

Emory University
Department of Sociology
Spring Term 2018
MWF 2-2:50; White Hall 110

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Office Hours: M 3-4:00, W 11-noon

Sociology 101: Introduction to General Sociology

Overview

How do people act together? How do our connections affect us? How do societies work? With many examples, this course illustrates how sociology answers those questions. It has two main goals: to give you a new understanding of social life and to entice you to explore the field in greater depth. Across nine areas of social life, we will study four themes:

1. *Puzzles*. We will see how sociologists use evidence to answer intriguing questions about society.
2. *Practices*. We will think about how people engage in different kinds of interaction that form the building blocks of social life.
3. *American society*. We will discuss how Americans have organized institutions in distinctive ways.
4. *World society*. We will examine how, in this age of globalization, we are developing many social connections across large distances and national borders.

Some features of this course

- To keep our collective focus on the course material, **use of laptops will not be allowed**. (Fairly detailed instructor slides, covering main points, will be posted.)
- This course contains a section on health, but it is **not specifically designed to help pre-med students prepare for the MCAT**. SOC 230, Sociology of Health and Illness, fits that purpose.
- This course touches on some salient social issues in current American public debate but it also offers a historical and **global perspective** on trends and institutions.
- Preparation for several classes will involve **short assignments**. While these will not take an inordinate amount of time, they will require a fairly regular routine of reading and writing. As noted in the Requirements below, you may skip a number of them.
- Instead of relying on a textbook, **lectures will provide guidance**. Readings will serve as illustrations but generally do **not** cover all the main points of the class for which they are assigned. Class discussion will often **go beyond the readings**.
- Taking a **broad view of sociology** as the study of how societies work, the course at times will draw on relevant research done by non-sociologists, including anthropologists, historians, psychologists, and economists.

Readings

All readings (see schedule below) will be available on Course Reserves or Canvas. Readings will include examples of current sociological research, parts of the instructor's own book, *The American Exception*, and media items media that we will interpret sociologically.

Requirements

1. **Midterm exam on Feb. 28 (25% of final grade) and final exam on May 9 (35% of final grade).** Class discussion and notes/slides are relevant exam material in addition to the readings and will point you to key issues to study. Exams will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions. The midterm can be rescheduled only in case of **documented** emergencies; the final can be rescheduled only with a note from the Dean. You will need to bring a **bluebook** to each exam. The final will not be cumulative.
2. **Six short assignments, worth 30% of your grade.** Several classes will involve a short assignment (e.g., a response to a reading or a task that complements the class material), **to be submitted via Canvas prior to the relevant class.** You will receive more than 6 assignments in total; this means that you may elect to skip certain assignments. You should aim to **finish 3 assignments prior to the midterm.** Note: You may not use additional assignments for extra credit and there are no other extra credit opportunities.
3. **One book report, worth 10% of your final grade, 2-3 pages.** You may select a book from a list to be posted on Canvas, consisting of a sample of the books from which we will read excerpts (see Schedule below), most of which will be available online through the library. Review this list early on. If you select a book to report on, **the report is due prior to the class in which it will be discussed.** Plan ahead!
4. **Attendance, preparation, and participation.** Especially since we will not use a textbook, regular attendance and participation will help you grasp the material and make your life easier. If you miss three or fewer classes and if in class discussion you show solid preparation, you will earn extra points that will be used to improve ‘borderline’ grades at the end of the semester. Only **documented** emergencies or professional responsibilities count as excused absences (**notify the TA prior to class**). Note: repeated violations of the general expectations below will cancel these extra points. We reserve the right to subtract additional points for conduct that disrupts the flow of the class.

General expectations. In taking this class, you agree to

1. **Be prepared**—to think, engage, discuss
2. **Arrive on time**
 - if you do arrive late, take out your notebook prior to entering the room and sit down quickly and unobtrusively in the front row (repeated late arrivals and disruptions will result in point deductions)
3. **Abide by class etiquette.** Specifically,
 - do not bring or consume any food (including gum); water and coffee are allowed
 - turn off and do not use your phone
 - do not use a laptop
4. **Follow the Honor Code,** especially with regard to plagiarism. Please note:
The honor code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, and to commit any form of academic misconduct. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the Honor Council.

Assistance

- The TA for this course is John Pothén. His office hours will be W 3-4 and F 1-2 p.m. (Tarbutton 223; john.pothén@emory.edu). Except where instructor approval is required, contact him first about issues pertaining to course logistics.
- Both the instructor and the TA welcome conversation about substantive matters. Feel free to visit us during office hours.
- For assistance with writing, consult the Emory Writing Center or the ESL program.
- For assistance with access or disability issues, contact adsrstudent@emory.edu. We are willing to discuss accommodations and any related issues that arise.
- If you encounter any unexpected personal challenges during the semester, let us know, so that we can help!

Schedule

- Readings will be posted on Course Reserves or linked on Canvas (some will be available via discoverE)
- All book titles listed (in italics) indicate sources from which we will read excerpts
- Expect short assignments for several classes (typically submit via Canvas prior to the relevant class)
- Assignments are not listed on the schedule below but will be available on Canvas (with instructions)
- In case of inclement-weather closures, we may use weekend make-up days on 3/24, 3/25, 4/14 or 4/15
- We may make minor changes in the readings as needed

1. Introduction

1/17 Course overview: What is sociology?

Note: this class introduces the course and the discipline

Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*

1/19 Example: The party

Note: this class illustrates themes we will address throughout the semester

Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton, *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*

2. Health

1/22 Puzzle: Who is more likely to commit suicide?

NPR, “The Forces Driving Middle-Aged White People’s Deaths of Despair”

Vox, “Why the White Middle Class Is Dying Faster”

1/24 Practice: Care as social practice

John Heritage and Steven Clayman, “Patients’ Presentations of Medical Issues: The Patient’s Problem” [*Talk in Action*, chapter 9]

1/26 American society: America’s peculiar health care system

Paul Starr, *Remedy and Reaction: The Peculiar American Struggle over Health Care Reform*

1/29 World society: Global health
Steven Radelet, *The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World*

3. Sports

1/31 How do fans use sports to define their identity?
Younghan Cho, "Toward the Post-Westernization of Baseball?"

2/2 Play and game as social practice
Thomas Mc Laughlin, *Give and Go: Basketball as a Cultural Practice*

2/5 America's "sports island"
Lechner, "Baseball, Football, and the American Sports Exception"

2/7 Global sports
Lincoln Allison and Alan Tomlinson, "The Hegemonic SINGO and the Shaping of Global Sport: The IOC and Its Olympic Behemoth" [in *Understanding International Sports Organizations*]

4. Religion

2/9 What do young Americans believe?
Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*

2/12 Ritual as social practice
Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

2/14 America's "spiritual marketplace"
Lechner, "Megachurches and the American Religious Exception"

2/16 Global religion
Girish Daswani, "The Globalization of Pentecostalism and the Limits of Globalization"

5. Crime and law

2/19 Why is Chicago such a violent place?
The New York Times, "A Weekend in Chicago: Where Gunfire Is a Terrifying Norm";
"Bored, Broke and Armed: Clues to Chicago's Gang Violence"

2/21 Violent conflict as social practice
Randall Collins, "C-Escalation and D-Escalation: A Theory of the Time-Dynamics of Conflict"

2/23 America's "adversarial legalism"
Lechner, "Capital Punishment and the American Legal Exception"

2/26 Global crime and violence
Steven Pinker, “A History of Violence” [summary of *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*]

2/28 **Midterm exam**

6. Economy

3/2 What makes modeling a hard job?
Ashley Mears, *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model*

3/5 Exchange as social practice
James Carrier, “Gifts, Commodities, and Social Relations”

3/7 America’s political economy
Lechner, “Housing and the American Dream”

3/9 The global economy
Aimee Carillo Rowe et al., *Answer the Call: Virtual Migration in Indian Call Centers*

7. Inequality

3/19 Which Americans move up (or down) the social ladder?
Pew, *Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across the Generations*

3/21 Ranking as social practice
Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*

3/23 American inequality 1: income and wealth
Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*

3/26 American inequality 2: race
Karyn Lacy, *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*

3/28 American inequality 3: ethnicity
Van Tran, “Social Mobility among Second-Generation Latinos”

3/30 Global inequality
Max Roser, “Global Economic Inequality” [ourworldindata.org]
Lechner, “Global Inequality: Winners and Losers in Globalization”

8. Education

4/2 Why do some kids learn more than others?
Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*

- 4/4 Learning as social practice
Michael Tomasello, “Culture and Cognition”
- 4/6 American education
Mitchell Stevens, *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*
- 4/9 Global education
WSJ, “Why So Many Chinese Students Come to the U.S.,” and other media reports

9. Culture and media

- 4/11 What makes a song, or show, a hit?
New Yorker, “The Song Machine”
William T. and Denise D. Bielby, “All Hits Are Flukes”
- 4/13 Performance as social practice
Lisa McCormick, “Music as Performance”
- 4/16 American media
Lechner, “Television and the American Media Exception”
- 4/18 Global media
John Lie, *K-Pop: Popular Music, Cultural Amnesia, and Economic Innovation in South Korea*

10. Sex, love, and family

- 4/20 Who are the single mothers and “deadbeat dads”?
Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*
Kathryn Edin and Timothy Nelson, *Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City*
- 4/23 Love as social practice
Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*
- 4/25 American family
Mark Regnerus, *Cheap Sex: The Transformation of Men, Marriage, and Monogamy*
- 4/27 Global sex
Kimberly Kay Hoang, “Economies of Desire: Speculative Capital and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work”
- 4/30 Recapitulation and review
- 5/9 **Final exam** (3-5:30 p.m.)