

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Department of Sociology | Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey--New Brunswick
Fall 2016 | 01: 920: 101: 25

Class: Mondays and Wednesdays, 7:15pm-8:35pm at LOR 022
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Office hours: Wednesdays, 6pm-7pm (or by appointment) at DAV 012

Course description

Sociology is the science of society. It aims to make sense of social life--how society works and how it doesn't, based on empirical observations of diverse human experiences. Sociology is principally a dance between individual experiences and collective knowledges, between personal problems and societal issues, and between biographies and histories/herstories. Everyone in this world is embedded in the tidal flow of society, and there is no escaping from it--we are all in this together. Conversely, society always emerges from small- and large-scale human interactions. It is therefore up to all of us to steer the future of our society toward something better, even if we are never to find the single perfect way to do it. No, unlike natural sciences, a perfect theory does not exist in human sciences.

However, we cannot change what we do not know, and we need to discuss what it means to know something. How do we know what we know? Do we really know what we think we know? This is why sociology matters. To understand society through scientific, systematic methods is to be able to make a compelling claim about a social phenomenon. It is but one way, among many, to understand your location in larger contexts of things, including language, politics, economics, culture, and environment. Sociological thinking can guide you through your life journey on how you should navigate and engage with the world. In this sense, sociology is a martial art. It helps you defend yourself and your loved ones against violent forces of society rooted in structural oppression--racism, sexism, capitalism, colonialism, homophobia, militarism, and so on. By developing higher levels of imagination and engaging with wider ranges of perspectives, you can open yourself up to understanding how the pain you are going through is connected to other people's suffering. Commitment to sociological imagination not only promises you a lifelong intellectual development beyond college education, but also makes you more aware of your innate capacity to heal together.

Just as in martial arts, sociology can teach you not only the established forms or existing facts but also the flexibility to apply your knowledge and skills in real-life situations. In other words, simply memorizing textbook facts will not enable you to master sociology. Learning sociology is a process and a practice. Once you begin this journey, you will inevitably encounter challenging and sometimes unsettling viewpoints, as your own way of thinking gets questioned. If you do not pay close attention to the details of the conflicting views that confront you, you may easily fail to benefit from the truly enriching experience of critical dialogues. This is why the absence of a perfect theory does not undermine the promise of sociological imagination. You must learn to question everything, including yourself. The true enemy is yourself, and the tension you may feel is a moment of growth waiting to happen. Openness, humility, and respect can unlock the power of knowledge that you can never find on any search engines. Congratulations on your decision to take on this difficult but rewarding journey through this course--I am truly honored to introduce *you* to sociology, not the other way around.

Learning objectives

By completing this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the purpose of using a sociological perspective to analyze society.
- Understand the importance of scientific, systematic, and empirical ways of producing knowledge about society.
- Recognize the dynamic patterns, flows, contexts, and relationships that exist between individual experiences and what goes on in society at large.
- Recognize how power shapes social structures and institutions, and how it impacts your own life experiences.

- Question and understand how human interactions produce social injustices and inequalities, and how social institutions maintain them.
- Question and understand how the effects of social differences like class, gender, race, sexuality, and nation intersect with one another to perpetrate structural oppression.
- Question and imagine how you may better engage with the social world as an active agent of social transformation, a responsible leader of the global community, and a compassionate healer of the planet.

This course also meets the School of Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum Learning Goals, 21st Century Challenges [21C] and Social Analysis [SCL].

Assessment and evaluation

Your performance in this course will be assessed according to the following criteria through appropriate evaluation methods. Your grades will be determined based on a 1,000-point scale.

Final grades are not negotiable. Do your work while you can.

Grade	Points	Level of intellectual achievement	Evaluation methods
A	900-1,000	You can think critically and formulate your own argument logically and compellingly by connecting sociological concepts and perspectives with your own life experience. You can understand complexities and contradictions of social life and articulate in your words.	Term papers Reading memos
B+	850-899	You have a solid grasp of basic sociological concepts and perspectives. You can explain them briefly by providing examples that may or may not be related to your own life experience. You can differentiate between opposing claims but may not understand complexities and contradictions.	Exams Reading memos
B	800-849		
C+	750-799	You can at least memorize/recite or find scientific facts readily presented in a textbook.	Exams Quizzes
C	700-749		
D	600-699	You cannot achieve any of the above.	
F	0-599		

For earning the points, you may complete the following evaluation methods:

Quizzes [30 points x 10 = 300 points]

You can take up to 12 weekly quizzes in class throughout the semester. They are open-book and will usually consist of 20 multiple-choice and two short-answer questions, based on the textbook and assigned articles on W. E. B. Du Bois (unless otherwise specified). You may work in small groups. Only the highest 10 scores will count toward your grade, and you may not re-take or make up for absence. The purpose of this evaluation method is to help you grasp important sociological concepts and keep up with the course content.

Reading memos [25 points x 4 = 100 points]

You can write up four short reading memos based on the assigned articles in the reader. They are due after every three chapters; you can select one article from Chapters 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. The memos can be typed or legibly hand-written and must be contained in one page. First, summarize the main argument of the article in less than 3 sentences. Second, in one paragraph, describe the evidences or subordinate points provided in the article to support

the main argument. Finally, in one paragraph, critically evaluate, respond to, or exemplify the argument. What did you think? Do you agree or disagree? What do you appreciate? What did you learn? How would you relate to your own life? What questions do you have? Why? Exemplary memos may be shared anonymously to the whole class. You should actually be writing a memo for each article you read, but you may turn in only one for every three chapters. The purpose of this evaluation method is to help you learn how to engage with academic readings, as well as take systematic notes that may become useful for writing the term papers.

---The first memo is due on October 3, the second on October 24, the third on November 16, and the last on December 12, all at the beginning of the class.

Exams [200 points x 2 = 400 points]

You can take mid-term and final exams based on the textbook, reader, articles, and lecture contents. They will consist of 60 multiple-choice and 10 short-answer questions, some of which are slightly modified from the quizzes. The final exam is cumulative, in the sense that some of the questions in the mid-term that many of you got incorrect may reappear in the final. The exams are of course closed-book, and no notes will be allowed. No official study guides will be provided, unless someone kindly volunteers to share their own with the whole class informally. If you miss an exam for some reason, you may take a make-up exam, which will be significantly more difficult. The purpose of this evaluation method is to assess your overall understanding of the course contents and help you review what you have learned.

Term paper [200 points]

You can write a 4- to 5-page (1,000- to 1,200-word, double-spaced) paper on your life experience, analyzing it through a sociological perspective. Think about a personal problem you have, and relate it to the larger context of a social or historical issue beyond your immediate environment and generation. In particular, you might begin with briefly describing certain moments when you have felt uncomfortable, offended, silenced, or belittled--or conversely, protected, advantaged, or privileged--because of your social class, race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, immigration background, and/or religion. Such moments might be from your personal relationships with friends, family, and romantic partners, or they might be from school, work, community, and other public interactions including the mass media. Who else may share the same or similar experiences even if you may never meet them individually? How is your problem connected to the way society is constructed and maintained? What kind of a social change does it call for? Make an argument first, then provide evidences or examples to support it. As you discuss how your life experience has been shaped by social structures, be sure to draw on the concepts, ideas, and arguments you have learned from the reader, textbook, and/or class lecture. The purpose of this evaluation method is to help you think about yourself in relation to the social context in which you are embedded, as well as apply the sociological knowledge and skills you have gained from this course to your own life experience.

---This paper is due on Wednesday, December 14 at the beginning of the class. If you wish to receive written feedback, please notify the instructor before submission.

Extra credit: Du Bois paper [100 points]

You can write a 3- to 4- page (750- to 1,000-word, double-spaced) paper on the significance of the work of W. E. B. Du Bois on the discipline of sociology in historical and contemporary contexts. The detailed instructions are to be announced later.

---This paper is also due on Wednesday, December 14 at the beginning of the class. If you wish to receive written feedback, please notify the instructor before submission. You may not be allowed to submit this paper for points if you have missed too many quizzes or reading memos, for this is not a substitute for those evaluation methods.

Notes:

- It is your responsibility to have a clear understanding of what is expected of these tasks before they are due. Please ask me enough in advance to clarify any confusions.
- Please submit one hard copy for each memo or paper. Papers must also be submitted to TurnItIn via Sakai.
- I will not accept late submissions under any circumstances. Strategize accordingly.
- I am available during office hours every week for advising on any of these tasks. Feel free to stop by.
- Quizzes and exams will not be curved.

Expectations

First of all, I expect you to behave as an adult in a friendly but professional environment whenever this class is concerned, and I will treat you accordingly. There are no requirements for this course, only opportunities that I lay out for you. It's entirely up to you to decide how you approach this course and make the most of these opportunities. I am not responsible for motivating or entertaining you. You are a student/scholar, not a customer. Education is not given or bought; you have to *earn* it. If you don't want to study, please don't waste such precious resources that most people in the world don't have access to. If you're not prepared to be here, you don't deserve to be here.

Second, I expect you to know or learn how to respect everyone (at least in this class) no matter what they may say. We're all imperfect human beings with limited capacity and resources. It is crucial that you learn what it takes to respect differences in life experiences and perspectives when they are graciously shared with you as powerful knowledge. Part of this is being able to differentiate such knowledge from baseless opinions, feelings of entitlement, or even arrogant assumptions. Problematic actions and speech will be called out and unpacked for the purpose of your education. This often requires learning how to own your mistakes and change your thinking. That's what it means to respect scientific knowledge. That's what it takes to grow as a human. Yet please keep in mind that I cannot guarantee a "safe space" by myself. All I can do is to facilitate our collaboration toward it.

Based on these expectations, please keep the following in mind:

1. I will not read emails lacking professionalism or respond to questions that can be answered by reading the syllabus. This is because I value your learning opportunities for professional communication or reading comprehension.
2. I will not take attendance or keep track of your participation. This means that if you are falling behind, you must actively seek advice or assistance from me rather than waiting for a saving hand.
3. For the reasons of security, privacy, and intellectual property, you are not allowed to record anything or anyone in the classroom, be it audio, video, or photograph, without my explicit permission.
4. Abuse of electronic devices is not only harmful to your learning but also offensive to all the other scholars in the classroom. From the cognitive scientific standpoint also, I strongly discourage you from taking notes electronically.
5. I will not share the PowerPoint files I use in class.
6. I reserve the right, and will not hesitate, to ask you to leave the classroom or give you a failing grade if these expectations are heavily betrayed.

In the meantime, as a professional educator, I strive to facilitate a world-class learning experience for all of us. I am deeply committed to providing clear explanation, quality guidance, and timely feedback in a manner that is as approachable and supportive as possible. I understand that the existing structure of formal education that emphasizes memorization and test-taking can incapacitate you and perpetuate inequalities, and I will do my best to counteract such a pattern through my curriculum. I also understand that some groups of people are particularly under-resourced to navigate the university, and I will always remain open to listening to you if you're going through a difficult time.

Academic integrity

Please cite your sources properly!! Rutgers University has a policy on academic integrity that addresses plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and so on. The formal legal procedure outlined in this policy will be followed in the case of a violation, along with a failing grade. Please refer to this link: academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.

- Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one's own words another person's written words or ideas as if they were one's own.
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.
- Incorporating into one's work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other non-textual material from other sources without proper attribution.

A SPECIAL NOTE: Students often assume that because information is available on the Web it is public information, does not need to be formally referenced, and can be used without attribution. This is a mistake. All information and ideas that you derive from other sources, whether written, spoken, or electronic, must be attributed to their original source. Such sources include not just written or electronic materials, but people with whom you may discuss your ideas, such as your roommate, friends, or family members. They deserve credit for their contributions too!

For an example of a referencing style, please refer to the American Sociological Association's quick style guide: www.asanet.org/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_ASA_Style.pdf. Other styles are also acceptable as long as it's used consistently throughout the document.

Academic and wellness support

Rutgers University offers various academic and wellness support for everyone. Please check out and take advantage of the following resources:

Rutgers Learning Centers

Their resources including peer tutoring, academic and writing coaching, and academic success workshops.

rlc.rutgers.edu/student-info/group-and-individual-academic-support.

Counseling, ADAP and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

Provides mental health services including individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, and referrals.

rhscaps.rutgers.edu

Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA)

Provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling, and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking.

vpva.rutgers.edu

Scarlet Listeners

A free and confidential student-run peer counseling and referral hotline.

www.scarletlisteners.com | 732-247-5555 (Sunday - Thursday, 6pm-12am)

Disability accommodations

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

Grounding texts

This course is grounded in two main texts, a textbook and a reader. The textbook is accessible online for suggested donation. The reader is available through the university bookstore or any other usual methods of accessing a book.

- *Introduction to Sociology*. OpenStax College.
 - www.openstaxcollege.org/textbooks/introduction-to-sociology
- *Sociologists in Action: Sociology, Social Change, and Social Justice, 2nd Edition*. SAGE.
 - Edited by Kathleen Odell Korgen, Jonathan M. White, and Shelley K. White.

Additionally, we will focus on the work of W. E. B. Du Bois as a founding scholar of sociology, based on the following articles in *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* (berkeleyjournal.org/topics/w-e-b-du-bois/):

1. “[For Colored Scholars Who Consider Suicide When Our Rainbows Are Not Enough](#)” by Marcus Hunter
2. “[W. E. B. Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory](#)” by Earl Wright II
3. “[From Du Bois to Black Lives Matter](#)” by Aldon Morris
4. “[Three Great Revolutions: Black Women and Social Change](#)” by Cheryl Townsend Gilkes

These and any other texts including **news articles** will be posted on Sakai under “Resources.” You will be notified when a news article is uploaded, so be sure to read them on your own--they will be covered in the exams!

Course schedule and corresponding readings

Topic	Dates	Readings	Things Due
Introduction and philosophy	Sep 7 Sep 12	No reading No reading -- watch 'TMNT' available on Sakai	
The sociological discipline	Sep 14 Sep 19	Textbook Chapter 1 Reader Chapter 1	
Theory, knowledge, power	Sep 21 Sep 26	Du Bois article #1 Reader Chapter 2	
Social research	Sep 28 Oct 3	Textbook Chapter 2 AND Du Bois article #2 Reader Chapter 3	Memo #1
Culture	Oct 5 Oct 10	Textbook Chapter 3 Reader Chapter 4	
Socialization	Oct 12 Oct 17	Textbook Chapter 5 Reader Chapter 5	
Deviance	Oct 19 Oct 24	Textbook Chapter 7 Reader Chapter 6	Memo #2
<<Midterm exam>>	Oct 26	Begins at 7:30pm, you MUST arrive by then!	
Social movements	Oct 31 Nov 2	Textbook Chapter 21 AND Du Bois article #3 Reader Chapter 7	
Social stratification	Nov 7 Nov 9	Textbook Chapter 9 Reader Chapter 8	
Race, ethnicity, nation	Nov 14	Textbook Chapter 11	

	Nov 16	Reader Chapter 9	Memo #3
Sex, gender, sexuality	Nov 21 Nov 28	Textbook Chapter 12 AND Du Bois article #4 Reader Chapter 10	
Global inequality	Nov 30 Dec 5	Textbook Chapter 10 Reader Chapter 11	
Ecology and environment	Dec 7 Dec 12	Textbook Chapter 20 Reader Chapter 12	Memo #4
Conclusion	Dec 14	No reading	Term paper & Du Bois paper
<<Final exam>>	Dec 19	Begins at 8pm, you MUST arrive by then!	

*The contents of this syllabus including the course schedule are subject to change.