Course Statement

Sociology is the study of the social structures and processes that exist over and above individuals. These structures and processes shape the context and experience of individuals - constraining and restricting us while simultaneously providing the order and stability needed for survival and self development. This paradox, the state of being an individual yet always, already a social creature is sociology's key concern. We will explore how sociology can help us to understand ourselves and the worlds in which we live by providing insight into the social construction of both self and society.

I define sociology as a form of applied philosophy, a conceptually rich, empirically grounded way of making sense of ourselves and our worlds. My experience suggests that if you become and remain engaged in this course you will experience insights you will not soon forget.

In addition to the three paper assignments and exams you will be expected to view 2 films (TBA) outside of class time and complete 2 single-page papers in response to 2 field exercises.

You are expected to complete all readings. Any student who exceeds more than 3 unexcused absences may be failed. Papers submitted later than the due-date will be lowered a full grade.

Required Texts and Grading


Paper 1 (5 pages) ........................................ 15%
Paper 2 (5 pages) ........................................ 15%
Midterm essay exam ...................................... 25%
Paper 3 (5 pages) .................................................. 15%
Final essay exam ...................................................... 30%

Wed 8/26  Sociology as ontology
    Read for Fri. ch. 1 in McGrane
    and entries on sociology, paradigm, dialectic

Fri 8/28  Dangerous sociology, Hegel’s dialectic and
    the Socratic method
    Read for Mon. chaps. 1 and 4 in Bell

Mon 8/31  Paradigms, reflexivity and the role of “student”
    Read for Wed. chaps. 3 and 5 in Bell

Wed 9/2  Demystifying the institution
    Read for Fri. chaps. 65, 64 and 2 in Charon
    and entry on C. W. Mills

Fri 9/4  The subversive, sociological imagination
    Read for Wed. handout on social facts (Durkheim)
    and entries on Durkheim, Comte, norms (social)

Mon 9/7  Labor Day

Wed 9/9  Durkheim’s social-structural imagination
    Paper #1 is assigned (due 9/14)

Fri 9/11  Durkheim and the origins of religion
    Read for Mon. ch. 2 in McGrane after completing

Mon 9/14  Paper #1 is due at 10:20am
    Suicide, division of labor, and functionalism
    Read ch. 4 in Charon and entry on social structure

Wed 9/16  The sui generis nature of groups
    Read chaps. 6 and 7 in Charon, and entries on
    Thomas axiom, social interaction, symbolic

Fri 9/18  Schools of micro sociology
    Read for Mon. chaps. 8 and 12 in Charon
    and entries on socialization, self concept

Mon 9/21  The self as a social process
    Read for Wed. chaps. 17 and 18 in Charon
    and entry on Max Weber

Wed 9/23  Weber’s typology of social action
    Read for Mon. chaps. 40 and 20 in Charon
    and entry on Protestant Ethic

Fri 9/25  No class - McGowan at conference

Mon 9/28  The Protestant ethic
    Read for Wed. ch. 42 in Charon
and entries on bureaucracy, rationalization

Wed 9/30  Bureaucracy and rationalization
Read for Fri. handout on Berger and Luckmann

Fri 10/2  The social construction of reality (p. 1)
Read for Mon. ch. 57 in Charon
and entry on reification

Mon 10/5  The social construction of reality (p. 2)
Read ch. 60 in Charon
and entries on Karl Marx, social change, conflict

Wed 10/7  Marx’s view of social change
Read for Fri. entries on mode of production, dialectical materialism

Fri 10/9  Marx’s dialectical materialism
Read for Mon. entries on alienation, class, class

Mon 10/12  Alienation and reification

Wed 10/14  Review for midterm

Fri 10/16  Midterm exam

Mon 10/19  Fall break

Wed 10/21  Types of sociological research methods
Read for Fri. entries on positivism, validity,

Fri 10/23  Validity, reliability, conceptualization and operationalization
Read for Mon. ch. 30 in Charon

Mon 10/26  The complexities of race and class
Read for Wed. ch. 34 in Charon

Wed 10/28  The social-psychology of race
Read for Wed. ch. 35 in Charon
Paper # 2 is assigned (due Mon. 11/2)

Fri 10/30  Racial and cultural diversity
Read for Mon. ch. 39 in Charon

Mon 11/2  Fraternities and rape on campus
Read for Wed. ch. 36 in Charon
Paper # 2 is due

Wed 11/4  Gender inequality
Read for Fri. handout on gender

Fri 11/6  The performativity of gender
Read for Mon. ch. 28 in Charon
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 11/9</td>
<td>The circle of poverty</td>
<td>Read for Wed. chaps. 26 and 27 in Charon</td>
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<td>Wed 11/11</td>
<td>The positive functions of poverty</td>
<td>Read for Mon. ch. 25 in Charon</td>
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<td>Fri 11/13</td>
<td>The social construction of affluence</td>
<td>Read for Wed. ch. 11 in Bell</td>
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<td>Mon 11/16</td>
<td>Appropriating sociology</td>
<td>Read for Wed. chaps. 5 and 6 in McGrane</td>
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<td>Wed 11/18</td>
<td>The repositioned self</td>
<td>Read for Fri. chaps. 3 and 4 in McGrane</td>
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<td>Fri 11/20</td>
<td>Repositioning the self</td>
<td>Paper # 3 is assigned</td>
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<td>Mon 11/23</td>
<td>No class (McGowan at conference)</td>
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<td>Wed 11/25</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
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<td>Fri 11/27</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
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<td>Mon 11/30</td>
<td>Desocialization</td>
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<td>Wed 12/2</td>
<td>The constituting self</td>
<td>Paper #3 is due</td>
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<td>Read for Fri. ch. 9 in Bell</td>
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<td>Fri 12/4</td>
<td>The art of relating</td>
<td>Read handout on ontological change</td>
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<td>(McGowan)</td>
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<td>Mon 12/7</td>
<td>The science of relating</td>
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<td>Wed 12/9</td>
<td>Final class meeting -- review for final exam</td>
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