

Patricia Arend
Introduction to Sociology
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Office Hours: Wed. 2-4 and by appt.

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INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY AS A CORE COURSE

Because this introductory course fulfills one of the university's core requirements in the social sciences it necessarily contains certain elements common to all university core courses. Among these elements are the following:

1. A concern with the perennial questions about human existence. Virtually by definition, an introduction to sociology course deals with fundamental questions about what it means to be a human being living in a society at a given moment in history. In this course we will confront such basic questions as: What is the nature of human nature? What is the place of biology and culture, respectively, in shaping human behavior? Why do human beings commit themselves to a society? Why do persons normally conform to the demands of society? Do we have free will? What is the basis for social order? How does one become a functioning human being in society? Why is there so much human conflict? What are the forces that create group life and sometimes generate intolerance among groups? What is the character of the social self? What is the role of community in sustaining a personal sense of well being? The purpose of our discussion will not be to answer definitively such questions, but to suggest the way a sociological perspective approaches them.

2. An attention to the role of history in human affairs. The view taken in this course is that one's place in history shapes the kind of consciousness it is possible to have. In this regard, I do not see sociology as producing immutable "laws" that transcend history and culture. Rather, the task is to understand how humans' 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. We will, therefore, consider how such "classical" sociological theorists as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber considered the effects of society's transition from an agrarian to an urban order. In this discussion, as throughout the course, we will consider how the strength of the "social bond" between the individual and the larger society changes over time. Since American society continues to evolve, we will consider, as well, how the current movement of American society from a production-based economy to a service-based economy is once again transforming human relations.

3. An attention to cultural diversity. Two additional and basic premises of this course are that ultimately all knowledge is comparative and that all human values must be considered in cultural context. Wherever possible, cross cultural comparisons and examples will be used to highlight the organization of our own culture. Of course, since American society is itself an enormously complex, variegated, pluralistic society, our attention throughout the semester will inevitably be drawn to the multiplicity of behavioral and value systems found in the United States.

Appreciation of cultural differences of all sorts helps to meet a primary mission of any sociology course. It is to make persons less self righteous about the superiority of their own cultural beliefs. Both class conversation and readings are designed to put students into contact with class and race segments of American society that may be very different from their own group memberships.

4. An attention to the methodology of the field. Sociologists normally consider their discipline as one of the social "sciences." Identification with science means that the discipline's understanding of the world is based on carefully collected data. The writing assignment for the course requires students to collect some data on their own and to analyze it. Given the assignment, a substantial amount of class time will be spent talking about the nature of deductive and inductive inquiry, the requirements of scientific investigation, the nature of participant observation field research in particular, the contents of field notes, and strategies for moving from data to analysis.

5. A strong writing component. Although the term paper is meant primarily as an exercise in observation, data collection, and analysis, the quality of the final product cannot be separated from the quality of writing. Students will be encouraged to discuss their work and to share drafts of their papers with each other. As time allows, we will discuss what C.W. Mills called "intellectual craftsmanship." As part of that discussion we will talk about what constitutes powerful social science writing. Here I am committed to two basic ideas about writing: (1) Writers should never confuse the complexity of their thinking with complicated writing. (2) Writing is not putting on paper what you think. It is, rather, part of the process of telling you what you think.

6. Contributing to the development of a personal philosophy of life. The psychologist Carl Jung has said, "There is no coming to consciousness without pain." Studying sociology can be uncomfortable for some people because it forces them to question essential ideas that have guided their lives. Much sociology is dedicated to "debunking" the myths and propaganda that allow some people to order their private lives. One of the first messages of sociology is that "things aren't always what they first seem to be." Often, what we take to be common sense turns out, upon closer investigation, to be neither common nor sensible. My approach in this class places primary emphasis on the basic processes of interaction that shape all human relations, from those among anonymous urbanites to our most precious intimacies. Thus, I expect the class to enhance each student's ability to think about core life questions about the quality of relationships, family involvement, child-rearing, the meaning of work, and personal commitment to social change in a more complex and nuanced way.

READING

Charon and Vigilant, eds., THE MEANING OF SOCIOLOGY

Venkatesh, GANG LEADER FOR A DAY

Karp, IS IT ME OR MY MEDS?

Handouts

METHODS OF EVALUATION

A. Attendance

Students should come to class regularly. Each student may have two unexcused absences without penalty. Each unexcused absence after two results in a one-third lowering of the final grade. So, if you have three unexcused absences and you score a “B” in the course, your final grade will be a “B-”. Funerals, serious illness, job interviews, religious holidays, and scheduled sporting events for student athletes are excused absences.

B. Class Participation and Presentations

For each class you should come prepared to discuss the assigned reading and you should participate in class discussion. I reserve the right to have pop quizzes that will impact your grade if students regularly come to class without having done so. Additionally, each of you will be required to present the readings and lead discussion for one class, in teams of three. There will be a sign up sheet the second week of class. The discussion should run approximately thirty minutes, and should address the following:

- a. The major arguments of the day’s readings.
- b. Your analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the readings.
- c. Discussion questions concerning the readings as they relate to other class materials and relevant current events.

This information also should be presented on a hand-out to all class members. This should not be just a print out of power point slides if you use them. (It may be helpful to think of this as a study sheet for your midterm or final exam.)

Finally, you are also required to present the findings of your semester long research project in a short presentation at the end of the semester. Prof. Arend will assign the presentation date.

Class participation and presentations will count for 10% of the final grade.

C. The Mid-term Examination

This examination will be taken during one of our normal class periods. It will cover the material on the course outline through section III of the syllabus. You will be responsible for both reading and lecture material to that point in the class. The mid-term exam will count for 30% of the final grade.

D. A Term Paper

Unlike other of your classes that typically require a library based research paper, the term paper in this class will be based on data you collect over the course of the semester. I would like for each student to identify a problem or issue that can be investigated by doing in-depth interviews. The best way to identify a meaningful issue or problem is to start with things that matter in your

own lives. In previous classes students have elected to do in-depth interviews with individuals who are the children of divorced parents, are biracial, suffer from eating disorders, are transfer students, are involved in a long distance relationship, are part of a particular subculture, suffer from one or another illness, are grieving for someone who died, have recently fallen in love, are members of a sports team, belong to a particular church or religious group, and so on.

I would like each class member to conduct six in-depth interviews over the course of the semester. The paper will be based on the data from those interviews. Typically each interview would last for about an hour. In order to conduct these interviews each student will need to define the issue or problem that interests them, construct an interview guide, choose respondents for the interviews, conduct the interviews, collate the data, and write the paper. We will spend time in class talking about each of these elements of the research process. You are also required to incorporate material from course readings and one additional source that may be either a book chapter or an article from a scholarly sociological journal. You may not use Wikipedia or other internet sources except to locate the article or book chapter. The paper will count for 30 % of the final grade.

D. The Final Exam

The final exam will be in-class. It will cover material on the course outline following your midterm. You will be responsible for both reading and lecture material. The final exam will count for 30% of the final grade.

Grade Scale:

93+: A*	83-86: B	73-76: C	63-66: D
90-92: A-	80-82: B-	70-72: C-	60-62: D-
87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+	0-59: F

* There is no A+ in BC's grading system.

CLASS ENVIRONMENT

- Laptops are not allowed in the classroom.
- Cell phones should be turned off before class, not just silenced.
- You may bring drinks to class and, if you need it, a small snack. Please do not eat full meals or make noise with wrappers.
- Please be respectful of each other, especially during class discussions where you may have disagreements over course material.
- Use the restroom before class. Please do not leave the room during class time unless it is an emergency.

COURSE OUTLINE

Note: Students should be prepared to discuss the reading on the day of the corresponding class listed.

I. What is Sociology?

Thursday, January 15: General Introduction

Tuesday, January 20:

- Reader, Part I The Discipline of Sociology, all

II. Socialization and the Social Construction of Reality

Thursday, January 22:

- Handout, “Extreme Isolation,” Kingsley Davis
- Reader, “Social Identity,” Richard Jenkins, 30
- Reader, “The Importance of Primary Groups,” Dexter C. Dunphy, 33

Tuesday, January 27:

- Reader, “Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple,” Charles Lindholm, 43
- Reader, “Collective Trauma at Buffalo Creek,” Kai Erikson, 49
- Reader, “The Meaning and the Importance of the City,” William A. Schwab, 56

Thursday, January 29:

- Handout, “Night to His Day: the Social Construction of Gender,” Judith Lorber
- Handout, “Life as the Maid’s Daughter: An Exploration of the Everyday Boundaries of Race, Class, and Gender,” Mary Romero
- Handout, “Boyhood, Organized Sports, and the Construction of Masculinities,” Michael A. Messner

Tuesday, February 3:

- *Tough Guise*, film screened in class

III. Social Inequalities, Social Structure: Race, Class, Gender

Thursday, February 5:

- Reader, “Gender as Structure,” Barbara J. Risman, 88
- Reader, “Four Modes of Inequality,” William M. Dugger, 94

Tuesday, February 10:

- Reader, “The New American Class Structure,” Purrucci and Wysong, 108
- Reader, “The Uses of Poverty: the Poor Pay All,” Herbert Gans, 117
- Reader, “Class in Everyday Life,” Stanley Aronowitz, 121
- Reader, “The Polarization of Class in the World,” Bellah, 134

Thursday, February 12:

- Reader, "Race, Wealth, and Equality," Oliver and Shapiro, 140
- Reader, "Occupational Opportunities and Race," Stephen Steinberg, 148
- Reader, "Yellow Face: Asian Americans in Popular Culture," Robert G. Lee, 160
- Reader, "Children of Immigrants: Adaptation and Identity," Suarez-Orozco, 168

Tuesday, February 17:

- *Gang Leader for a Day*, by Sudhir Venkatesh, Preface, chs. 1-3

Thursday, February 19:

- Reader, Part VI, Social Structure: Gender, all.

Tuesday, February 24:

- *Gang Leader for a Day*, chs. 4-6

Thursday, February 26:

- Reader, "The Code of the Street," Elijah Anderson, 225
- Reader "Government Programs and Social Cohesion," Skocpol, 269
- Reader, "Punishment and Inequality in America," Bruce Western, 156

March 3 and 5: Spring Break

Tuesday, March 10:

- *Gang Leader for a Day*, chs. 7-8

Thursday, March 12: **IN CLASS MIDTERM**

IV. Society and the Self: Deviance and Social Control

Tuesday, March 17:

- Reader, "Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" by Erving Goffman, 38
- Reader "Society, Social Control, and the Individual" by Peter L. Berger, 61

Thursday, March 19:

- *Is It Me or My Meds?* by David Karp, prologue-chapter 3, pp. 1-94.

Tuesday, March 24:

- Reader, "The Pathology of Imprisonment," Philip G. Zimbardo, 68
- Reader, "If Hitler Asked You to Electrocute a Stranger, Would you? Probably," Philip Meyer, 71
- Reader, "The Mai Lai Massacre: A Military Crime of Obedience," Kelman and Hamilton, 76

Thursday, March 26:

- *Is It Me or My Meds?* chapters 4-5, pp. 95-165

Tuesday, March 31:

- *Lars and the Real Girl* screening

Thursday, April 2:

- In class finish and discuss *Lars and the Real Girl*
- *Is It Me or My Meds?* Appendix A only, pp. 251-261
- Come prepared to discuss your research project

Tuesday, April 7:

- *Is It Me or My Meds?* chapters 6-7, pp. 167-229 (Epilogue not required but highly recommended.)

Thursday, April 9: Easter Thursday, no class

V. Social Institutions: Capitalism, Education and Family

Tuesday, April 14:

- Reader “Class, Social Conflict, and Social Change,” Karl Marx, 340

Thursday, April 16:

- Reader “The Institution of Capitalism,” Zweig, 251
- Reader “The Rise of Big Business in the United States,” Perrow, 258
- Reader “The Dominance of the Corporation,” Carl Boggs, 262

Tuesday, April 21:

- Reader “The Shame of the Nation,” Jonathan Kozol, 321
- Reader “The Culture of the School,” Hallinan, 329

Thursday, April 23:

- Reader “Family in Transition, 2007,” Skolnick and Skolnick, 286
- Reader “Family Life and Economic Success,” Lisa A. Keister, 294
- Reader “Unequal Childhoods,” Annette Lareau, 301

Tuesday, April 28:

- In class presentations on research projects

Thursday, April 30: **Last day of class: Research Papers Due**

- In class presentations on research projects