Soc100A: Contemporary Society

9:20-10:20 MWF

Asbury Hall 121

Spring 2012

**Instructor:** Alicia Suarez

**Office:** Asbury Hall 305

**Office hours:** 2:30-3:30 M W; F 1-2 (or by appointment)

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

“(Sociology) should rather cause us to see things in a different way from the ordinary man, for the purpose of any science is to make discoveries, and all such discoveries more or less upset accepted opinions.” Emile Durkheim

In this course, we will gain a sense of the basic theories, topics, and methods of sociology in order to view the world through a sociological lens. We will be challenged to rethink the everyday assumptions we hold about society and go beyond any “common sense” notions of the social world. We will learn to take a sociological perspective, which involves reaching beyond our own experiences and opinions. Learning critical thinking skills will enhance our ability to understand the diverse world we live in. We will hopefully gain a heightened awareness of how our surroundings affect not only who we are but how we interact with others.

We begin the semester by exploring what sociology is and how sociologists study a wide array of topics. We will then address the social construction of reality through a variety of topics including deviance, health and illness, sexuality and the family. Next, we will look at social stratification and how patterns of inequality are built into the social structure in such areas as race, class, and gender.

**COURSE GOALS**

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Explain what sociology is and what sociologists do
2. Adopt a sociological perspective when interpreting the world around you
3. Think critically about your own and others’ taken for granted assumptions about the social world
4. Identify how society is stratified along social class, race and gender lines
5. Analyze social issue using critical thinking and writing skills
6. Understand the usefulness of sociology for *your* life

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the*

*Inner City.* New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America.* New

York: Henry Holt and Company.

McNamee, Stephen J. and Robert K. Miller Jr. 2009. *The Meritocracy Myth.* 2nd edition.Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Newman, David M. and Jodi O’Brien, Eds. 2010. *Exploring the Architecture of Everyday*

*Life (*Sociology Readings), 8th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

(NOTE: There is a textbook by the same title. Be sure to get the reader and 8th edition.)

The required articles (in italics in schedule below) are available through Sociological Abstracts, a database available through the DePauw Library website.

### EVALUATION

**Exams:** There will be three exams in this course (80 points each). The exams will be short-answer and essay based. Please make note NOW of the exam dates and plan accordingly.

**Panel:** You will all participate in a panel with three to four other students on a sociological topic that interests you (50 points). Each member of the panel will present a different twist on the decided topic. See the handout on panels/paper for more information.

**Paper:** Based on your panel’s topic, you will write an individual paper on a certain aspect of that topic (80 points). Papers must be turned IN PERSON to me (not my mailbox or by e-mail) the day of the panel. See the handout on panels/paper for more information.

**Group Presentation and Paper “Getting by in Greencastle”:** You will each work with three to four other students on a group project based on the book, *Nickel and Dimed.* These presentations and accompanying paper will be due the last week of class (100 points total). See the handout on “Getting by in Greencastle” for more information.

**Grading:**

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| --- | --- |
| **Exam 1** | **80 points** |
| **Exam 2** | **80 points** |
| **Exam 3** | **80 points** |
| **Panel** | **50 points** |
| **Paper** | **80 points** |
| **Getting by in Greencastle presentation** | **50 points** |
| **Getting by in Greencastle paper** | **50 points** |
| **Total** | **470 points** |

I will follow the usual DePauw University grading system whereby:

A or A- reflects, “achievement of exceptionally high merit.”

B+, B, B- reflects, “achievement at a level superior to the basic level.”

C+, C, C- reflects, “basic achievement.”

D+, D, D- reflects, “achievement which falls short of satisfying the quantitative and qualitative requirements yet warrants credit.”

Remember, you do not start the course with an A and lose points. You essentially start with zero points and *earn* your grades along the way. Please meet with me if at any time you have questions about your grades. **Do not wait until the end of the semester**.

\*\*\* An important point to note about grades. Grades do NOT reflect your effort, but the result of your efforts. We are not all alike and some of us must put forth more effort while others put forth minimal effort and earn higher marks. We are simply diverse people with different talents and abilities. Therefore, I do NOT grade your effort. In addition, grades do NOT reflect what I think you do or do not deserve. Your grade is what YOU earn in the course.

### OTHER POLICIES

**Attendance and Participation:** I expect you to attend class prepared and ready to *engage* with the material and the class community. Simply showing up to class having skimmed the readings is insufficient. If everyone does this, we will have a boring class (and you will have to listen to me the whole time). If only a few people are prepared, we will only know their opinions and miss out on the full classroom experience of everyone participating. Another reason for you to come to class is that you will be tested on material that is presented only in class lecture/ discussion. If you want to be familiar with this material, you must be in class. Thus, if you want to do well in this class, you will very quickly learn that daily attendance is essential.

Coming to class late is a disruption to all members of the class. Tardiness and absences will be penalized at my discretion. If you are frequently late to class, you can expect a conversation with me or an email from me reminding you of your obligation to be in class on time. I will notify you if you are in danger of having your grade reduced due to tardiness or absences. Don’t let it happen to you. **In the event that you are absent, you are solely responsible for being informed of what went on during class.** I will not provide you with copies of the lecture notes or give you an individualized lecture on the material you missed.

**Classroom Etiquette:** In order to have a positive and safe learning environment, we as a class will have to agree to disagree at times. Some of us may have strong feelings and/or reactions to class materials, readings, etc. Expressing these reactions is encouraged as long as this is done in a respectful manner. Hostile and/or disrespectful behavior is not allowed. In addition, we must be watchful to not take up too much “airtime” and allow for *everyone* to share. Talking *a lot* is generally *not* a good way of actively participating. Instead, carefully listening to others and clearly and concisely expressing your input is the best strategy. Remember to address each other when talking rather than directing your comments to me (unless they are solely intended for me!) Of course, all cell phones must be turned off. While you may use laptops, if you are checking email and facebook during class, I will not allow you to use your laptop.

**Communication:** Please come and visit me during office hours. I am there waiting for you to discuss readings, lecture, grading, exams, classroom behaviors, sociology, etc. If you cannot come to scheduled office hours, please let me know and we will work something else out. The best way to reach me is through e-mail. I will communicate with the class through email. I expect each of you to check your email on a *daily* basis.

**Late work/Make-up Work:** All papers are due at the beginning of class and all exams will be taken in class on the schedule day, unless, I receive *in advance*, an official notification that you will be off-campus on official university business or some other *legitimate and verifiable* excused absence. Late papers will be subject to a reduction in letter grade. There will be NO EXTRA CREDIT assignments available to anyone.

**Academic Dishonesty/Misconduct:** I take academic dishonesty or misconduct extremely seriously as surely you do as well. Please be familiar with the DePauw University Academic Integrity Policy available in the *Student Handbook.* Any student violating this policy will be subject to a range of disciplinary actions.

**Students with Disabilities:** DePauw University offers accommodations to students with disabilities. It is your responsibility to contact the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator: Pamela Roberts, Harrison Hall 302 to request accommodations.

### SCHEDULE

Readings must be completed *prior* to class on the due date. We may get off schedule and I will make adjustments accordingly in the event that this occurs.

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| 1/30 (M) | Introduction to Class | |
| SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION | | |
| 2/1 (W) | | “The Sociological Imagination”  Anderson Intro |
| 2/3 (F) | | “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema”  Anderson Ch. 1 |
| 2/6 (M) | | “The My Lai Massacre”  Anderson Ch. 2 |
| 2/8 (W) | | “McDonald’s in Hong Kong”  Anderson Ch. 3 |
| SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY | | |
| 2/10 (F) | “Concepts, Indicators, and Reality”  “Sense and Nonsense about Surveys”  Anderson Ch. 4 | |
| 2/13 (M) | “Culture of Fear”  *Reinarman, Craig and Harry G. Levine. 2004. “Crack in the Rearview Mirror: Deconstructing Drug War Mythology” Social Justice 31: 182-199.*  McNamee and Miller Ch. 1 | |
| 2/15 (W) | Anderson Ch. 5 | |
| SOCIALIZATION AND PRESENTATION OF SELF | | |
| 2/17 (F) | | “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life: Selections”  Anderson Ch. 6 |
| 2/20 (M) | | “Life as the Maid’s Daughter”  Anderson Ch. 7 |
| 2/22 (W) | | “Working ‘the Code’”  “Maternity and Its Discontents”  **Family group works cited due** |
| 2/24 (F) | | “The Girl Hunt”  McNamee and Miller Ch. 2 |
| 2/27 (M) | | **Exam 1** |
| INTIMACY AND FAMILY | | |
| 2/29 (W) | | “Diversity among Same-Sex Couples and Their Children”  McNamee and Miller Ch. 3  **Deviance group works cited due** |
| 3/2 (F) | | “The Radical Idea of Marrying for Love”  “Coping with Commitment: Dilemmas and Conflicts of Family Life” |
| 3/5 (M) | | McNamee and Miller Ch. 4 |
| 3/7 (W) | | **Health and Illness works cited due**  **Panel presentation** |
| SOCIAL DEVIANCE | | |
| 3/9 (F) | | “Watching the Canary” |
| 3/12 (M) | | *Becker, Howard. 1953. “Becoming a Marijuana User”American Journal of Sociology, 59:235-242.*  “Patients, Potheads, and Dying to Get High”  McNamee and Miller Ch. 5 |
| 3/14 (W) | | **Sexuality group works cited due**  **Panel Presentation** |
| HEALTH AND ILLNESS | | |
| 3/16 (F) | | “Medicine as an Institution of Social Control”  *Barker, Kristin K. 2008. “Electronic Support Groups, Patient-Consumers, and Medicalization: The Case of Contested Illness” Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 49: 20-36.* |
| 3/19 (M) | | *Clarke, Christina et al. 2010. “Racial and Social Class Gradients in Life Expectancy in Contemporary California.” Social Science and Medicine, 70: 1373-1380.*  McNamee and Miller Ch. 6 |
| 3/21 (W) | | **Panel Presentation** |
| SEXUALITY | | |
| 3/23 (F) | | *Asthana, Sheena and Robert Oostvogels. 2001. “The Social Construction of Male ‘Homosexuality’ in India: Implications for HIV Transmission and Prevention.” Social Science and Medicine 52:707-721.*  *Thorne, Barrie and Zella Luria. 1986. “Sexuality and Gender in Children’s Daily Worlds.”Social Problems 33:176-190.* |
| 4/2 (M) | | *Sprecher, Susan and Pamela C. Regan. 1996. “College Virgins: How Men and Women Perceive their Sexual Status.” Journal of Sex Research 33:3-15.*  **Social class group works cited due** |
| 4/4 (W) | | **Panel Presentation** |
| 4/6 (F) | | **Exam 2** |
| SOCIAL CLASS | | |
| 4/9 (M) | “Making Class Invisible”  McNamee and Miller Ch. 7 | |
| 4/11 (W) | “The Compassion Gap in American Poverty Policy”  “Avenue to Adulthood”  **Race group works cited due** | |
| 4/13 (F) | Ehrenreich Intro  Ehrenreich Ch. 1  In class film: *People Like Us* | |
| 4/16 (M) | **Panel Presentation** | |
| RACE AND ETHNICITY | | |
| 4/18 (W) | “Racial and Ethnic Formation”  McNamee and Miller Ch. 8 | |
| 4/20 (F) | “Optional Ethnicities”  Ehrenreich Ch. 2  **Gender group works cited due** | |
| 4/23 (M) | “The Downside of Racial Uplift”  Ehrenreich Ch. 3 | |
| 4/25 (W) | **Panel Presentation** | |
| GENDER | | |
| 4/27 (F) | McNamee and MillerCh. 9  Ehrenreich Evaluation | |
| 4/30 (M) | “Still a Man’s World”  “Love and Gold”  “Cheerleading and the Gendered Politics of Sport” | |
| 5/2 (W) | McNamee and Miller Ch. 10 | |
| 5/4 (F) | **Panel Presentation** | |
| “GETTING BY IN GREENCASTLE” PRESENTATIONS | | |
| 5/7 (M) | **Presentations** | |
| 5/9 (W) | **Presentations** | |
| 5/15 9:30 (T) | **Exam 3** | |