SC001-01 --- Introductory Sociology

Spring 2008 - Monday & Wednesday, 3:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.
McGuinn 531; Ritchie Lowry & Cheolku Kang

Nature of This Class: This is a special seminar-like introductory class, not the usual large lecture. You should not take this course if you have already taken an Introductory Sociology course (SC001). The class is held to low enrollment to facilitate discussion and interaction, and it will focus upon the development of research and writing skills dealing with the application of social theory and concepts to social issues and social problems leading to policy implications and public policies (what is known as "public sociology").

Overall Course Content & Requirements: Within the discipline of Sociology, there are two general perspectives — micro and macro. Micro-sociological perspectives focus upon human interaction and relationships in everyday life, while macro-sociological perspectives look at long-term historical social and cultural trends and processes. Both perspectives are necessary to understand the nature of human society and the human condition. Sociology is also both humanistic and scientific. We will begin the semester by talking about the history and nature of Sociology as a discipline - what sociologists look at, how they look, and why. We will then spend the first part of the semester reading Karp and Howard. In addition, you will be receiving frequent class handouts that summarize sociological research and theories. The major requirement of the course will be 3 sequential papers (approximately 10 pages each) dealing with an important problem, theory, concept or issue using a sociological perspective. The first paper should identify and discuss the issue-theory-problem/etc. The second paper should analyze it, and the third paper should develop a conclusion. This will allow all class participants to develop their own resource list (not just books and papers, but also perhaps off the World Wide Web and Internet) and deal with something of, hopefully, lasting personal interest from a sociological perspective. Early in the semester, you will be asked to describe for the class your research project for the semester (see Examples below). After the completion of the first and second papers, you will be asked to present your findings to the class. Therefore, participation in class discussions will be a very important aspect of this course, and you should let us know if you must miss a class for some reason. Attendance will be taken at certain times.

Required & Shared Reading:

David Karp et al, Sociology of Everyday Life (Waveland, paper).
Eve L. Howard, Classic Readings in Sociology (Wadsworth, paper)

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Office Hours:

Ritchie Lowry - Mondays, 1:00 to 2:00 pm. and Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., or by arrangement in 422 McGuinn (X23346).
Cheolku Kang – to be arranged

Important Dates:

Monday, January 14th - Snow Day; No Class
Wednesday, January 16th – Introduction to course.
Monday, January 21st - Martin Luther King Day; No Class
Wednesday, January 23rd - What is Sociology? What do Sociologists study? Why?
Monday, January 28th – Tentative Title & Description of Term Project Due
Monday, February 25th – First Paper Due
Monday, March 3rd and Wednesday, March 5th – No Classes; Spring Vacation
Monday, March 10th - Report on First Paper in Class
Monday, March 24th - Easter; No Class
Wednesday, April 2nd – Second Paper(s) due
Monday, April 14th - Report on Second Paper in Class
Monday, April 21st – Patriots' Day; No Class
Wednesday, April 30th - Last Class
Thursday, May 1st through Monday, May 5th – Study Days
Wednesday, May 7th – Final Paper(s) due
Topics, Concepts & Issues To Be Discussed

Origins and History of Sociology
Human Behavior as Symbolic Interaction
The Social Construction of Reality
The Sociological Method
  Positivism & Humanism
  Testing of Hypotheses
  Formulating Theory
Popular Myths, Social Scientific Paradigms & "Paradigm Revolutions"
  Functions of Popular Myths
  Natural, Evil=Evil & Blaming the Victim Myths
Origin and Nature of "Scientific" Paradigms
  Major Sociological Paradigms and Opposing Theories and Perspectives
  Deviance Paradigm
    Criticisms of Deviance: Alternative Theories/Paradigms
    Labeling Theory
  Disorganization Paradigm
    Criticisms of Disorganization
    Conflict Theory
Macrosociological Perspective: Functionalism
  Criticisms of Functionalism
  Radical/Critical Theory
  Post-Modernism

Examples of Past & Possible Term Projects:

  Abortion versus Adoption
  Animal Rights Movement (history, organization, goals, and accomplishments)
  Capital Punishment (prevention or retribution?)
  Conceptions of Beauty Among Black Americans
  Gay and Lesbian Status (treatment by society and consequences)
  Genetic Engineering (social and cultural issues)
  Gun Ownership and Violence (is there a correlation and why?)
  Marijuana Prohibition: Is It Working?
  Racial Stereotypes and Prejudice (Black/White, Arab American, Asian, etc.)
  Sexism and Racism in Advertising (content analysis and implications)
  Study of Body Piercing (what is its meaning?)
  The Tattoo Community
  War and the Role of the Media (propaganda, news reports, etc.)
Readings in Howard & Karp (Topics Covered)

Wed., Jan. 16th – Howard #1 & #2; Karp #1 (What Is Sociology and Why?)
Wed., Jan. 23th – Howard #4, #6 & #7; Karp #2, #3 & #8 (Symbolic Interaction)
Mon., Feb. 11th – Howard #8 & #9; Karp #9 & #10 (Deviance Theory)
Mon., Mar. 10th – Howard #10, #11 & #12; Karp #4 & #5 (Disorganization Theory)
Mon., Apr. 7th – Howard #5 & #15 (Macrosociology & Functionalism)
Wed., Apr. 14th – Howard #3, #13 & #14; Karp #6, #7 & #11 (Radical/Critical Theory)

You can read these selections in any order that you desire but be prepared to discuss them in the following several classes after the dates indicated above. They will also help you select and design a term project.

Grading of Term Projects:

The term projects will be graded on three things:
(1) The way in which concepts and theories from the class and shared readings can be used to analyze the problem/issue you have selected to study.
(2) The quality and originality of your paper(s).
(3) The relevance of the issues discussed to sociological research and theory and the implications for social policy.

Staying in Touch: If you want to send Ritchie Lowry e-mail - GOODMONEY1@aol.com with a copy to lowry@bc.edu. If you have access to the World Wide Web, check out Professor Lowry's Home Page for Socially Concerned Investors, Consumers and Businesspeople - http://www.goodmoney.com/ He also has a Personal Web Page through the B.C. server @ HYPERLINK http://www2.bc.edu/~lowry http://www2.bc.edu/~lowry