

Introduction to Sociology
Section 16
Friday, 2:10 AM
TODD 211

Discussion Section Syllabus

Section Leader:

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Mon. 3-5
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and by appointment¹

We will meet once a week to discuss sociology. The goal of our meetings is to provide you with opportunities to gain fluency in sociology and sociological concepts—and to assist you in completing the reading and writing assignments for this class.

Discussing sociological concepts will not be easy. Some students tell us that it would be easier to just hear a lecture three times a week rather than hear two lectures and then have to discuss. They're right—because discussion is difficult. However, discussion allows for a deeper understanding of concepts than just having a lecture would. We want you to be able to go beyond simply replicating the ideas we present to you. Instead, this course hopes that you can take these concepts and apply them beyond the academic.

You are expected to complete **ALL** of the readings and assignments prior to the discussion each week. We will be discussing broad and interesting sociological concepts. There should be no reason for you to find the conversations dull. Therefore, demonstrating a lack of interest will be viewed as a lack of preparation for our discussions.

Your **preparation, attendance and participation** in discussion are worth **15%** of your course grade. So, it behooves you to prepare, attend and participate! On the back side of this sheet you will find an explanation of how you will be graded.

Writing and Critical Thinking Assignments

If you wish to succeed in sociology 101, it's important to keep up with the assignments. This is especially true of the *Writing and Critical Thinking Assignments*². **These are due at the beginning of discussion session meetings on designated dates.** Late papers will not be accepted without penalty. The first paper is due, Week Three, at the beginning of discussion. The calendar on Blackboard shows other due dates.

Before you attempt these papers, you must familiarize yourself with the basic requirements for writing in this class as these are described in the resources section on Blackboard. You are expected to do “college-level” writing in this class. That means, your papers must respond to all parts of the questions asked, properly cite sources used, and be written in conventional English. **I will accept no papers that are not written at a college level.** If you are confused about how to do these assignments, please talk to me. I want you to do well!

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¹ Please email me if you'd like to schedule a meeting.

² See Blackboard for more information.

Discussion Rubric
(How Participation Will Be Graded)

Good (A or B)	Average (C)	Disappointing (D)	Failure (F)
<p>I actively supported, engaged and listened to my peers</p> <p>I came fully prepared</p> <p>I played an active role in discussion</p> <p>My comments advanced the level and depth of the discussion</p> <p>The group dynamic and level of discussion were consistently better because of my presence</p>	<p>I actively supported, engaged and listened to my peers</p> <p>I arrived at discussion mostly prepared</p> <p>I participated constructively in discussion</p> <p>I made relevant comments based on assigned materials</p> <p>The group dynamic and level of discussion was often better (never worse) because of my presence</p>	<p>My interaction in discussion was limited</p> <p>My preparation, and therefore, my level of participation were inconsistent</p> <p>Although not prepared, I did offer constructive comments</p> <p>Group dynamic and level of discussion were not affected by my presence</p>	<p>Virtually no constructive interaction with my peers</p> <p>I was unprepared</p> <p>My comments were generally vague or drawn from outside of assigned materials</p> <p>I demonstrated a noticeable lack of interest in discussion</p> <p>The group dynamic and level of discussion were lessened by my presence.</p>

Additional Factors that May Affect Your Grade Positively:

- If you show measurable improvement as the semester progresses, you will be rewarded significantly. Becoming more active and/or making more effective comments not only raises the overall level of discussion in the room, it also sets an example for the rest of the class. By trying, you encourage others to do the same.

Additional Factors that May Affect Your Grade Negatively:

- Not attending discussion session will have a significant impact on your final grade (regardless of the quality of your contributions during weeks when you are there). More important, not attending sets a poor example for your peers and encourages them to do the same. Finally, a cohesive and supportive class dynamic is most easily developed and maintained in a relatively predictable and consistent environment. Your peers must know you and trust you to feel comfortable; it is much more difficult to build this trust if you do not attend discussion regularly.

- Dominating class discussions is not helpful. It denies other students the opportunity to contribute and therefore restricts the number of ideas that might be considered. Dominating also prevents you from listening, and from building effectively on the comments of your peers.

- Speaking directly to the discussion leader is discouraged. Discussion session is supposed to be a dialogue among peers, not a series of individual one-on-one conversations. Ignoring your peers — and/or not referring to them by name — risks alienating them, and creates a much less supportive group dynamic.

- Negative, offensive, and disrespectful comments and actions can do serious damage to the learning atmosphere. Such behavior result in a substantially lower grade. Be respectful. Follow the golden rule.

DISCUSSION TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS
(TENTATIVE SCHEDULE—SUBJECT TO CHANGE
CHANGES WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN DISCUSSION, IN ADVANCE)

Note: Most discussions sessions will require you to prepare by completing a brief writing assignment—each of these must be typed. Make sure you print your responses and bring them to class with you. **You are allowed to skip only one of these assignments; for each one you miss after that, your participation grade will drop two points.** Late assignments will not be accepted. These must be typed and will be graded Very good (+), Satisfactory (√) or Unsatisfactory (-).

Week One

Prior to discussion, study the requirements for papers in this class (see Blackboard). Identify any questions you have about these requirements.

****Week Two**

1. Describe, in your own words, what C.W. Mills meant by the phrase "sociological imagination." Provide at least two examples. Type your response and bring it to our discussion session. (Max 750 words). (Show the word count on your paper). Be prepared to discuss and defend your analysis of the "sociological imagination." Even though you are using your own words, properly cite your sources.
2. Carefully review the discussion rubric (included in this syllabus). At the end of our discussion session, you will be asked to rate your contributions.

Week Three—Part One Paper Due

Bring your lecture notes from the first three weeks of the semester. (If they are stored only on your computer, print them and bring them on paper.)

****Week Four**

Prior to our meeting, study Chapter Six in *Core Concepts*. Then, pick two of the three research articles assigned from the reader for Week Three (articles #4, #5, #7) and decide whether the method used in the research falls into the category of "qualitative" or "quantitative" research (based on the material in chapter 6 of *Core Concepts*). Be prepared to justify your choices and to discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

Week Five—

Just show up! Bring your copy of the *Reader*.

****Week Six**

According to Erving Goffman, much social interaction is made up of "performances" given by individuals. The intention of these performances is the create a favorable impression in the minds of the audience (i.e., the people with whom the actor is interacting). Consider article by Beth Quinn and the one by David Grazian. Who is the intended audience of the actors' performances? What would constitute a favorable impression?

****Week Seven—Part Two Paper Due**

Before discussion, review the paper you are about to submit. Compose two typed paragraphs: In the first paragraph, describe the strengths of your paper. In the second paragraph, describe any weakness you suspect your discussion leader will identify.

****Week Eight**

Prior to discussion, review the definitions given in *Core Concepts* of social structure (122-124) and social institution (144-151). List 5 examples of each concept (and briefly explain your choices). Bring your printed list to discussion.

****Week Nine**

Prior to discussion, review the lists of concepts given at the end of chapters 7-10 in *Core Concepts*. Pick the four concepts that you find are most useful for explaining social phenomena—justify your choices (typed).

****Week Ten**

Prior to discussion, make a list of at least 4 instances of deviance that you have observed since the beginning of this semester at college—list them in order of seriousness, with the most serious first and the least serious last. Explain on what basis you distinguished between more and less serious deviance.

****Week Eleven—Part Three paper due**

Review the kinds of excuses given by the student cheaters to researchers (LaBeff and her colleagues) in Article #30. Assume you are a college professor who has just caught some students cheating. Which, if any, of these sorts of excuses would lead you to forgive the student cheater? Which type of excuse seems the most "lame" to you? Explain your reasoning. (1.5 double-spaced pages max)

****Week Twelve**

Before discussion, study Chapter Eleven in *Core Concepts*. As you are reading, notice that sociologists who study deviance focus on how *social factors* influence the rate of deviance that occurs. During discussion, we will consider the kinds of social factors that are emphasized by the various sociological theorists discussed in the reading *and* in lecture. Bring to class a printed list of the theories discussed in Chapter 11 of *Core Concepts (and in lecture)*—annotate your list with a brief description of each theory.

Week Thirteen

During discussion this week we see the final part of the video, *People Like Us*.

****Week Fourteen—**

1. In the lecture materials for Week 13, answer all questions on pages 80 & 81—including doing the "research" (listed at the bottom of the page 81).
2. Paul Fussel, a noted social commentator, once wrote, "you are for a lifetime in the class in which you grew up." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

****Week Fifteen—Final Paper due!**

Prior to discussion, make a list of three suggestions you have for students taking Soc 101 in Spring 2015. Print your list and bring it to our meeting; be prepared to defend your suggestions.