

Sociology / SOCY 101
Writing-Intensive Syllabus
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Sociology is a social science; the *scientific study* of society. Sociology seeks to understand how human beings live with others. We create social life, including social *structures* and *culture*, which, in turn, shape our individual lives. A sociological perspective keeps “the social” in focus as it asks questions about our everyday existence.

This course is an introduction to sociology. An introductory course surveys the academic discipline or field. This course intends to give you a fundamental grasp of the *subject matter* of sociology. A consistent focus is on the core concepts of culture and social structure; this is highlighted in a “survey” of representative topics: the group and the individual, socialization and the self, the family, gender, and social stratification. The course keeps in focus the *science* of sociology, that is, the logical and objective approach to the subject matter of society.

Methods of Instruction

The course utilizes a mix of instructional strategies. The course is based on small research projects. The projects are sociological excursions into the everyday social world, involving the collection and analysis of empirical data (see accompanying handout). The whole class will serve as a forum for student presentations of research projects that are the basis of a course grade. The outline of a first draft will be presented orally in class. Constructive in-class feedback is intended to guide *revisions* of the first draft. A completed second draft is to be submitted within one week of in-class presentations.

Written work must reference readings in the course text, Intersections: Readings in Sociology, which I have edited (Pearson, 2009). An earlier edition is acceptable. The book has been customized for this course and is sold by the college bookstore; it is assigned to enhance comprehension of the material presented in class. Written work is expected to integrate insights from *the readings*. It should also reference class lectures and discussion, which means that *students should take representative notes in class*. Note taking creates a “student text” that complements the assigned text.

Regular class meetings are in M126 which is a “Smart Room” equipped with Internet capability. This allows access to the Internet for instructional purposes; students are encouraged to utilize the technology in the classroom setting. Smart technology is available to exhibit a range of content from the Internet as well as video including the PBS productions “Growing Up Online”, “The Merchants of Cool”, and “Let’s Get Married”.

Course Grade

- A *course grade* is determined by computing an average of grades assigned to research projects (presentations and written reports). There will be 4 research projects required for completion of the course.
- Contributions to class discussion – defined as enhancing the *group learning experience* - are **factored into the final grade (20%)**. This is based on the 4 in-class presentations of a first draft. A class grade is impacted by behavioral disruptions including the extraneous use of personal technology (**cell phones, iPods, laptops, etc.**).
- Projects must be completed in a timely fashion; this refers both to in-class presentations and written submissions. Students are asked to conference with me if additional time is necessary. Irresponsibility results in grading penalties.
- Course grades conform to the college's grading schedule (see QCC Catalogue or Student Handbook).

Attendance

The college attendance policy is in force, permitting absences that are equivalent to 6 hours of class time (e.g., four 1 hour and 15 minute class meetings). A written explanation is required for excess absences. Persistent lateness must be remedied. Attendance issues also impact on the class participation grade.

Contact

Pertinent questions or comments are, of course, welcome at any time during class. I encourage you to visit my office for matters that pertain to the course. Email is preferred to telephone except during office hours.

Office: M121; days and hours to be announced

Office Telephone: (718) 631-6015

Email Address: Dtricarico@qcc.cuny.edu

TOPIC OUTLINE [With Readings]

1 The Subject Matter of Sociology

- Defining the “social”: social *structures* and social *interaction* (social constraints and social construction)
- Social life is patterned
- “Finding the general in the particular”

READ: Mills, Durkheim, Putnam, Becker, Kraybill

“Least affluent Families Income is Declining”, B. Appelbaum (NYT, 9.5.14); “The Evolution of Trust”, D. Brooks (New York Times, 7.2.14); “The Power of Two”, J.W. Shenk, The Atlantic (6.25.14)

Video: “Growing Up Online” (PBS, 2009); “The Amish in Ohio” (YouTube)

2 Culture, Society, and Socialization

- Culture is the total way of life of a society
- Subcultures: ethnic and youth formations
- Culture as the making of meaning within the social group
- Culture and change: immigrant group assimilation
- The transmission of culture from one generation to another
- Biological capabilities and limitations of human beings
- Agents of socialization
- Secondary socialization and the complexity of modern status passages

READ: Jenkins, Charon, Kraybill, Kinney, Neugarten and Neugarten, Goffman, Tricarico

“TV Lowers Birthrate (Seriously)” by N. Kristof (NYT, 3/20/14); “What is it About 20-Somethings?” by Robin Henig (NYT, 8/18/10)

Video: “The Merchants of Cool” (Frontline, 2001); “Growing Up Online” (“Autumn Edows”).

3 Families

- A biological and a social institution
- Cross-cultural variation in marriage and family
- Mate selection and family formation
- Family change and new living arrangements

READ: Coontz, Ingoldsby

“The New Unmarried Moms” by Hymowitz, Wilcox and Kaye (Wall Street Journal, 3/15/13); “Mom Wants You Married.? So Does the State”, NYT, 8/5/13); “Afghan Lovers’ Plight Shaking Up the Lives of Those Left in Their Wake” (NYT, 5/19/14)..

Video: “Let’s Get Married” (Frontline, 2002)

4 Stratification / American Social Class System

- Types of stratification systems
- Class and status: economic and social ranking (Max Weber)
- Hierarchies of wealth, power, and prestige
- Class and culture: the significance of *life-chances* and *life-styles*

READ: Anderson, Lareau, Ogbu, Tricarico

“Class Matters” (NYT); “Nine Ways to Know You Are Middle Class” (MSN.com); “Race Equality is Still a Work in Progress”, S. Roberts (NYT, 8/23/13); “Least affluent Families Income is Declining”, B. Appelbaum (NYT, 9.5.14); “The Hipster in the Mirror” by Mark Grief (NYT, 11/12/10).

Video: “You Talkin’ to Me?” (NYT); “Intersections: Southern Boulevard, The Bronx” (NYT)