

Smith College
Introduction to Sociology, Fall, 2019

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Office Hours Tuesdays 10-11, Thursdays 2-3 and by appointment

C. Wright Mills writes that, “The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society.” This course seeks to develop students’ sociological imaginations in order to understand how social forces affect individuals, groups, and society as a whole. The course is organized around several central sociological questions: How is inequality produced and reproduced? How do race, class, and gender affect individuals’ lives and organizations such as schools, families, or workplaces? How are our selves, emotions, and interactions in daily life shaped by social forces? How can we understand the interplay between the powerful effects of social structures and the agency that individuals and groups exercise to shape their own lives? We will examine answers to these questions from different theoretical perspectives as well as exploring them in different areas of the social world.

The work of sociologists is to examine, explain, and ask questions about the social world. Accordingly, the written work for this class requires your own sociological research. As a beginning sociologist, you will practice analyzing different kinds of data, exploring different kinds of research methods, and applying a range of theoretical or analytical perspectives.

Readings

C.J. Pascoe, Dude, You’re a Fag. University of California, 2007 or 2011 (either edition is fine). Also available electronically through the Smith library website and in hard copy on reserve in Neilson Library.

Electronic reserves, available on Moodle. (<http://moodle.smith.edu>).

Requirements

1. Paper One: Observation Paper 25%. Due 10/16, in class. Approx. 5-6 pp., double-spaced.

For this paper, you will conduct observations of social interactions and analyze them using class readings.

2. Paper Two: Mapping Inequality Paper 25%. Due 11/18 in class. 4-5 pp., double-spaced, plus maps.

For this paper, you will use the mapped U.S. Census data available through Social Explorer to examine the geographic distribution of inequality.

3. Final Essay 25%. Due December 18 before 5:00 PM, to my office (10 Prospect #203)

This essay will take the form of a mock memo to your high school making recommendations (with annotation, citation, and extensive sociological analysis presented in footnotes) regarding gender and sexuality, using theoretical concepts and empirical findings from Dude, You're a Fag and related readings.

4. Class Participation 10%

Active and informed participation in discussion and classroom activities is vital to the success of the course. You are expected to complete readings before the class for which they are assigned, attend class regularly, and participate actively and intelligently in class discussions. You are not expected to have clear and definitive answers to large, much-debated scholarly questions, but you are expected to be willing to engage in discussion about these questions. You are also expected to respect and appreciate the diverse points of view that emerge within the classroom.

One component of class participation is bringing in an **example for class discussion**. Each student will schedule a day to bring a visual example related to the material we are studying. This can be an advertisement, a photograph, a piece of art, a short (2 min. max.) video clip, etc. You will show the image and tell us how it exemplifies the topic.

Please note that you are responsible for keeping track of your scheduled date; I will not issue reminders or reschedule if you forget.

5. Quizzes and in-class writing assignments 10%

These will be unannounced, usually will occur at the beginning of class, and will focus on the basic arguments and material of that day's readings. Questions will be easy for anyone who's done the reading and will be graded generously. They are intended to serve three purposes. First, they provide encouragement for you to keep up with the reading. Second, they give you a chance to reflect on that day's reading prior to class discussion. Third, they give me a snapshot of the class's comprehension of and response to the material. They will be graded with a simple check system; I will drop one, either the lowest grade or one that you miss. You may not make these up if you are absent or late to class.

6. Student choice 5%. Due by 12/2 (the day after Thanksgiving break). (You may turn in before the deadline if you choose.)

Choose one of the following:

- Using the Sociological Abstracts database (access through Smith library homepage → research → databases by title, <http://www.smith.edu/libraries/research/a-z>), locate an article in a sociological journal on a topic of your choice related to one of the subjects on the syllabus. Write a short (one page (double-spaced) or less) summary of the article's methods, findings, and thesis. In two sentences or less, tell me what this article addresses that is not addressed by the readings on the syllabus.
- Locate and read an article in the sociology magazine Contexts (access through the Smith library catalog, search by journal title) on a topic of your choice that is *not included* on the syllabus. Write a short (one page or less) summary of the article's reported methods,

findings, and thesis and one question that you have about the research or the subject matter.

- Creative or visual representation of a sociological concept. This can be a skit, song, poem, video, meme, craft, baked good,, etc., to be presented to the class, and may be done alone or with a group. Please schedule with me in advance.
- Choose an occupation and, using the Census data tool that will be demonstrated in class in mid-October, find out and write up its racial and gender composition and average earnings.
- In 1-2 page, write-up your assessment of any empirical reading for the class. (Empirical means that the reading is based on data that the author collected.) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the method of data collection, and the overall argument? What do you find convincing or unconvincing and why? (Be sure you can succinctly state the author's thesis in order to respond to it.)
- Methodological creativity: Choose any empirical study included in a course reading. Think of at least two other methods of studying the same topic – i.e., how else could one gather data to study that topic empirically? In 1-2 pp., write up what those other methods would be, their strengths and weaknesses, and any ethical issues.

LATE WORK

If medical or personal circumstances make you unable to complete an assignment as scheduled, contact me in advance to make other arrangements. You should also be in touch with your Class Dean when necessary. Any late assignments not approved ahead of time will receive 5% off for each day late up to a maximum of 50% off.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES, LAPTOPS, ETC.

Cell phones, tablets, laptops, and similar devices have been shown to be distracting to the user and surrounding students. "Multi-tasking," AKA dividing your attention between class and chatting, online shopping, looking at social media, etc., is universally shown to be ineffective. In addition, research suggests that taking notes with pen and paper is more effective than electronic note-taking for retaining information. If you nevertheless prefer or need to use a keyboard, or want to use your device to access course readings, you must **turn off WiFi** (or put your phone in airplane mode). You ***may not*** use your device to do anything except take notes and access readings.

ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have accommodations through ODS please speak with me early in the semester. *First-year students*: If you used accommodations in high school, I strongly encourage you to speak with ODS now about accommodations at Smith, rather than waiting until you are sure you need them.

SUMMARY OF KEY DUE DATES: 10/7 (field notes for paper 1), 10/16 (paper 1), 11/18 (paper 2), 12/2 (choice assignment), 12/18 (final essay).

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

All readings are on Moodle unless otherwise noted. Readings should be completed by the date listed. (I.e., read Durkheim and Lemert before class 9/18.)

9/9-9/11: No class

Read:

Syllabus

Theodore Caplow, "The Rules for Giving Christmas Gifts"

Charles Lemert, from Social Things, ch. 3, pp. 34-45 ("Practicing the Discipline of Social Things")

9/16 Introduction: What is Sociology?
Discussion of Caplow and Lemert

9/18 Sociological Theories and Methods
Emile Durkheim, excerpt from Suicide
Charles Lemert, from Social Things, ch. 7 ("The Mysterious Power of Social Structures")

9/23 Sociological Methods
Devah Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record"
Flores and Schacter, "Examining Americans' Stereotypes about Immigrant Illegality"

9/25 Identity, the Self, and Interaction
Erving Goffman, from "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life"
Daniel Trotter, from "Identity Problems in the Facebook Age"
Robert Granfield, "Making it By Faking It"

9/30 Interaction and Race, Class, and Gender
Barrie Thorne, "Girls and Boys Together But Mostly Apart: Gender Arrangements in Elementary School"
Christine Williams, "Shopping as Symbolic Interaction: Race, Class, and Gender in the Toy Store"

Research groups in class: Plan observations for Paper One.

10/2 Culture and Subculture
Eviatar Zerubavel, "The Fine Line: Making Distinctions in Everyday Life"
Janine Chi, "Consuming Rice, Branding the Nation"
Miliann Kang and Katherine Jones, "Why do People get Tattoos?"

10/7 Culture, Consumption, Distinction
James Watson, "McDonald's in Hong Kong: Consumerism, Dietary Change, and the Rise of a Children's Culture"

Jay Gabler and Jason Kaufman, "Chess, Cheerleading, and Chopin: What Gets You Into College"

Complete observations and share field notes with team members and Prof. Whittier by 10 PM on 10/7.

- 10/9 The Social Construction of Emotion
Arlie Hochschild, The Managed Heart, excerpts from Chs. 1, 3, and 4 (pp. 3-12, 35-48, 56-68). *E-book through Smith library.*
Jennifer Silva, "Constructing Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty"
- 10/14 Fall Break
- 10/16 **Paper One due in class**
- 10/21 Class and Its Reproduction
C. Wright Mills, "The Power Elite"
Annette Lareau, "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families"
- 10/23 The Social Construction of Race
FILM: Race: The Power of an Illusion
Jennifer Lee and Frank Bean, "Beyond Black and White: Remaking Race in America"
Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "When Whites Flock Together: The Social Psychology of White Habitus"
- 10/28 Class session: Mapping Social Characteristics of Neighborhoods:
This is required training for Paper Two. I will not be providing a make-up session. Do not miss this class unless you have a verified emergency (verified by the class dean). Please bring your own laptop to this class; if you do not own a laptop, please see me about borrowing one from ITS for that class meeting.
Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, Excerpt from American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass
Jennifer Sabo, "What the Census Taught Me About Myself"
- 10/30 Race, Class, and Neighborhood Segregation in the U.S.
Mary Pattillo-McCoy, Black Picket Fences, ch. 1 (ch. 2 *suggested*)
James W. Loewen, Introduction to "Sundown Towns"
See additional information and resources on James Loewen's website:
<http://sundown.afro.illinois.edu/sundowntowns.php>
- 11/4 The Reproduction of Poverty in the U.S.
Robert Florida, "The Persistent Geography of Disadvantage"
Ronald Wimberly, "U.S. Poverty in Space and Time: Its Persistence in the South"

Matthew Desmond, "Forced Out"

11/6 Crime, Race, and Inequality
Jerry Flores, Ariana Ochoa Camacho, and Xuan Santos, "Gender on the Run: Wanted Latinas in a Southern California Barrio"
Rebecca Tiger, "Race, Class, and the Framing of Drug Epidemics"

11/11 Work and Culture
George Ritzer, "The McDonald's System"
Rachel Sherman, from *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels*

11/13 Class Reproduction and Education
Stevens, Creating a Class (ch. 6, "Decisions")
Laura Hamilton and Elizabeth Anderson "The Miseducation of Monica and Karen"
Yingyi Ma, "Is the Grass Greener on the Other Side of the Pacific?"

11/18 **Paper Two due in class**

11/20 Constructions of Gender and Sexuality in Institutional Context
C.J. Pascoe, Dude, You're a Fag, Ch. 1-2 and appendix

11/25 Masculinity, Sexuality, and Power in High Schools
Dude, You're a Fag, Ch. 3-5

11/27 No class: Thanksgiving break

12/2 Gender, Sexuality, and Culture
Dude, You're a Fag, Ch. 6
Amy Schalet, "Sex, Love, and Autonomy in the Teenage Sleepover"

Choice assignment due no later than 12/2.

12/4 Social Movements and Social Change
David Meyer, "How Social Movements Matter" and "Targeting the NRA"
David Cunningham, "A Long View on the Alt-Right's Doomed Emergence From the Shadows."

12/9 Social Movements and Social Change
Dana Fisher, Lorien Jasny, and Dawn Dow, "Why are We Here? Patterns of Intersectional Motivations Across the Resistance"
Chris Zepeda-Millán and Sophia Wallace, "Mobilizing for Immigrant and Latino Rights under Trump"

12/11 Conclusions: What Can I Do with Sociology?