

An/Soc 105: Introductory Sociology (Spring 2006)

Thomas G. McGowan, Ph. D. Office: C107; #843-3932
Associate Professor of Sociology Office hrs: T and TR 12:15-2pm; W 3-5pm

Course Statement

Sociology is a general social science that overlaps with numerous disciplines including philosophy, history, social-psychology, economics, political science and religious studies. Sociology's generality is the discipline's strength *and* weakness. Its generality is a strength in that it provides a theoretical and methodological grounding capable of supporting the study of most any topic pertaining to human existence, for human existence is always, already social and "the structure of social existence" is sociology's primary focus. On the other hand, sociology's generality has left the discipline with an unclear place in academia and society itself. Moreover, because the content of sociology concerns the everyday, taken-for-granted aspects of life, sociology is sometimes criticized for studying the "obvious." The problem with the taken-for-granted aspects of life is that they are meaning producing and significant *even when they are ignored* or taken-for-granted. The primary challenge of sociology, therefore, is to develop a critical awareness of the taken-for-granted structure and content of our social existence in order to address the displaced (hidden) problems that otherwise would not receive intentional analysis and ameliorative action.

There are two primary objectives of this course, both of which are identified by our college's new core curriculum: critical thinking and the ability to understand the "other." These objectives will be pursued by studying the three classical theoretical orientations in sociology and then applying them to critically investigate a variety of social issues, including an issue you personally identify and focus on for your term research paper. In addition, you will learn fascinating theoretical perspectives and interesting research findings and develop a basic understanding of sociology and social science. Perhaps more importantly, this course will contribute to the development of your own personal philosophy by helping you appropriate a new conceptual vocabulary and understanding of your social existence.

Expectations

In preparation for each class meeting you will prepare a written response to an assigned question (found on the syllabus). Your work should reflect a minimum of two hours of preparation, reflection and/or secondary research in addition to the time spent reading the assignment. Your written response to the question(s) should be single spaced (12 point Times New Roman font) and edited so as not to exceed one page in length. Papers are to be handed in at the conclusion of each class meeting.

This class will be conducted as a discussion/lecture course. **YOU MUST COMPLETE YOUR READINGS.** Each class meeting will begin with a brief discussion of the essay you have prepared in response to the question assigned for the scheduled class meeting. We will then launch into a discussion about the reading(s) in relation to the day's specific learning objectives. It should be clear, then, that preparation (reading) and participation (actively joining in class

discussions) are absolutely crucial to the quality of outcomes in this class. For this reason, preparation, participation and class attendance are mandatory. Three unexcused absences will qualify you to receive an automatic “F” in this class, and poor participation will be reflected in your course grade.

There will be a two-phase term research paper involving a literature review (8-10 pages) and an analysis of your research question examined from one of sociology’s traditional paradigms (8-10 pages). Handouts will be provided intermittently to guide your completion of this assignment.

Grading

Class preparation and participation:	25%
Midterm essay exam:	25%
Term paper (part 1 = 10%;part 2= 15%):	25%
Final exam:	25%

Required Texts

The Meaning of Sociology. 2005. Joel Charon, editor. 8th edition.
New York: Prentice Hall.

Sources: Notable Selections in Sociology. 1999. Kurt Finsterbusch, editor. 3d edition.
Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill.

This Book is Not Required. 3^d edition. 2005.
Inge Bell, Bernard McGrane and John Gunderson. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press

Thursday	1/12	Course overview, objectives and a sociological object lesson. <i>Every philosophy presupposes a sociology.</i>
Tuesday	1/17	Plato’s cave, Hegel’s dialectic and liberal arts education <i>We reside in the cave until we intentionally seek to live outside of it. How are we to live outside of the cave; what does such living require of us?</i> Discuss excerpt from Book VII of Plato’s <i>Republic</i> and #1 in Bell, et al.
Thursday	1/19	Culture, ethnocentrism and paradigms <i>Ethnocentrism is a condition of existence but it need not be determinate. Would you want to live in the culture described by Miner? Explain why. In what sense are grades similar to Plato’s cave?(Refer to chapter one in Bell/McGrane.)</i> Discuss #2.2 (Miner) and chapter 2 in Bell, et al.

Tuesday	1/24	<p>The sociological imagination <i>Structural forces exert themselves upon us whether we realize it or not. What is the sociological imagination and why is it important? Do you think Berger shares Mill's view of sociology?</i> #1.2 (Mills) and 1.1 (Berger) TERM PAPER IS ASSIGNED – READ CHAPTER 6 IN BELL, et. al.</p>
Thursday	1/26	<p>A science of society <i>Sociology defines itself as a science of society but the meaning of this is problematic. Why is the notion of a “science” of society problematic?</i> Discuss excerpt from Babbie's <i>The Practice of Social Research</i>.</p>
Tuesday	1/31	<p>Comte, Durkheim and the origins of sociology <i>Sociology is rooted in positivism. Who is August Comte, how does he understand human intellectual history, and how does he define positivism?</i> Discuss excerpt from Durkheim's <i>The Rules of Sociological Method</i>.</p>
Thursday	2/2	<p>Durkheim, religion and the origins of the sacred. <i>Order is sacred. According to Durkheim, why did humans create religion? In what sense may society be considered a sufficient cause for the creation of religion?</i> Discuss excerpt from Durkheim's <i>The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life</i>.</p>
Tuesday	2/7	<p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING RESEARCH TOPIC/ PART 1 OF TERM PAPER IS ASSIGNED (DUE 3/7) Anomie and Durkheim's sociological theory of the individual. <i>The absence of integration requires regulation. What does Durkheim mean by integration and regulation, and how do they relate to his concept of anomie? Is American society anomic?</i> Discuss excerpt from Ritzer (on Durkheim) and Riesman</p>
Thursday	2/9	<p>Durkheim and suicide. <i>Suicide is a sociological phenomenon because the health of the individual is dependent on the health of the individual's social being. Discuss Durkheim's typology of suicide and describe in detail the nature and causes of anomic suicide.</i> Discuss excerpt from Ritzer (on Durkheim)</p>
Tuesday	2/14	<p>Marx's analysis of modernization. <i>In the absence of conflict there is domination. Explain this riddle which reflects Marx's dialectical view of history and the structure of capitalism.</i></p>

Thursday	2/16	<p>Discuss #51 (Marx) and handout on Marx. Capitalism and alienation. <i>Capitalism presupposes alienation. Explain this riddle which reflects Marx's view of wage labor and commodification.</i> Discuss excerpt from Marx's <i>Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844</i>.</p>
Tuesday	2/21	<p>Stratification, class consciousness and reification <i>Being determines consciousness. Compare and contrast the respective world views of the privileged and working classes. Which class makes the laws and what are the moral and ethical implications of this social fact? What does changing one's class position also mean for one's existence?</i> Discuss # 21 (Gans), # 19 (Perrucci and Wysong) and chapter 10 13 in Bell, et al.</p>
Thursday	2/23	<p>Weber, instrumental-rational social action and disenchantment. <i>Capitalism requires a particular cultural orientation which is "instrumentally-rational." What are the defining features of instrumental-rationality and how does it order one's relationship to oneself and to others?</i> Discuss #6.4 (Weber) and excerpt from Brubaker's <i>Rationality</i>.</p>
Tuesday	2/28	<p>The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of detachment <i>Protestantism presupposes an ethos of instrumental-rationality. What appear to be the social-psychological roots of this ethos and what are the implications of this ethos for social action?</i> Discuss excerpt from Weber's <i>Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>.</p>
Thursday	3/2	<p>Rationalization and structural dehumanization Discuss #11.2 (Dowie) and #41 (Boggs) <i>Rationalization includes the colonization of the life-world through instrumental-rational social action. In what sense is this colonization evident in corporate institutions and how does it evidence the phenomenon of dehumanization?</i></p>
Tuesday	3/7	<p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PART 1 OF TERM PAPER Authority and instrumental-rationality <i>Methodological being and the displacement of the logos. How do the three assigned readings illustrate the displacement of the logos resulting from internalized, methodological behavior?</i> Discuss # 15 (Zimbardo), #16 (Meyer) and #17 (Kelman and Hamilton).</p>
Thursday	3/9	Midterm exam
Tuesday	3/14	SPRING BREAK

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Tuesday	3/21	<p>PART 2 OF TERM PAPER IS ASSIGNED</p> <p>The concept of “human nature.”</p> <p><i>Culture completes biology in the sense that human nature is always already a socio-cultural nature. [There is no assigned preparation question due for this class meeting.]</i></p>
Thursday	3/23	<p>The social construction of reality</p> <p><i>Society is a human product, society is an objective reality, humans are social products. What is the crucial element that turns life activity (externalization) into an objective, social force (institutionalization)?</i></p> <p>Discuss #7 (Cooley) and excerpt from Berger and Luckmann’s <i>The Social Construction of Reality</i>.</p>
Tuesday	3/28	<p>Institutionalization, legitimation and social controls.</p> <p><i>That which is socially constructed can be constructed differently. Why is it, however, that the existing social order appears to be so stable and difficult to change?</i></p> <p>Discuss excerpt from Berger and Luckmann’s <i>The Social Construction of Reality</i>.</p>
Thursday	3/30	<p>G. H. Mead and the origins of symbolic interactionism</p> <p><i>The self is a social structure. Describe Mead’s explanation of this riddle.</i></p> <p>Discuss #3.1 (G. H. Mead)</p>
Tuesday	4/4	<p>Language, self and society.</p> <p><i>Language is practical consciousness and the liaison between self and society. Investigate contemporary thought on the importance of language and explain why it is a key element in the emergence of and maintenance of self identity. Consider Dunphy’s article on the importance of primary groups a clue to conceptualizing your answer.</i></p> <p>Discuss #11 (Dunphy).</p>
Thursday	4/6	<p>Language, gender and social controls</p> <p><i>The self is engendered in a primary sense through language. Write a paper based on the observation of language use by your peers and compare it to Tannen’s research on language and gender. Can you see language structuring gender differences in a primary yet unconscious way?</i></p> <p>Discuss #2.5 (Tannen).</p>
Tuesday	4/11	<p>Gender as cave</p> <p><i>Like race and class, gender is a social fact that implicitly structures identity and behavior. How does gender structure</i></p>

women's lives and how have recent historical changes affected this structuring process.

Discuss #28 (Howard and Hollander), #29 (Risman) and #30 (Hochschild and Machung).

Thursday	4/13	Easter BREAK
Tuesday	4/18	DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PART 2 OF TERM PAPER
Thursday	4/20	Stigma <i>The very idea of normal presupposes difference, yet the very presence of the different threatens the normal and are therefore vilified. What is different about the elderly that threatens the young and middle aged and underlies their vilification?</i> Discuss article on Ageism (McGowan) and excerpt from Erving Goffman's <i>Stigma</i> .
Tuesday	4/25	Desocialization and reflexive self understanding: Leaving the cave. <i>The courage to unlearn by deferring to the lessons of experience is one of the keys to wisdom. Write a letter addressed to your future self summarizing what you have learned from sociology regarding the cave, human development and the cultivation of wisdom and understanding.</i> Discuss chapters 5, 7 and 8 in Bell, et al.
Thursday	4/27	Review for final exam