SOCY100104 Introductory Sociology
Monday/Wednesday/Friday 12:00-12:50
Cushing 210

Instructor: Jeffrey Stokes
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Office: McGuinn Hall 410C
Office Hours: M 1-3, W 11-12, or by arrangement

Social Science core course objectives:
This course is designed to introduce you to sociology, or the study of human society. Together we will discuss the foundations, methods, theory, and various examples of sociological inquiry. Further, we will examine our own lives sociologically, using what C. Wright Mills called the “sociological imagination” to investigate the intersections of the biographical and the historical. As part of the Boston College core curriculum, this course will also include the following objectives:

Perennial Questions. Throughout the semester, we will ask questions such as “What is the structure of our society, and how did it come to be?”, “What is my role in shaping society?”, “Is society fair?”, and “How might society change/be changing?” We will challenge preconceptions about society and ourselves in order to better consider these perennial questions.

Cultural Diversity. We will focus on how race, class, and gender function in society, often as dividing forces. We will also focus on the social construction of these distinctions, with an eye towards challenging preconceptions and promoting social inclusion.

Historical Perspective. Sociology approaches society as a dynamic system, not a static one. We will work to develop a “sociological imagination” to investigate the intersection of the biographical and the historical, as well as the connection between “private troubles” and “public issues”. A historical perspective will help us to better understand how our society came to be as it is, and how we may change it in the future.

Methodology. Sociology is a scientific discipline, with various methodologies we will discuss. We will also use a critical lens to assess and critique methodologies, in order to better understand how sociologists can ask (and answer) what types of questions.

Writing. There will be a strong writing component to this course. The purpose of this course is to promote sociological thinking, and sociological writing goes alongside that. Writing is an important skill, and is also useful in clarifying and furthering one’s thinking. All major assignments in this course will be writing assignments.

Creating a Personal Philosophy. Lastly, this course aims to help you in creating a personal philosophy. Sociology is not merely a scientific discipline, but is a way of viewing the world we live in. This course will challenge preconceived notions and “common sense” knowledge, and should spur critical re-thinking about oneself and one’s place and role in society. The historian Howard Zinn once wrote “You can’t be neutral on a moving train.” This course aims to promote critical thinking about where society is, where it is headed, and what we can/should do to change (or preserve) aspects of it.
Course Requirements:
10% Attendance
10% Class participation (including co-leadership of one class discussion)
20% Paper 1 (Sociological autobiography)
20% Weekly article submissions & responses
40% Paper 2 (Sociological analysis)

Grading Scale:
A+ none at Boston College A 93 – 100% A- 90 – 92%
B+ 87 – 89% B 83 – 86% B- 80 – 82%
C+ 77 – 79% C 73 – 76% C- 70 – 72%
D+ 67 – 69% D 63 – 66% D- 60 – 62%
F below 60%

Assignments:
*Paper 1* will consist of a 5-7 page “sociological autobiography,” where you will use a sociological imagination to assess how your individual biography intersects with history, and where you see a connection between private troubles and public issues.

*Paper 2* will be a 6-10 page sociological analysis of a contemporary social issue, chosen by the student (in consultation with the instructor). This paper should use both assigned and non-assigned sources, and should approach a social question or issue using sociological paradigms covered in the course.

*Article submissions*. Throughout the course of the semester, students will submit a total of 5 articles (or books/videos/etc.) via email to the instructor that pertain to the overarching topic being discussed that week (e.g., gender, or education). Students will also include a brief (2-4 sentences) summary of how the article/book/video relates to the course topic, and why it was of interest to them. Students are free to choose the 5 topic areas they will submit articles concerning, but may not submit more than 1 article per week/topic. Article submissions will be due by 12pm on Wednesday of each week. The instructor may occasionally disseminate articles of particular interest to the class as a whole for in-class discussion, but all submissions will remain confidential and no article summaries will be sent to the class.

Policies:
*Attendance* for this class is expected of all participants. If and when an absence is excused, please provide me with written confirmation thereof (e.g., from a coach, doctor/infirmary, or academic dean).

*Email* is usually the best form of contact for me. I will do my best to answer any questions within 24-48 hours of receipt. Please recognize, however, that response times may be delayed at high-volume periods during the semester. If you have a question for me, *do not wait until the last minute, especially before assignment deadlines*. Please read the syllabus (and any other assignment documents I have given you) before emailing. If you do NOT receive a reply from me within 48 hours, this is because you don’t need me to answer your question. Lastly, if you have an in-depth question, please come to office hours or email me to set up a meeting. I will
NOT send extensive or in-depth reply emails. Email will be used for quick and simple questions only.

Late assignments will be marked down one letter grade for each day beyond the deadline they are submitted. That is, a paper submitted between midnight and 11:59pm the day after the due date will receive at best a B grade. Do not ask me for personal extensions. If you have extenuating circumstances, please submit confirmation thereof (e.g., a note from a coach, doctor/infirmary, or academic dean).

Academic Integrity:
Violations of academic integrity are extremely serious offenses, and will result in automatic course failure. Presenting the work of another as your own is dishonest, wasteful, and will not be tolerated. If at any point during the semester you are having difficulty understanding or completing assignments, please come to me and we will discuss any issues or difficulties; do not try to take the “easy way out.” The full statement on the University’s academic integrity policies is available here: [http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html)

Accommodations:
If you have a documented disability and are 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.

Required Books:


These books are also available on 2-hour reserve at O’Neill Library.

Both of these books are recent editions, and there are often only minor changes from one edition to another. If you decide to purchase an earlier edition of either book, make sure to 1) read the correct chapters, following the author names and titles rather than chapter numbers, and 2) access any readings unavailable in prior editions on your own, either using the reserve copies or borrowing a classmate’s book. Students are responsible for accessing all required readings.

If you need support to buy books, please contact the Montserrat Coalition. Go to Brock House at 78 College Road, call 617-552-8865, or e-mail Paula Dias at paula.dias@bc.edu.
Class Schedule:

**What is Sociology? (Introduction)**

**Week 1**
- Course Introduction and Overview
- Seagull, Ch. 1
- DuBois “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” and “Training Negroes for Social Power”
- Readings, Ch. 1, 2, & 4 (Berger, Mills, Burawoy)

**How do we know what we know? (Methodology)**

**Week 2**
- SEPT. 5: NO CLASS – LABOR DAY
- Seagull, Ch. 2
- Readings, Ch. 8 (Brandt, “Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study”)
- NYT on “What’s the Matter With Polling?”; Pew Research on “Collecting survey data”

**Culture and Socialization**

**Week 3**
- Seagull, Ch. 3 & 4

**The Self and Social Interaction**

**Week 4**
- Readings, Ch. 18 (Goffman, “On Face Work”)
- Reserve: Cooley, “The Looking Glass Self”
- Reserve: Mead, “The Self”

**Stratification, Inequality, & their Reproduction:**

**Part 1) Capitalism & Economic Power**

**Week 5**
- Readings, Ch. 24, 26, & 30 (Marx & Engels, “Communist Manifesto”; Dodson, “Employing Parents Who Can’t Make a Living”; Gans, “Uses of the Underclass in America”)
- John Oliver on Inequality (video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfgSEwjAeno](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfgSEwjAeno))

**Part 2) Political Power & Bureaucracy**

**Week 6**
- Reserve: Weber, “Class, Status, Party”
- Reserve: Domhoff, “Can Anyone Become President of the United States?”
- Readings, Ch. 5 & 31 (Kelman & Hamilton, “The My Lai Massacre: A Crime of Obedience?”; Foucault, “Panopticism”)
- TingoEd, “Bureaucracy” (video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2acoQuo4ppc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2acoQuo4ppc))

**Part 3) Education**

**Week 7**
- Seagull, Ch. 16
- Reserve: Kozol, “Savage Inequalities: Children in U.S. Schools”
- Urban Politico, “The Ivy-in-Chief: Is the Political Establishment Too Elitist?”
John Oliver on Student Debt (video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8pjd1QEA0c)

**Part 4) Cultural Capital**

**Week 8**

OCTOBER 10: NO CLASS – COLUMBUS DAY
Reserve: Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital”
Padte, “Class and the Canine”

***OCTOBER 14: PAPER 1 DUE***

**Gender**

**Week 9**

Seagull, Ch. 10
Reserve: Crittendon, “The Mommy Tax”
Reserve: Pascoe, “‘Dude, You’re a Fag?’: Adolescent Male Homophobia”
Reserve: Benokraitis, “How Subtle Sex Discrimination Works”
The Representation Project “Sexism in News Media in 2012” (video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Py5X_biBOYk)

**Race & Ethnicity**

**Week 10**

Seagull, Ch. 11
Readings, Ch. 22 (Waters, “Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?”)
Louis C.K. on White Privilege (video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87LGmm1M5Is)
Reserve: Hill Collins, “Controlling Images and Black Women’s Oppression”
Reserve: Zhou, “Are Asian Americans Becoming ‘White’?”
Daily Show report on Washington Redskins name (video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoK2DRBnk24)
Butler, “What’s Wrong With ‘All Lives Matter’?”
Chang, “We Can’t Fix Policing Without Talking About Race”

**Deviance and Social Control**

**Week 11**

Seagull, Ch. 7
Readings, Ch. 32 & 33 (Shearing & Stenning, “From the Panopticon to Disney World”; Ritzer, “The McDonald’s System”)
Reserve: Goffman, “Stigma and Social Identity”
Reserve: Durkheim, “The Functions of Crime”
Reserve: Meyer “If Hitler Asked You to Electrocute a Stranger, Would You? Probably”
John Oliver on Civil Forfeiture (video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kEpZWGgJks) and/or Prisons (video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Pz3syET3DY)
Health and Illness

Weeks 12-13
NOVEMBER 23 & 25: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING
Edsall, “Does Moving Poor People Work?”
Krugman, “Life, Death and Deficits” and “Life Expectancy of the Living Dead”
Chang, “Living in a Poor Neighborhood Changes Everything About Your Life”

Families & Aging

Week 14
Seagull, Ch. 15
Reader, Ch. 38 & 39 (Coontz, “The Radical Idea of Marrying for Love”; Stack, “Domestic Networks”)
Gerstel & Sarkisian, “Marriage: The Good, the Bad, and the Greedy”
Reserve: Cherlin, “The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage”
Reserve: Giarrusso, Silverstein, and Bengtson, “How the Grandparent Role Is Changing”
Reserve: Lanutti, “For Better or Worse: Exploring the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community”

Social Movements & Social Change

Week 15
Reserve: Gamson, “Commitment and Agency in Social Movements”
Reserve: Jaffee “Weak Coffee: Certification and Co-Optation in the Fair Trade Movement”
Schradie, “Bringing the Organization Back In: Social Media and Social Movements”
Extra Credit: Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”, or “Science as a Vocation”
***DECEMBER 14: PAPER 2 DUE***

Note: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time, provided that ample warning is given in advance.

If we have any additional time in the semester, the final week of the course will be a conclusion and will cover a topic chosen by the class.