Course Overview

This course is designed to give you a dynamic introduction to the field of sociology, with special attention paid to issues, ideas, and facets of American culture and society. If you and I do our jobs correctly, you’ll walk away with an appreciation of the ideas and methods of sociological inquiry and a sense of where the field is today.

This course has four broad goals:

1. **To introduce sociology and its ideas**
   You should have a sense of the kinds of issues with which sociology grapples, the tools it brings, and the ideas upon which it is built.

2. **To survey several fields of contemporary sociology**
   Where is sociology going today? What do sociologists do?

3. **To encourage critical approaches to social claims**
   Claims about the nature of society are made daily in the press, popular and business books, and elsewhere. After this class, you should be able to evaluate these claims critically and think about how they might be tested sociologically.

4. **To write well**
   Social science is, fundamentally, a written art. Writing well is integral to good sociology. Your writing will be evaluated for clarity of thought, language, structure, and grammar.

Readings and Resources

*Required Books*


Supplementary Readings

All other readings are available either on the web or on the course website. These are marked with the www symbol. Those available on the web are linked from the course website. The course website is available through http://blackboard.unc.edu and is also linked from http://www.unc.edu/~aperrin.

Other Resources

Have a dictionary close at hand to look up words you don’t know. You can find an adequate one at http://www.dictionary.com if you prefer using an online version.

The UNC Writing Center (http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb) can help you with writing clearly and correctly.

There is an astonishing amount of information available on the World Wide Web. A significant proportion of that information—though by no means all—is true and relevant. By all means, use the Web to supplement your reading and knowledge, but use it critically and make sure you know the source of the information.

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

The requirements of this course are as follows:

Reading You must complete all the course readings. You are responsible for understanding the readings—make use of your fellow students, your dictionary, the Internet, your TA, and me to make sure you understand the readings. Course time is to be used for substantive discussion and further exploration of the implications of course readings, not for grasping the basic contents.

Participation You must attend, and participate in, all class discussions and small group exercises. You are also responsible for the information contained in course lectures.

Reading Comments You must turn in two 2-page reflective discussions of readings of your choice. These are due at the beginning of the class during which the readings are discussed.

Vocabulary Exercises You must turn in two short (one page or less) exercises in which you explore a word in one of the class readings whose meaning you did not previously know. You should note the word, its definition, and its meaning in the context of the reading.

Exams There will be two examinations. You must take the examinations at the date, time, and place assigned.

Book Review You must write a review of a sociological book published within the past ten years. You can assume a book is appropriate if it has been reviewed in Contemporary Sociology or The American Journal of Sociology; however, your review must be substantively different from these reviews. Other books may also be appropriate. In the book review, you must describe and evaluate the book’s research question, research design, and argument. You must tell me by February 24 what book you intend to review. The book review is due by 5:00 pm on Friday, March 10. NOTE: Two small groups will be selected to form the sides of the in-class debate on February 10. Members of these groups will be excused from writing the book review, and the grade for their group’s performance in the debate will substitute for that for the book review.
**Final Paper**
The final paper is your opportunity to synthesize what you have learned during the class with outside interests and experiences. Your final paper must develop a sociological argument using appropriate sources. It is an academic paper and, as such, must be written in an appropriate style. The paper is due at **5:00 pm on Wednesday, April 26**. Select an assignment from these four options:

1. Find some issue, situation, or paradox of interest to you and compare how at least two of sociology’s grand theorists (Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, Goffman) would understand it. For this project you will have to do further reading of the theorists you choose, and offer an evaluation of the situation and the theorists’ approaches to it.

2. Find some issue, situation, or paradox of interest to you and review and evaluate sociological research and writing on it. For this project you must provide a broad introduction to the field of interest and a sense of the similarities, differences, and relationships among sociological approaches. *This is not simply an annotated bibliography.*

3. Find some issue, situation, or paradox of interest to you and design a sociological study to investigate it. You must provide a theoretical background, literature review, methodological specification, and expected results. (This option is probably of greatest interest to those interested in the craft of social scientific research.)

4. You may choose to do a different assignment, appropriate for a final paper in a sociology course. You **must check with me before embarking on this option.**

**Grading**

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small-Group Presentations</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small-Group Ethnographies</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Response Exercises</td>
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<td>Vocabulary Exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Course Policies**

You are an adult. As a student in this class, you are provided with a set of resources for learning the class’s contents, and you are expected to fulfill a series of requirements designed to evaluate the depth and breadth of your knowledge of those contents. Your grade, therefore, is a reflection of your success in utilizing the resources you have at your disposal. There will be no in-class quizzes or writing assignments, and there will be no extra credit or make-up assignments.

You are responsible for the information in the readings and given during lectures. If you do not understand something I say in a lecture, ask me during the lecture, during a later class, or privately via e-mail or office hours.

On days when discussions are scheduled, participation is mandatory. Some discussions will be full-class; others will be in small groups. Your participation will be useless—and graded as such—if you have not done the reading.

Assignments are due on the dates listed. Make sure you give yourself sufficient time to finish assignments by their due dates. You will lose roughly one letter grade per day between the due date and the date the paper is received. You may make the calculation yourself as to whether your work will improve
sufficiently in the extra time to make up for the grade reduction. In exceptional cases, I may grant an extension; you must discuss this with me in advance.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS COURSE IS COVERED BY THE UNC HONOR CODE (see http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/studinfo.html). I take academic dishonesty—including, but not limited to, plagiarism—very seriously. There will be no excuses or second chances; if you have plagiarized the ideas or words of someone else without giving credit, you will be referred to the Student Attorney General. If you have questions as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, check http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/plagiarism.html or consult your TA or me.

Adequate completion of the requirements of the class will earn you a B-. Work whose quality clearly exceeds these requirements will earn a B, B+, A-, or A.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 11 Lecture: Introduction to “Introduction to Sociology”

January 13 Sociological Introductions (Small Groups)

January 16 No class - MLK, Jr., Holiday

January 18 Lecture: “What is a Group?”
Reading: Selections from Simmel, “The Importance of Numbers for Social Life” www

January 20 Lecture: Critical Principles of Sociology

January 23 Lecture: How to Read, Write, and Think Sociologically
Start reading Schwartz!

January 25 Lecture: Sociology in the Real World
Reading:

January 27 Small-Group Discussions

January 30 Lecture: Love, Romance, and Family

Reading: Schwartz, chapters 1, 2, 3, and 6
Recommended: Stephanie Coontz, Marriage: A History, from Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage (Viking, 2005)

February 1 Small-Group Task

February 3 Lecture: Foundations of Social Thought
Reading:
February 6 Small groups: Marx quote interpretation

Begin reading Lareau!

February 8 Video: Roger & Me (selections)

February 10 Class debate: Marx vs. Weber on Lareau and Michael Moore

February 13 Lecture: Social Class as Lived Experience

Reading: Lareau, chapters 1–5

February 15 Lecture: Cultural and Cross-Cultural Sociology

Reading:


February 17 Small group task

Reading: Lareau, chapters 8–12

February 20 Lecture: Society, the Body, and Health


February 22 Lecture: What does Genetics Mean for Sociology?


February 24 Small group task: bodies and society

**Book Review Topic Due**

February 27 Guest Lecture: Eliana Perrin, M.D., M.P.H.: The Training and Organization of Medical Care


March 1 Lecture: Health Care and Social Outcomes

Reading: Conley et al., chapters 1 and 2

March 3 Video: *The Deadly Deception*

March 6 Small group task: Integrating levels with health information

Reading:

- Conley et al., chapters 3 and 4

March 8 Lecture: Debunking and Experience in Medical Sociology

Reading:


March 10 Discussion: Writing the Final Paper

**Book Review Due, 5:00 pm**

March 11–19 Spring Break
March 20 Lecture/Discussion: Review and Explanation

March 22 Midterm Examination

March 24 Lecture: What is Culture? How does it Work?  
Reading: Bethany Bryson, “‘Anything But Heavy Metal’: Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes.”  
[http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-1224%28199610%2961%3A5%3C884%3A%22BHME%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-1224%28199610%2961%3A5%3C884%3A%22BHME%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O)

March 27 Video: *Cannibal Tours*

March 29 Small-group Ethnographic Exercise

March 31 Small-Group Exercise: Art Choices  

April 3 Video: Excerpts on Katrina  
*Begin reading Klinenberg!*

April 5 Lecture: Mistake, Misconduct, and Disaster  
Reading: Klinenberg, Prologue, Introduction, Chapter 2  
Recommended:  

April 7 Small-group discussions  
Reading: Klinenberg, chapters 4 and 5, Epilogue

April 10 Small-group discussions

April 12 No class (Passover)

April 14 No class (Good Friday)

April 17 Video: John Stossel, *Are We Scaring Ourselves to Death?*

April 19 Lecture: Social Science and Evidence in the Public Sphere  
Reading: Haltom & McCann, chapters 1–3

April 21 Small groups  
Reading: Haltom & McCann, chapters 5 and 6

April 24 Lecture: Thinking about Risk  
Reading: Conley et al., chapter 5

April 26 Review and discussion  
**Final papers due, 5:00 pm**

April 28 Course wrap-up and evaluation

May 9 Final examination - 12:00 noon

**Recommended Further Reading**  
*These are only a few suggestions—contact me for more in your areas of interest.*
Textbooks
I have not assigned a traditional textbook for this class. If you’d like to look at one for reference, I recommend Giddens’ Introduction to Sociology, or Coser et al.’s Introduction to Sociology.

Social Theory
- Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory.
- Coser, Masters of Sociological Thought.
- Smith, Moral, Believing Animals

Individual and Society
- Putnam, Bowling Alone.

Sociology of Work

Inequalities
- Bowen and Bok. The Shape of the River. Princeton University Press.
- Ferguson, Bad Boys. University of Michigan Press.
- Fischer et al., Inequality by Design.
- Conley, Being Black, Living in the Red.

Politics and Democracy
- Eliasoph, Avoiding Politics
- Perrin, Citizen Speak