

Boston College, Spring 2007  
**SOCIOLOGY 001: INTRODUCTORY SOCIOLOGY**  
Section 04, MWF 4.00 – 4.50pm  
Cushing 210

Dr. Dwight Fee  
Office Hours: MWF 3-3.50

Overview

This course provides an introduction to the constantly evolving field of sociology. We will explore and debate many areas of sociological inquiry, but just as importantly, we will discuss what it means to *think sociologically* more generally. This takes hard work, active discussion, and, overall, an openness to new ideas. Please be ready to challenge yourself in all of these ways.

While our scope will be rather broad, the course is loosely organized around five substantive themes: work, deviance, sports, gender, and personal relationships (in addition to introductory and concluding sections). Addressing these and a few other areas, we will regularly come back to several questions: (1) What are the key characteristics of western industrial society? (2) How does society evolve, change, and, hopefully, stay together? (3) What kinds of identities and relationships characterize the modern world? (4) What is power? Who has it, and how do we recognize it? (5) What is the relationship between the individual and society, and how is it changing? (6) What does it mean to think sociologically, and, perhaps, to *live* sociologically?

We will also discuss sociological writing – how we represent the worlds that we study. Along with practical issues of writing, we will address how style, voice, and reflexivity in writing are all implicated in the making of sociological theory.

Reading

Eve L. Howard (ed.), *Classic Readings in Sociology, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition* (Thomson, 2007).  
Available at the BC Bookstore, and on library reserve.

The majority of our readings will be articles and chapters available on our *course website* (WebCT) or online through the library's article databases.

Academic Integrity

I take cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Portions of the University's academic integrity statement are included in this syllabus. You are responsible for knowing what that policy is, and how cheating and plagiarism are defined.

## Requirements and Grading

This is a fairly large course, but your individual commitment and responsibility matters a lot. A central expectation is that you will be diligent in your work and that you will take seriously your accountability in all aspects of the course – assignments, readings, participation, and so on. Please note that I’ll also be asking you to undertake a few “homework” experiments that will involve brief observations and interactions outside of class.

Fridays will usually be discussion days – dedicated time to discuss the “homework,” go over weekly discussion questions, view film excerpts, etc.

Read the assignments *before* class. Please also note that I might substitute a few readings as we go on, and some sequencing of readings might change over the semester. Any changes will be announced in class or on the course website.

Excellent attendance is crucial for success in the course. More than *two* absences without campus or medical documentation will result in point deductions.

Your exams and written work will total 85 points, and your overall commitment-participation-responsibility [“CPR”] will also be taken into account (15%). Excellent attendance and informed, active participation are the best ways to ensure top marks here.

During the course you will complete one midterm exam (essay) and write three papers. There will also be an essay final exam. You must complete *all* assignments to pass the course. Here’s the basic grading scheme.

|     |                                 |        |
|-----|---------------------------------|--------|
| 20% | Midterm                         |        |
| 45% | Three Section Papers (15% each) |        |
| 20% | Final Exam                      |        |
| 15% | “CPR”                           | = 100% |

## Sociology 001 and the Core Curriculum

Sociology 001 is a part of the Core Curriculum in Sociology, and thus it is designed to address a range of intellectual issues, to use a variety of methodologies, and to engage students in particular ways. For example:

- a) *The long-standing questions.* Sociology has long been preoccupied with a set of “big questions.” These include the debate over biological versus sociological causality, how cultures and societies evolve, the nature of human agency or action and its relation to social structure, problems of power and inequality, what constitutes progress and what are the possibilities for realizing it. This course addresses these, and other similar issues.

Our class will address such questions by examining how the social world may have a larger bearing on our behavior and identities than, say, psychology or biology. More generally, we will be constantly concerned with the nature of social change, and the real contexts that construct what is “true” or “real.” We’ll simply call this process “the social construction of reality.” Power, also, will be an ongoing theme: how do we understand power, especially in volatile, modern societies? How do we construct the divisions and hierarchies that reproduce power relations?

- b) *Cultural diversity.* This course also considers cultural diversity, looking at how social class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are structured and reproduced in contemporary society. As mentioned above (a), divisions and hierarchies are central in all of our course themes (work, deviance, sports, gender, relationships), and we will discuss how diversity issues interlock with cultural change and institutional dynamics in these five areas.
- c) *Historical perspective.* As we will discuss early on, there can be no tenable sociology without an historical imagination. Throughout the course, a historical perspective will be important in our survey of sociology, particularly in regard to changes in what has been labeled as “deviant,” the socio-historical shifts in work and material conditions, the transformation of personal life and intimacy, and others.
- d) *Methodology.* Our readings will illustrate a variety of methodological approaches and tools in sociology (grand theory, critical analysis, field work/ethnography, participant observation, positivism, etc.). Furthermore, we will take time to discuss how sociologists have gone about studying the world of which they are apart. In other words, how do we create and communicate useful knowledge about our world – not a world “out there,” but one that is in many ways *internal* to our experience?
- e) *Writing component.* The course requires not only reading, but also considerable writing. In addition to a mid-term and a final examination that are mainly essay format, students write several short papers which incorporate readings and personal experience. As stated, we will also examine writing itself as a sociological issue.
- f) *Creating a personal philosophy.* Every one of us is a moving laboratory for studying social forces. Most of the time, however, we don’t consider the sociological dimensions of our experience. A major objective of this course is to inspire us to think critically and consciously about how the social world is built into not only what we observe, but also into our very own experience and action. Virtually all of our material will be geared toward developing an awareness of, and approach to, the power of social structure and social reality.

**Boston College Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures (excerpted)**  
**Copied from: <http://www.bc.edu/integrity>**

The pursuit of knowledge can proceed only when scholars take responsibility and receive credit for their work. Recognition of individual contributions to knowledge and of the intellectual property of others builds trust within the university and encourages the sharing of ideas that is essential to scholarship. Similarly, the educational process requires that individuals present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique, and eventual reformulation. Presentation of others' work as one's own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but also undermines the educational process.

**Standards:** Academic integrity is violated by any dishonest act which is committed in an academic context including, but not restricted to the following:

**Cheating** is the fraudulent or dishonest presentation of work. Cheating includes but is not limited to:

- \* the use or attempted use of unauthorized aids in examinations or other academic exercises submitted for evaluation;
- \* fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of data, results, sources for papers or reports, or in clinical practice, as in reporting experiments, measurements, statistical analyses, tests, or other studies never performed; manipulating or altering data or other manifestations of research to achieve a desired result; selective reporting, including the deliberate suppression of conflicting or unwanted data;
- \* falsification of papers, official records, or reports;
- \* copying from another student's work;
- \* actions that destroy or alter the work of another student;
- \* unauthorized cooperation in completing assignments or during an examination;
- \* the use of purchased essays or term papers, or of purchased preparatory research for such papers;
- \* submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved;
- \* dishonesty in requests for make-up exams, for extensions of deadlines for submitting papers, and in any other matter relating to a course.

**Plagiarism** is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged.

Please see the Integrity Policy for other breaches of academic integrity.

**Grading Guidelines** - How I think about the letter grade:

**A** = Excellent work, consistently demonstrated. Aggressive engagement with course content. Articulate, carefully considered written and in-class work that evidences tenacious, effective thinking/processing, understanding of (or serious grappling with) presented concepts. Initiative. Perhaps significant breakthroughs are made. Demonstrated ability to follow through to consolidate learning. Ability to enter unfamiliar territory.

**B** = Above average work. All basic requirements met and exceeded. Class participation and written work indicate that you have absorbed and put the material of the course to use. Demonstrated expansion in thinking and analyzing. Overall, careful, clear presentation. Involvement with work in independent, intelligent way. Some areas are less developed than others. Some inconsistencies or weaknesses in grasp of concepts.

**C** = Lackluster work. Basic requirements met. Indicates that a student has been present, participated in class and homework, but has either not fully engaged the work of the course or is inconsistent in her/his grasp or application of basic principles. May also indicate important weaknesses in written expression.

(+ and - indicate modulations of the basic thrust of a grade category)

**D** = Unsatisfactory, incomplete or careless work. Minimal, erratic or uninformed participation. Written and class work demonstrate inattention or inability to engage relevant concepts. May have sought help but was unable to follow through. No development.

**F** = Failure to thrive. Doesn't come to class. Doesn't turn in work. Doesn't participate. Doesn't bother to seek help or fails to follow up.

Lecture and Reading Schedule

(all readings are electronic unless indicated or listed "in Howard")

**Weeks 1 and 2: Jan 17 – 26**

*What is Sociology? Early Perspectives and Issues*

F 19 – Mills, "The Promise" from *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) [also Ch. 1 in Watson]  
Berger, "Invitation to Sociology," Ch. 2 in Watson

M 22 – Lemert, Chapters 1 and 3 ("Imagining Social Things, Competently" and "Practicing the Discipline of Social Things") from *Social Things*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2002)

W 24 – Molotch, "The Restroom and Equal Opportunity" from *Sociological Forum* (1988)  
Durkheim, "What is a Social Fact?" from *Rules of the Sociological Method*

F 26 – Mills, "The Power Elite," Ch. 13 in Howard

**Weeks 3 and 4: Jan 29 – Feb 9**

*Work: Social Structure, Inequality, Material Analysis and Other Approaches*

M 29 – Marx, “Excerpts from the 1844 Manuscripts”

Marx, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” Ch. 3 in Howard

W 31 - Gans, “The Uses of Poverty,” Ch. 10 in Howard

Merton, “Manifest and Latent Functions,” Ch. 5 in Howard

F 2 – Durkheim, “Division of Labor,” Ch. 15 in Howard

Gilman, “Women and Economics,” Ch. 12 in Howard

M 5 – Hochschild, “Emotional Labor” from *The Managed Heart*

Rollins, “Deference and Maternalism” from *Between Women*

W 7 – Weber, “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,” Ch. 16 in Watson

F 9 – VIDEO: Walmart

Reading TBA