

An/Soc 105: Introductory Sociology (Fall 2007)

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Course Statement

Sociology may be defined as a general social science that addresses the intersection of 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, powerful conceptual vocabulary.

Expectations

In preparation for each week of class you will write a brief essay in response to an assigned question. The questions are provided on the syllabus and your response essay must be submitted each Tuesday at the conclusion of class. Papers will be graded and returned to you on the following Thursday. Your work should reflect a minimum of three 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.

This class will be conducted as a discussion/lecture course. **YOU MUST COMPLETE YOUR READINGS**, and each class meeting will begin with a brief discussion of the essay you have prepared in response to the question assigned for the week. 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. 1999.
Inge Bell and Bernard McGrane. Fort Bragg, CA: The Small Press.

Thursday	8/23	Course overview, objectives and a sociological object lesson. <i>Every philosophy presupposes a sociology.</i>
Tuesday	8/28	Culture, ethnocentrism and paradigms <i>Weekly Question: What is ethnocentrism and can it be avoided?</i> Discuss #32 (Becker), #2.2 (Miner) and chapter 2 in Bell/McGrane
Thursday	8/30	Wisdom and the sociological imagination <i>Culture and structural forces exert themselves upon us whether we realize it or not.</i> Discuss #1.2 (Mills) and handout on Plato.
Tuesday	9/4	The idea of a social science <i>Weekly Question: Sociology defines itself as a science of society. What constitutes a science and is the notion of “social science” inherently problematic?</i> Discuss #4 (Best) and #5 (Charon).

Thursday	9/6	Comte, Durkheim and the origins of sociology Discuss excerpt from Durkheim's <i>The Rules of Sociological Method</i> (handout). TERM PAPER IS ASSIGNED
Tuesday	9/11	Durkheim, religion and the origins of the sacred. <i>Weekly Question: 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> (handout).
Thursday	9/13	Anomie and Durkheim's sociological theory of the individual. Discuss handout on Durkheim DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING RESEARCH TOPIC/ PART 1 OF TERM PAPER IS ASSIGNED
Tuesday	9/18	Durkheim and suicide. <i>Weekly Question: In what sense and under what conditions can suicide be explained as a sociological phenomenon?</i> Discuss excerpt from Durkheim's <i>Suicide</i> (handout).
Thursday	9/20	Marx's analysis of modernization. Discuss #51 (Marx).
Tuesday	9/25	Capitalism and alienation. <i>Weekly Question: According to Marx, where does profit come from?</i> Discuss excerpt from Marx's <i>Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844</i> (handout).
Thursday	9/27	Stratification, class consciousness and reification Discuss # 18 (Dugger), # 19 (Perrucci and Wysong) and #21 (Gans).
Tuesday	10/2	Weber, instrumental-rational social action and disenchantment. <i>Weekly Question: What is the ethos of capitalism, that is, how does it require one to act on a daily basis?</i> Discuss #6.4 (Weber) and excerpt from Brubaker (handout).
Thursday	10/4	The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of detachment Discuss excerpt from Weber's <i>Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> (handout).
Tuesday	10/9	Rationalization and structural dehumanization <i>Weekly Question: Was Lee Iacocca a bad person?</i> Discuss #11.2 (Dowie) and #50 (Ehrensall).

Thursday	10/11	DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PART 1 OF TERM PAPER Authority, instrumental-rationality and displacement Discuss # 15 (Zimbardo), #16 (Meyer) and #17 (Kelman and Hamilton).
Tuesday	10/16	Fall Break
Thursday	10/18	Midterm exam
Tuesday	10/23	The concept of “human nature.” <i>Weekly Question: In what sense is the term “human nature” an</i> Discuss #7 (Cooley) and #8 (Berger and Luckmann). PART 2 OF TERM PAPER IS ASSIGNED
Thursday	10/25	Socialization and the self Discuss #3.1 (G. H. Mead).
Tuesday	10/30	The social construction of reality <i>Weekly Question: According to Berger and Luckmann, in what</i> <i>sense is reality socially constructed?</i> Read excerpt from Berger and Luckmann’s <i>The Social</i> <i>Construction of Reality</i> (handout).
Thursday	11/1	Institutionalization Discuss # 12.3 (Berger and Kellner).
Tuesday	11/6	Legitimation and social controls. <i>Weekly Question: Given that reality is socially constructed, why is</i> <i>it so stable and difficult to change?</i> Discuss # 14 (Berger and Luckmann) and # 13 in Bell/McGrane.
Thursday	11/8	The importance of primary groups Discuss # 6.1 (Cooley) and #11 (Dunphy).
Tuesday	11/13	Gender as social structure and control <i>Weekly Question: In what sense is gender a social structure and</i> Discuss #28 (Howard and Hollander), #29 (Risman) and #30 (Hochschild and Machung).
Thursday	11/15	Language and gender Discuss #2.5 (Tannen).
Tuesday	11/20	Language and the power of dialogue <i>Weekly Question: What is the difference between dialogue and</i> <i>debate and what must one do in order to engage in dialogue?</i> Discuss article by McGowan and chapter 12 in Bell/McGrane.

Thursday	11/22	Thanksgiving
Tuesday	11/27	<i>Weekly Question: Are you adjusted, anomic or autonomous?</i> Discuss article by Riesman (handout). DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PART 2 OF TERM PAPER
Thursday	11/29	Deviance Discuss article by Merton (handout).
Tuesday	12/4	<i>Weekly Question: What is wisdom and how might sociology inform efforts to become wise?</i> Discuss chapters 7, 8 and 9 in Bell/McGrane.
Thursday	12/4	Review for final exam