

Introduction to Sociology
Sociology 100
Spring 2013
Wednesdays, 5:30-8pm

Instructor: Amy Ivers

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 8:00-8:30 Sturges 223

Sociology helps us understand how and why people and organizations behave or operate the way they do. Sociologists study economic, political, and cultural systems and structures and the interactions of people and groups. This course introduces students to sociology as a discipline and helps them develop critical analysis skills to help examine the world surrounding them. The main goal is to familiarize students with key ideas and concepts within the field. Additionally, this course should enable students to use sociological perspectives to better understand their social world and their own particular circumstances.

Required Text:

- Readings posted on mycourses
- Class handouts, other readings as assigned
- Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America, by Jonathan Kozol

Course Objectives:

At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Define sociology and differentiate it from other disciplines
- Define and give an example of sociological imagination from their everyday life
- Apply the four major sociological theories to a social issue/experience and identify how each theory provides a different perspective.
- Compare and contrast the different methods used by sociologists to gather data and what types of questions are best suited to each method.
- Define social institutions & social structure and provide examples of the influence of each in everyday life.

- Compare and contrast ethnocentrism with cultural relativity
- Demonstrate the influence of culture and socialization on basic cognitive functions
- Identify agents of socialization
- Explain Goffman's theory of dramaturgy and how it applies to everyday life
- Demonstrate the role of emotions in social interaction
- Define deviance and criminology

- Describe and provide examples of the social nature of gender
- Articulate how gender affects life chances
- Differentiate how rigid gender roles affect men and women

- Describe and provide examples of the social nature of race
- Explain white privilege and its consequences
- Differentiate between individual and institutional racism
- Describe the influence of race and ethnicity on life chances
- Differentiate and give examples of individual and institutional discrimination
- Define social class in terms of wealth, power, and status
- Recall the distribution of wealth by social class in the United States
- Describe the effects of social class on life chances
- Explain the longitudinal effects of poverty

Class Policies:

1) **Grading:** Grades will be assigned on the following basis*:

35% Exams	A	93 or higher	C+	77-79
20% Participation in homework and activities	A-	90-92	C	73-76
20% Issue Projects	B+	87-89	C-	70-72
25% Final Project	B	83-86	D	66-69
	B-	80-82	E	below 65

There will be an optional final exam. If you choose to take it, it will replace your lowest exam score from the semester (i.e. only your best 3 exam grades will count.)

*In cases of marginal grades, your participation, overall effort and improvement are all used to determine final grades.

2) **Missing class and class preparation:** There is no attendance policy for this class; however class participation will count for 20% of your final grade. A large portion of the material for this course will be covered in class and emerge from class discussions. Because of this, it is strongly encouraged that you attend every class with readings completed and ready to be an active participant. We are not only learning individually in this class, we are also building communal knowledge and meaning through discussions. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Speak with other students first to find out what you missed before coming to see me.

3) **Cell Phones and Text Messaging:** Please do not use your cell phone during class in any way.

4) **Email policy:** I will regularly check my email Monday-Friday during the work day. You can expect a reply from me within 48-hours. Additionally, please put your full name and course # in the subject line of your emails to me, followed by a meaningful subject descriptor. E.g.

To: ivers@geneseo.edu

Subj: Jennifer Simon Soc100: Question about Wednesday's Exam.

5) **Exams:** Exams will be a mix of short answer, short essay, and multiple choice. They are to be taken as scheduled on the syllabus. There will be an optional final exam. If you choose to take it, it will replace your lowest exam score from the semester (i.e. only your best 3 exam grades will count.)

6) **Issue Project and Presentation** is intended to be a fun way to actively involve students in the study of society. You will choose one project date on the first night of class, and be prepared to informally present your Issue Project to the class on the assigned day. A written report in any format you desire (essay, poster, art, journal, catalogue of magazines, etc) will be handed in. We will present Issue Projects the final half hour of class.

6) **Final projects:** The final projects will be group multimedia presentations that will be presented on the last day of class. *****YOU MUST ATTEND CLASS THIS EVENING*****

7) **Cheating:** Academic dishonesty in any form is not acceptable. This includes, but is not limited to, copying homework from another student, unauthorized assistance on exams or assignments, turning in work for this class that was completed for another, plagiarizing, or selling/purchasing materials for class assignments. Please refer to http://www.geneseo.edu/dean_office/dishonesty for additional detail.

*All readings, assignments, and dates are subject to change.

Readings are listed in quotes and are due on the dates listed

January

- 23 **Introductions**
What is sociology? Using sociological imagination.
“Why Study Sociology?”
“Invitation to Sociology”
“The Sociological Perspective”
- 30 **Levels of analysis: Institutions, social structure, and everyday life**
“Levels of Sociological Analysis”
“The Supermarket as Prime Real Estate”
Thinking like a sociologist: An old guy in France and class participation
“Verstehen and Social Facts”
“Suicide”
“Student Participation in the College Classroom”

February

- 6 **Bringing questions into focus: The role of theory in sociology.**
Theory #1 Functionalism
“Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology” (pgs 24-27)
“No, Poverty Has Not Disappeared”
Theory #2 Conflict Theory
“Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology” (pgs 27-29)
“The Power Elite”
- 13 **Theory #3 Symbolic Interactionism**
“Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology” (pgs 21-24)
“The Rise of Erectile Dysfunction”
Theory #4 Feminism
“Feminism”
“A War Against Boys?”
“Pigskin, Patriarchy, & Pain”
- 20 **Applying Theory**
In class activity
Exam #1
You will need to carefully review the article “The War Between the Women” posted on mycourses before coming to the exam and bring a copy of the article to the exam.

- 27 **Culture: What is the role of culture and social structure in the human experience?**
“What is Culture?”
Culture /Socialization: Learning to make sense of the world.
“Islands of Meaning”
“Agents of Socialization”

March

- 6 **Interaction/Dramaturgy: Those embarrassing moments**
“Dramaturgy: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”
“Dramaturgical Theory”
Interaction/Dramaturgy continued
“Emotions and the Micropolitics of Place”
- 13 **Deviance and Crime**
“Deviance and Crime”
Speaker: Superintendent of Allegany County Jail
Exam #2

18-22 Spring break

- 27 **Gender: Why is there always a line for the ladies room?**
“Gender Inequality in the US”
“Rescuing Our Sons From Myths of Boyhood”
Learning Gender
“Borderwork Among Boys and Girls”

April

- 3 **Race & Ethnicity: Why isn't there White History Month?**
“Race: Myth and Reality”
“The Invisible Knapsack”
Race & Ethnicity: Two kinds of discrimination
“Institutional Discrimination Individual Racism and Hurricane Katrina”
- 10 **Social class**
“What is Social Class?”
“Wealth Gap in the News”
- 17 **Test #3**
Start Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America, by Jonathan Kozol
Assign Final Group Project

24 **Work day**
Finish Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children
in America, by Jonathan Kozol

May

1 **Final presentations**

Our final exam period is Wednesday, May 15 from 6:45-9:45pm in our regular classroom.

Issue Project Collection

Sociology 100

Week #2: January 30

1. Watch a few hours of network television and pay particular attention to the commercials. When there is programming on one channel, flip the dial to find other commercials. Note what people's concerns are in these commercials (bad breath, dandruff, yellow teeth, etc). From your impressions of these commercials, try writing a satirical description of the values, norms, and rules of TV commercial culture.
2. Test societal rules on "space" and "spatial relationships." Normal conversation distance in America seems to be 26 to 28 inches. Observe and report what happens when you stand 13 to 14 inches (a normal distance in an Arab country) when talking with another person. What types of reaction do people have? Older people? Younger people? Children? Members of the same sex? Of the opposite sex? Business people? Clergy? Etc.
3. Try to list all the decisions that you or someone else (a parent, teacher, or counselor, for example) made about your future role or direction in school. List all tests you were given for these purposes (IQ, college boards, etc.)
 - a. How did you feel about the decisions made? Did you agree with some and disagree with others?
 - b. How much control do you feel you had?
 - c. How meaningful do you think each test was as a guide to the course your schooling could take?
 - d. How important were your family income, ethnic background, and social class in these educational choices?

Week #3: February 6

1. Analyze the content of popular songs from the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s as one way of viewing and analyzing the normative changes (values, ways of thinking and behavior) among the young. Compare and contrast with music today.
2. Prepare a simple history of your family from the time your parents met. Include major events such as dates of births, job changes, moves, separations, losing members, etc. Contrast how different members of your family experienced and perceived their own history and how these different perspectives might produce intergenerational conflicts.
3. Conflict theorists claim the schools tend to perpetuate rather than correct inequities in the social structure. How would you design a research study to test this hypothesis? What sort of findings would prove the conflict argument? What evidence would support the functional argument that schools are channels of upward mobility?

Week #4: February 13

1. Peruse your favorite pop culture media (TV, internet, magazines, etc.) and list the traits that seem important for females and males in media. Create a booklet of what an ideal pop-culture male and female encompasses.
2. To check your understanding of the different perspectives and approaches in sociology, take two of the social issues listed below and try to figure out how a functionalist and a conflict theorist would approach them. Then see if you can guess the sources of data you might use to study these issues.
 - a. The seniority system in a labor union or a congressional body.
 - b. The problem of environmental pollution.
 - c. A land use problem (for example, strip mining an area instead of using it for farming).
 - d. Keeping traditional gender roles.
 - e. The military-industrial complex (that is, the close ties among the defense industry, the military and Congress).
3. Design a grading system for your class that would maximize conflict in the classroom and one that would maximize cooperation. Reference your suggestions to functionalism and conflict theory.

Week #5: February 20

No Issue projects

Week #6: February 27

1. If a visitor from another culture asked you for an introduction to North American culture and only had three or four days to spend with you, what would you show that person? Why? What would you want an intelligent outsider to understand about how we live? What would you be embarrassed or ashamed to show? Can you think of subgroups or subcultures in our area that would portray our culture in other ways? What aspects of culture can outsiders understand better than insiders and vice-versa?
2. Conduct an interview with the oldest person you know regarding changes in values that have taken place during his or her life. What changes would you expect to see in American values during your lifetime?
3. Education varies from culture to culture. Compare American educational goals to those in a socialist society. How can you account for the differences?

Week #7: March 6

1. Politicians actively engage in impression management. Write a paper on this topic. What images are they pushing? How do they do this? Use an example from a public appearance (televised) or a press conference.
2. Clothing and grooming practices convey symbolic meanings as do material environments. Using strategies of non-participant observation select a group or aggregate of people and jot down your observations of clothing, grooming, and material features of the participants. What conclusions can you draw about those you observed?
3. Peruse Facebook, Twitter, or some other form of social media and catalogue the uses of image management different types of people use. Why is social media positive for our society? Why is it negative?

Week #8: March 13

1. Some behaviors are labeled deviant when exhibited by some groups but not when exhibited by others. To illustrate this, buy a copy of a Hollywood produced and oriented magazine, such as Modern Screen, Photoplay or even People. Read it thoroughly and document what behaviors are allowable for movie stars that would be considered deviant if performed by an average citizen. Areas of particular interest include living together outside of wedlock, divorce/marriage, having children out of wedlock, drug use, fashion, religious faith, political causes, etc.
2. All employers have codes of conduct for their employees. Compile the codes from different organizations (schools, supermarkets, government or military establishments, fast food restaurants, etc.). Compare the codes, exploring the differences in emphasis and underlying values.
3. Do a participant observation study of a group of people who are trying to deal with “deviant” master status traits: smokers, over eaters, alcoholics, handicapped, etc.
4. If the punishment or labeling of deviants functions to maintain group solidarity and to affirm group values, does it matter whether or not these labeled are actually criminals, mentally ill, witches, or whatever? Discuss this proposition.

Week #9: March 27

1. What are the societal benefits in the U.S. of being born female? What are the benefits of being born male? What about in world cultures? Discuss.
2. Conduct a survey on attitudes toward women’s familial role. Divide your sample into three age cohorts: young, middle aged, elderly. Ask about their beliefs in regard to child care, household work, working women and authority. Compare the responses across age categories. What differences appear? What similarities? How can you explain your results?
3. Stereotypes are agreements-beliefs- about the characteristics of a particular group, and may not be based on actual experiences or observations. Often stereotypes are learned by children during early socialization. Women, as a group, suffer both negative and positive stereotypes, such as being poor drivers and good housekeepers. The women’s liberation

movement is working to disprove these negative stereotypes and promote the notion of treating everyone individually, disregarding the stereotypical concepts. Discuss these issues.

Week #10: April 3

1. Analyze some form of media in terms of how the various minority groups are portrayed.
2. What advantages and disadvantages do you have in our society based on your race/ethnicity?
3. Prepare a scrapbook of advertisements from a variety of magazines directed at race/ethnicity. Analyze the basis of appeal in each type of advertisement.
4. Look for portrayals of race/ethnicity in movies, television, and literature. Discuss these portrayals (i.e.: are they romanticized, individualistic, etc.).

Week #11: April 10

1. Prepare a scrapbook of advertisements from a variety of magazines directed at different social strata. Analyze the basis of appeal in each type of advertisement.
2. Spend one hour in the waiting rooms of one or more institutions that serve primarily the poor-welfare office, emergency room, unemployment office (in a poorer area) –and report your findings.
3. Look for portrayals of poverty in movies, television, and literature. Discuss these portrayals (i.e.: are they romanticized, individualistic, etc.).
4. To many people, poverty is an individual failing. People are too lazy or too untalented to work. Write a paper on the true nature of poverty. Who are the poor? Are they really to blame for their situation? Look at census data. Check with reference librarians.