

SOC 278 • COMMUNITY RESEARCH

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2015 Spring semester • Thursdays 6:00pm – 8:45pm • Room D208

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:30-4:00 or by appointment • D205W

The trouble we're in privileges some groups at the expense of others. It creates a yawning divide in levels of income, wealth, dignity, safety, health, and quality of life. It promotes fear, suspicion, discrimination, harassment, and violence. It sets people against one another. It builds walls topped with broken glass and barbed wire. It weaves the insidious and corroding effects of oppression into the daily lives of tens of millions of women, men, and children. It has the potential to ruin entire generations and, in the long run, to take just about everyone down with it. (Allan G. Johnson)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, you will volunteer with a community organization, carrying out activities that will have some concrete result in addressing structural inequality and meeting the needs of the community. You will gain experience in one or more primary research methods used by sociologists: participant observation, interviews, survey research, content analysis, or the use of existing documents. We will meet in a seminar a number of times to reflect on our experiences.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After successfully completing this course, a student should have the following skills and abilities:

- an understanding of the community and issues related to structural inequality
- application of sociological concepts in the field
- an understanding of the research process as practiced by social scientists
- development of competencies in research and oral presentation skills
- proficiency as a “reflexive practitioner”

REQUIRED TEXT

Johnson, Allan G. 2006. *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, 2nd edition. Boston: McGraw Hill.

READING ASSIGNMENTS 20% OF COURSE GRADE

Readings for each class are listed in the course outline to follow and are also posted on the Blackboard page for this class. Readings must be completed before class on the day it is listed. They are designed to prepare you for the upcoming lecture. You will complete the readings on your own so that you are familiar with the topics to be discussed during class. You are responsible for all assigned reading, whether or not it is discussed in class.

In order to facilitate class discussion, you will have on hand for class your written reflections on the reading for that date. These reflections will be handed in to me at the end of each class period. I require at least two reflections on each section or article read.

Do NOT submit your notes on the reading. Do NOT merely summarize the reading.

Reading Reflections must be thought provoking, analytical, and should address the material in an academic way. I want to see that you've read and thought about each assignment; I do not want a summary of or your notes on what the reading was about. Your comments should show what your thinking is on the concepts you found most important or intriguing. This requires a close and careful reading along with reflection on and interpretation of the author's intent. Supporting evidence from the texts, handouts, and lectures will enhance your reflections. One reflection may be as short as one sentence or as long as a paragraph—it's up to you.

A thought-provoking comment might be something like: *Now that I understand the concept of privilege in a sociological way, I can see the ways in which my life is privilege.* Or you may frame your comment as a question, such as: *Does difference automatically and inevitably lead to inequalities?* Do not ask fact-finding questions like: *What is the definition of structural inequality?*

CLASS ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION 20% OF COURSE GRADE

Participation in class discussion is essential. It is a graded element of this course and is fundamental to effective learning. Participation credit is earned when you discuss the readings as well as for sharing stories, thoughts, opinions, asking questions, and responding to other students' inquiries. The exams will be based in part on in-class discussions and activities, so your presence at every class is extremely important to your grade, as is your active and involved participation. Participation will be assessed each class meeting and your presence/absence will be noted. More than two absences may lower your final grade by one letter. It is your responsibility to be sure that your presence in class is accounted for by signing in each class meeting.

I will use the following criteria to evaluate your participation:

- Frequency and clarity of your verbal contributions. Are you making an effort to contribute to class discussion? Is it evident that you have prepared for class?
- Knowledge of the reading material and your ability to grasp its central themes. How carefully and critically did you read?
- Your ability to take an independent and reflective stance toward ideas under discussion. Are you willing to think and re-think your ideas and positions?
- The overall development of your power of verbal expression during the course of the semester. Do you demonstrate increased willingness and ability to contribute to class discussion as the course progresses?

While not all students will be as interested in all of the topics we cover, I expect everyone to be very, very attentive and engaged. Please use your computers **only** to take notes. I will deduct points from your attendance and participation grade if I notice that you are browsing the Internet.

COMMUNITY SERVICE 30% OF COURSE GRADE

You must participate in the community in the context of service learning. Service learning is a form of experiential learning, or learning through experience. You will volunteer your services to aid a community organization or agency. You may do direct service (i.e., preparing and serving meals at a meal center), organizing work (i.e., help a non-profit plan an event), or lobbying work (i.e., assisting an organization in their efforts to shape social policy). You may locate your own placement, with the instructor's approval, or work in a program of community research that the College has developed with a local agency. You will successfully complete 20-30 hours of volunteer work with or for the community organization chosen. This portion of the coursework involves a number of forms that must be completed.

ADVOCACY PAPER & PRESENTATION 30% OF COURSE GRADE

For this assignment, you will focus on the population that you are serving through your community work. Your paper and presentation will bring this population and their particular needs to the attention of a group or person who holds power (private individuals, congressional members, industry, state agencies, churches, campus community, etc). Your goal is to create an evidence-based piece that informs a target audience about the particular circumstances of your population and to persuade that target audience to take action. Your presentation will be a summary of the major points made in your paper and will be presented to the class.

CLASS CANCELLATION

If the College cancels classes due to adverse weather conditions, the College has a system in place for informing students. The Three Rivers home page also contains that information. If class is canceled by me personally, I will inform you through your **CommNet email address**. I will also inform the administration who will then post a sign on the classroom door.

GRADING

I expect all assigned work to be handed in on the day it is due. I will not grade late work. An alternative due date is acceptable only under extraordinary circumstances and with at least one week's advance notice. All inquiries or disagreements regarding grades will be handled during my office hours or at another mutually agreeable time. I will not discuss grades immediately before, during, or after class.

Exams and your final grade for the course will be evaluated on a conventional A to F scale.

Reading Reflections will be graded on a 3-point rubric as follows:

| | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| CONTENT | The reflection fully addresses the reading and demonstrates creative thought about the ideas of the reading. Summary used only as reference. | The reflection addresses the reading and demonstrates some thought about the ideas of the reading. Summary used mainly as reference. | The reflection addresses the reading, but demonstrates very little thought about the ideas of the reading and often merely summarizes the material. | The reflection does not address the reading and/or demonstrates no thought about the ideas of the reading. All or almost all is summarization. |
| IDEA DEVELOPMENT | Has supporting details and examples that help make meaningful connections, either drawn from readings, in-class work, or personal experience | Has some supporting details and examples, but are not necessarily well-connected to the reading. | Has few details or examples which are are poorly connected to the reading. | Has no details or examples. |
| COMPREHENSION | Fully addresses the reading and demonstrates creative thought about the ideas of the reading. Summary used only as reference. | Addresses the reading and demonstrates some thought about the ideas of the reading. Summary used mainly as reference. | Addresses the reading, but demonstrates very little thought about the ideas of the reading and often merely summarizes the material. | The reflection does not address the reading and/or demonstrates no thought about the ideas of the reading. All or almost all is summarization. |

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to a useful education. Academic dishonesty erodes the legitimacy of every degree awarded by the College. I encourage students to discuss course material and study together, but everyone must do their own work. In this class and in the course of your academic career, present only your own best work; clearly document the sources of the material you use from others; and act at all times with honor. If you present someone else's work as your own (including cheating on assignments or exams and/or plagiarizing on assignments or papers), you will **automatically fail** the class.

COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Cellular phones are allowed in class only if they are turned off or turned to a silent mode. Vibrating mode is not allowed, as it can sometimes be heard. Under no circumstances are you to answer your phone or text message in class. If you must respond, please leave the room. If you answer your phone or text while in class, I will take your phone until the end of class.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Some of the material in this course involves issues, language, and areas that are sensitive in nature. Sociology courses can sometimes bring about unsettling feelings as they address personal matters as well as academic matters. This course will draw on our experiential knowledge as well as our cognitive understandings. It is important for us to be especially aware of the unique learning process in which we are involved and to insure a level of sensitivity for others' needs, feelings, and struggles.

For productive class interaction, I suggest that we all follow certain guidelines:

- Listen attentively to whoever is speaking and do not interrupt.
- Acknowledge that prejudice and discrimination based on social categories exists.
- Understand that we have all learned misinformation about these social categories.
- Agree not blame ourselves or others for this misinformation while accepting responsibility for not repeating such misinformation after we have learned otherwise.
- Never demean, devalue, or in any way "put down" people for their experiences, backgrounds, or statements. This doesn't mean that you can't disagree, only that you must do so respectfully.

Please note that I run a low-tech classroom. I do not post or hand out my lecture notes, conduct PowerPoint lectures, or expect online discussions/submissions. I do write out my notes as you write yours, pause for your contributions, and expect in-person interaction.

ACCESSIBILITY

I intend for my courses to be as accessible to as many different people as possible. If there is any reason why the standard approach to college classrooms and coursework is difficult for you to accomplish or if you have any special issues that have the potential to interfere with your completion of the course requirements, please come and talk to me about it.

This may include but is not limited to: extreme shyness; difficulty with English; learning disability; physical disability; personal life issues; emotional/psychological challenges; past experiences that make course material anxiety-producing; students whose parents did not attend college and can't help their children understand the system as well as other parents might; and students who have more responsibility than the typical college student (ie: dependent parents, children, especially heavy outside workload). I will work with you to find a suitable arrangement. You must come to see me about this *within the first week of class or within one week of an issue's occurrence*.

If you have a disability that may affect your progress in this course, please meet with a Disability Service Provider (DSP) as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations cannot be provided until you submit a written authorization from a DSP. It is your responsibility to alert me about the disability and to make accommodation arrangements. I will do everything I can to help. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes a learning disability, contact the staff in the Counseling and Advising Office.

| TRCC Disabilities Service Providers Counseling & Advising Office Room A-119 | |
|--|--|
| Matt Liscum (860) 383-5240 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical Disabilities• Sensory Disabilities• Medical Disabilities• Mental Health Disabilities |
| Chris Scarborough (860) 892-5751 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning Disabilities• ADD/ADHD• Autism Spectrum |

LEARNING PORTFOLIO

All students are required to maintain an online learning portfolio in Digication that uses the college template. Through this electronic tool students will have the opportunity to monitor their own growth in college-wide learning. The student will keep his/her learning portfolio and may continue to use the Digication account after graduation. A Three Rivers General Education Assessment Team will select and review random works to improve the college experience for all. Student work reviewed for assessment purposes will not include names and all student work will remain private and anonymous for college improvement purposes. Students will have the ability to integrate learning from the classroom, college, and life in general, which will provide additional learning opportunities. If desired, students will have the option to create multiple portfolios

COURSE OUTLINE

This course outline serves as a general guide for students of SOC 278. It is subject to change based on class discussion, class activities, and current events. You will help shape what we pursue and what we emphasize. If the Course Outline needs to be adjusted, changes will be noted in class. If you miss class, you are responsible for finding out about any changes.

Jan 22 • Introduction to SOC 278

Jan 29 • Theoretical Perspectives

Readings

Johnson Introduction p.vii-xii

**Due Reading Reflections
Leads & contact people for service placement**

Feb 5 • No Classes Held

Feb 12 • Methodological Approaches

Readings

Johnson Chapter 1 *Rodney King's Question*

Due Reading Reflections

Feb 19 • Systems of Inequality

Readings

Johnson Chapter 2 *Privilege, Oppression, and Difference* p.12-40

**Due Reading Reflections
Signed forms: Learning Objectives Agreement
Contact Information and Behavior Guidelines
Waiver and Release of Liability**

Feb 26 • Capitalism & Social Class

Readings

Johnson Chapter 3 *Capitalism, Class, and the Matrix of Domination*

Due Reading Reflections

Mar 12 • Privilege & Discrimination

Readings

Johnson Chapter 4 *Making Privilege Happen*
Chapter 5 *The Trouble with the Trouble*

Due Reading Reflections

Mar 26 • The Myth of Individualism

Readings

Johnson Chapter 6 *What It All Has to Do With Us*

Due **Reading Reflections**
Advocacy Paper Rough Draft

Apr 9 • Myth of Meritocracy

Readings

Johnson Chapter 7 *How Systems of Privilege Work*

Due **Reading Reflections**

Apr 23 • Strategies of Denial and Resistance

Readings

Johnson Chapter 8 *Getting Off the Hook: Denial and Resistance*

Due **Reading Reflections**

May 7 • Strategies for Challenge and Change

Readings

Johnson Chapter 9 *What Can We Do?*

Due **Reading Reflections**

May 14 • Presentations

Due **Advocacy Paper & Presentation**
Project Time Log