Syllabus: Sociology 001

Intro to Sociology

Fall 2012

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-2:45
Campion 231
Professor: Betsy Leondar-Wright (betsy@classmatters.org • 781-648-0630)
Office hours: Tuesday 12:45-1:20 and Thursday 3-3:30 pm in McGuinn 426D.

Required textbooks:
Conley, Dalton, You May Ask Yourself, Second Edition
Sternheimer, Karen, Everyday Sociology Reader

If the cost of buying the books poses a hardship for you, please notify the professor.

Overview:

To think like a sociologist is to change your perspective on every aspect of human life and behavior. When you use the sociological imagination, opinions and actions that seem individual turn out to have a social context, and social norms and institutions that seem natural or inevitable turn out to be socially constructed. While sociology may seem like an easy subject because so many of its topics are already familiar to you, in fact it’s a challenge to adopt this new way of looking at social life.

This overview course will introduce you to many of the big ideas and recurring themes in sociology. While each topic will get only a brief focus, you will learn enough about the foundations of each one to enable you to take advanced and specialized social science courses with confidence.

By spanning the two centuries from the earliest sociological theorists to today’s controversies about race, class, gender, family roles, religion, the media, education, crime, health care, globalization and the role of government, the course will enable you to apply social theory to whatever social problems concern you.

The course will also give you some tools to ask your own questions about any social phenomena that spark your curiosity. You will get opportunities to practice sociological methods to answer research questions.
SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS

Tuesday September 4 – Starting with the stories of our names

Thursday September 6 – Are there totally individual decisions and natural behavior?  
*Reading:* Conley, “What’s in a name?” pp. 84-85

Tuesday September 11 – The sociological imagination; Course overview  
*Readings:*  
• Conley, Chapter 1, “Sociological Imagination,” pp. 3-38  
• Mills, “The Promise,” pp. 3-6 in Sternheimer

Thursday September 13 – Sociological methods; Sign up for presentations  
*Readings:*  
• Conley, Chapter 2, “Methods,” pp. 41-69 (EXCEPT for pp. 52-53)  
• Conley excerpts, pp. 198-199 and 552-553

Tuesday September 18 – Measurement and statistics in sociology  
*Readings:*  
• Conley pp. 52-53  
• Best, “Scary Numbers,” pp. 15-22 in Sternheimer

Thursday September 20 – Culture and public portrayals of society  
*(There will be substitute instructor for first half of class.)*  
*Reading:* Conley Chapter 3, “Culture and Media,” pp. 71-2

Tuesday September 25 – Consumer behavior as more than individual choices  
*Readings:*  
• Veblen, “Conspicuous Consumption,” pp. 27-30 in Sternheimer  
• Schor, “The Visible Lifestyle,” pp. 31-37 in Sternheimer  
• Conley, pp. 102-109

Thursday September 27 – How is “normal” created?  
*Reading:* Conley, Chapter 4 “Socialization and the Construction of Reality,”  
pp. 111-141; ok to skip pp. 131-137

Tuesday October 2 – “Face work” and the public self  
*Readings:*  
• Goffman, “Impression management,” pp. 49-56 in Sternheimer  
• Wright, “Grocery shopping,” pp. 57-58 in Sternheimer  
• Conley, pp. 131-137

Thursday October 4 – Friendship, romance and the intimate realm as socially constructed  
*Readings:*  
• Conley, Chapter 5 “Groups and Networks,” pp. 154-169  
• Wright, “Romantic exchanges,” pp. 77-79 in Sternheimer

Tuesday October 9 – Deviance  
*Reading:* Conley, Chapter 6, “Social Control and Deviance,” pp. 177-223

Thursday October 11 – Midterm exam; Midterm evaluation of course

Tuesday October 16 – Overview of stratification  
*Reading:* Conley, Chapter 7, “Stratification,” pp. 227-263

Thursday October 18 – Gender roles and stratification  
*Readings:*  
• Conley, Chapter 8, “Gender,” pp. 265-30  
• West and Zimmerman, “Doing Gender,” pp. 175-182 in Sternheimer
Tuesday October 23 – The family as a social institution
Reading: Conley, Chapter 12, “Family,” pp. 427-467

Thursday October 25 – Class stratification
• Sternheimer, “Class Consciousness,” pp. 154-156 in Sternheimer

Tuesday October 30 – Arguments over why poor people are poor
Reading: Conley, Chapter 10, “Poverty,” pp. 355-385

Thursday November 1 – The economy as a set of social institutions
Readings: • Conley, Chapter 14, “Capitalism and the Economy,” pp. 511-543
• Marx, 2 excerpts on Blackboard site

Tuesday November 6 – Racial stratification and the social construction of race
Readings: • Conley, Chapter 9, “Race,” pp. 307-353
• Omi and Winant, “Racial Formation,” pp. 211-224 in Sternheimer

Thursday November 8 – Immigrants; Election discussion
Readings: • Inniss “Black Ethnicity,” Sampson, “Rethinking Crime and Immigration,”
and Raskoff, “Statistics and Myths about Immigrants,” pp. 310-234 in Sternheimer

Tuesday November 13 – Health, science and the environment
• Conley, Chapter 17, “Science, The Environment and Society,” pp. 629-665

Thursday November 15 – Education as a set of social institutions
Readings: • Conley, Chapter 13, “Education,” pp. 469-509
• Kozol, “Hitting Them Hardest,” pp. 262-273 in Sternheimer

Tuesday November 20 – Government as a set of social institutions
Readings: • Conley, Chapter 15, “Authority and the State,” pp. 545-581
• Weber, “Bureaucracy,” pp. 84-86 in Sternheimer

Thursday November 22 – NO CLASS – Happy Thanksgiving

Tuesday November 27 – Religion as a set of social institutions
Readings: • Conley, Chapter 16 “Religion,” pp. 583-627
• Lowney, “What is a cult,” pp. 292-293 in Sternheimer
• Durkheim excerpts on Blackboard site

Thursday November 29 – Social change and civic engagement

Tuesday December 4 – Social movements & other deliberate efforts to change society
List of potential final exam questions will be distributed
Reading: Conley, Chapter 18, “Collective Action,” pp. 667-703

Thursday December 6 – Q&A re final exam; Wrap-up - No reading

Monday December 17 at 12:30 – Final exam
Course Expectations

1) The readings are an important part of the course. Readings are due on the date they are listed. Please come to class ready to discuss them and do exercises based on them. You may be called on and asked to summarize the main points of a reading whether or not you raise your hand.

2) Class participation is also important, as this course involves learning by doing and discussing. Both speaking and focused listening will be valued; either too much silence or too much over-participation (dominating discussions) could negatively affect your grade.

Looking at or listening to unrelated content on a screen (laptop, phone, iPod, etc) during class will lower your grade by 2 points per offense. Offline laptops may be used for taking notes only; all other devices must be turned off during class sessions. Repeated violations may result in disallowing all laptops for note-taking as well.

3) Presentation in pairs on a supplemental article
Pairs of students will sign up to read one extra article in the Sternheimer book or another extra article and together do a 5-minute presentation to teach the article’s main points to the class, using a visual aid such as a bulleted list, timeline or diagram (on the board, via Powerpoint or a handout). The two of you can divide up the preparation and presentation any way you want, as long as both read the article and both speak in front of the class.

4) Practicing sociology
A list of small sociological research options is posted on Blackboard; hard copies will be distributed in the second week of the course. Each student is required to do two of them, posting submissions on Blackboard by the due date. More may be done for extra credit of 5 points towards your final grade per research project. Late submissions are discouraged; the grade will drop by two points per day late. Submissions will be graded on completeness, thoughtfulness, and incorporation of course concepts.

5) Midterm exam – Multiple-choice test on October 11. The concepts most emphasized in the required readings and in the reading-review questions at the beginning of class will be covered.

6) Final exam – A list of essay questions will be handed out on December 4. Three of them will appear on the exam on Monday December 17 at 12:30.

Absences: If you miss a class session, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate. More than two unexcused absences will lower your grade by 3 points per absence. A doctor, clergy member, school administrator, or other certified official must verify an absence in order for it to be excused on the basis of illness, death or hospitalization in the family or other emergency (defined as an unforeseen and unavoidable crisis) or religious holiday. Notes from family members will not be accepted.

If you have a special circumstance that makes a non-medical excused absence likely (e.g., if you have a required trip for an internship), please let me know at the beginning of the semester; don't wait until you actually miss a class.

Arriving 5 to 15 minutes late counts as a half-absence; arriving more than 15 minutes late counts as a full unexcused absence.
GRADING

Grades will be calculated on a 100-point scale:
- Participation in class sessions 10%
- Practicing sociology (2 @ 15% each) 30%
- Presentation of article summary (joint grade with partner) 10%
- Midterm exam (October 11) 20%
- Final exam (December 17) 30%

Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-85</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-81</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-77</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-73</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-69</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62-65</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-61</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54-57</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53-00</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policy on students’ opinions

The classroom exercises and discussions sometimes invite you to put forward critical opinions. Feel free to try out views new to you or ones you aren't sure you actually agree with. If you disagree with the professor or with the author of a reading, you will not be graded more strictly for that; if you agree, you will not be graded more leniently. All positions you take will be evaluated by whether you have used evidence-based reasoning.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity standards are of utmost importance in this course. Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the BC website at:

http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity

Outright plagiarism of a written assignment or cheating on the midterm exam will result in failing the course and notification of the dean. Lesser degrees of noncompliance with BC’s policies on academic integrity will result in a lower grade on the assignment in question. It is your responsibility to know the rules of citation. If you have any questions pertaining to the academic integrity guidelines, please come and talk with the professor.

Disability accommodation

Students needing a change in the time, location and/or format of the midterm exam due to a disability, or needing any other disability accommodation, should inform the professor at the beginning of the semester. For more information, please see http://www.bc.edu/offices/odsd/disabilityservices.html or call the Dean for Students with Disabilities at 617-552-3470.