“The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise.”
–C. Wright Mills

This course aims to bring out and nurture your sociological imagination. This sociological imagination intends to show you the relationship of your personal biography with the issues of the society in the socio-historical context that you are living in. By learning to utilize your sociological imagination, you will question your perspectives, beliefs and values on macro and micro level issues ranging from the general structure of the society and the world to everyday interactions between people, critically thinking about what you take as “common sense.” We aim to teach you the tools to understand your life and the society by learning about major paradigms, theories, methodologies and explanations for social phenomena.

Introductory Sociology is part of the Core Curriculum in Sociology. This course will discuss the perennial questions of human existence, introducing you to major topics of inquiry in the field of sociology and basic sociological concepts. These guiding questions include but are not limited to:

What is the society? How does it work? What drives human behavior? What is the “nature” in human nature? How do individuals interact with and/or within the society? Why is the society, the way it is? How do different societies and communities around the world and through time differ or are similar to each other? How are power relationships constructed in the society? Who benefits from these power relations, how and why? What are reasons for social conflict? Is social in/equality inevitable? What is the role of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality in the organization of the society and people's experiences? What is social change and how is it possible? What is “freedom”? What are the limits of our ability to overcome oppression and inequality? What is the meaning of progress?

One of the major questions for sociology is about the existence of universal truths and rules, especially in relation to human beliefs, values and behavior and the societies they live in. In this course we will examine how the effects of historical and cultural contexts result in differences among individuals’ behaviors and choices as well as the structures of the society. This approach will explore how race,
ethnicity, gender, sexuality and other dimensions of human diversity affect social reality of individuals’ experiences and the characteristics of the society, including this one and others around the world. We will always be looking at similarities and distinctions within and across groups, while interrogating seemingly monolithic groups of identities. In addition to the diversity of individuals’ experiences, we will also look at how the socio-historical structures influence the life chances and choices of different groups of people. Therefore, while looking at how society (societies) has changed over time and where it might be headed in the future we will look at the history and development of the sociological discipline and its major paradigms. This course underscores how our understandings of ourselves and our individual identities, shared relationships, societies, structures and institutions are inescapably political, situational, socio-cultural and temporal. By paying attention to cultural and historical context and diversity, we will question taken-for-granted assumptions about seemingly natural and fixed categories, identities and “social facts,” which we take to be “real.” 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.

**Methodologies** are the procedures that are used to guide research. Through this course, you will learn about a variety of tools that sociologists employ for study of the social world. In the beginning of the semester you will learn about some of the most common methodologies used in sociology. We will cover qualitative and quantitative approaches to sociological research. Throughout the course, as we read various sociological publications, we will consider which methods the researchers have employed and why, especially the links between theory and research methods. We will also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of particular methodologies. In particular, this course will consider how researchers approach their topics—how they are influenced by their beliefs and own particular social contexts. We will ask what ethical considerations responsible researchers should use to shape how they do their research.

One of the central aims of this course is to challenge you to think more critically about your position in society—how your background, class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on influence your goals, beliefs, experiences, and interactions with both other individuals and social institutions. In other words, paying attention to the socio-historical context and the relationship between personal biographies and the social structures, I am hoping that you will question your everyday life, your place in the society and your “common sense” assumptions. This questioning will include but is not limited to critical examinations of: how you benefit from and/or are oppressed by your social location; your ideas of freedom and social justice; your vision for yourself and society in the future; and the best ways to realize that vision considering the very real social constraints that bind us all. Doing this, I aim for you to create your own **personal philosophy and sociological perspective**. Through what you learn from this course, I expect you to
understand how you can use sociological tools to analyze your own approach to the world and the social problems you see and determine how you can act most effectively to create personal and social change.

Good writing is critical in all academic disciplines and written assignments will be an essential component of this class. On your assignments, you will be compelled to use your “sociological imagination” in essays for exams and in-class writing. The writing component will help you develop critical thinking skills and to engage the world sociologically. I will aim to provide you with feedback that will help you improve the structure, clarity, and impact of your arguments.

Course Requirements and Grading
Attendance/ Class Participation/ Quizzes (unannounced) 20%
Sociological Autobiography 25%
Midterm 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/ Class Participation/ Quizzes (%20)
Class attendance is obligatory and it is part of your participation grade. The class format is lecture and discussion based. You should prepare for class discussion by carefully reading and writing notes/outlines on the assigned readings before coming to class. It is very important that you read the assigned material for each class, as you will have a hard time following the lecture and the discussion if you do not. 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 your ideas and/or questions about course content in class. In addition, there will be several short unannounced quizzes throughout the semester covering any of the course readings assigned up until the day of the quiz.

Sociological Autobiography Essay (%25)
(4-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font) – Instructions will be distributed later in the semester.

Midterm Exam – Take-home essay (%25)
(8-10 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font) – Instructions will be distributed later in the semester.

Final Exam – In-class (%30)

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**

Academic integrity is a standard of utmost importance in this course. Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the Boston College website at: [http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html](http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html)

*If you have any questions pertaining to the academic integrity guidelines, please come and talk with me for clarification. If you are caught violating Boston College’s policies on academic integrity, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment and the appropriate Dean will be notified in accordance to the rules set forth by Boston College.*

**Disability Statement**

Boston College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and integrated access for students with disabilities to all available academic, social, and recreational programs and activities. Appropriate support and referral services are provided by the Disability Services Office, which serves students with hearing, visual, mobility, medical, and psychiatric disabilities.

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.

**The Classroom as a Safe Space/Ally**

Please note: Introductory Sociology, is a welcoming, supportive and safe environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students.

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

**Assigned Readings**

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


*Note: All required course materials can be purchased at the BC bookstore, and they are on course reserves at the O’Neill library. Online material will be available at the online course reserves page or at a separate link provided in the syllabus.*

**Week One - The Sociological Imagination**

**January 14**

Introduction and Course Overview

**January 16**

Giddens et al., Ch. 1 “What is Sociology?”
Sternheimer, Ch. 1 “Thinking Sociologically and Doing Sociology”

2. *Sociological Theory:* SALLY RASKOFF, Fractals, Theories, and Patterns

**Week Two – Methodology**

**January 21**

Giddens et al., Ch. 2 “Asking and Answering Sociological Questions”
Sternheimer, Ch. 1 contd. “Thinking Sociologically and Doing Sociology”

2. *Conducting Research:* BRADLEY WRIGHT, Where to Sit: Doing Qualitative
3. *Statistics:* JOEL BEST, Scary Numbers

**January 23**


Meyer, Philip. “If Hitler Asked You to Electrocute A Stranger, Would You?” *(available*

**Week Three– Culture, Subcultures and Consumption**

**January 28**

Giddens et al., Ch. 3 “Culture and Society”

Sternheimer, Ch. 2 “Culture, Consumption, and Media”

1. *Consumption*: THORSTEIN VEBLEN, Conspicuous Consumption

Wright, Bradley. “Conspicuous consumption and your iPhone” (available online at http://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2008/09/conspicuous-con.html)

**January 30**


Thornton, Sarah. 1996. “Introduction” in Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital. (available online at course reserves)

**Week Four – Socialization/ Social Interaction/ Identity**

**February 4**

Giddens, Ch. 4 “Socialization and Life Cycle”

Sternheimer, Ch. 3 “Self and Interaction”

1. *Breaching Norms*: BRADLEY WRIGHT, Grocery Shopping, Ordering Whoppers, and Borat

**February 6**

Giddens, Ch. 5 “Social Interaction and the Internet”
Week Five – Stratification, Class and Inequality

February 11

Giddens, Ch. 8 Stratification, Class and Inequality


Sternheimer, Ch. 6 “Stratification”

1. *American Class Structure*: ROBERT PERRUCCI and EARL WYSONG, Class in America

February 13

Sternheimer, Ch. 6 “Stratification”

1. *The Intersection of Class and Race*: JANICE PRINCE INNISS, Class and Race


Week Six– Gender, Sexuality and the Body
**February 18**

Giddens, Ch. 10 “Gender Inequality”

Sternheimer, Ch. 7 “Gender and Sexuality”


**February 20**

Giddens, Ch. 18 “Sociology of Body”

Sternheimer, Ch. 7 “Gender and Sexuality”

1. *Gender as Performance*: CANDACE WEST and DON H. ZIMMERMAN, Doing Gender

2. *Performing Masculinity*: KRISTEN BARBER, The Well-Coiffed Man: Class, Race, and Heterosexual Masculinity in the Hair Salon

**Week Seven - Ethnicity and Race**

**February 25**

Giddens, Ch. 11 “Ethnicity and Race”

Sternheimer, Ch. 8 “Race and Ethnicity”

1. *Constructing Race*: MICHAEL OMI and HOWARD WINANT, Racial Formation, from Racial Formation in the United States

2. *Racial Identity*: JANICE PRINCE INNISS, Black and White or Rainbow Colors: Tiger Woods and the ‘One Drop Rule’

**February 27 (SOCIOCOLICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY ESSAY DUE)**

Du Bois, W.E.B. “Chapter I. Of Our Spiritual Strivings” in The Souls of Black Folk (available online at course reserves)


Sternheimer, Ch. 8 “Race and Ethnicity”

1. *Race Relations*: C. N. LE, Racial Tensions and Living in a Colorblind Society
Week Eight – March 4-6 - Spring Vacation

Week Nine – Groups and Modern Organizations

March 11

Giddens, Ch. 6 “Groups and Modern Organizations”

Sternheimer, Ch. 4 “Community, Organizations, and Social Groups”
1. Organizations: MAX WEBER, Bureaucracy
2. Organizational Failure: JANICE PRINCE INNISS, Bureaucracy: Resistance to Change and Adaptation

March 13

Sternheimer, Ch. 4 “Community, Organizations, and Social Groups”
3. Declining Civic Engagement: ROBERT PUTNAM, Civic Participation
4. Increasing Civic Engagement: SALLY RASKOFF, Beyond Bowling Alone


Week Ten – Social Institutions: State and Religion

March 18 - State

Giddens, Ch. 13 “Government, Political Power and Social Movements”


March 20 - Religion

Giddens, Ch. 17 “Religion in Modern Society”
2. Religion and Deviance: KATHLEEN LOWNEY, What Is a Cult?

Week Eleven – Social Institutions Contnd. : Family and Work
March 25 - Family
Giddens, Ch. 15 “Family and Intimate Relations”

Sternheimer, Ch. 9 “Social Institutions”
1. Families and Work: ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD, The Overextended Family
2. Child Care: JANICE PRINCE INNISS, Who Cares for America’s Babies?

March 27 - Work
Giddens, Ch. 14 “Work and Economic Life”

Sternheimer, Ch. 9 “Social Institutions”
1. Work and the Economy: BARBARA EHRENREICH, White-collar Downward Mobility
2. Work and Social Networks: BRADLEY WRIGHT, Getting a Job: Weak Social Ties and Online Connections

Week Twelve – Social Institutions Contd.: Education

April 1 - Education
Giddens, Ch. 16 “Education and Mass Media”
Sternheimer, Ch. 9 “Social Institutions”
1. Education and Inequality: JONATHAN KOZOL, Hitting Them Hardest When They’re Small

April 3 (MIDTERM DUE)


Week Thirteen– Deviance and Social Control

April 8
Giddens, Ch. 7 “Conformity, Deviance and Crime”


April 10


Week Fourteen - Global Inequality

April 15

Giddens, Ch. 9 “Global Inequality”
Giddens Ch. 19 “Urbanization, Population and Environment"

Golash-Boza, Tanya. 2011. “Ch. 5 The Immigration Industrial Complex” in Immigration Nation: Raids, Detentions and Deportations in Post-9/11 America. Paradigm Publishers (available online at course reserves)


April 17

Easter Weekend

Week Fifteen – Images: Media, Internet and Postmodern World

April 22


April 24


Monahan, Torin. 2011. “Surveillance as Cultural Practice” in The Sociological Quarterly 52: 495-508 (available online at course reserves)

**Week Sixteen – Globalization, Social Movements and Social Change in the Age of the Internet**

April 29

Giddens et al., Ch. 20 “Globalization in a Changing World”


May 1


Look at Website: http://viralgezi.outliers.es/ for “#OccupyGezi: The Power of Images”

**Week Seventeen – TERM EXAMINATIONS: SEE UNIVERSITY EXAM SCHEDULE**

**FINAL EXAM DAY: IN CLASS ESSAY EXAM**

***ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE IN ATTENDANCE***