SC001: Introduction to Sociology, section 07

Instructor: Prof. Matthew Williams
Course meeting time: 10:30-11:45 a.m., Tuesday & Thursday
Course location: McGuin 334
Office hours: 9:15-10:15 a.m., Tuesday & Thursday; or by appointment. Please note that I will only be able to come to campus Tuesdays and Thursdays to meet with you. I am teaching at other schools on the other days of the week.
Office location: McGuinn 426D
Instructor’s e-mail: matthew.williams.3@bc.edu, willibhi@bc.edu, or mw21@mindspring.com (They all end up in the same place.)

Disclaimer: This syllabus is not set in stone. I may change things on it, if I judge doing so will better meet the needs of the class. Please pay attention for any messages I send out indicating such changes.

Overview

This course is intended to give you an overview of the field of sociology. Sociology is a very broad field, covering the entire range of human activities. More exactly, sociology is the science of the ways in which people interact with each other, ranging from small-scale face-to-face interactions you might have with your friends to such large-scale interactions as those that make up the global economy. Given the wide scope of the field, we cannot adequately cover all the major areas of social life that sociologist study within the time of one semester. Instead, we will focus on a subset of those major areas. Some the areas--culture, social structure, social psychology, inequality--are ones essential to understanding the world from a sociological perspective. Others--politics, social movements, the mass media, the economy, and globalization--reflect my own areas of specialization and interest--they are what I know best and can thus teach best. One could spend an entire semester--or, indeed, an entire lifetime--studying any one of these topics. We will only have the opportunity to begin to scratch the surface.

Why study sociology? At its best, sociology is not merely intellectually interesting but illuminates many of the issues we face in our day-to-day lives and many of the major social problems we are now grappling with as a country and a world. In our society, when trying to understand people’s actions or social issues, we typically look at the psychology of the individuals involved. Sociology offers another, equally important perspective, sometimes known as the “sociological imagination.” When we look at things through the sociological imagination, we consider how the networks of social relationships we are embedded within shape our actions and our chances to do well in life. This can include looking at our peers, our families, schools, the political system, the economy and the hierarchies of race, class and gender. While few if any of you will become professional sociologists, people from all walks of life can draw on the sociological imagination to help them better understand the issues we face as a country and a global community, to reflect on their own lives, and to understand the lives of those from different social backgrounds. Over the course of the semester, you will have an opportunity to develop
this sociological imagination and apply it to a number of social issues--and to your own life. We will look at how the wider social world can shape people’s actions, even how they understand themselves. We will also look at the ways in which people can work to change society, including ways we might address some of these social issues.

You may find that some sociological ideas challenge fundamental beliefs you have about the world, in some cases so fundamental you are not even aware of them. This can sometimes be an uncomfortable experience. To benefit from this course, you need to be open-minded and willing to work with that discomfort. Among the beliefs that sociology may challenge are your political beliefs, particularly if you are conservative, but probably also if you are liberal. The way sociologists look at social problems leads them to see their solutions in ways that are consistent with left-of-center politics, though not necessarily with conventional left-of-center analyses; those few sociologists who are conservative tend to be anti-free market communitarians. I don’t necessarily expect you to change your political beliefs. I do expect you to take the ideas in this class seriously, however, and to wrestle with them. If nothing else, I hope that you will at least come away from this class having thought through those beliefs more deeply.

Since this is a core sociology class, we will also address the following matters:

- We will consider some of the perennial questions that sociologists ask: How is society possible, and how much social conformity is necessary for it to survive? What is the nature of human freedom and what are the limits of our ability to withstand oppression? How do cultures and societies evolve?
- We will spend a class considering the various methods that sociologists use. These systematized methods of empirical research are what make sociology a science, as opposed to a field of philosophical speculation.
- We will consider issues of cultural diversity, particularly issues of race, class, and gender. As part of this process of exploring diversity, we will read articles by authors who are themselves from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- We will consider why a historical perspective is an important element of sociology. Societies are not static, but change over time and if we are to understand why things are the way they are today, we must understand the history and causes of these changes.
- This class will be writing intensive, including both in-class free-writing, take-home short essay exams, and a semester-long writing project. This will give you multiple opportunities to explore and refine your ideas and your responses to the class material.
- Finally, I hope this class will help you develop a personal philosophy. In particular, I hope that you will come to understand how larger social forces have shaped your life and the lives of others and consider the implications of this for issues like ethics, social policy and social justice.

**Communications**

When I have something important to notify the class of, I will try to do so both through an announcement in class and through an e-mail message to the class; at times, it may be
by e-mail only though. I may also e-mail students individually if I feel the need to communicate with them about something in particular. I ask that you please read your e-mail regularly and, if I ask you to respond, to do so promptly. If you are not able to check your e-mail regularly for some reason, please let me know early in the semester, so we can agree on an alternate method of communication.

If you need to communicate with me outside of class, please e-mail me. Include the name of the class in the subject line, so I know that it is class-related and therefore deserving of prompt attention—and so I know to which of the classes I am teaching it is related.

Readings

I ask that you complete all reading assignments on the day that they are listed on the syllabus. You will be held responsible for all readings on the exams, even those we do not cover in class. (At the same time, if you have a question on a reading we did not cover in class, please feel free to ask about it.)

Books
The following books will be used in the class and are available at the BC bookstore; they will also be on course reserve at the library:


Recommended Book
This book too will be available at the bookstore and on reserve at the library. The readings in this book are not required, only recommended. If you are feeling a bit lost in class, either after the lectures or class discussion, or when you sit down to take the exams, you can use this as a reference to help you.


Blackboard
Many of the readings will be available in PDF format on the Blackboard system.

Web
A few of the readings will be available on the internet. The URLs for such readings are provided in the syllabus.

Grading and Written Assignments
Your final grade will be calculated as follows: Your midterm and final exams (both take-homes) will each be worth 25% of your grade, your sociological autobiography worth 20%, class participation 15%, weekly quotes from the reading 10%, and attendance 5%.

I will give numerical grades on your papers. BC’s grading system is, however, letter based, so your grades will be translated into letter format when I enter them into the system at the end of the semester. The scale translates as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Grade</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93+: A*</td>
<td>83-86: B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92: A-</td>
<td>80-82: B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89: B+</td>
<td>77-79: C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-76: C</td>
<td>70-72: C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69: D+</td>
<td>67-69: D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63-66: D</td>
<td>60-62: D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59: F</td>
<td>0-59: F</td>
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* There is no A+ in BC’s grading system.

**Attendance**

I put in a good deal of work preparing for class and, in return, I ask that you come to class regularly. Additionally, we will be discussing certain facts and ideas in class that will not be in the readings, but that you will be expected to know for the exams. Thus, attendance is worth 5% of your grade. You are allowed two unexcused absences. If you have two or fewer unexcused absences, your grade for attendance will be a 95%. For every absence after the first two, I will deduct 3 points from your attendance grade (i.e., after three absences, your grade would be a 92%, after four, an 89%, etc.). Thus, good attendance can boost your grade, while poor attendance can hurt it.

If you come into class late, after attendance has been taken, please check in with me at the end of class to make sure you are not marked as absent. If you are more than fifteen minutes late, you will be credited with only half an attendance.

**Class Participation**

I hope to have in-class exercises and discussions in which everyone will participate on a regular basis. This will give you a chance to actively explore the ideas we examine in this class and debate with others. Thus, class participation is worth 15% of your grade.

In order to properly keep track of who has said what during class discussion, at the end of each class, I will ask you to turn in an index card with notes of anything you said during large groups discussion. These don’t have to be elaborate--just enough to jog my memory. While ideally I would remember what everyone has said during class and would not need these cards as an aid, my memory is fallible and I find if I don’t use this system, I often forget to credit people with participation. This system is meant to allow you to get proper credit for participating.

Please remember that if you don’t come to class, you can’t participate. Thus, unexcused absences will also count against your class participation grade.

**Weekly Quotes**

On Thursday of each week starting September 16, I will ask you to turn in three quotes from the reading and a brief (paragraph length) explanation of why you chose these three
quotes. Please make sure you provide the source for your quotes—both the individual reading it is from and the page number. Your selection of the quotes should be based on one of two reasons: 1) They capture central concepts or arguments in the reading nicely; or 2) you find the quotes provocative, whether because they’ve caused you to look at an issue in a new way, they contain striking facts you were unaware of, you strongly disagree with them, or because they clearly capture some belief of your own. These weekly quotes will be graded on a 15-point scale. You are allowed three weeks in which you do not turn in the weekly quotes. This will be worth 10% of your grade.

Weekly quotes will not be accepted late, except in unusual circumstances. If you miss class, please e-mail them to me on the day they are due, then bring in a hard copy next time you come to class.

Exams
There will be two take-home exams, a midterm and final, each worth 25% of your grade. Both exams will involve three short essay (a couple of paragraphs) questions. Both exams will be open-book and open-notebook. My goal is not to test whether you have memorized the material, but how well you understand and can apply the ideas. You may study in groups, but the work on the exams should be your own. The midterm will be passed out in class on October 19 and be due in class on November 2. The final will be passed out on the last day of class, December 9, and be due on December 20. The midterm will test you on all the material in the first half of the class, including both the reading and the lectures, while the final will be cumulative. Please keep in mind that, while I do not necessarily expect you to agree with any of the ideas in this class, I do expect you to be able to understand, clearly explain and apply them in your exams.

Sociological Autobiography
I will ask you to write a ten-page sociological autobiography—an examination of how your life has been shaped by the society of which you are a part. This will be worth 20% of your grade and be due on the last day of class, December 9. The in-class discussions and exercises should help you think about these issues over the course of the semester. I don’t actually expect you to tell me your whole life story—instead, you should highlight certain parts, those that most fit with the sociological analysis you are engaging in. This paper should cover three major themes:

1) Think about the social roles you have—student, son or daughter, sibling, employee, in a few cases a parent, a member of an extracurricular group such as an athletics team, volunteer group, musical group, theater group, etc. Think about how these social roles shape your life—how are you expected to act because of them? In what ways do they reinforce each other? In what ways do they conflict? (Think of the difficulties of being a student-athlete or working full time and being a student.) How do you manage these conflicts? Expectations that you don’t like? How do they shape your sense of who you are—that is, your sense of self-identity? Would you think of yourself the same way if you didn’t have some particular social role?
2) Reflect on your own social background and how it has influenced your life chances (that is, to do well in life and get ahead), including your childhood, your current state, and your future prospects. You must discuss the effects of race, class and gender on your life. You may discuss other aspects of your social background, such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age, (dis)ability, etc., if you wish, but you are not required to.

3) Discuss how one major social institution--the economy, government, mass media, educational system, religion or social movements--has affected your life. As part of this, you should discuss your relationship with at least one “distant other”--someone living a profoundly different life than yours, but to whom you nonetheless have a connection. They could be the poorly paid workers who make your clothes or your food, which you need to survive; or it could be President Obama, who shapes the laws that govern our lives, decides when and how to wage war with other countries, etc. Look at the ways you are dependent on this social institution--it may be for material necessities like food and clothing (the economy); for providing order and security to society (government); information and knowledge (the mass media or educational system); or a sense of community or larger meaning to your life (religion); or a push for social justice that has improved your life (social movements). What ways does this institution make your life better--provide you with basic needs and/or enable you to pursue your goals? In what ways does it constrain you--limit the choices you can make, keep you from getting access to certain things you might want?

Although you should cover all these themes, there is no one right way to organize the paper--you can do it in three separate sections or weave the themes together into one chronological story or choose some other approach. I am not expecting you to do in-depth library research for this paper, but you may want to do some research to better help you understand some of the things you are writing about, such as your chosen social institution and distant other. For these, reliable sources on current events may be sufficient.

You may, if you wish, do this as in a non-traditional format--you can make a collage, a DVD, a children’s book, a poem. If you choose this approach, you still need to provide an analytical part, to explain the collage, poem, etc., although it need not be the full ten pages. This is meant to be an avenue for students who express themselves better through non-traditional means, not a requirement for a good grade. If you produce a very well written, thoughtful ten-page paper, you can certainly get an A without doing anything unusual.

**Paper Format**

All papers--the weekly quotes, the exams, and the sociological autobiography--should be typed and double-spaced. Please number your pages and use 12-point type in a common font such as Times New Roman or Courier. Please be sure to attend to such matters as proper grammar, organization and writing in a clear style. The better your writing, the more clearly you can convey your ideas. While some important thinkers have been bad writers, there is no reason to emulate them in this. More often than not, unclear writing reflects unclear thinking. If you are having trouble with the writing process, you may see
me during office hours or make an appointment with the Connors Family Learning Center (http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html).

Late Papers
For every day a paper is late, I will deduct three numerical points from it. A paper handed in on the due date, but after the time listed on the exam, will be counted as half a day late—that is, I will deduct 1.5 points from it. If you want to turn in a paper late on a non-class day, you should both e-mail me a copy (so I have proof of when you finished it) and leave it in my mailbox (in McGuinn 426) so I do not have to print it out myself. If you fail to e-mail me a copy and I only find a copy in my box, I reserve the right to count it as having been turned in on the day I find, which may cost you additional late points. E-mail alone, however, is not sufficient. As a general rule, I will not grade your paper until you give me a hard copy. I may make exceptions in very unusual circumstances.

Extensions
If you need an extension on one of your exams or the sociological autobiography, please ask. I am willing to be flexible in when your papers are due—but you must plan ahead. I ask that you request an extension well ahead of time; the later you ask for an extension, the less likely I am to say yes. I will make exceptions to all these rules in the case of a documented medical or personal emergency. If you’re handing in a paper on which you received an extension on a day when class does not meet, please follow the procedures for late papers given above.

Academic Integrity
Please familiarize yourself with BC’s definition of academic integrity, at http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity. In addition, two pamphlets, one on plagiarism and one on properly citing sources, are available on Blackboard. I encourage you to read and refer to them.

If you have any questions about how to interpret it in the context of class assignments, please feel free to ask me. Any violation of academic integrity will result, at a minimum, in a zero on that assignment. Additionally, I may report the incident to your dean and the Committee on Academic Integrity. This is as much for your protection as mine, since the Committee will conduct an independent review of the incident in order to determine whether or not I have made a fair judgment.

Special Needs
If you have a learning disability or other special need, please tell me during the first week of classes, so that I can best prepare to accommodate you.

Course Schedule

Tuesday, September 7, Introduction
No reading--first day of class
Thursday, September 9, *The Sociological Imagination*
Ferguson, chs. 1-3 (Mills, “The Promise;” Gaines, “Teenage Wasteland;” Romero “An Intersection of Biography and History”)
*Recommended: Neubeck & Glasberg, ch 1*

Tuesday, September 14, *Social Structure*
Ferguson, ch. 50 (Crow Dog & Erdoes, “Civilize Them With a Stick”)
*Recommended: Neubeck & Glasberg, pp. 45-47, 56-77*

Thursday, September 16, *Culture*
Goodwin & Jasper, ch. 16 (Gusfield, “Keyword: Culture”)
*Recommended: Neubeck & Glasberg, ch. 5*

Tuesday, September 21, *Culture & Power*
Ferguson, chs. 10 & 13 (Granfield, “Making it by Faking it”; Trask, “Lovely Hula Hands”)
Goodwin & Jasper, ch. 17 (Peterson, “Roll Over Beethoven, There’s a New Way to Be Cool”)

Thursday, September 23, *Sociological Research*
*Recommended: Neubeck & Glasberg, ch. 2*

Tuesday, September 28, *Social Psychology: Socialization and the Self*
Goodwin & Jasper, ch. 1 (Zussman, “Keyword: The Self”)
Ferguson, chs. 14, 28 & 49 (Dyer, “Anybody’s Son Will Do;” Pascoe, “Dude, You’re a Fag;” Karp, “Illness and Identity”)
*Recommended: Neubeck & Glasberg, ch. 6*
Thursday, September 30, *Social Psychology: Social Interaction, part 1*
Ferguson, chs. 17 & 22 (Williams, “Shopping as Symbolic Interaction”; Boswell & Spade “Fraternities and Collegiate Rape Culture”)
Recommended: Neubeck & Glasberg, pp. 80-92

Tuesday, October 5, *Social Psychology: Social Interaction, part 2*
Goodwin & Jasper, chs. 2 (Barbelet, “Keyword: Emotion”)

Thursday, October 7, *Power, Privilege and Oppression*
Goodwin & Jasper, ch. 38 (Conley, “Forty Acres and a Mule”)
Recommended: Neubeck & Glasberg, chs. 7 & 8

Tuesday, October 12, *Economic Dimensions of Inequality: Job Discrimination*
Goodwin & Jasper, chs. 21, 26 & 33 (Jackson, “Keyword: Inequalities;” Herring, “Is Job Discrimination Dead?;” Jacobs, “Detours on the Road to Equality”)

Thursday, October 14, *Economic Dimensions of Inequality: Resources*

Tuesday, October 19, *Cultural Dimensions of Inequality*
Goodwin & Jasper, ch. 35 (Morning, “Keyword: Race”)

Midterm handed out

Thursday, October 21, *Politics & Power*
Ferguson, chs. 35 & 36 (Mills, “The Power Elite”; Clawson et al., “Dollars and Votes”)
*Recommended:* Neubeck & Glasberg, ch. 11

Tuesday, October 26, *Political Participation*

Thursday, October 28, *Social Movements and Strategy, part 1*
Goodwin & Jasper, ch. 57 (Meyer, “How Social Movements Matter”)
*Recommended:* Neubeck & Glasberg, pp. 313-325

Tuesday, November 2, *Social Movements and Strategy, part 2*

Thursday, November 4, *The Culture of Social Movements*
Blackboard: Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting*, pp. 149-175 (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002)

Tuesday, November 9, *The Mass Media: The News*
Blackboard: Charlotte Ryan, *Prime Time Activism*, pp. 53-74 (Boston, South End Press, 1991)

Thursday, November 11, *The Mass Media: Advertising and Entertainment*
http://www.thirdspace.ca/journal/article/viewArticle/karras/50
Web: Jonathan McIntosh, “What Would Buffy Do?: Notes on Dusting Edward Cullen,” *Women in Media and News*, July 1, 2009:
http://www.wimnonline.org/WIMNsVoicesBlog/?p=1272

Tuesday, November 16, *The Economy, Work & Welfare, part 1*
**Recommended:** Neubeck & Glasberg, ch. 12

Thursday, November 18, *The Economy & Power*
Goodwin & Jasper, ch. 25 & 27 (Swedberg, “Keyword: Market;” Davis, “American Cronyism”)
Ferguson, ch. 37 (Derber, “One World Under Business”)

Tuesday, November 23, *The Economy, Work & Welfare, part 2*
Ferguson, ch. 42 (Leidner, “Over the Counter”)

Thursday, November 25
NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Day
Tuesday, November 30, *Globalization and Development, part 1*
Movie (in-class): *Deadly Embrace: Nicaragua, the World Bank, and the IMF* (producers, Elizabeth Canner and Ashley Eames; Wentworth NH, Compas de la Primavera, 1999)
Dupuy, preface, chs. 1-2
*Recommended:* Neubeck & Glasberg, pp. 47-56, 298-307

Thursday, December 2, *Globalization and Development, part 2*
Dupuy, chs. 3-4

Tuesday, December 7, *Globalization and Development, part 3*
Dupuy, chs. 5-6
URL: http://www.democracynow.org/2010/7/14/land_ownership_at_the_crux_of

Thursday, December 9, *Social Movements Revisited: Institutionalization*

*Sociological autobiography due*
*Final exam passed out*

Monday, December 20
*Final exam due (12:30 p.m.)*