SOCILOGY 240
Normality and Abnormality
Tuesday & Thursday 4:30-5:50 p.m.
Scott Hall 135 (College Ave. Campus)
Spring 2014

Professor: Allan Horwitz
Institute for Health, 112 Paterson St., New Brunswick
E-mail: ahorwitz@sas.rutgers.edu
Office Hours: by appointment.

Teaching Assistants:
Heather Batson (hbatson@sociology.rutgers.edu)
Libby Luth (eluth@sociology.rutgers.edu)
Lauren Murphy (lmurphy@sociology.rutgers.edu)
Irina Nicorici (inicorici@sociology.rutgers.edu)
Jess Streeter (jstreeter.rutgers@gmail.com)
Jason Torkelson (jtorkelson@sociology.rutgers.edu)

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>10:05 - 11:00am</td>
<td>Scott 106</td>
<td>Nicorici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>10:05 - 11:00am</td>
<td>Frelighuysen A4</td>
<td>Torkelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>10:05 - 11:00am</td>
<td>Hardenbergh A2</td>
<td>Streeter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>10:05 - 11:00am</td>
<td>Frelighuysen B3</td>
<td>Murphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>11:45am - 12:40pm</td>
<td>Frelighuysen B4</td>
<td>Nicorici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>1:25 - 2:20pm</td>
<td>Frelighuysen B6</td>
<td>Nicorici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>T5</td>
<td>3:05 - 4:00pm</td>
<td>Campbell A3</td>
<td>Torkelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>T7</td>
<td>6:25 - 7:20pm</td>
<td>Scott 203</td>
<td>Streeter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>T7</td>
<td>6:25 - 7:20pm</td>
<td>Hardenbergh A5</td>
<td>Luth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>T8</td>
<td>7:55 - 8:50pm</td>
<td>Scott104</td>
<td>Torkelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>T8</td>
<td>7:55 - 8:50pm</td>
<td>Scott 106</td>
<td>Streeter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>T8</td>
<td>7:55 - 8:50pm</td>
<td>Scott 119</td>
<td>Luth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>T8</td>
<td>7:55 - 8:50pm</td>
<td>Scott 203</td>
<td>Batson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>H8</td>
<td>7:55 - 8:50pm</td>
<td>Scott 106</td>
<td>Murphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>H8</td>
<td>7:55 - 8:50pm</td>
<td>Scott 102</td>
<td>Batson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Description:** Sociology is the scientific study of social life. Sociologists recognize that all human behavior is shaped by cultural and historical context. As such, the extent to which our beliefs, behaviors, and even appearance are considered “normal” is powerfully shaped by social context. Human evolution involves the scientific study of how people evolved from earlier forms of life. In constant to social and cultural views, it emphasizes the universality rather than the cultural relativity of human behavior. This course examines how the sociological and evolutionary views apply to the study of normality and abnormality. We begin by examining the basic tenets of the cultural and evolutionary views. We then apply these concepts to specific topics including physical appearance and the body, incest, courage and cowardice, food, grief, fear, sexuality, mating, the life course, and happiness. In the final part of the course, we will explore the ways that tools such as personality testing, drugs, and medical enhancements are used to control and change normality and abnormality.

**Required Readings:**

Available at Barnes and Noble (on campus) and New Jersey Books. Students are also required to read the book chapters and articles posted on the Sakai site https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal. Because these readings might change over the course of the semester, students are not encouraged to read too far ahead. Readings are listed below.

**Class Format:**
Students must attend two lectures and one discussion section each week. Power Point slides will be posted on the class Sakai website prior to each lecture. Assigned readings should be read before each lecture. Lectures will be supplemented with video clips, movie selections, and occasional guest lectures.

**Requirements and Grading:**
**Exams:** There will be two closed-book exams that cover materials from lectures, readings, and film clips. The midterm will be held on Thursday March 11 (regular class time) and the final exam will be held on Wednesday May 14 from 3-4:30 p.m. While the final exam is non-cumulative, you are responsible for understanding the key themes that run through this class throughout the semester. NO make-up exams will be given unless I receive notification at least three days prior to the exam, and you have a valid and documented reason for missing the scheduled exam. Exams will consist primarily of multiple choice (scantron) but may also include short definitions. Students must bring pencils to all exams for the scantron sheet. Your exam with the higher score will account for 30% of your grade; your exam with the lower score will account for 20% of your grade.
**Written Assignments:** There will be three writing assignments, which are outlined below. Each is worth 15% of your grade. You must hand your assignment to your TA at the beginning of discussion section during the week of each assignment’s due date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Week of Feb 18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Week of April 1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Week of April 29</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attendance at Discussion Section:** Attendance and active participation is required at discussion section, and accounts for 5% of your course grade. You may have up to three unexcused absences from your recitation section; additional absences will result in a penalty.

**Summary of grading procedures:** Course grades are based on the total number of points an individual earns on exams, written assignments, and discussion section. No extra credit opportunities are available. **FINAL GRADES ARE NOT NEGOTIABLE** and will be assigned according to the following scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Final Numerical Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 to 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 to 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 to 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 to 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>66 to 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50 to 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION**

**E-mail etiquette and requirements:** The TAs and I will happily and promptly reply to all student email. However, you must follow a few simple rules. First, you must put “Soc 240” in the subject line. If you do not, then I have no way of knowing whether an email message from jrzygrrl@aoh.com or PhatBoy@earthlin.net is from a Sociology 240 student, or a spam message from a Viagra vendor. I will delete all email messages from unfamiliar addresses unless “Soc 240” is in the subject line. Second, you should include your name somewhere in the body of the message. Your email addresses often do not tell me who you are.

**Sakai Site:** The class Sakai website includes our syllabus, course readings, outlines, notes following class, exam study guides, answer keys following exams, supplemental and/or “current event” readings, and other important announcements pertaining to class. Please check the website regularly, to keep updated of class information and any changes in class schedules.
We will also maintain two Sakai discussion options. The first one, called “Questions” allows you to post factual and conceptual questions about the course material that the TAs will answer. The second one, a chat room called “Class Discussion,” allows you to post your thoughts about the course material, and enables you and your classmates to share ideas. All ideas are welcome, although proper and polite behavior is expected.

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

**Academic Misconduct:** Rutgers University policies state that academic misconduct may involve: cheating; fabrication; facilitating academic dishonesty; plagiarism; denying others access to information or material. Any instances of academic misconduct will be reported to your dean. Plagiarism is using someone else's words without giving the author proper attribution. For further information on plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty see the University's academic integrity policy: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml)

**Class Conduct:** The Sociology Department encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe and productive classroom environment. As such, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and courtesy. Behaviors that distract students and faculty is not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, discourteous remarks, and other behaviors specified by the instructor. Courteous expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is, of course, permitted. If a student engages in disruptive behavior, the instructor, following the University Code of Student Conduct, may direct the student to leave class for the remainder of the class period. Instructors may specify other consequences in their syllabi. Serious verbal assaults, harassment, or defamation of the instructor or students can lead to university disciplinary proceedings. The University Code of Student Conduct is at [http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/judaff/ucsc.shtml](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/judaff/ucsc.shtml).

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS**

**January 21 (Tu). Welcome and Introduction to Course**
Overview of course and requirements.

**January 23 (Th). Definitions of Normality and Abnormality**
What do we mean by the terms “normality” and “abnormality”? An overview, contrast, and critique of three perspectives on normality and abnormality: statistical, normative, and natural views.


**January 28 (Tu) and January 30 (Th). Culture, Fashion, and Normality**

How do cultural norms influence what we consider to be normal and abnormal? Can people easily change what they think is normal and abnormal? What do your first and last names indicate about what is normal? What about our fashion choices?


(To see how “normal” your last name is among all Americans, check out: [http://www.census.gov/genealogy/www/data/2000surnames/index.html](http://www.census.gov/genealogy/www/data/2000surnames/index.html).)
(To see how “normal” your last name is among Rutgers students today, check out: [http://www.njfuture.org/2011/01/31/college-students-as-a-leading-indicator-of-diversity/](http://www.njfuture.org/2011/01/31/college-students-as-a-leading-indicator-of-diversity/))


**February 4 (Tu). And 6 (Th) Evolution and Normality**

To what extent does human nature guide what we think is normal and abnormal? Can norms about normality be universal and not culturally relative? Are ideals of beauty and physical attractiveness universal or culturally relative? Where do our ideals of beauty/handsomeness, weight, and height come from? Are many things that we think of as abnormal actually mismatches between human nature and current social environments?
Saad. 2011. Chapter 1 (pp. 11-39) and Chapter 4 (pp. 95-114).
Saad, 2011. Chapter 2 (pp. 67-94); Chapter 8 (pp. 219-222); Chapter 10 (pp. 274-278).
(To calculate your own body mass index, see: http://nhlbiupport.com/bmi/)

**Feb 11 (Tu) Incest**
Have you ever had fantasies about having sex with a close relative? Did anyone ever teach you that you shouldn’t? If not, why don’t you have this desire?

Allan Horwitz, “Incest”.

**Feb 13 (Th) Cowardice and Courage**
All organisms naturally try to survive when faced with extreme danger. Yet, societies need to reward people who are willing to sacrifice their lives to benefit the group. Behavior in combat illustrates how cultural norms shame people who act naturally and reward those who act in unnatural ways.

Allan Horwitz, “Cowardice and Courage”.

**February 18(Tu) and 20 (Th). Food, Appetite, and Obesity**
How do we acquire our ideas about what’s normal or abnormal to eat and drink. What accounts for the steep increase in body weight in recent years? What are eating ‘disorders’? How do cultural ideals and biologically natural eating propensities conflict?


**February 25 (Tu) and Feb 27 (Th) Mental Health: Sadness and Depression**
What accounts for the high and steadily rising rates of depression in the United States in recent decades? How do we differentiate “normal” sadness from depressive disorders? Under what conditions is it normal to feel sad? Why are some types of grief considered natural and
reasonable and others pathological? Why do we experience grief? What are its functions? Should normal grief be a time-delimited experience?


March 4 (Tu.) and March 6 (Th.) Mental Health: Anxiety and PTSD
Why are some sources of anxiety considered natural and reasonable, and others pathological? Does fear stem from human nature or from individually and culturally learned processes? Are many of our fears evolutionary mismatches? Are traumatic responses to abnormal situations indicative of mental disorder, or a variety of normality?


Horwitz, Allan and Jerome C. Wakefield. 2007. Chapter 1: All We Have to Fear.

(To find out how “normal” your fears are, see: http://psychology.about.com/od/phobias/p/commonphobias.htm)

March 11 (Tu.) Exam #1. Good luck!

March 13 (Th.) March 25 (Tu.) March 27 (Th) Sexuality
Is sexuality biologically determined or culturally produced? How did the Kinsey Report influence conceptions of sexuality? Why and how have conceptions of normal sexuality undergone an enormous change in recent years?


**April 1 (Tu). Normality and the Life Course (or “Acting Your Age”) – Guest Lecturer Deborah Carr**

What accounts for changes in conceptions of normal childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age? What is the “new” normal for young adults regarding whom they should live with, when and whether they should marry and have children, and what they should do after they have passed college age?

Furstenburg, Frank et al., 2004. “Growing Up is Harder to Do.” *Contexts* 3: 33-41.


*(To calculate how long you can expect to live, see: http://gosset.wharton.upenn.edu/~foster/mortality/perl/CalcForm.html)*

**April 3 (Th) Mate Selection: Finding Mr. or Mrs. “Right”**

Which adage best characterizes “normal” romantic couples?: “opposites attract,” or “birds of a feather flock together?” What factors besides love guide our romantic choices? Do men and women differ in what they’re looking for? What cultural, biological, and evolutionary factors shape our partner choices?


**April 8 (Tu). Happiness: Can We Have Too Much?**
Is it normal to be happy? When is it abnormal to be happy? What accounts for the recent emphasis on promoting happiness? Is happiness more valued in some societies than in others?


**April 10 (Th). Personality and Personality Testing**
Is it possible to develop objective tests that can detect normality and abnormality? How are these tests used? What do they really show?


(The “Big 5” is a widely used personality assessment. You can evaluate yourself here: [http://www.outofservice.com/bigfive/](http://www.outofservice.com/bigfive/))

**April 15 (Th), April 17 (Tu), and April 22 (Tu). Drugs and Normality**
Why are some drugs valued and considered to be normal while others are stigmatized and harshly punished? How do these processes change over time? We draw on examples including alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, heroin, the opiates, Prozac and Ritalin. How do drug therapies secure conformity to standards of normality?


**April 24 (Tu). Enhancing Normality: The Quest for Human Perfection?**
Can enhancement therapies make people “super-normal”? What problems arise when people use enhancements? What counts as “enhancement” in the first place? We will discuss examples of cognitive, physical, and appearance enhancements.


**April 29 (Th). The Future of Normality**
What changes can we expect in future conceptualizations of normality and abnormality? What sorts of things that are currently normal are likely to become abnormal? What kinds of things that are currently abnormal are likely to become normal?


May 1

Wrap up and odds and ends.

May 14 (Wednesday)

Final exam 4:00 – 5:20 pm Scott Hall Rm. 135

******* Have a wonderful summer break! *******
WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Papers should be about three to five pages long, typewritten and double spaced. You should use Times Roman Font with font size 12 and one inch margins. Proper grammar and spelling are expected. Papers must be handed in to your teaching assistant at your discussion section during the week when they are due. Your teaching assistant will tell you whether you should submit papers via hard copy or email attachment. Late papers will not be accepted. Each will account for 15% of your overall class grade.

FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT: due February 18 (15% of course grade)

For a one-week period in your life, record your observations of when you thought something was abnormal (if you have too many, just use the most important ones). These can range from ordinary social interactions with strangers, friends, and relatives, the content of television programs or social media, or any other phenomenon that made you think of abnormality. What made you think the phenomena were abnormal (or normal)? Were your feelings based on moral considerations, cultural norms, idiosyncratic personal reasons, or something else? Is there some objective basis for your belief that the activities were abnormal?

Grading is based on the clarity of your presentation and reasoning, not on the contents of what you observed.

SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT: due April 1 (15% of course grade)

In order to understand the ways that conceptions of normality change across generations, you will conduct an in-depth interview with one person who is at least 65 years old. A suggested list of questions is presented below. These questions should provide you with sufficient guidelines for your conversation. You need not ask every question listed. You should feel free to tailor the interview in such a way that you capture the experiences and information that are most pertinent to your subject’s life. It's fine to interview someone who doesn't speak English, but you must translate all responses and ensure that the final paper is submitted fully in English.

Your interviewing will be most effective if you tape record the interaction. It is not mandatory that you tape the interview, however. You are not expected to have full quotations in your paper. The limitations of simply taking notes are that you might lose important information and that you might not be able to concentrate on the information being conveyed during the interview.

The paper will have three parts. The first part is an introduction, which provides the background for your analysis. In this section, you will provide a brief and general discussion of how conceptions of normality change across different generations and subgroups. The second part of the paper is your biography, or case study. Here, you will write the life history of your subject. The third part of the paper is your analysis and discussion; this is the most important part of the
paper. Here, you will discuss and interpret your subject’s conceptions of normality. Are they more similar or different than your own conceptions? What accounts for any differences that you see? In particular, given the information you acquired in your interview, what have you learned about how age-based norms change over time? How have these norms changed from your subject’s life time to your life time? How might your subject’s life experiences be different if he or she was growing up today?

GUIDELINES AND POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic Characteristics

Relevant demographic data would include age; race/ethnicity; religion; country of birth; educational attainment; main occupation; marital status; number of children.

Childhood, Adolescence, Young Adulthood

1. When were you born? Where? What did your parents do at that time? How many brothers and sisters, if any, do you have?
2. When you were a child, what were your favorite activities? What were your children’s favorite activities? Your grandchildren’s?
3. What sorts of clothes did you wear? How are they different than what people wear today? What about hairstyles? Do you think they were better or worse than today?
4. What kind of music did you listen to? Do you think it was better or worse than music today? How about television shows?
5. If you were young now, are there certain kinds of things that you think you would do that you couldn’t do when you were actually young because they would have seemed too strange back then?
6. What are the major types of technology that you currently use? Are these more similar to or different than the kinds you used growing up? Do you use email? A smartphone? Facebook? Twitter? In general, do you think technology is better or worse than what it was when you were growing up?
7. When you were growing up, did you ever think you were abnormal in any way? If so, what ways? What made you think you were abnormal?

Marriage and Family

1. How did you meet your husband/wife? How did your children meet their spouses or partners? How did you decide this was the person you wanted to marry? How long did you know each other before you got married?
2. When did you move out of your parents’ home for the first time? Where did you move to? Whom did you live with? Why did you decide to move? Did you ever live with anyone without being married to them? Did your children? What did you think about that?
3. How many children, if any, did you have? When were your children born? How do you think their views about what’s normal are different than or the same as yours?
4. How many grandchildren, if any, do you have? How do you think their views about what’s normal are different than or the same as yours?
Views of Normality/Abnormality
1. What do you think of as the most important changes in what’s considered normal and abnormal that have happened over your life? Why do you think they have happened?
2. Which of these changes do you think has been a good thing?
3. Which of these changes do you think has been a bad thing?
4. How have your own attitudes toward what’s normal and abnormal changed over the course of your lifetime?
5. If you could live your life over, would you rather live it during the time that you have or would you rather start over and be a young person in the current era?
6. When you look back at your life, do you think American society has changed for the better or worse? Why? What has changed?

THIRD WRITING ASSIGNMENT: due April 29 (15% of grade)

Take some phenomenon or behavior that is currently considered to be normal that you think will become viewed as abnormal in the future. Second, take some phenomenon or behavior that is currently considered to be abnormal that you think will come to be viewed as normal in the future. In each case, give your reasons for your predictions. Finally, for each case indicate whether you think the changes you discuss will be good or bad transformations.