

Principles of Sociology (Soc 101), Spring 2010

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Class Hours: Thursdays: 6:15 – 9:30 pm
Class Location: D-105
Phone: 202-321-0676 or 860-434-2212
Office Hours: By Appointment
Office Location: D-Wing Adjunct Faculty Offices

Please note: This syllabus – and especially the course schedule -- will change somewhat as the class progresses. Please see all updates to the syllabus, assignments and the class calendar on Blackboard.

Course Description & Why Sociology Might Interest You

Sociology is a branch of social science that concerns itself with the study of human behavior in the context of the social forces that shape and are shaped by it. Sociology tries to understand social life, social inequality, social institutions, and social change by exploring social behavior. Thus, sociologists study the thinking and behavior of groups, organizations, institutions, and societies in order to understand why they exist and what effects they have on individuals and groups.

This course provides an introductory overview of Sociology by exposing you to core concepts and examples of Sociology in action. In Part 1 of this introductory course, we will explore Sociology's foundations: its history, major theories and theorists, primary methods of research, and various sub-disciplines. In Part 2 of the course, we will explore social life through attention to society, culture, socialization, groups, demography, aging, and deviance. Part 3 of the course will focus on social inequality as seen through the lenses of race/ethnicity, class, gender and other factors. Part 4 of the course will explore social institutions and social change. Economy, family religion, medicine/health and politics will guide our study along with discussions of how collective behavior and social movements have sought to bring about change in these areas historically and right now.

Learning about Sociology can help you better understand things that are happening in your life and in the world around you. Why has it been so difficult to find a job lately? Why is health insurance such a big issue? What is the purpose of war? Are college students drinking more these days and, if so, why? Daily we hear about education, health care, national and international economic matters, defense and diplomacy. In news analyses, statistics are cited, theories are floated, and conjectures are made. Since sociological theories and research methods are often the basis of these reports, knowing a bit about Sociology can help you read them, understand them, and critically assess them. Sociology helps you look at the world more closely by providing, first, ways to ask questions and, then, ways to answer them.

Required Texts and Readings

Course Textbook: McIntyre, Lisa J., The Practical Skeptic: core concepts in sociology, 4th Ed or later. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Other readings: Posted on Blackboard or in other locations. See class assignments below.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class Assignments/Attendance	80pts or 20%
Mid-Term Exam	60pts or 15%
Final Exam	60pts or 15%
Using Sociology Project	100pts or 25%
Research Paper	100pts or 25%
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 400pts or 100%

Grading Scale:

A = 400-360 points

B = 359-320 points

C = 319-280 points

D = 279-240 points

F = 239 or below

Class Assignments (80pts or 20% of your final grade): You are expected to attend all classes, read all assigned readings in preparation for class discussions, prepare and hand in on time all written assignments/projects, and complete all in-class assignments (these are not announced ahead of time – you must be in class to complete them).

Exams (120pts or 30% of your final grade): Throughout the course you will be learning core concepts and facts about Sociology. These will be covered in two exams that are intended to help solidify the materials you have covered in the course - no tricks; no new information.

Mid-Term Exam (60pts or 15% of your final grade): The in-class mid-term exam will cover Parts 1 and 2 of the course and will consist of short answer questions and multiple choice questions. A take-home essay will also be due on the day of this exam. All instructions will be posted on Blackboard. Exam date: March 11th, 2010.

Final Exam (60pts or 15% of your final grade): The final exam will cover Parts 3 and 4 of the course and, like the mid-term, will consist of short answer questions and multiple choice questions. A take-home essay will also be due on the day of this exam. All instructions will be posted on Blackboard. Exam date: May 6th, 2010.

Using Sociology Project (100pts or 25% of your final grade): Because a major aspect of Sociology is its use as an applied social science, I want you to have the experience of doing some real sociological research. For this project, there will be a number of applied tasks that you can choose from: creating a survey or interview protocol, administering a survey or conducting an interview, identifying and interpreting survey data or qualitative transcripts. The applied task you pursue must be approved by me and you will write a brief 2-3 page “methods paper” that describes the approach, the methods and steps you took, and the results of your efforts. More detail on the assignment and additional guidance will be posted on Blackboard. Due date: February 18, 2010.

Short Research Paper (100pts or 25% of your final grade): Sociologists do a lot of writing. Informal writing through journals and emails is used as a tool to conceptualize and think through ideas. Sociologists review other scholarship and reports on their topics of interest and write up summaries – literature reviews – that help them understand what has already been done. And, of course, sociologists write research reports that report on the data collection, analysis, and interpretation of their findings. For this assignment, I would like you to write a short, 5-7 page research paper on a sociological topic of interest to you. We will discuss possible topics in class and then you must have your topic approved by me. More detail on the assignment and additional guidance will be posted on Blackboard. Due date: May 13th, 2010.

Course Schedule

Part 1: Sociology’s foundations: history, major theories and theorists, primary methods of research, and various sub-disciplines.

Week 1	Jan 21	Class Overview/Introduction DO NOT ATTEND CLASS, BUT PREPARE FOR WEEK 2: read the syllabus, and do the readings and assignments listed below here for Week 2.
Week 2	Jan 28	The Sociological Perspective McIntyre, Chapters 1 & 2 Assignment for Week 2 – Bring to class to hand in today (Jan 28 th): typed answers to the following questions: 1) What is “The Sociological Imagination?” and 2) why do you think this concept is important for sociology? After reading the textbook, search the Internet to learn more about the sociological imagination. This is not a test; it’s just to get you thinking. Type no less than ½ a page and no more than one page.
Week 3	Feb 4	The Discipline of Sociology: Approaches McIntyre, Chapters 3 & 4

Week 4 Feb 11 The Science of Sociology: Research Methods
McIntyre, Chapters 5 & 6
Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, (1973). Interpersonal
Dynamics in a Simulated Prison (on Blackboard)

Part 2: Social life: society, culture, socialization, groups, demography, aging, and deviance.

Week 5 Feb 18 Culture & Socialization
McIntyre, Chapters 7 & 10
Assignment for Week 5 – Bring to class to hand in
today (Feb 18th): typed “Using Sociology Project.”

Week 6 Feb 25 Social Structure and Social Institutions
McIntyre, Chapters 8 & 9

Week 7 Mar 4 Deviance and Social Control
McIntyre, Chapter 11

Week 8 Mar 11 Mid-Term Exam

Week 9 Mar 15-22 SPRING BREAK -- NO CLASS

Part 3: Social inequality: race/ethnicity, class, gender and other factors

Week 10 Mar 25 Social Stratification and Inequality
McIntyre, Chapters 12 & 13

Week 11 Apr 1 Social Inequality: Race/Ethnicity, Gender
McIntyre, Chapter 14

Part 4: Social institutions and social change: economy, family religion, medicine/health, politics and collective behavior/social movements

Week 12 Apr 8 Families and Religion
Cherlin, (2004). The Deinstitutionalization of American
Marriage (on Blackboard)

Week 13 Apr 15 Economy, Population, Health Care and Politics
Chapters 13 & 14 - Kendall, Sociology in our Times (on
Blackboard)

Week 14 Apr 22 Education and Mass Media
Kozol, (2005). Still Separate, Still Unequal (on
Blackboard)

Week 15 Apr 29	Collective Behavior and Social Change Chapter 16 - Kendall, Sociology in our Times (on Blackboard)
Week 16 May 6	Final Exam
Week 17 May 13	Research Paper Due
Week 18 May 18 or 19	Make Up Day (if needed)

Grades Due May 21st and available to students on May 27th

How To Do Well In This Course:

- Come to class on time and participate in discussions. I will deduct points if you are late.
- Follow the syllabus, check for updates, read and follow assignment instructions closely, and ask if you have any questions or difficulties.
- Do the reading BEFORE class and think about it. Take notes. Come with questions or discussion points.
- Turn your assignments in on time. Contact me if an assignment is going to be late. I will take points off for late assignments (one letter grade per day). I do not accept email submissions unless you arrange with me beforehand.
- Please type all work (except in-class writing) using 12-point font.
- Plan for your larger projects well in advance and work on them incrementally; not just at the last minute.
- Think! Question! Speculate! Take risks!
- Silence your cell phone off in class; don't even THINK about answering it ;-)
- Meet or talk with me so I can help guide you or...just for the heck if it.
- Use the services of the Writing Center/Tutoring Center: they know how to help you study, think, and write. They are nice and very helpful. Use this resource.
- Find a friend or two from class to study and talk the material over with.

Disabilities/Accommodations

If you have a disability for which you may need some kind of accommodations, please let me know. Also, connect with Chris Scarborough, the Disabled Student Counselor, who can provide you with additional information and assistance.