INTRODUCTORY SOCIOLOGY
SC 001.02
BOSTON COLLEGE
Fall 2013

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociology could be defined as the scientific study of human society, ranging from the smallest of social interactions to the functioning of global society. This course is designed to introduce you to the study, theory, and methods of sociology. As humans, we are inherently social creatures and thus any aspect of our lives can be examined through sociological investigation. In this course we will examine connections between the individual and society, structures of power, social institutions, and social change.

As a Boston College core course, Introductory Sociology will also incorporate the following elements and objectives:

1) **An exploration of perennial questions of human existence**, such as: What is society, and what is the individual’s place within it? To what extent are we free agents and to what extent are our choices, behaviors, and preferences determined and influenced by society? How can sociology inform our understanding of how we and others affect, and are affected by, social institutions and structures? Why do some groups in society have more power than others, and how can we resist what is unjust and bring about social change?

2) **Attention to cultural diversity**. In this course we will consider in depth how race, class, gender, sexuality and other dimensions of human diversity contribute both to the individual’s experience within society and to the organization and characteristics of the society itself. As we will be considering perspectives that may not be familiar to you and will be discussing sensitive subject matter, I ask that you always treat your fellow classmates with respect and compassion, focusing your critical comments on students’ arguments—never on the students themselves.

3) **A historical perspective**. While much of sociology consists of the study of contemporary issues, it is also critical to understand how we got to where we are today. Sociological thought and theories, as in other disciplines, have evolved over time and will continue to do so. Thus, we will consider both how society has changed
over time and where it might be headed in the future, as well as the history and development of the sociological discipline itself.

4) **An introduction to methodologies of the field.** In the beginning of the semester we will learn about some of the most common methodologies used in sociology. Throughout the course, as we read various sociological publications, we will consider which methods the researchers have employed and why.

5) **A strong writing component.** College is a great opportunity to develop and improve your writing skills. Good writing is critical in all academic disciplines and written assignments will be an essential component of this class. On your assignments, I will aim to provide you with feedback that will help you improve the structure, clarity, and impact of your arguments.

6) **A contribution to the development of a personal philosophy.** One of the central aims of this course is to challenge you to think more critically about your position in society—how your background, race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, health, and so on influence your goals, beliefs, experiences, and interactions with both other individuals and social institutions. In other words, I will ask you to draw on C. Wright Mills by asking, what are the links between the “personal” and the “public”? In answering these and other questions, you will often be asked to question fundamental and “common sense” assumptions. You may find yourself developing a more nuanced way of thinking about your position in society, as well as a more complex understanding of the functioning of societies and the potential of individuals to make substantial and lasting changes within them.

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS**


*Note: All required course materials can be purchased at the BC bookstore, and they are on course reserves at the O’Neill library.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

| Attendance/Participation/Oral Presentations | 15% |
| Quizzes (unannounced) | 10% |
Sociological Autobiography 20%
Midterm Research Paper 25%
Final Exam 30%

DEFINITION OF LETTER GRADES
A = 95; A- = 90; B+ = 88; B = 85; B- 80; C+ = 78; C = 75; C- = 70; D+ = 68; D = 65;
D- = 60; F = 59 and below

Attendance

Students are required to attend and participate in every class. Unexcused absences will result in a
deduction of one’s attendance/participation grade. **Students can make up attendance &
participation points for excused absences by submitting a typed written summary of the
readings assigned for the missed classes up to three times.** Beyond three absences, reading
summaries may be submitted for partial credit. If you believe that you will miss more than three
weeks of classes (more than 9 classes) for any reason, you should choose a different class;
otherwise you will fail the course.

Class Participation

The class format is lecture and discussion based. Students should prepare for class discussion by
carefully reading and writing notes/outlines on the assigned readings before coming to class.
Class participation encompasses attendance and quality of interaction with the class. High
quality participation includes listening carefully and responding thoughtfully and respectfully to
others’ ideas, as well as expressing one’s ideas and/or questions about course content in class.

Oral Presentations

Students are required to do **TWO oral presentations** covering the reading assignments on two
different assigned days throughout the term. The presentation should be 5 minutes and include a
**brief summary and critical assessment of the readings.** Students should also come up with
**two discussion questions** to lead class discussion (on the day he/she is presenting) and **email
them to the professor before 9PM the day before the scheduled presentation.** Students will sign
up for presentations during the first two weeks of the term.

To prepare for the “Oral Presentations” students can answer all of the following questions:

1) What are the main arguments in each reading and what support or evidence is given
for the author’s claims? Do you find them strong or weak? Explain why.
2) What are new theories or concepts discussed by the author(s)? **Can you apply these
theories or concepts to current events or to your own life and history?**
3) How can sociology (specifically what you have learned in the readings) inform our
understanding of how we and others affect, and are affected by, social institutions and
structures?
Quizzes

There will be several short unannounced quizzes throughout the semester covering any of the course readings assigned up until the day of the quiz.

Writing Assignments: Guidelines & Grading Criteria

There are two major writing assignments required in this course. Papers are to be submitted at the BEGINNING of the class, on the date they are due. Anything handed in after the start of class is considered to be one day late. Papers will be accepted late, but they drop one letter grade for each day that they are late. Students should carefully write AND rewrite essays before handing them in to the instructor. It is the student’s responsibility to ask questions if the assignment’s expectations are not understood. NO re-writes are given. Students are encouraged to take drafts of papers to the writing tutors at the Connors Family Learning Center. Since you are learning to write academic papers, your grade will reflect your use of appropriate grammar, style, and organization. You will also need to use proper citation and quotation practices, using the format described in A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers, Chapter 4 (O’Neill Library reserve).

Most importantly, while you are required, on written assignments, to show familiarity with readings assigned for this class, you must do so in ways that properly acknowledge ideas and phrasing that did not originate with you.

Proper acknowledgement that avoids plagiarism requires you either to (1) substantially rephrase and rewrite arguments obtained from others, or (2) directly quote from your source. In the first cases, you should provide the author and date in the text (e.g., Smith, 2004). In the second case, you should enclose the borrowed material in quotation marks and provide author, date, and page number in the text (e.g., Smith, 2004, p. 10). It is necessary to acknowledge not only published documents, but also material appearing on web sites and in unpublished sources.

SOCIIOLOGICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY – **DUE: FRIDAY, OCT. 11**
(4-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 point font)

“Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.... No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey.... The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two in society.... For that imagination is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another— from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessments of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self— and to see the relations between the two.” -- C. Wright Mills.

Write an autobiographical essay describing the intersection between your biography and history using your “sociological imagination” as discussed in C. Wright Mills’ essay “The Promise” (See Sternheimer text, p. 3-6). What sociological factors have shaped your life so far?
Specifically think about your historical background, race, ethnicity, class, economic status, gender and/or sexual orientation. How have any of these factors or the intersection of any of them given you advantages or disadvantages throughout life? What factors have shaped your parents’ lives, and how have those impacted your life? (To begin with, you may want to think about the privileges associated with attending a prestigious university). Keep your essay focused to a few key events or moments in your life. Use at least THREE sociological concepts, ideas or definitions from course texts AND lectures to explain specifically how they apply to your life or help your understand it sociologically. Be sure to use proper citations.

MIDTERM ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PAPER
(6-7 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 point font)

Ethnography or participant-observation is a social science methodology researchers use to study people as they go about their everyday lives. The ethnographer writes detailed field notes about what he/she observes and learns about the social, cultural, physical and/or emotional text of a social space, while at the same time participating in the daily life of people. Afterward, he/she analyzes the data/field notes using sociological concepts to find relevant sociological themes or patterns.

Become an ethnographer for a day [or at least 5 hours] and immerse yourself in a social space of your choice! (In the past, students have chosen to analyze the behavior of shoppers in various stores e.g. Target, Victoria’s Secret, of commuters on public transportation, of fans at a baseball game, of worshippers at a Pentecostal church service, of diners at restaurants, of doctors and patients in a hospital emergency room, and of teenagers in a movie theater ticket line.)

MIDTERM DUE DATES:
1) Research Field Site (where you’ll be conducting research): *WED., OCT. 18*
2) Field Notes – typed observations of your research: **FRI., NOV. 1**
3) Midterm Research Paper: **FRI., NOV. 15**

FINAL EXAM - Students will have a comprehensive in class essay exam covering all the readings, lectures and class discussion materials on the final exam day scheduled for the course. Final review questions will be handed out a couple weeks before the exam date.

Make-up Assignments/Exams: The university requires that make-up exams be given only in exceptional circumstances. They may be negotiated ONLY in the event of an excused absence constituted by: (1) an EMERGENCY, defined as a death in the family or a contagious/incapacitating illness, or (2) an out-of-town sports event for players. In such cases, you will need to produce a note from University Health Services, your dean, or your coach. If you believe you may have influenza, you are especially encouraged to seek an excused absence as verified by University Health Services.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Boston College values the academic integrity of its students and faculty. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university’s policy on academic integrity: www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html.
If you have any questions, always consult your professor.

Violations of academic integrity will be reported to your class dean and judged by the Academic Integrity Committee in your school. If you are found responsible for violating the policy, penalties may include a failing grade as well as possible probation, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the violation.

**Cheating** is the fraudulent or dishonest presentation of work. Cheating includes but is not limited to: the use of unauthorized aids in examinations or other academic exercises submitted for evaluation; copying from another student’s work; unauthorized cooperation in completing assignments or during an examination; the use of purchased essays or term papers; submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved; dishonesty in requests for make-up exams or for extensions of deadlines for submitting papers.

**Plagiarism** is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one’s own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged.

**Collusion** is defined as assistance or an attempt to assist another student in an act of academic dishonesty. Collusion is distinct from collaborative learning, which may be a valuable component of students’ scholarly development. Acceptable levels of collaboration vary in different courses, and students are expected to consult with their instructor if they are uncertain whether their cooperative activities are acceptable.

**Documented Disability Accommodations**

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, dugganka@bc.edu, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, paulette.durrett@bc.edu, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities, including temporary disabilities. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

*Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus at any point during the course.*
ASSIGNMENTS

We will discuss the following readings on the days they appear below. Please read them before the class day for which they are listed. Bring readings to class each day because we will refer to them in our discussions.

**Week One – Sept. 4 & 6 – Thinking Sociologically and Doing Sociology**
W: SYLLABUS

F: Sternheimer: Ch. 1 (p. 1-24 Mills, Raskoff, Inniss, Wright & Best)

**Week Two – Sept. 9, 11, 13 – Culture, Consumption and Media**
M: Duneier: Introduction: p. 3-14 & Sternheimer: Ch. 2 (p. 25-37 Veblen & Schor)

W: Duneier: The Book Vendor: p. 17-42 & Sternheimer: Ch. 2 (p. 38-46 Sternheimer, Sternheimer & Innis)

F: Duneier: The Magazine Vendors: p. 43-80

**Week Three – Sept. 16, 18, 20 – Stratification**
M: Sternheimer: Ch. 6 (p. 133-156 Perrucci and Wysong, Inniss & Sternheimer)
*Instructions given for Sociological Autobiography Paper

W: Duneier: The Men Without Accounts: p. 81-111 & Sternheimer: Ch.6 (p. 157-170 Kendall and Raskoff)

F: Duneier: How Sixth Avenue Became a Sustaining Habitat: p. 115-154

**Week Four – Sept. 23, 25, 27 – Crime and Deviance**
M: Sternheimer Ch. 5 (p. 105-118 Sternheimer, Wilson and Kelling & Wright) & Duneier: Sidewalk Sleeping: p. 157-172

W: Sternheimer: Ch. 5 (p. 119-132 Parnaby and Sacco & Raskoff)


**Week Five – Sept. 30, Oct. 2 & 4 – Gender and Sexuality**
M: Sternheimer: Ch. 7 (p. 173-196 West and Zimmerman & Barber)

W: Duneier: Talking to Women: p.188-216

F: Sternheimer: Ch. 7 (p. 197-208 Raskoff, Inniss & Raskoff) Duneier: Accusations: Caveat Vendor? p. 217-228

**Week Six – Oct. 7, 9, 11 – Race and Ethnicity**
M: Sternheimer: Ch. 8 (p. 209-226 Omi and Winant & Inniss & p. 227-228 C. N. Le)
W: Duneier: The Space Wars: Competing Legalities: p. 231-252

F: Sternheimer: Ch. 8 (p. 229-242 Waters and Innis)
**SOCILOGICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY DUE**
*Instructions given for Midterm Ethnographic Research Paper*

**Week Seven – Oct. 16 & 18—Race and Ethnic Relations & Inequality**
M: NO CLASS – COLUMBUS DAY

W: Duneier: A Christmas on Sixth Avenue: p. 253-289
**MIDTERM RESEARCH FIELD SITE DUE**

F: Duneier: A Scene from Jane Street: p. 293-311

**Week Eight – Oct. 21, 23 & 25—Identity**
M: Duneier: Conclusion, Afterword and Appendix: p. 312-357 (no presentations)
   Film: Duneier and Brown

W: Film: Duneier on Ethnography

F: Sternheimer: Ch. 3 (p. 47-61 Goffman, Wright & Raskoff)
   Agger: Preface, Thanks for Sharing & Texting, Tweeting and Blogging p. 1-19

**Week Nine – Oct. 28, 30, Nov. 1—Self and Interaction and the Internet Age**
M: Sternheimer: Ch. 3 (p. 62-81 Loe and Cuttino & Wright)

W: Agger: Social Media, Internet Pornography & A Non-Pornographic Public Sphere p. 20-50

F: Library Research Presentation
**MIDTERM FIELD NOTES DUE**

**Week Ten – Nov. 4, 6, 8—Social Institutions**
M: Sternheimer: Ch. 9 (p. 243-261 Hochschild, Innis, Ehrenreich & Wright)

W: Sternheimer: Ch. 9 (p. 262-275 Kozol and C. N. Le & p. 294-298)

F: Sternheimer: Ch. 9 (p. 299-322 Alwin, Inniss & Sampson)

**Week Eleven – Nov. 11, 13, 15—Immigration & Society**
   & Sternheimer: Ch. 10 (p. 323-328 Raskoff and Sternheimer)

W: Golash-Boza: Ch. 1 Roots of Immigration to the United States p. 15-44

F: Golash-Boza: Ch. 2 The Department of Homeland Security and the Immigration
Enforcement Regime of the Twenty-First Century p. 45-80

**MIDTERM DUE**

**Week Twelve – Nov. 18, 20, 22 – Social Problems & Consequences**
M: Film: *AbUSed: The Postville Raid*

W: Film: *AbUSed: The Postville Raid*
F: Golash-Boza: Ch. 3 Racism and the Consequences of U.S. Immigration Policy p. 81-108 & Sternheimer: Ch. 4 (p. 82-86 Weber)

**Week Thirteen – Nov. 25 – Social Problems & Policies**
M: Golash-Boza: Ch. 5 The Immigration Industrial Complex…p. 139-158

W: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS
F: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS

**Week Fourteen – Dec. 2, 4, 6 – Forced Migration and Displaced Populations**
M: Sternheimer: Ch. 4 (p. 87-98 Inniss & Putnam, p. 99-100 Raskoff & p. 101-104 Wright) *Study Guide handout for Final Exam*

W: Agier: Ch. 1 Introduction p. 1-6 & Ch. 2 Bruised Populations p. 7-38

F: Agier: Ch. 3 The Desert, The Camp, the City p. 39-72

**Week Fifteen – Dec. 9, 11 – Marginalized Groups & Asylum**
M: Film: *Home Across Lands*

W: Agier: Ch. 4 The Right to Life & Ch. 5 Conclusion: What Refugees Need is Fame p. 73-104

F: NO CLASS – STUDY DAYS

**Week Sixteen – Dec. 14-21 TERM EXAMINATIONS: SEE UNIVERSITY EXAM SCHEDULE**

FINAL EXAM DAY: IN CLASS ESSAY EXAM***ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE IN ATTENDANCE***