

Sociology 422:01
Sociological engagements through Novels
Fall 2016

Professor: Richard Williams
MW 5:00-6:20
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Office Hrs. M (2:00-3:00) & by Appt.

The focus in this senior seminar is quite simple; I want to expand your mastery of sociological knowledge while simultaneously deepening your enjoy of novels. In order to accomplish that task I will be working with the following assumptions: (1) sociological concepts are useful for the analysis of novels (2) novels can be used as data for the study of connections between individual behaviors and collective cultural norms. **You will also be working on a novel of your choice.**

“Social Worlds” (social stratification), “Social Beings” (identities), “Social Spaces (contexts of interactions), “Gendered Socialization and “Narrators” (gendered, reliable, unreliable) as social actors are some of the concepts we explore during the semester. We will be operating with two conceptual shifts. In one instance we will strive to shift our attention away from viewing characters in novels merely as creations for our amusement and towards viewing them as socio-historically situated characters even through imaginary. In another instance we will strive to move from viewing readers as mere individuals with a text in hand to thinking about them as persons who are socio-historically situated. My claim is that by making use of the two shifts we will be able to develop an understanding of characters in novels in ways that are quite similar to the sociological analysis of individuals in everyday life.

As a nod to this year’s elections we could push our thinking by looking for insights about politics throughout the readings. In addition the last two readings, post-election, will be visions about possible worlds towards which we might not be giving sufficient attention.

We will be working with the SAKAI course website during the semester. The web address is <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>. Make use of your RU username and password to login. This site will provide everyone with important information about the course. It will also be the location where you will place all of your assignments.

(All assignments are to be posted by the appropriate date and time. There will be no extensions.)

Texts

\$= BOOKSTORE TM660@bncollege.com

**= SAKAI/RESOURCE

\$Cole, T. *Open City* [Parallels with Auster, P. *City of Glass*]

Conrad, J. *Lord Jim*

\$Diaz, J. *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

\$Dick, P. K. *The Man in the High Castle*

Flaubert, G. *Sentimental Education*

\$Franzen, J. *Freedom*

Goffman, E. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

\$Lewis, S. *It Can’t Happen Here*

\$Orwell, G. *1984*

\$Portis, C. *True Grit*

Remarque, Erich M. *All Quiet on the Western Front*

Week I

Wed: September 7th

Introduction: Structure of the class

Our concern during the semester will be primarily concerned to how our texts can inform us about the importance of “realistic” representations of micro (e.g., face-to-face interactions) and macro (e.g. interactions relative to social institutions) aspects of human social systems.

M: 9-12

Sociological discussions of Individuals (social beings) as products of Social Worlds (macro)

Read:

** Mead, G. H. “Play, the Game, and the Generalized Other”

** Durkheim, “Social Facts”

First Commentary due before class:

Week II

W: 9-14

*A sociological take on social beings as performers in everyday life: **Readers are social beings***

Read:

\$Goffman, “Introduction,” and “Performances” in his *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

Commentary due:

M: 9-19

A Sociological framework for identifying the Social Worlds of authors and their characters

Read:

**Bourdieu, P. “Flaubert, Analyst of Flaubert”

**Bourdieu, P. “Appendix 3: The Paris of Sentimental Education,” in *The Rules of Art*

Week III

W: 9-21

Characters are social beings

Read:

**(Excerpts from): Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*

M: 9-26

Narrator as (sometimes also a character) social being

Read:

(Excerpts from): Cole, T. *Open City*

Week IV

W: 9-28

Read:

(Excerpts from): Cole, T. *Open City*

Essay #1 due: Will also be discussed in class:

M: October 3rd

Narrator as (sometimes also a characters) social being

Read:

\$(Excerpts from): Diaz, J. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Pay attention to any characteristics you can pick-up about the narrator. Also pay attention to how gender socialization is representation in the novel

Week V

W: 10-5

Narrator as (sometimes also a characters) social being

\$(Excerpts from): *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Commentary due:

M: 10-10

Narrators are social beings

Read/Listen to:

Diaz reading at NYU: <http://cwp.as.nyu.edu/object/cwp.podcasts.fa> 10

Week VI

W: 10-12

Looking more closely at the narrator as a social being

Read:

**Booth, W. Chapter VII, "The Uses of Reliable Commentary"

M: 10-17

Can we trust these Narrators/Characters? (Can our understanding of Social Worlds help?)

Read:

**Excerpts from Portis, *True Grit*

Commentary due:

Week VII

W: 10-19

(Still focusing on the "TRUST" of the narrato4: Group presentation of remaining parts of *True Grit*

M: 10-21

Movie excerpts from *True Grit*

Commentary due:

(TRUST AND): *Socialization into Social Worlds (primary vs. secondary)*

Read:

Conrad, J. *Lord Jim*

Week VIII

W: 10-26

Read:

Conrad, J. *Lord Jim*

Essay #2: Will be discussed in class

M: 10-31

(More Male) *Socialization into multiple (primary and secondary) social worlds*

Read:

(Excerpts from) Remarque, M. *All Quiet On The Western Front* **the novel**

<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=77260968>

Week IX

W: November 2nd

Read/Watch:

Movie: "All Quiet on the Western Front"

Commentary due:

M: 11-7

(Contemporary Female) *socialization*

Read:

Franzen, J. *Freedom*

Week X

W: 11-9

(Contemporary Female) *socialization*

Read:

Franzen, J. *Freedom*

Essay #3 due:

M: 11-14

Introductions to the text you will present during the last week of class

Week XI

W: 11-16

Conrad, J. *1984*

Commentary due:

Week XII

M: 11-21

Conrad, J. *1984*

W: 11-23 (Thanksgiving Break: No Class)

M: 11-28

The Variability of Culture: Socialization into Social Worlds

Read:

(Excerpts from) Lewis, S. *It Can't Happen Here*

Commentary due:

W: 11-30

The Variability of Culture: Socialization into Social Worlds

Read:

(Excerpts from) Lewis, S. *It Can't Happen Here*

Week XIII

M: 12-5

The Variability of Culture: Socialization into Social Worlds

(Excerpts from) Dick, Phillip, K. *The Man in the High Castle*

Essay #4 due:

W: 12-7

Read:

(Excerpts from) Dick, Phillip, K. *The Man in the High Castle*

Week XIV

M: 12-12

Presentations:

Social worlds, social beings, social spaces, gendered narrator, gendered socialization

Based on a novel of your choice

W: 12-14

(Last Day of class)

Presentations:

Social worlds, social beings, social spaces, gendered narrator, gendered socialization

Based on a novel of your choice

Friday 12-19

Final longer essay DUE: building upon your presentation posted to your drop box by NOON

GRADING

YOU WILL GET ALL OF YOUR ASSIGNMENTS AT LEAST ONE WEEK BEFORE IT IS DUE. THEREFORE NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED

You will be graded in the following manner:

9 Comments/questions on the readings (**4 pts. each: 36 pts.**): Due Dates

- (1) W: 9-12; (2) W: 9-14; (3) W: 9-21
- (4) W: 10-05; (5) W: 10-12; (6) W: 10-19
- (7) W: 11-02; (8) W: 11-16; (9) M: 11-28

4 Essays (**9 pts. each: 36 pts.**): Due Dates

- **Wed: 9-28**
- **Wed: 10-26**
- **Wed: 11-09**
- **Mon: 12-05**

Seminar presentation (**6 pts.**)

General seminar participation (**10 pts.**)

Final paper (**12 pts.**)

- **Monday: December 19th**

• **Total: 100 pts.**

Consistent attendance in class is taken for granted. You are granted two unexcused absences, after that you risk losing points towards your overall grade. I advise that you treasure those absences and not use them too early in the semester.