

Introduction to Sociology
Sociology 110-01
Spring 2011
TR 9:40-11:10
Carnegie 305

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Course Description:

Sociology offers a new window on the world we inhabit. It provides a fresh outlook at what seems to be familiar while shedding light at the unfamiliar world. A sociological perspective examines the social context and explores the ways in which people's life chances are shaped by societal forces. Sociology addresses a wide range of issues and questions our common sense understanding of the social phenomenon. It challenges our ordinary perception or personal experiences and proposes a deeper appreciation and analysis of the world.

As a discipline, sociology deals with a variety of topics. Any social phenomenon can be studied from a sociological perspective: socialization, culture, race, ethnic, gender, and class stratification, deviance and crime, economic and global inequality, families and intimate relationships, education, religion, and globalization. Sociology explores minute aspects of social life (microsociology) as well as global social processes and structures (macrosociology).

This course is designed to introduce you to the study of society and what Mills calls the "sociological imagination:" a way of viewing the events, relationships and social phenomena that shape our individual lives and much of our collective experience. Throughout the course we will examine some of the central concepts, theories, and problems that have preoccupied both classical and contemporary sociologists, and gain a sense of how the sociological imagination can illuminate the social forces that have a concrete impact on our everyday lives. This course encourages you to develop your own "sociological imagination," and to apply that perspective to an understanding of your experience and the larger society.

Required Books:

Witt, Jon (2007). *The Big Picture: A Sociology Primer*. McGraw Hill.
Shipler K. David (2004). *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*. Knopf.
Schor B. Juliet (2004). *Born to Buy*. Scribner.

Additional readings may be assigned throughout the semester. It is your responsibility to keep up with the changes announced in the class.

Supplementary Books:

Klinenberg, Eric (2002). *Heat Wave. A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago.* University of Chicago Press.

Kozol, Jonathan (2000). *Ordinary Resurrections.* Perennial.

Pollan, Michael (2007). *Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals.* Penguin Books.

Sandweiss, A. Martha (2009). *Passing Strange.* Penguin Books.

Class Dynamics and Course Requirements:

This course is designed as a seminar. There will be weekly written discussion questions, two exams, one book analysis, individual or group presentations, and in-class activities. Students are expected to attend all classes and complete the readings and assignments before each class period. If you miss a class, you are responsible to get notes and an update from a classmate and to contact me regarding your absence. Contacting me with the reason for your absence does not constitute permission for an excused absence.

Attendance:

I will be taking attendance at the beginning of each class. Attending the class will influence your participation grade.

0 class missing= A

1 class missing= A-

2 classes missing= B

3 classes missing=C

4 classes missing=D

Missing more than four classes will result in no credits for the 10% devoted to attendance and participation. 10% of the grade.

Class Participation: This class will be fairly dynamic and requires students' interaction and involvement. Your regular participation may take the form of raising or answering questions, referring to main points in the readings, offering analysis, giving your informed opinion, and articulating an insightful point. All students are expected to participate in class activities. Students will be randomly selected to present a short summary of the main points from the readings. **Come to the class with your prepared notes to summarize the day's readings.**

Your discussion grade will be based on regular attendance and participation, the amount of participation, and quality of your comments. The quality is judged by demonstrating your in-depth understanding of the readings. However, although you are expected to be actively involved, we need to remember that all students have something important and unique to contribute to class discussion.

Analytical Question:

You are expected to bring daily typed questions/comments/reflections from the readings. You will share these questions not only with me but also with your classmates. I will collect these questions at the end of each class period. Questions written during the class, emailed questions, or late submissions do not count. Your questions will be used as a basis for discussion and analysis of major theories and concepts in the readings. Small groups will be working on choosing specific questions to discuss in more detail. All group members are expected to participate in this activity. Your questions will be evaluated on the basis of their overall quality throughout the semester, the degree of your engagement with the readings, and your creativity in articulating your thoughts. 10% of the grade.

Exams: Exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and short essay questions. The second exam will cover only the material that we have studied following the mid-term. Each exam will count for 30% of the final grade for a total of 60%. Attendance at exams is mandatory. Make-up exams will be allowed only in cases of emergency or extreme conditions and will result in reduced points.

Short Exercises:

There will be short assignments conducted both individually and as part of a group. You are expected to sign up for an assignment by **February 3rd** and complete it before the due date. The number of individuals who may work on each assignment is limited. Feel free to let me know before the deadline which assignment you would like to choose.

Those who have chosen the same assignment will present their findings as a group in the class. Your presentation will be limited to 15-20 minutes, depending on the number of students presenting. While the assigned groups will be in charge of presenting their research, the entire class is expected to explore the assignment on their own (for example, by visiting the websites) to gain a preliminary understanding of the assignment. This will be another area where your participation and contribution to class dynamics counts. Worth 10% of the grade.

The written submission of the assignment is **not** a group activity; rather each person will write a separate paper analyzing their findings. Your exercise reports (and book reviews) will be graded on the basis of the following criteria: **1.** Organization (For example, is the topic adequately introduced, are the ideas connected throughout the paper, and is there a main thesis and concluding remarks?) **2.** Creativity (Does your paper motivate the reader?) **3.** Strength of the argument (Have you developed an argument, is it convincing using adequate data and sociological sources, concepts, or theories?) **4.** Content (The content of your paper shows the depth and breadth of your understanding of the issue, relating it to sociological ideas covered in our readings and discussions, and an overall demonstration of the effort you have put into accomplishing the exercise.) **5.** Style (Please make sure you proofread your final draft, using correct grammar and punctuation.) **6.** Format (Includes correct citation and bibliographic information.) For more information on correct citation of your sources, you may consult ASA Style Guide available on line at <http://www.asanet.org/apap/quickstyle.html>

Book Analysis and Presentation:

This is a two part activity. You need to choose one of the four supplementary books and write a substantive book review. You must sign up for the book during the second week of the class; you may tell me earlier which book you would like to choose. The number of students who can write on a single book is limited. The due date for each book review and presentation is listed on the reading list.

1) After you have chosen your book, those who have selected the same book will work together on a presentation of the entire book. One class session is devoted to this group presentation. Other classmates have not read the book so your panel will need to present the entire book in a way that: 1) clearly conveys the most pertinent issues, ideas, and themes in the book, and 2) engages the entire class in thinking and discussing the relevant issues. Prepare a handout for the class, including the main ideas and key questions. You should aim to connect the book to course material and current events, and engage the class in thinking about the key issues raised in the book. Groups may use videos, media, guided activities, role-playing, films, music, and web resources. In short, be creative by using any activity that you think will better communicate the main ideas of the book and engages your classmates. Working in groups will give you an opportunity to be more creative. Creativity and thoughtfulness is expected in these presentations.

As a group you may divide the tasks and discuss aspects of your final presentation. In short, **Be Creative**. Do not only summarize the reading material. Develop a clear understanding of the author's position, relate it to what we have learned in the class, engage the class, work on organization of your presentation to make sure it flows smoothly, and demonstrate that you have planned and rehearsed.

The last part of the class session is devoted to questions and comments raised by the class. A good presentation will elicit questions in the audience. All group members are expected to be able to address questions raised by the class.

Presentations are assigned for different dates throughout the semester. Please keep in mind the due date for the book you have chosen. Group members may receive different grades on the basis of their performance. The class is expected to grade each presentation at the end.

2) To write your book analysis, you need to briefly summarize the study and the main thesis or themes of the book, discuss the research methodology used for conducting the study, and address the strengths and weaknesses of the work. Have the authors clearly articulated their points? Explain why the book is useful, and the implications of the study. Demonstrate that you have read the book carefully and understand the most pertinent points. Situate the book within the larger sociological literature on the topic by relating it to other perspectives studied in the course. In your evaluation, consider the strengths and weaknesses of the work. Cite examples for each and clearly explain your position and critiques. Note: A well-developed review/critique does not imply an evaluation of the most negative aspects of the book. Rather, it includes both the positive

and the negative aspects of the book supported by examples from the book or other sources. Statements such as, “I didn’t like the book,” or “I didn’t understand the argument,” are not adequate and informed critiques.

You will be graded on the clarity of your writing, evidence of original thinking, and demonstration of your in-depth understanding of the book. Make sure your paper reflects your own thinking and analysis. For more information on evaluation, please see the criteria for short exercises.

4-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, stapled, including page numbers, and bibliography.

Late reviews will be accepted only under extreme conditions and will result in reduced points. Book analysis and presentation 15% of the grade.

Grade will be based on the following criteria:

Daily questions/reflections: 10% of the grade

Attendance: 10%

Exams: Each 30%

Book Analysis and presentation: 15%

Exercise Report and Paper: 5%

Important Dates

February 17 First and second exercises due.

February 24 First Book Review and Presentation. *Heat Wave*.

March 1 First Exam.

March 3 Third and fourth exercises due.

March 10 Fifth exercise due.

March 24 Second Book Review and Presentation. *Passing Strange*.

March 31 Third Book Review and Presentation. *Ordinary Resurrection*.

April 21 Fourth Book Review and Presentation. *Omnivore’s Dilemma*.

May 3 Second Exam.

Reading Schedule

January 25 Introduction

Jan. 27 Witt: Chapter 1, *The Sociological Perspective & the Significance of Place*.

Feb. 1 Witt: Chapter 2 & 3, *The Sociological Imagination & Collecting Data: the Wheel of Science*.

Feb. 3 Witt: Chapter 4, *Big Ideas in Sociology: A Hamburger Is a Miracle*.

Feb. 8 Witt: Chapter 5 & 6, *Labor Power+Tree=Desk & I Think Therefore I Do*.

- Feb. 10** Witt: Chapter 7, *Self and Society*.
- Feb. 15** Witt: Chapters 9 & 10, *Worlds We Live & In Getting Schooled*.
- Feb. 17** **First & Second Exercises Due.** *Analysis of the News Media & How Does Your Representative Vote?*
- Feb. 22** Witt, Chapters 11 & 12, *Keeping the Faith & From Gap to Gucci*.
- Feb. 24** **First Book Analysis & Presentation Due:** *Heat Wave*.
- March 1** **First Exam**
- March 3** **Third and Fourth Exercises Due.** *Gender, Politics and Political Power & The Hidden Curriculum: History, Values, and Socialization*.
- March 8** Witt, Chapters 13 & 14, *Opening Doors & Color Coded*.
- March 10** Witt, Chapter 15, *Sociology Is A Verb*.
Fifth Exercise Due. *Work, Unemployment, and Our Changing Economy*.
- March 12-20** **Spring Break. Have fun!**
- March 22** Schor, Chapters 1-3, *Introduction, The Changing World of Children's Consumption, & From Tony the Tiger to Slime Time Live: The Content of Commercial Messages*, (Pages 9-69).
- March 24** **Second Book Analysis and Presentation Due:** *Passing Strange*
- March 29** Schor, Chapters 4-7, *The Virus Unleashed: Ads Infiltrate Everyday Life, Captive Audiences: The Commercialization of Public Schools, Dissecting the Child Consumer: The New Intrusive Research & Habit Formation: Selling Kids on Junk Food, Drugs, and Violence*, (Pages 69-140).
- March 31** **3rd Book Analysis and Presentation Due:** *Ordinary Resurrection*
- April 5** Schor, Chapters 8-10, *How Consumer Culture Undermines Children's Well-Being, Empowered or Seduced? The Debate About Advertising and Marketing to Kids, & Decommmercializing Childhood: Beyond Big Bird, Bratz Dolls, and the Black Street Boys*, (Pages 141-213).
- April 7** Shipler, Preface and Chapters 1-2, *At the Edge of Poverty, Money and Its Opposite & Work Doesn't Work*, (Pages 3-76).

- April 12** Shipler, Chapters 3-4, *Importing the Third World & Harvest of Shame*, (Pages 77-120).
- April 14** Shipler, Chapters 5-7, *The Daunting Workplace, Sins of the Fathers, & Kinship*, (Pages 121-200).
- April 19** Shipler, Chapters 8-9, *Body and Mind & Dreams*, (Pages 201-253).
- April 21** Shipler, Chapters 10-11, *Work Works & Skill and Will*, (254-300).
- April 26** **4th Book Analysis and Presentation: *Omnivore's Dilemma***
- April 28** **Documentary**
- May 3** **Second Exam.**