

SC 001: Introductory Sociology (Spring 2009)

MWF 10-10:50 A.M., Gasson 209

*Please read carefully. **You** are responsible for knowing the information in this document.*

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Course Description

Theme: **The Social and the Biographical: Social Interaction and Social Inequality**

Sociology could be defined as the scientific study of human society, ranging from the smallest of social interactions all the way to the emerging “global society.” We study how humans become social creatures to themselves and to one another. We examine both individual behavior in groups and collective behavior in society, social institutions, and social forces; in other words, even though individual behavior is taken into account, our focus in this class is the collective – on interpersonal, societal, and global scales. Humans being fundamentally social creatures, any aspect of our lives can be subject to sociological investigation: politics, the economy, education, health and medicine, media, religion, criminal justice, sexuality, race, class, and gender, among others.

Though we will cover all levels of society, from the small to the large, and a variety of topics, this class will have two primary and intersecting emphases: the micro-level of society and social inequality. That is, the lectures and the reading (outside of the main textbook) will emphasize smaller groups and social interaction, and they will frequently revisit inequalities of class, race, gender, sexuality, and disability, among others. However, in spite of these emphases, you will soon see how closely related small groups and interaction are to larger social institutions and forces, and you will realize how social inequalities affect, and are affected by, other societal phenomena.

As a part of BC’s “core” curriculum, this course is designed to contribute to your personal and scholarly growth in the following ways:

Perennial Questions. We will interrogate several fundamental questions in the scientific study of human society:

- What is sociology?
- What is “society,” and what is the individual’s place within it? How do the individual and society shape one another?
- Why, and how, do we study society?
- How do social forces and institutions affect the way we see and treat ourselves and others?
- How is the micro-level of society, small groups and social interaction, linked to the intermediate levels

(social institutions and status groups) and the macro-level (societies, nations, “global society”)?

- What is social inequality? What groups in society are comparatively advantaged and disadvantaged? How do different dimensions of inequality (e.g., race and gender)

intersect? How do both privilege and oppression permeate various aspects of our everyday lives and our social institutions?

- How can we use sociological knowledge to promote a better society, however one defines that?

Historical Perspective. We will look at a combination of both contemporary and classic work in this class. In addition, we will learn how to look at the work of the past with an eye to its socio-historical context and critique that work for the potential biases of its authors. Finally, we will see how the social processes examined in the class have affected both the past and the present—and how they *could* affect the future.

Methodology. You will be introduced the basic methods of sociological research and knowledge production. In addition, we will revisit these ideas as we progress through the course material. We will also work on developing your ability to critically evaluate research findings on the basis of their methods, arguments, and use of evidence.

Writing. This will be an essential component of this course, and you will be expected to engage in a number of different styles of analysis, criticism, and debate, as well as engage in discussion of class reading. Students are expected to build upon whatever writing skills they have and improve them throughout the course.

Cultural Diversity. Readings are designed in order to provide you with an eye to both more general sociological processes and to the myriad ways in which these processes are inflected by differences in race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, social status, and other social identities. We will also come to understand the ways in which these processes may differ from one culture to another—de-centering our own respective cultures in the process and entertaining alternative perspectives.

Creating a Personal Philosophy. This course is designed to challenge you to think about society and its members and institutions from a different, more theoretical and sociological standpoint. In so doing, you may develop more complex or better articulated personal beliefs about how humans should interact with one another, navigate their social worlds, and build a society. You are encouraged to use the classroom environment as a space to explore these ideas more fully.

Texts

- Anderson, Margaret L., and Taylor, Howard F. 2008. *Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society*. Thomson Wadsworth.
- O’Brien, Jodi A. 2006. *The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings on Social Interaction*. Pine Forge Press.

Assignments and Requirements

1. Midterm (25%) and Final (30%): There will be a midterm exam and a final exam that will cover important concepts from the readings and also test your ability to formulate, compose, and defend an intellectual argument. You will be given study guides for each of these exams. In addition, throughout the semester, I intend to give you lists of key words for a particular week's material, which you are advised to study along the way – which means less cramming the night before the exams!
2. Norm Violation (10%): You will do a mini-experiment in which you violate a social norm, record your feelings and others reactions, and write a paper analyzing those feelings and reactions. This is designed to increase your awareness of social norms.
3. Chapter Presentation (20%): You will get together with your group and “teach” one of seven chapters to the class. This will include a brief lecture and a classroom activity. You will also choose an outside reading to go with the chapter. I have chosen three of those: Chapter 10 (Global Stratification), Chapter 22 (Collective Behavior and Social Movements), and Chapter 23 (Social Change in Global Perspective). The class will vote on the other four.
4. Syllabus Quiz (5%): To ensure that you read and internalize the contents of the syllabus, there will be a quiz early in the semester.
5. Pop Quizzes (15%): Throughout the semester, there will be seven unannounced multiple-choice quizzes. This is to encourage you to keep up with the reading diligently. Your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped, such that your average for quizzes will be calculated based upon your best five. Any make-ups for missed quizzes will be at my discretion.

Percentages: The aforementioned items add up to 105%. Think of the additional 5% as built-in “extra credit.” Thus, even if you only get 2/3 of the total possible credit on the pop quizzes, it would still be possible (in theory) to get a grade of 100%.

Participation: Normally, I would make participation a percentage of the grade. However, I feel like any attempt to quantify the participation of so many students would be very arbitrary. Besides, students often do not respond well to forced participation. Thus, participation will be voluntary, and for those who distinguish themselves through frequent participation, I reserve the option to take this into account when assigning final course grades.

Topic and Reading Schedule

Please have readings completed by the beginning of the week. In addition, please keep in mind that any reading may be revisited, possibly multiple times, during the semester. Finally, any reading marked with a "*" is found through Blackboard or **online reserves**. All others are in either the text book or the O'Brien volume.

Week 1: Introductions (Jan. 14-16)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 1

*Berger, Peter L. 1963. "Sociology as an Individual Pastime." Pp. 1-24 in *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*. New York: Anchor. [**Only 16-24 required**]

*Mills, C. Wright. 2005. "The Sociological Imagination." Pp. 11-20 in *The Spirit of Sociology: A Reader*, edited by Ron Matson. Boston: Pearson.

Week 2: Doing Sociological Research (Jan. 21-23)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 2

O'Brien Readings:

- **Reading 3:** Babbie, Earl. "Truth, Objectivity, and Agreement"
- **Reading 4:** Schwandt, Thomas A. "Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry"

* Hill Collins, Patricia. 1989. "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought." *Signs* 14(4): 745-773. [**Available on Blackboard**]

*Epstein, Robert. 1997. "Folk Wisdom: Was Your Grandmother Right?" *Psychology Today* (Nov/Dec).

Week 3: Culture (Jan. 26-30)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 3

O'Brien Readings:

- "What is Real?" (p. 2)
- "Shared Meaning is the Foundation of Humanness" (p. 64)
- **Reading 1:** Zerubavel, Eviatar. "Islands of Meaning" (p. 12)
- **Reading 5:** Hughes, Langston. "That Powerful Drop" (p. 84)
- **Reading 10:** Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark. "Metaphors We Live By" (p. 103)

*Miner, Horace. 1956. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema." *American Anthropologist* 58: 503-507.

Week 4: Socialization (Feb. 2-6)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 4

O'Brien Readings:

- "From Masks to Selves" (p. 236)
- **Reading 6:** Cassirer, Ernst. "A Clue to the Nature of Man: The Symbol" (p. 84)
- **Reading 8:** Davis, Kingsley. "Final Note on a Case of Extreme Isolation" (p. 89)

- **Reading 21:** Mead, George Herbert. "The Self, The I, and the Me" (p. 250)
- **Reading 22:** Cooley, Charles Horton. "The Looking Glass Self" (p. 255)
- **Reading 26:** Scheff, Thomas. "A Theory of Genius" (p. 296)

Week 5: Social Interaction (Feb. 9-13)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 5

O'Brien Readings:

- "Meaning Is Negotiated Through Interaction" (p. 128)
 - **Reading 18 or 19:** Emerson, Joan P., "Behavior in Private Places" (p. 201) **or** Lerum, Kari. "'Precarious Situations' in a Strip Club" (p. 214)
 - **Reading 20:** Higgins, Paul. "Encounters With the Hearing" (p. 223)
 - **Reading 27:** Cheung, Charles. "Identity Construction and Self-Presentation on Personal Homepages" (p. 310)
- *Caplow, Theodore. 1984. "Rule Enforcement Without Visible Means: Christmas Gift Giving in Middletown." *American Journal of Sociology* 89(6): 1306-1323.
- *Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books. **Introduction, pp. 1-16.**

Week 6: Groups and Organizations (Feb. 16-20)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 6

O'Brien Readings:

- **Reading 24:** Durham, Meenakshi Gigi, "Girls, Media, and the Negotiation of Sexuality" (p. 264)
 - **Reading 25:** Perry, Pamela, "Shades of White" (p. 276)
- *Henslin, James M. 2001. "The Survivors of the F-227," Pp. 238-246 in *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*, edited by James M. Henslin. New York: The Free Press.
- *Rosenhan, David L. 1973. "On Being Sane in Insane Places." *Science* 179: 250-258.
- ***Slide show** about Stanford Prison Experiment: <http://www.prisonexp.org/slide-1.htm>

Week 7: Deviance (Feb. 23-27)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 7

O'Brien Readings:

- "Building and Breaching Reality" (p. 334)
 - **Reading 13:** Becker, Howard. "Becoming a Marijuana User" (p. 140)
 - **Reading 30:** Mehan, Hugh, and Wood, Houston. "Five Features of Reality" (p. 354)
- *Chambliss, William J. 1973. "The Saints and the Roughnecks." *Society* 11(1), 24-31.

MIDTERM EXAM: Feb. 27

Week 8: Inequality: Class (Mar. 9-13)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 9

O'Brien Readings:

- “Boundaries and Contradictions” (p. 426)
- **Reading 34:** Harris, Scott R. “Status Inequality and Close Relationships” (p. 410)

*Gans, Herbert J. 1971. “The Uses of Poverty: The Poor Pay All.” *Social Policy* July/August: pp. 20-24.

*Higley, Stephen Richard. 1995. *Privilege, Power, and Place: The Geography of the American Upper Class*. Rowman & Littlefield. **Chapter 2, “Social Class in America...,” pp. 13-30.**

*Sennett, Richard, and Cobb, Jonathan. 1993. *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. W. W. Norton & Company. Chapter 2, “Sacrifice and Betrayal,” pp. 119-150.

Week 9: Inequality: Race (Mar. 16-20)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 11

O'Brien Readings:

- **Reading 12:** Moore, Robert. “Racism in the English Language” (p. 119)
- **Reading 35:** Du Bois, W. E. B. “Double Consciousness and the Veil” (p. 445)
- **Reading 38:** Arnold, Ellen L., and Plymire, Darcy C. “Continuity Within Change: The Cherokee Indians and the Internet” (p. 476)

*Hill Collins, Patricia. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge. **Chapter 4 (“Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images”), p. 69-96.**

* Plous, S. 1996. “Ten myths about affirmative action.” *Journal of Social Issues* 52: 25-31.

Week 10: Inequality: Gender (Mar. 23-27)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 12

O'Brien Readings:

- **Reading 11:** Bordo, Susan. “Pills and Power Tools” (p. 115)
- **Reading 28:** Dyck, Isabel. “Body Troubles” (p. 320)
- **Reading 33:** Ridgeway, Cecelia. “The Persistence of Gender Inequality in Employment Settings” (p. 401)

*Foley, D. E. 1990. “The Great American Football Ritual: Reproducing Race, Class, and Gender Inequality.” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 7(2): 111-135.

*Henslin, James M. 2001. “On Becoming Male: Reflections of a Sociologist on Childhood and Early Socialization,” Pp. 138-148 in *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*, edited by James M. Henslin. New York: The Free Press.

*Tannen, Deborah. “But What Do You Mean? Women and Men in Conversation”

Week 11: Religion (Mar. 30 – Apr. 3)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 17

O'Brien Readings:

- **Reading 36:** O'Brien, Jodi. "Wrestling the Angel of Contradiction: Queer Christian Identities" (p. 450)
- **Reading 37:** Chaudhry, Lubna. "'We Are Graceful Swans Who Can Also Be Crows': Hybrid Identities of Pakistani Muslim Women" (p. 465)

* Berger, Peter L. 1990. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Anchor. **Chapter 1, "Religion and World Construction," pp. 3-28.**

* Boellstorff, Tom. 2005. "Between Religion and Desire: Being Muslim and Gay in Indonesia" *American Anthropologist* 107(4): 575-585.

* Schervish, Paul G., Halnon, Raymond, and Bettez-Halnon, Karen. 1996. "Culture and Emotion in Christmas: The Elementary Forms of the Spiritual Life." *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 16, no. 9/10: 144-170.

Week 12: Student Presentations (Apr. 6-8)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapters TBA

Other readings TBA

Week 13: Student Presentations (Apr. 15-17)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapters TBA

Other readings TBA

Week 14: Student Presentations (Apr. 22-24)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapters TBA

Other readings TBA

Week 15: Student Presentations (Apr. 27-29)

Anderson and Taylor, Chapter 23

Other readings TBA

O'Brien Readings:

- **Reading 40:** Bell, Inge, and McGrane, Bernard. "Adventures in Desocialization" (p. 492)
- **Reading 41:** hooks, bell. "Talking Back" (p. 507)
- "Epilogue" (p. 511)

APPENDIX

A Word to the Wise:

Many students sign up for so-called “core classes” based on the assumption that “core” means “easy” (e.g., minimal reading, simple assignments, little engagement and interaction). However, as you can see from above, it means no such thing! On the contrary, “core” entails that the course will raise various issues, introduce you to a variety of perspectives on the subject matter, challenge you to develop your own ideas, and seek to improve your writing and critical-thinking skills. For those reasons, this class is not designed to be easy at all; you will be expected to read and engage with **many** complicated and often dense texts, discuss and debate those texts with your instructor and fellow students, and write about those texts in papers and on tests.

This is not a class in which you can be minimally involved and expect to succeed; you must be intimately engaged at every step! If you do not feel motivated to be this engaged and would prefer more of a “backseat” role, then I highly recommend that you choose another class. I would prefer that you *remain*, and take up the challenge, but you must decide what is best for you. **In short, you should take this class only if you accept the above things and are willing to commit to them!**

Class Policies:

- 1. Attendance:** Frequent and responsible attendance to this class is important for two reasons. First, sociology is a complex topic; while you will no doubt learn a lot from the class readings, a lot of information—including “insider information”—will come from the instructor himself. To that end, it is important that you are in class to receive additional information not in the readings, and clarification of the readings. Second, because social scientists constitute a community (though broad and sometimes very divided), interaction among community members is very important. Thus, your own interaction with one another, and with the instructor, is no exception.
 - I do recognize that sometimes you would be better off doing something besides attending class, so I want to be cognizant of that. Thus, you get two “freebies”—two unexcused absences without penalty. I consider this to be a reasonable allowance.
 - After that, the next two unexcused absences will result in a deduction of **3 percent** each from your final grade for the class; just two unexcused absences, or even one, could turn an A into a B, a B into a C, and so forth. For that reason, it is in your best interest to attend class.
 - For an absence to be excused, you must inform the instructor **by e-mail** at least 48 hours in advance of your absence and provide some form of **documentation** afterwards. (If it is an emergency, and you are unable to inform me of your absence in advance, then at least see us afterwards, with appropriate documentation.)
 - Valid excuses include, but are not limited to, personal illness, illness or death in the family, religious observances, or professional reasons.

- In addition, you are allowed one “political absence.” If you are involved in activism of any sort (liberal or conservative, right or left, it does not matter), you may miss class once in order to attend an important event or do important work in this regard. For this to be excused, you must inform me beforehand and submit a sociological report on the event, according to a sheet of directions that will be provided to you. (This cannot be done on an exam day or your presentation day.)
- If you will be absent for an extended length of time, you or a family member must make arrangements with your associate dean **and** be sure I am informed of this.
- You are responsible for contacting a fellow student and/or the instructor and finding out what happened in class while you were absent—including class notes, handouts, and announcements. It is not the instructor’s responsibility to locate you and tell you.

2. **Writing:** Social science writing is written up not just for oneself but for an entire community of social scientists and students—along with anyone else who takes an interest in your respective topics. Therefore, your writing needs to be clear, easy to understand, grammatical, and visually neat. These features are necessary, though not sufficient, in order to get the highest grade possible on your assignments; in other words, points will be deducted for poor writing. In addition, I reserve the option to initiate a “fatal error policy” if poor writing proves to be a pervasive problem.

If you already know that you have difficulty with writing for any reason—unfamiliarity with the rules of English grammar, limited college prep, a learning disability, or anything else—please let the instructor know, **ASAP**, so that I can communicate with you and help you decide upon an appropriate solution.

Finally, **Wikipedia is not a source!** (This also goes for other encyclopedia-type articles.) You may use a Wikipedia or encyclopedia article to point you towards resources about a topic, but do not cite the article itself in any assignment.

3. **Late Work:** Work is due at the exact date and time specified. For every day that work is late (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and school holidays) there will be a 5% deduction from your score, unless you have been granted an extension. Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due, will only be granted in extenuating circumstances (e.g., student illness, death or serious illness in the family, extensive work due in other classes at the same time), and only with appropriate documentation.

4. **E-mail:** E-mail is an important method of communication, and it will be a primary medium for this class.

- You should check your e-mail at least once per day.
- E-mails or announcements relevant to a particular class meeting will be sent no later than 8:00 P.M. before that meeting. If, for some unforeseen reason, an e-mail is sent out after 8:00 P.M. before a class meeting, then you will not be responsible for it for that meeting.
- Because the instructor receives a tremendous amount of e-mail, it is easier to keep up with your e-mails about this class if you use appropriate subject lines. The subject line should indicate the class number and the message topic. For example:

- “SC001: Next Week’s Readings” or “SC001: Absence on Friday 1/16/2008.” The instructor will do the same. Following these recommendations will make communication smoother and more efficient.
- Finally, e-mail should be reserved for personal matters, such as informing the instructor of one’s absence on a particular day. For other matters, you should make use of the Blackboard discussion boards.
- 5. Internet:** This class will make use of the Internet for downloading some course readings, discussion, communication, and submitting assignments. Thus, it is imperative that you know how to use Blackboard proficiently. If you have any problem with any aspect of using the Internet in this course, it is your responsibility to bring this problem to my attention *immediately*. Unfamiliarity with the Internet, Blackboard, or any other online aspect of the course will not be accepted as an excuse for failing to complete requirements.
 - 6. Disability:** If you have a disability that could affect your class performance or that requires special accommodations, then you must let me know at the beginning of the semester. It is your responsibility to bring this up *at the earliest possible moment*.
 - 7. Athletics:** Student athletes must provide me with all proper documentation and semester game schedules *ASAP*.
 - 8. Personal Problems:** If you have any personal problems or difficulties that might affect your class performance, then you must let me know about this *as early as possible*. Such problems include, but are not limited to, the following: economic hardship, limited English proficiency, psychological/mental issues, and personal difficulties.
 - 9. Academic Integrity:** You are expected to adhere to Boston College’s standards of academic integrity (<http://www.bc.edu/integrity>) with respect to **every** aspect of this class. Any cheating, plagiarism, or other kind of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero and will be reported to the academic dean.

I reserve the option to change aspects of this syllabus, at any time, should circumstances appear to require such.