

## SC 00104 Introduction to Sociology

Spring, 2006

MWF 10, Gasson 206

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*“The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise. To recognize this task and this promise is the mark of the classic social analyst.”* C.W. Mills The Sociological Imagination, 1959

*“... human behavior must not be seen exclusively as either the product of the social structures enveloping persons or a matter of individual will and choice. There is a dynamic interplay between society’s expectations for individuals and their own responses in situations. ... We must entertain simultaneously the apparently contradictory thoughts that humans are social products and that society is a human product.”* D.A. Karp, W.C. Yoels Sociology in Everyday Life, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 1993

### Course objectives

This course is designed as an invitation to sociology. Sociology is a systematic, disciplined way of looking at society and our role in it. This course will introduce you to the sociological imagination. This means that we will learn how to look at the world with “a sociological eye”. We will also learn the basics of sociological theory and research at both the micro and macro levels of analysis and cover a broad spectrum of topical areas and social issues that are routinely investigated in sociology. The primary goal of this course is to provide a preliminary understanding of the craft of sociology, i.e. to understand what it is that sociologists do and to develop the ability to think sociologically. A special emphasis will be placed on the notion and awareness that all elements of social life are interconnected sometimes in simple, sometimes in the most intricate ways. A concurrent goal of this course is to impart a sociological awareness of the contemporary perspectives relating to race, gender, class, and sexuality as they shape our lives both locally and globally. Representative readings and films will provide the basis for in-class discussions, exercises, assignments, and exams.

The following issues will be addressed in this class:

### Perennial questions

This course will ask the following questions: How is society possible? What is the relationship of the individual to society and vice versa? What is the role of culture in society? Why is there inequality? How can we come to understand inequality? What is our relationship to the global society? What is the value and purpose of sociology? What should it be? As we discuss these questions we will begin to uncover the society’s underlying structures, we will begin to see from a new perspective that which we take for granted. We will see how social forces, consciously or unconsciously shape our lives.

### Cultural diversity

The presented material addresses the nature, relevance and importance of cultural diversity within the United States (subcultures and countercultures) as well as globally. We will emphasize that all human values must be understood in a cultural context. Wherever possible, cross-cultural comparisons will be examined to point out the complex organization of the American culture. Appreciation of cultural differences fulfills one of the primary missions of any sociology course. This is to make people less self-righteous about the superiority of their own cultural beliefs and more aware of the complexity of the human existence. Class, race, gender and culture will be emphasized throughout the whole course.

### Historical perspective

In general, sociology explores how one's place in history shapes the consciousness of the individual. In other words we will attempt to understand how people's understanding of themselves and their societies shifts over time. In fact, sociology itself was a response to the transformations created by the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century.

### Methodology

A section of this course will be devoted to understanding different methods sociologists use to study various social phenomena.

### Writing and Research

In this course we will also pay attention to developing good research skills together with writing and analytical proficiency that are crucial in becoming a good sociologist. At the beginning of the course we will devote some time to elaborating on and practicing what a research paper in sociology requires and how it is formed. We will be working on developing critical thinking skills in order cultivate an understanding of what class readings present and most of all what they mean in the large sociological context. No ideas will be accepted at face value; multiple points of view will be introduced and encouraged.

### Course requirements

- 1) Class attendance – students are expected to attend all classes.
- 2) Class participation – students are expected to actively participate in class by asking questions, offering comments and exchanging their ideas regarding the material with class mates and the instructor.
- 3) Assigned readings and exercises – students are expected to complete all readings and take-home exercises before the class of the date for which they are assigned.
- 4) Four unannounced pop-quizzes
- 5) Final – take home essay exam
- 6) Term Project – details outlined in a separate guidelines
- 7) Presentation of Term Project – details outlined in a separate guidelines

### Grading

Final grades will be determined as follows:

- Section Participation 10%
- Midterm 20%
- Final 20%
- Term Project 30%
- Presentation of Term Project 20%

### Academic Honesty

You are responsible for adhering to the statement of academic honesty in your Student Handbook.

### Disability Statement

If you have a disability you would like me to know about so that I can make appropriate accommodations for you, please, let me know at the beginning of the semester.

### Required readings

Karp, D., Yoels, W. **Sociology of Everyday Life**. Waveland Press Inc, 1993. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

Finsterbusch, K. **Taking Sides:Clashing View on Controversial Social Issues**

Karp, D. **Speaking of Sadness**. NY: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Class handouts, WebCT readings

Documentaries and films

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### **NOTES**

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# I. The Study of Society: The Sociological Perspective

## **Week 1: Jan 18-20**

**Wed** Introduction

**Fri**

- *Karp & Yoels*  
Chapter 1 “Culture and Organization of Everyday Life”, pp. xi -34.
- *Finsterbusch*  
Introduction: Debating Social Issues, pp. xi – xvii.
- WebCT  
C.W. Mills “The Promise of Sociology”. From **The Sociological Imagination**, 1959.

## Social Construction of Reality: Core Thinkers in Sociology and Basic Research Methods

## **Week 2: Jan 23-27**

**MW** **Core thinkers in Sociology** – Marx, Weber, Durkheim

- WebCT  
*Curra*, “Sages and Superstars”, pp. 31-57

**Fri** **Basic Research Methods**

- WebCT  
Research Methods in Sociology

## Socialization, Social Interaction and The Unique Nature of Being Human

## **Week 3: Jan 30 – Feb 3**

**Mon** **Film:** Secret of the Wild Child WGBH 1994

- WebCT  
*Curra*, “The Unique Nature of Being Human”, pp. 59-81.

**Wed** **Socialization**

- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapter 2 “Socialization and the Construction of Social Reality”
- WebCT  
*Curra*, “Socialization”, pp. 83-109.
- *Finsterbusch*  
Issue 2: Does Television Make Children Significantly More Violent?, p. 22

**Fri Sex Roles and Gender: Nature Vs Nurture**

- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapter 3 “Understanding Interaction” pp. 37-89.
- *Finsterbusch*  
Issue 4: Do the New Sex Roles Burden Women More Than Men?, p. 64  
Issue 5: Are Communication Problems Between Men and Women Largely Due to Radically Different Conversation Styles?, p. 80
- WebCT  
For fun: The Difference Between Men and Women

## **II. Establishing Social Order**

### **Week 4: Feb 6–10**

**Mon Social Structure**

- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapter 4 “Everyday Urban Relations: Contacts Among Strangers“, pp. 95-121.

**WF Marriage, Family, Education, Religion**

- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapter 5 “Family, Friendship and Love: Contacts Among Intimates”, pp. 125-163.
- *Finsterbusch*  
Issue 7: Is the Decline of the Traditional Family a National Crisis?  
Issue 6: Should Same-Sex Marriage Be Legally Recognized?

### **Social Stratification, Inequality and Deviance Weeks 5 -7**

### **Week 5: Feb 13-17**

**Mon Stratification and Inequality**

- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapters 6 “Power and Stratification”, p. 165
- *Finsterbusch*  
Issue 8: Is Increasing Economic Inequality a Serious Problem? P. 132  
Issue 9: Is the Underclass the Major Threat to American Ideals?, p. 148

**Wed Inequality and Bureaucracy**

- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapter 7 “Social Organization: Life in Bureaucracies”, p.195.
- *Finsterbusch*  
Issue 10: Has Affirmative Action Outlived Its Usefulness?, p. 168

- Fri Gender Inequality**  
Film: Still Killing Us Softly 3 (2000)  
Tough Guise (2000)

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**Week 6: Feb 20-24**

- Mon Gender Inequality (Continued)**  
Film discussion
- WebCT
    - \* Gender Inequality
    - \* Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity by M. Kimmel
- MW Racial Inequality**  
Film: The Power of Illusion: The difference Between Us (2002)
- WebCT
    - \* “White Privilege, Male Privilege” Peggy McIntosh
    - \* Defining Racism “Can We Talk?” Beverly Daniel Tatum

**Week 7: Feb 27 – March 3**

**Deviance**

- Mon Introduction to Deviance, Definitions of the Norm**
- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapter 9 “Deviance”, p. 257
  - *Finsterebusch Crime and Social Control*  
Issue 16: Is Street Crime More Harmful Than White Collar Crime?, p. 280  
Issue 17: Should Drug Use Be Decriminalized?  
Issue 18: Is Capital Punishment Justified?
- Wed Deviance and Sexuality**  
Film: Two Spirit People (1991)
- WebCT  
“Lesbians, Men-Women, and Two-Spirits: Homosexuality and Gender in Native American Cultures”, Sabine Lang

**Fri MARCH 3<sup>rd</sup> MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 8 SPRING BREAK March 6-10**

## **IV. Society, Health, Inequality**

**Week 9: March 13-17**

### **Social Context of Health**

**Mon Health and Society**

- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapter 8 “Health and Illness”, p. 225

**Wed Depression and Society**

- *Karp Speaking of Sadness*  
Discussion

**Fri Eating Disorders and Society**

Film:

- WebCT  
Social Context of Eating Disorders

**Week 10: March 20-24**

### **Disability**

**Mon The Social Context of Disability**

- WebCT
  - \* Disability Studies – an outline and overview
  - \* Tong, Rosemarie. Dealing with Difference Justly: Perspectives on Disability. *Social Theory and Practice*, Fall 1999, v25, i3, pp. 519-528. (internet)

**Wed Intellectual Disabilities**

- WebCT
  - \* Colson, Charles, Pearcey, Nancy. Why Max deserves a life. *Christianity Today*, June 16, 1997, v41 n7 p80(1). (internet)
  - \* McDonald, Victoria. “Mothers pressed to abort Down’s babies.” *The Human Life Review*, Wntr 1996, v.22, n1, pp.119-121. (internet)

**Fri Physical Disabilities**

Film

- WebCT  
Physical Disabilities

## V. Economy, Politics and Society

### Week 11: March 27-31

**Mon Corporate America**  
Film

**Wed Political Economy and Institutions**

- *Finsterbusch*  
Issue 11: Is Government Dominated by Big Businesses?, p. 188  
Issue 12: Should Government Intervene in a Capitalist Economy?, p. 206

**Fri Other pressing questions**

- *Finsterbusch*  
Issue 13: Has welfare Reform Benefited the Poor?, p. 206  
Issue 12: Should Government Intervene in a Capitalist Economy?, p. 206  
Issue 14: Should Doctor-Assisted Suicide Be Legalized for the Terminally Ill?, p. 260

## VI. THE FUTURE: Social Change, Population, Environment and Society

### Week 12: April 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>

**Mon Aging and Society**

- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapter 10 “Aging and the Life Cycle”, p. 291

**Wed Social Change, Life and Its Questions**

- *Karp and Yoels*  
Chapter 11 “Social Change and the Search for Self”, p. 321

**Fri Environment, Population**

- WebCT  
Diamond, Jared. Easter Island’s End. Discover magazine, August, 1995.  
<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/24/042.html>
- *Finsterbusch*  
Issue 19: Is Mankind Dangerously Harming the Environment? p. 334

### Week 13: Apr 10 - 12

**Mon Globalization**

Film  
Issue 20: Is Globalization Good for Mankind? p. 352

**Wed Globalization**

Discussion of film, questions about presentations

**Fri EASTER BREAK till Monday 17<sup>th</sup> of April**

## **VII. Term Project Presentations**

Weeks 14-16: April 19- May 3

## **VIII. Conclusion May 3d**

Last class discussion: Tying up the semester

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**TERM PROJECT DUE // MAY 3<sup>rd</sup> in class!!!**

**FINAL TAKE HOME EXAM May 3rd**

**Handed out: in class**

**Due date: by 10<sup>th</sup> May 2006 // 10am**

**Send either to my email [cervenak@bc.edu](mailto:cervenak@bc.edu)**

**or leave in my mailbox McGuinn 410D, #13**