

Sociology 001: Principles of Sociology
From Social Facts to Literary Acts

TR 1:30-2:45, Spring 2005
3005 Lassen Hall

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“Sociology [is] the science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning.”

Emile Durkheim, 1901

“Social science deals with problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within social structures.”

C. Wright Mills, 1959

“Sociology is storytelling.”

Ben Agger, 2000

This is both a sociology course and a course about sociology. First we will sociologically analyze the discipline of sociology: We will ask what sociology is, who sociologists are, and what they do. We will then examine a number of social phenomena (social problems, social processes, and social movements) and discuss the ways that sociologists have studied them and what they have found. We will examine how questions are asked, how they are answered, why the results matter, and how the results are used. Most importantly, this course will ask you to take a careful look at all the assumptions behind our social system and examine society with a critical eye. The emphasis of this course is on rigorous examination of the ideas and issues involved. The course will be in both lecture and discussion format in order to facilitate this focus. Traditionally the classroom is a place where the professor produces or reports knowledge and the students consume this knowledge (and regurgitate it in exams). This course will be different: students are expected to be active participants in the production and interpretation of knowledge and ideas. This will occur through reading, reflection, discussion, and research. The emphasis is on critical thinking and rigorous engagement with the ideas of the course. Thus, there will be no exams. Instead, you are expected to keep up with the readings and participate vigorously in discussion. Students will be evaluated based on several short paper assignments and written lecture responses, as per the outline below.

There are 2 required texts (Hornet Bookstore) and one required reader (online). **Students are expected to keep up on the readings and come to lecture**, where we will discuss the readings. There will be no exams. Instead, students will be given the opportunity to explore ideas and issues in a series of response papers: The emphasis of the course is on ideas.

I am available outside of the office hours above—email me to set up an appointment. ***Please use my office hours!*** The more that people come to raise issues and to ask clarifying questions, the better I can improve the quality of the course. ***Your best bet for a quick response is to email me.*** I check this regularly (usually several times a day).

Required Texts:

- *Online course reader.*
- *Social Things: An Introduction to the Sociological Life.* Charles Lemert 1997.
- *The Vulnerable Planet.* John B. Foster 1999.

1. 1.25 **intro**
1.27

Lemert: pp. ix-50

2. 2.01 **sociology**
2.03

Lemert: pp. 53-119

3. 2.08 **sociology**
2.10

Lemert: pp. 123-191

4. 2.15 **sociology**
2.17

reader: "the promise"

5. 2.22 **education**
2.24

reader: "failing at fairness", "against school"

6. 3.01 **race/city**
3.03

reader: "apartheid", "code of the street"

7. 3.08 **city/race**
3.10

reader: "sprawl city"

8. 3.15 **crime**
3.17

reader: "crime in the news"

FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE BY TODAY.

9. **Spring Break**
3.21-3.24

10. 3.29 **media**
3.31

reader: "corporate media"

11. 4.05 **surveillance**
4.07

reader: "everyday surveillance"

12. 4.12 **immigration**
4.14

reader: "lockdown America"

13. 4.19 **bodies**
4.21

reader: "bodies of law"

14. 4.26 **environment**
4.28

text: *the vulnerable planet*

15. 5.03 **development**
5.05

reader: "stolen harvest"

SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE BY TODAY

16. 5.10 environment continued
5.12 Toward a "conclusion,"

reader: "on reason and freedom"

Catalog description

Introduction to the field of sociology; its basic concepts and principles; the analysis and explanation of culture, personality, social institutions, social change, population, social processes and collective behavior.. This is a General Education course in area D1a.

Learning objectives

1. Demonstrates an understanding of the unique perspective taken by at least one social or behavioral science discipline in its study of sociology. 2. Demonstrates an understanding of the inquiry methods used by sociology. 3. Demonstrates an understanding of the diversity that exists in human societies. 4. Demonstrates an understanding of the contributions to human society of at least two of the following groups: Women, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, gays and lesbians, and persons with disabilities.

COURSEWORK COMPONENTS AND FINAL GRADES:

In accordance with the emphasis of this course (on students as active and critical producers of knowledge rather than passive consumers of knowledge), I have not scheduled any exams. Students' evaluation is based entirely on written work. The reasons for this are manifold, based in part upon the inherent variability in student's abilities at taking exams, the difficulty in expressing critical engagement with a wide body of work in an exam format, and problems with assessing "correct" or "incorrect" responses to queries. Exams are deeply problematic, but written responses to course materials can be as well. This is why the emphasis on this course is for students to grapple with the ideas and concepts of the course as presented in the readings, the lectures, and the classroom discussions. Parallel to this, the coursework components give you an opportunity to respond to each of these levels of work. Because of the focus on grappling with ideas and the difficulty of "getting the right answer" to such a request, there are no grades given to the written work. Each portion of the components are graded as either PASS or NO PASS. Outstanding work will be indicated with a STAR.

There are 3 distinct components of coursework in this course:

28 IN-CLASS COMMENT/QUESTION CARDS (one per lecture with one week off)

7 CLOSE READING ONE PAGE RESPONSE PAPERS (one every other week with one week off)

2 FOUR-PAGE (TYPED DOUBLE SPACED) ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

These coursework components are designed to give you credit for attending lecture, reading, thinking critically about the content of lectures and readings, and writing down your ideas on the content of lectures and readings. The point is to engage with the ideas in the class. All assignments will be assessed as "PASS" or "NO PASS." ***It is very difficult to get a "no pass" on an assignment, unless you clearly do not engage with the readings/lecture, or do not turn in your own work.*** I reserve the right to add new assessment tools to this syllabus, including, but not limited to pop quizzes, exams, or reading journals.

To receive a passing grade (D-) for this course you must submit (on time) at least half of ALL of the assignments for each of the COURSEWORK COMPONENTS (13 cards, 3 response papers and 1 essay). Your final grade is then based upon whether you complete the rest of the assignments for each COURSEWORK COMPONENT or not. Therefore,

To earn a D, you must complete the above PLUS 1 COURSEWORK COMPONENT

To earn a C, you must complete the above PLUS 2 COURSEWORK COMPONENTS

To earn a B, you must complete the above PLUS 3 COURSEWORK COMPONENTS

To earn an A, you must complete ALL coursework components and have your work be CONSISTENTLY OUTSTANDING. This is indicated by a * on the returned assignment. This is not difficult to achieve, but requires more effort than simply doing the "busy work." Grades of C+ or A- (etc.) will be assigned for partial work, partial completion of a component, or for other circumstances. **It is always to your advantage to turn in a partially completed assignment.**

PLEASE NOTE:

- **THERE IS NO NEED TO EXPLAIN YOUR ABSENCE FROM LECTURE — ATTENDANCE IS NOT "REQUIRED."**
- **I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE PAPERS, EMAILED PAPERS, PAPERS PUT IN MY MAILBOX, OR UNDER THE OFFICE DOOR.**
- **YOU CANNOT TURN IN MORE THAN ONE OF ANY COMPONENT PER LECTURE.**
- **PLAGIARISM IS A VERY SERIOUS ISSUE AND WILL BE DEALT WITH FIRMLY.**

COURSEWORK COMPONENT GUIDELINES

The coursework components are designed to give you credit for attending lecture, reading, thinking critically about the content of lectures and readings, and writing down your ideas on the content of lectures and readings. The point is to engage with the ideas in the class. All assignments will be assessed as “PASS” or “NO PASS.”

The **COMMENT CARDS** are to be only a few sentences, thoughtfully responding to the lecture. Write your comments on the 3.5x5 cards provided during each lecture. Though they only need to be a few sentences, they need to be thoughtful and insightful. I will accept personal observations or the relating of personal experiences only if they apply directly to the content of the lecture. I will not accept personal experiences if they are banal and relate only tangentially, or if the relation is not clearly stated. For instance, an acceptable comment card might read: “Racial profiling is certainly a problem, even in Madison. While racial profiling is a national problem, it is also a local one. I was pulled over one time when everyone else on the highway was driving the same speed, but I feel that because I am black I was singled out.” An unacceptable comment card might say “The pigs pulled me over for speeding one time, but I think it was really racial profiling. It sucked, man.”

The **CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENT** is a more in-depth response to the readings, but you are limited to just one page. This is designed to give you an opportunity for more in-depth comment and analysis of the readings for the week. You should stick to just a few ideas and carefully explain your response to them. This should also be typed, double-spaced, and copy-edited. You can only turn these in during lectures that you attend.

The **ESSAY ASSIGNMENT** gives you a chance to engage with an entire section of the course: readings, lectures, and outside material. The essay should be typed, double-spaced, and copy-edited. Treat this as a formal essay of about four pages. It should tie together the readings, lecture, and at least one outside academic source (that is, scholarly journals or books). *Internet sources, newspaper articles, and magazines are not accepted unless you get prior approval.* As with any formal essay it should have an introduction, the substance of your argument, and a conclusion. This **ESSAY ASSIGNMENT** is meant to give you an opportunity to think carefully and deeply about a single topic. Choose one idea or subject that was covered in the readings or discussed in lecture. Think through your approach to the topic: what interests you about it? What do you know already and what do you want to know? Design a question or thesis about the topic, and then search for outside sources. Write up your thoughts on the material you researched in a formal four-page essay. Feel free to use creative forms of presentation.

The following are requirements to get a passing mark on the paper:

- You must use **at least one outside academic source (that is, scholarly journals or books)**. *Newspaper articles and magazines are not accepted as academic sources. You may use them if you get prior approval.*
- You **CANNOT** use internet sources unless you get approval at least a week in advance.
- You **MUST** include a bibliography of your references.