

Sociology 102
The Sociological Perspective: An Introduction to Sociology

Wellesley College
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Office Hours: Wednesday 10-12
& 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. In addition to these, each student will select a book for the book review assignment. A list of books to choose from will be provided after course enrollment is finalized.

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.
- A **book group** and **group presentation** will be worth 5% of the course grade.
- Students will individually complete a **book review**, worth 20% of the course grade.
- A **midterm exam** will count for 20% 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 demonstrating comprehension to show use of the sociological imagination in critical thinking and application of sociological concepts.

Book Review

You will select a book, from a list to be provided, 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. Following these meetings, each book group will give an in-class presentation to the other members of the class about their book. A list of books, as well as additional guidelines for preparing discussion notes, planning a group presentation, and writing your book reviews will be provided.

Course Schedule

| Month | Monday | Tuesday | Wed. | Thurs. | Friday | Read & Prepare for Class |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------|---|--|
| J A N | 29 Classes Begin | 30 What is sociology? | 31 | 1 | 2 Introductions & The Soc. Imagination | T – no reading F – “The Promise” Mills “The Credit Card” Ritzer |
| F E B R U A R Y | 5 | 6 History of Sociology | 7 | 8 | 9 Sociological Theory | T – “Getting Past the Soundbites” Coontz F – “What is a Social Fact?” Durkheim “Theory & Common Sense” Sears |
| | 12 | 13 Sociological Method | 14 | 15 | 16 Culture | T – “Doing Social Research” McIntyre “Sense and Nonsense about Surveys” Schuman F – “What does it mean to be human?” Charon “Queer Customs” Kluckhohn |
| | 19 Presiden t's Day | 20 Ethnocentrism | 21 | 22 | 23 Socialization | T – “Body Ritual among the Nacerima” Miner “Hidden Culture” Hall “The Young, the Rich, and the Famous” Natadecha-Spo F – “Learning the Student Role” Gracey |
| | 26 | 27 The Social Self | 28 | 1 | 2 Deviance & Social Control | T – “The Presentation of Self” Goffman “Aces and Bombers” Albas & Albas F – “On Being Sane in Insane Places” Rosenhan “The Code of the Streets” Anderson “Rule Enforcement” Caplow |
| M A R C H | 5 | 6 Social Institutions | 7 | 8 | 9 Social Institutions | T – “From Badness to Sickness” Conrad & Schneider F – “The Good Society” Bellah, et. al. SUBMIT AT LEAST 4 READING RESPONSES BY MARCH 9 |
| | 12 | 13 Wrap-up & Review | 14 | 15 | 16 Midterm Exam | F - MIDTERM EXAM MARCH 16 |
| | 19 | 20 Spring | 21 Break | 22 | 23 | |
| | 26 | 27 Social Stratification | 28 | 29 | 30 Sociopoly | T – “Class, Status, Party” Weber F – “The American Upper Class” Domhoff “Preparing for Power” Cookson & Persell |
| A P R I L | 2 | 3 Socio- economic class | 4 | 5 | 6 Racial & ethnic inequalities | T – “Planning Ahead, Getting Ahead” Sernau “Media Magic” Matsios “As American as Apple Pie” Rank F – “Race as Class” Gans “A Different Mirror” Takaki “On Becoming Chicano” Rodriguez |
| | 9 | 10 Gender inequalities | 11 | 12 | 13 Book Group Meeting | T – “Detours on the Road to Equality” Jacobs “The Glass Escalator” Williams “Pyramids of Inequality” Hays F - BOOK GROUP MEETING APRIL 13 |
| | 16 Patriots Day | 17 Monday Schedule | 18 | 19 | 20 Group presentations | |
| | 23 | 24 Group presentations | 25 | 26 | 27 Social change | BOOK REVIEW DUE APRIL 27 F – “The McDonalidization of Society” Ritzer |
| | 30 | 1 Social problems | 2 Ruhlma n Conf. | 3 | 4 Social movements | T “The Cultural Construction of Social Problems” Griswold F - “Technology, Community, & Global Culture” Griswold “How Social Movements Matter” Meyer MAY 4 IS LAST DAY TO SUBMIT READING RESPONSES |
| M A Y | 7 | 8 Wrap-up & Review | 9 Classes End | 10 | 11 | FINAL EXAM IS SELF-SCHEDULED |

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 family member). Minor illnesses, over-scheduling, oversleeping, 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 attendance and 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.