

Sociology 102
The Sociological Perspective: An Introduction to Sociology

Wellesley College
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Office Hours: Mon. 1:30-4:00, Wed. 2:00-3:00, & by appointment

Course Description

Sociology is a subject for the endlessly curious. A few examples:

- Just what is so fascinating about those numbers above elevator doors?
- Why do college students receive so many credit card applications?
- Why don't we dress our baby boys in pink or buy them Barbies?
- What makes many people uncomfortable around disabled individuals?
- Why, in this "land of opportunity," do so many hard-working people find it impossible to get ahead? And how is it that others succeed?
- What keeps the "glass ceiling" in place after years of women's social advancement?
- Why, despite our best environmental intentions, do we find it so difficult to resist a materialistic and consumer-driven lifestyle?
- What does it take to bring about social change?

None of these questions is as simple as it seems, but the sociological perspective can help the curious begin to unravel these and hundreds of other dilemmas. Thinking sociologically enables us to make observations and offer insights about the social world that extend far beyond either common sense or explanations that rely on individual quirks and personalities. This course is designed to introduce you to "the sociological imagination" and encourage you to develop this critical capacity to understand how the social world works. Along the way, you will become familiar with a number of key sociological concepts as well as some of the major substantive topics that sociologists study. Finally, you will have the opportunity to analyze a variety of sociological themes as they emerge in some of the most exciting contemporary research on topics such as social inequality, globalization, technological change, and consumerism.

Required Texts

- Required readings for class will be posted in the e-reserves folder of the course conference.
- Each student will select two books for book review assignments (see list on page 3 of syllabus).

Evaluation Measures

- **Regular attendance** and **active participation** are expected. These will account for 10% of the course grade.
- Students will have opportunities to respond in writing to a number of reading assignments. **Response papers** (1 page each) will account for 20% of the course grade.
- Students will complete **two book reviews** (5-7 pages each), each worth 15% of the course grade.
- A **midterm exam** will count for 15% of the course grade.
- The **final exam** will make up the remaining 25% of the course grade.

Reading Response Papers

In order to help you get the most out of your readings and prepare for class, I provide a few reading questions for most of the readings. All of these are good questions for reflection and will help you participate actively in class. During the semester, students will have opportunities to respond in writing to at least 6, but no more than 9, reading assignments. The objective of these writing assignments is to provide you with an opportunity to systematically reflect on the course readings and to think through their possible applications. I will be looking for your comprehension and application of sociological concepts, as well as the ways that you apply critical thinking skills and use the sociological imagination. Thus, these are not simply reading summaries, but require you to respond in a thoughtful and concise way to the readings. You may either base your response papers on one of the reading questions for an assigned reading or you may exercise greater autonomy in responding based on your own interests and creativity.

Reading responses should be no longer than 1 single-spaced typed page. Please use regular margins and 12-point font. Include your name, the date, and the author and title of the reading in the header.

Responses must be handed in during class on the day for which the reading is assigned—because there are plenty of opportunities during the semester, no reflection papers will be accepted after the corresponding class. You may respond to no more than one reading assignment per week. You will choose which assignments you wish to respond to, but you must complete at least 4 responses by March 9. The last day to submit reading responses will be May 4.

I will make every effort to return your responses by the following week, marked according to the following system:

- Ø = Unacceptable. Papers which do not follow the basic instructions or are not minimally adequate will not be awarded any credit.
- √ = Satisfactory. These are responses that meet the requirements of the assignment but may show room for improvement in conceptual comprehension, critical thinking, relevant application of concepts, or written clarity.
- + = Above Average. These are responses that thoughtfully engage the readings and go beyond adequacy in demonstrating clear comprehension *and* relevant application of sociological concepts.

Book Reviews

You will select one book from each of the following lists to read and review. Before writing your review, you will meet with other students who have read the same book for a group discussion. You will need to have finished your book by the time of the book group meeting, and you must bring discussion notes to the meeting. Additional guidelines for preparing your discussion notes and writing your book reviews will be provided.

All of the following books are available for purchase through Amazon.com. They will also be available for purchase at the Wellesley Bookstore. In addition, at least one copy each book is available in the library, and it may be possible to borrow additional copies through interlibrary loan. I encourage you to browse through those that look most interesting to you in making your selections.

Book Review #1—Select a book from the following:

- *Stigma*, by Erving Goffman. 1986, Touchstone.
- *Ethnic Options: Choosing Ethnic Identities in America*, by Mary C. Waters. 1990, University of California Press.
- *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, by Anne Fadiman. 1998, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- *The McDonaldization of Society*, by George Ritzer. 2000, Pine Forge.

Book Review #2—Select a book from the following:

- *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*, by Jay MacLeod. 1995, Westview Press.
- *Sidewalk*, by Mitchell Duneier. 2000, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World is Still the Least Valued*, by Ann Crittenden. 2002, Owl Books.
- *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, by Arlie Hochschild. 2003, University of California Press.
- *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*, by Juliet Schor. 2004, Scribner.

Course Policies

This course will abide by the following **grading system** outlined by the Wellesley College Articles of Government (Book II, Article VII, Section 1):

Grade A is given to students who meet with conspicuous excellence every demand which can fairly be made by the course.

Grade B is given to those students who add to the minimum of satisfactory attainment excellence in not all, but some of the following: organization, accuracy, originality, understanding, insight.

Grade C is given to those students who have attained a satisfactory familiarity with the content of a course and who have demonstrated ability to use this knowledge in a satisfactory manner.

Grade D is a passing grade. There is no grade of D+ or D-.

Grade F denotes failure and a loss of credit for the course.

Academic honesty is expected of all students in accordance with the Wellesley Honor Code. Suspected honor violations relating to course work in this class will be reported to the General Judiciary.

Late papers and exams will not be accepted, except in cases of extreme emergency (such as hospitalization, death of a loved one). Minor illnesses, over-scheduling, and perfectionism do not constitute extreme emergencies. However, if you have had a major disruption in your life and need extra time, I am willing to work with you; in such cases, please make a request as early as possible. Similarly, except for special cases, **I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. More than 4 absences during the semester will result in no credit for class participation.** Please come to class on time.

I will gladly make necessary accommodations for students with disabilities. Those needing accommodations are encouraged to work with either Jim Wice or Barb Burck in the Pforzheimer Learning and Teaching Center in Clapp Library to make appropriate arrangements.

I strongly encourage students to schedule an appointment to meet with me individually in my office at least once during the first half of the semester. This can be either during my office hours or at some other agreed-upon time. If at any point in the semester you are experiencing difficulty with the course material or requirements, please make an appointment to see me.

***Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on the course conference.

Course Outline

Date	Class topic	Read and prepare for class	Important dates
Jan. 30	What is sociology?		
Feb. 2	Introductions; The Sociological Imagination	“The Promise” Mills “The Credit Card” Ritzer	
Feb. 6	The History of Sociology	“Getting Past the Sound Bites” Coontz	
Feb. 9	Sociological Theory & Method	“What is a Social Fact?” Durkheim “Theory & Common Sense” Sears	
Feb. 13		“Doing Social Research” McIntyre	
Feb. 16	Culture & Ethnocentrism	“What does it mean to be human?” Charon “Queer customs” Kluckhohn	Select preference for book review 1
Feb. 20	No class— Presidents’ Day		
Feb. 23	Culture & Ethnocentrism	“Body Ritual among the Nacerima” Miner http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-7294%28195606%292%3A58%3A3%3C503%3ABRATN%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y “Hidden Culture” Hall “The Young, the Rich, and the Famous” Natadecha-Sponsel	
Feb. 27	Socialization	“Learning the Student Role” Gracey “Night to His Day” Lorber	
Mar. 2	The Social Self	“The Presentation of Self” Goffman “Aces and Bombers” Albas & Albas	
Mar. 6	Norms, Symbols, & Social Control	“Rule Enforcement” Caplow http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-9602%28198405%2989%3A6%3C1306%3AREWVMC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0	
Mar. 9		“Barbie Doll Culture” Cunningham “Names, Logos, Mascots, and Flags” Eitzen	Submit at least 4 reading responses by this date
Mar. 13	Wrap Up: Culture, Norms, and Social Control		
Mar. 16	Midterm Exam		Midterm Exam
Mar. 20	No class—Spring	Remember to finish your book before your book group meeting!	
Mar. 23	Break		
Mar. 27	Book Group Meeting	See guidelines for preparing for book group meeting	Book Group Meeting
Mar. 30	Social Institutions		Book Review #1 Due
Apr. 3		“From Badness to Sickness” Conrad & Schneider	Select preference for book review 2
Apr. 6	Power & Authority	“Class, Status, and Party” Weber	
Apr. 10		“The American Upper Class” Domhoff	
Apr. 13	Social Stratification	“Preparing for Power” Cookson & Persell	
Apr. 17	No class—Patriots’ Day		
Apr. 18	Socioeconomic class	“Planning Ahead, Getting Ahead” Sernau “Media Magic” Mantsios	

Apr. 20	Racial & ethnic inequalities	“A Different Mirror” Takaki “On Becoming Chicano” Rodriguez	
Apr. 24	Gender inequalities	“Talking Power” Lakoff	
Apr. 27	Book Group Meeting	See guidelines for preparing for book group meeting	Book Group Meeting
May 1	Social movements & Social change	Reading TBA	Book Review #2 Due
May 4	Globalization	“Technology, Community, and Global Culture” Griswold	Last day to submit reading responses
May 8	Wrap-up & Review		

The final exam will be a self-scheduled exam. Exam period begins May 15 and ends May 19.