SC001.04: Introduction to Sociology  
Spring 2011, Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00-4:15 p.m. (at Campion 231)

Instructor: Rie Taniguchi                 Office: McGuinn 410B  
E-mail: tanigucer@bc.edu                 Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays by appointment

Course Description and Objectives
Throughout the semester, you will be introduced to various theories and topics in the field of sociology. You will be asked, through personal reflection, participation in class discussions and presentation, as well as the completion of written assignments, to apply these theories to issues that are integral in your own lives and the broader contemporary social world.

The purpose of the class is to help establish a “sociological perspective” that will enable you to better understand social structure, culture, and institutions that surround you. Throughout the semester, the class also aims to highlight your role within American as well as global society. At the end of this course, you should be able to identify important social phenomena, critically analyzing these phenomena by using sociological imagination, relate these phenomena to your own social world, and clearly communicating your analysis both orally and in writing.

Required Texts

* Jeffrey C. Alexander and Kenneth Thompson, A Contemporary Introduction to Sociology (Boulder: Paradigm, 2008).


These books are available in the BC bookstore, but used copies are also available on websites such as Amazon.com. There is also a copy of these books in the Reserve Room of the O’Neill Library. The required texts are starred (*) in the syllabus below.

All the additional readings are available on WebCT (https://cms.bc.edu) and on the Library’s Course Reserves web page.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Class Attendance and Participation 15%

Class Attendance is mandatory and will have a significant effect on your final grade. Each student may have two unexcused absences without penalty. Each unexcused absence after two results in a one-third lowering of the final grade. (For example, if you have three unexcused absences and your final grade is a B, it will become a B-). Funerals, serious illness, job interviews, religious holidays, and scheduled sporting events for student athletes that are properly documented are excused absences. If you need to miss a class, please let me know prior to class.

I expect that you read the assigned materials prior to the class and actively participate in class discussions. Sharing of your thoughts and reflections is strongly appreciated and encouraged.
Critical Reflection Papers 30%

You will be asked to complete five (5) reflection papers (out of 10 weeks/topics beginning from the third week) over the course of the semester. These papers should be a maximum of three (3), double-spaced pages and due on each Monday following the week.

Discussion Leader and 5-Page Paper 25%

Early in the semester, you will choose one class period where you (in partnership with 3-4 other students) will perform as discussion leader(s) who are in charge of running a class discussion, approximately for 40-50 minutes. Most of all the discussion sessions are scheduled on Thursdays and you are required to prepare 8-12 discussion questions based on the assigned readings for that day as well as a film from the week (if applicable) by Tuesday prior to the discussion period. **You need to choose a date for your discussion leader presentation by January 25th.** In addition, after the presentation, you will individually prepare a minimum 5-page (maximum 8-page) double-spaced paper where you will discuss and reflect the assigned readings (accompanied by at least 1 extra reading from earlier the week) and experiences and content of the class discussion.

Midterm exam 15%

Final exam 15%

*There are no make-up exams in this class. Please make arrangements to attend both the in-class midterm and the final exam.

*No late work will be accepted unless an extension is granted by me BEFORE THE DUE DATE of the assignment.

*More information on each assignment will be provided in class and Blackboard Vista (Web CT).

The Core Course

This is a core course which is designed to contain six elements common to all university core courses. First, the introduction to sociology addresses 1) the **perennial questions** of human existence—questions regarding what it means to be a human living in a society at given moment in history. Fundamental questions such as what drives human behavior? What are the causes of poverty and inequality in globalizing social world? are addressed throughout the semester. Secondly and thirdly, the course pays special attention to the role of history and culture in understanding society. In-depth understanding of 2) **historical context(s)** and 3) **cultural diversity** is considered to be crucial in accurately addressing the above questions. Fourthly, we will examine various 4) **methodological approaches** of the field. The class will address both deductive and inductive inquiry. Through the assignments, students will be exposed to various methodologies of sociological inquiry, placing particular focus on qualitative methods. Fifthly, students are required to 5) **read and write extensively** which should help them expand their critical thinking skills and analytical abilities. Lastly, the course will help the students develop 6) **personal philosophy of life** which should be reflective of enhanced and more complex and nuanced understanding of the social world that they inhabit.
**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism**

Cheating, Plagiarism and fabrication of information or citations are strictly forbidden. Plagiarizing students will fail the class, regardless of circumstances. Please read carefully BC's policy on academic integrity: [http://www.bc.edu/integrity](http://www.bc.edu/integrity)

*Policies on bringing personal computer*

You can bring your computer to the class for note-taking purpose only (Except for your presentation). If you decide to bring your computer to the class, I will ask you to e-mail me bi-weekly your class notes. Please send me an e-mail, if you plan to bring your computer to the class.
Course Outline
Preliminary Schedule-subject to change

Week 1: Introduction to Sociology
Tuesday, January 18th
Introduction and Course Overview

Thursday, January 20th
What is Sociology? How Do Sociologists Understand the World?

Readings:
* Alexander and Thompson “Sociological Stories and Key Concepts” (P4-27)
  Berger, Peter. “Invitation to Sociology”
  Lemert, Charles C. “Introduction” Social Things
  Ruane & Cerulo, “Introduction: the Sociological Perspective” Second Thoughts

Week 2: Tools for Theorizing about the Social World (January 25, 27)
Tuesday, January 25  DISCUSSION LEADER SELECTION DUE
The Sociological Imagination

Readings:
  C. Wright Mills, “The Promise” (*Ferguson, P1-7)
  Lemert, Charles C. Ch.1 “Imagining Social Things, Competently” Social Things

Choose one reading from below:
  Donna Gaines, “Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia’s Dead-End Kids” (*Ferguson, P7-19)
  Mary Romero, “An Intersection of Biography and History: My Intellectual Journey” (*Ferguson, P19-33)

Thursday, January 27
Socialization & Social Construction of Identities, Methods of Sociological Inquiry

Readings:
  *Alexander and Thompson Ch 5 “Socialization and the Life Cycle” (P121-147)
  *Alexander and Thompson Ch 2 “Sociological Methods” (P30-61)
  Lisa J. McIntype, Ch 10 “Socialization” The Practical Skeptic: Core Concepts in Sociology

Week 3 Gender (Feb 1, 3)
Tuesday, February 1
Social Construction of Gender and Gendered Stratification

A lecture followed by the film: “Tough Guise” (80 min)

Readings:
  *Alexander and Thompson Ch 9 “Gender” (P269-297)
  Barbara Riesman, “Gender as Structure” (*Ferguson, P295-304)
  Judith Lorber, “Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender” Ch Seeing Ourselves

Recommended:

**Thursday, February 3rd**
Completing the film “Tough Guise,” followed by **discussion leader presentation 1**

**Readings:**
- C.J. Pascoe, “Dude, You’re a Fag?” (*Ferguson, P305-313)
- Amy Young et al., “Drinking Like a Guy” Frequent Binge Drinking Among Undergraduate Women” (*Ferguson, P314-330)

**Week 4: Culture (Feb 8, 10)**
**Tuesday, February 8th**
How does Culture Influence our-selves and our self-representations and body? How is culture gendered?

A lecture, a film (“The Strength to Resist” 25 min) and discussion of the readings

**Readings:**
*Alexander and Thompson Ch 3 “Cultural Structures” (P64-85) (You can finish it by Thursday)*

**Choose two readings from below**
- Laura Miller, “No body is exempt: Beauty compulsion and resistance in Japan.” *Storytelling Sociology: Narrative as Social Inquiry*

**Thursday, February 10th**
How does culture influence our society? What is subculture? What is the role of advertising in influencing/reproducing culture?

A film (“The Merchants of Cool” 30 min, first half) followed by **discussion leader presentation 2**

**Readings:**
- Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson, “Nike Culture: The Sign of the Swoosh”
**Week 5: Race and Ethnicity (Feb 15, 17)**

**Tuesday, February 15**

Social Construction of Race

A film (in class): Race: The Power of an Illusion, The Difference Between Us (56 minutes) followed by a lecture

**Readings:**

* Alexander and Thompson Ch 10 “Race & Ethnicity” (P299-329)
* Ruane and Cerulo, Essay 14: Conventional Wisdom Tells Us…America is the Land of Equal-Opportunity *Second Thoughts*

**Thursday, February 17**

A lecture followed by **discussion leader presentation 3**

**Readings:**


Recommended:

* Katherin M. Flower Kim, “Out of Sorts: Adoption and (Un)Desirable Children” (*Ferguson, P371-384)

**Week 6: Social Class and Inequality (Feb 22, 24, and March 1st)**

**Tuesday, February 22nd**

A lecture and Midterm Evaluation

**Readings:**

* Alexander and Thompson Ch 8 “Inequality” (P239-267)
* Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (1848) Ch 11 in *Seeing Ourselves*
* Max Weber, “Class, Status, Party” in *Social Theory* edited by Charles Lemert (P115-125)

**Thursday, February 24th**

A film (in class): Waging a Living (75 minutes)

**Readings:**

* Kingsley et al., “Some Principles of Stratification” (*Ferguson, P247-256)

**Tuesday, March 1st**

**Discussion leader presentation 4**

**Readings:**

Barbara Ehrenreich, “Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America”(*Ferguson, P282-295)

Thursday, March 3: Midterm Exam in Class!

*Spring Break (March 7 – March 11th) No Class!

Week 7: Health and Medicine (March 15, 17)
Tuesday, March 15
A lecture followed by a film (in class): Sicko

Readings:
*Alexander and Thompson Ch 14 “Health & Medicine” (P427-453)
David A. Karp, “Illness and Identity” (*Ferguson, P547-560)

Recommended:
Emile Durkheim, “Suicide and Modernity” Social Theory edited by Charles Lemert (P74-82)

*For people who are not comfortable with Michel Moore’s views, you can watch alternative videos online:

“Sick around America” PBS 2009 at

“Sick around the World” PBS 2008 at
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/sickaroundtheworld/view/

Thursday, March 17th
Completion of the film followed by discussion leader presentation 5

Readings:
Lillian B. Ruben, “Sand Castles and Snake Pits” (*Ferguson, P527-P534)

2 online articles:
Drew Amstrong “Insures Gave U.S. Chamber $86 Million Used to Oppose Obama’s Health Law” Bloomberg Nov, 2010 at
Week 8: Economy and Work (March 22, 24)
Tuesday, March 22nd

Readings:
* Alexander and Thompson Ch12 “Work and the Economy” (P365-393) (You can take until Thursday to finish this reading).
  Karl Marx, “Alienated Labor” (1844) Ch 46 in Seeing Ourselves

Thursday, March 24
Discussion leader presentation 6

Readings:
  Robin Leidner, “Over the Counter McDonald’s” (*Ferguson, P474-488)

Week 9: Politics and the State (March 29, 31)
Tuesday, March 29

Readings:
* Alexander and Thompson Ch 17 “Politics, Publics and the State” (P511-537)
  C. Wright Mills, “The Power Elite” (*Ferguson, P399-406)
  Recommended:
    Max Weber, “The types of legitimate domination” in Social Theory edited by Charles Lemert

Thursday, March 31
Discussion leader presentation 7

Readings:
  One more reading (TBA)

Week 10: Mass Media (April 5, 7)
Tuesday, April 5
Mass Media and Cultural Industry
A lecture and
a film: Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land: U. S. Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Readings:
* Alexander and Thompson Ch 4 “Media and Communication” (P91-119)
Recommended:

Thursday, April 7
Completion of the film followed by discussion leader presentation 8

Readings:
- Gregory Mantsios, “Media Magic: Making Class Invisible” (*Ferguson, P433-441)
- Barry Glassner, “The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things” (*Ferguson, P61-68)
- Brigitte L. Nacos and Oscar Torres-Reyna, “Muslim Americans in the News before and after 9/11” (*Ferguson, P441-453)

Week 11: Consumer Culture and the Reproduction of Class and Inequality (April 12, 14)
Tuesday, April 12
A lecture followed by a film: People Like Us

Readings
- Thorstein Veblen, “Conspicuous Consumption” (1899) The Consumer Society Reader
- *Revisit Alexander and Thompson Ch 8 under “Culture and Inequality” (P258-264), Ch 3 under “Class, Culture, and Genre” (P85-88)

Thursday, April 14
Completion of the film followed by discussion leader presentation 9

Readings
- Juliet B. Schor, Chs 2 “Communicating with Commodities”, The Overspent American

Week 12: Globalization and Development (April 19, 26 and 28)
Tuesday, April 19
What is Economic Globalization/Neoliberal Development?

Readings:
- One more reading (TBA)

*Easter Break (April 21st to April 25th)
Globalization and Development (continues)
Tuesday April 26

Film (in class): “Life and Debt”

Readings:
Joseph E. Stiglitz, “Broken Promises” Ch 2 in Globalization and Its Discontents

Thursday, April 28
Resistence and Alternatives to Globalization

Completion of the film followed by discussion leader presentation 10

Readings:
Harriet Friedmann, Ch 1 “Remaking Traditions: How We Eat, What We Eat and the Changing Political Economy of Food” Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain (P36-58)
Joseph E. Stiglitz, Ch 9 “Way Ahead” in Globalization and Its Discontents

Recommended:
(Also see http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/index.php?cd_language=2&id_menu=)

Tuesday, May 3rd
Review and Wrap-Up

Final Exam on Thursday, May 5th, during the last day of the class!