

Introduction to Sociology

Spring, 2016

Instructor: Dr. Tracy Perkins
tracy.perkins@howard.edu (for reference only, please contact me through Blackboard for anything related to class)

Class: Tuesday/Thursday: 9:40-11
Douglass Hall 116

Office hours: Tuesdays: 11:30 - 2:30
Douglass Hall, room 210C

Final Exam: Saturday, April 30, 6pm-9pm

“The challenge of modernity is to live without illusions and without becoming disillusioned.”

- *Antonio Gramsci*

The aims of this course are to:

- Learn about the field of sociology. What do sociologists study? How is sociology useful?
- Learn how to apply the sociological imagination to your personal life and to contemporary events.
- Learn how to analyze the world through the lens of inequalities resulting from social structures of race, class, gender and sexuality.
- Learn about the core areas of expertise in Howard’s Sociology and Anthropology Department: Social Inequality, Health, Criminology, and the Environment.
- Improve reading comprehension of scholarly and popular texts.
- Create a productive, respectful and creative learning environment and intellectual community in class.

Required Readings

The following text will be available for purchase at the Howard Barnes and Noble, and available for two-hour checkout from the reserves collection available at the lending desk at Founder’s Library. All other texts will be available on the course Blackboard site.

- *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Class Time

Our class time will take a variety of formats, including lecture, large group discussion, small group discussion, film, class activities, and time for individual written reflection. I encourage you to ask questions during lectures. A few guidelines:

- Come to class prepared by having done all the assigned reading and taking notes on it.

- Bring your readings (hard-copies are preferable) and notes to class every day, you will sometimes need them for small-group work.

Names and Gender Pronouns in the Classroom

As we will learn in this course, many people’s gender identity does not match what society would otherwise impose upon them. On the first day of class every student will fill out an index card that includes, among other things, your preferred name and gender pronoun (he, she, they, zie, etc). For example, my name is Dr. Perkins, and my preferred gender pronouns are “she” or “her.” Share whatever pronoun you feel most comfortable being used in a classroom setting, and feel free to inform me if you would like to change it partway through the course.

What You Should Expect During the Discussion (from Nathan Palmer)

You should expect	You should not expect
People waiting to be called on before speaking.	People blurting out their thoughts, interrupting one another, etc.
People actively listening to whomever is speaking.	People disrespecting the speaker by ignoring them or having side conversations
Honesty, but honesty that is also respectful of others.	Honesty that is said in a way to hurt others or attack another’s truth.
People sharing their experiences.	People trying to invalidate, disprove, or dismiss the experience others have had.
People using “I statements” to share their experiences.	People starting statements with “they,” “we,” “you,” or otherwise trying to speak on behalf of or stereotype others.
People showing respect to speakers with their body language & non-verbal responses.	People rolling their eyes, making faces, or otherwise disrespecting the speaker.
People talking about their experiences with frank, honest, and powerful words.	Anyone using curse words, racial slurs, or any other kind of epithet to talk about themselves or others.

Grading

	Date	% of course grade
Quiz 1	Jan. 28	15%
Quiz 2	Feb.18	15%
Quiz 3	March 10	15%
Quiz 4	April 5	15%
Quiz 5	April 21	15%
Final Exam (cumulative)	April 30, 6-9pm	25%

Attendance and Missed Exams

- All students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly. It is especially important to attend the FIRST meeting of each class. It is there that you will receive much of the information critical to your success in the class – syllabi, handouts, names of textbooks, instructor contact information, class format, etc.
- Attendance will not be taken in this class. I expect you to attend class regularly, but do not need to know your reasons for any missed days. If you are absent from classes, you are still responsible for the work missed and the announcements made.
- You may not make up missed quizzes for any reason. However, as I understand students sometimes miss classes for reasons outside of their control (i.e. illness, death in the family), I will drop your lowest score from the five class quizzes.
- The final exam is scheduled on Saturday, April 30th, from 6pm-9pm. If you cannot attend this exam, you should not take this course.

Communications

- Please do not e-mail me directly. Instead, sign into our class Blackboard site and contact me there. That way I will be sure to see your e-mail. If you e-mail me directly, your e-mail may get lost in the flood of daily e-mails I receive.
- The less time I spend responding to individual e-mails, the more time I have to prepare for leading a high-quality class. To that end, before you send me a question via e-mail, first check my syllabus to see if the information you want is listed there. Also, I will not respond to questions about the *concepts* covered in class via e-mail. These are best asked in class or office hours.
- I will use Blackboard to send periodic class announcements via e-mail. You may set your Blackboard account to whatever e-mail account you use most frequently. Plan on checking this account daily.

Plagiarism

- Any act of academic misconduct, such as cheating or plagiarizing on exams, is a serious violation of the University's norms of conduct. Students who plagiarize or cheat on assignments or exams receive an F in the course and will be reported to the Dean of the College of Arts and Science for further sanctions, including possible suspension from the University. Read the Academic Code of Student Conduct for more information: <https://www.howard.edu/policy/academic/student-conduct.htm>

Disability

Howard University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students who need accommodations because of a disability should contact the Dean for Special Student Services (202-238-2420) as soon as possible after admission to the University or at the beginning of each semester. Please document and discuss your disability with me during the first week of classes. Find more information about how to get academic accommodations here <http://www.howard.edu/specialstudentservices/>.

Resources

- Tutoring for General Education classes <http://undergraduatestudies.howard.edu/cae/tutor-clearinghouse>
- Writing tutoring for any class: <http://www.coas.howard.edu/writingcenter/>
- How to get tested for a learning disability:
<https://www.howard.edu/specialstudentservices/DisabledStudents.htm>
- Howard University Counseling Service
<https://www.howard.edu/services/counseling/nav%20links/services.html>
- Academic counseling and choosing a major <http://undergraduatestudies.howard.edu/cae/>
- For your questions about using Blackboard
https://itsupport.howard.edu/sims/helpcenter/common/layout/SelfHelpHome.seam?inst_name=howard
- For help finding information, ask a librarian!
<http://library.howard.edu/content.php?pid=485081&sid=3987279#14737326>
- Tips on how to study effectively
<http://www.howtostudy.org/index.php>

Class Schedule

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

January 12: Introduction

January 14: The Sociological Imagination

- Mills, C. Wright. 2000. "The Promise." Pp. 1-11 in *The Sociological Imagination*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.

January 19: How to Think Sociologically

- Buechler, Stephen. 2008. "How to Think Sociologically." Pp. 3-15 in *Critical Sociology*. London: Routledge.

THE CHALLENGE OF CRITICAL THINKING

January 21: Authority and Thinking for Yourself

- Kelman, Herbert C. and V. Lee Hamilton. 2015. "The My Lai Massacre: A Crime of Obedience?" New York: W. W. Norton and Company. Pp. 34-52 in *Readings for Sociology*, edited by G. Massey.

January 26: Is Objectivity Possible?

- Freedman, David H. 1992. "New Theory on How the Aggressive Egg Attracts Sperm." *Discover Magazine*, June 1. Retrieved August 23, 2015 (<http://discovermagazine.com/1992/jun/theaggressiveegg55>).

January 28: When Science Meets Money and Politics

Quiz #1

- Shearer, Christine. 2011. "Blueprint for Denial." Pp. 13-33 in *Kivalina: A Climate Change Story*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: CLASS

February 2: Class and Health

- Scott, Janny. 2005. "Life at the Top in America Isn't Just Better, It's Longer." Pp. 27-50 in *Class Matters* by Correspondents of *The New York Times*. New York: Times Books.

February 4: Class and Work

- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2012. "Nickel and Dime: On Not Getting By in America." Pp. 278 to 291 in *Mapping the Social Landscape: Readings in Sociology*, edited by S. J. Ferguson. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Play the game "Spent" at <http://playspent.org/html/>

February 9: Class and Power

- Domhoff, G. William. 2010. "Class and Power in America." Pp. 1-23 in *Who Rules America? Challenges to Corporate and Class Dominance*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: GENDER & SEXUALITY

February 11: Social Construction of Gender

- Lorber, Judith. 1994. "Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender." Pp. 13-36 in *Paradoxes of Gender*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

February 16: Masculinity

Guest speaker: Shaneda Destine, Howard University

- Kimmel, Michael S. 2000. "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." Pp. 213-219 in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology on Racism, Antisemitism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Ableism, and Classism*, edited by Maurianne Adams, Warren J. Blumenfeld, Rosie Castaneda, Heather W. Hackman, Madeline L. Peters, Ximena Zuniga. New York, NY: Routledge.

February 18: Case Study - Caitlyn Jenner

Quiz #2

- Burkett, Elinor. 2015. "What Makes a Woman?" *The New York Times*, June 6. Retrieved Aug. 23, 2015 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/opinion/sunday/what-makes-a-woman.html>).
- Allen, Samantha. 2015. "Caitlyn Jenner is Pissing Off Feminists and Bigots: Good for Her." *The Daily Beast*, June 9. Retrieved Aug. 23 (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/09/caitlyn-jenner-is-pissing-off-feminists-and-bigots-good-for-her.html>)

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: RACE

February 23: Racial Formation

- Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 2015. "The Theory of Racial Formation." Pp. 105-136 in *Racial Formation In the United States*. New York: Routledge.

February 25: Color Blind Racism

Guest speaker: Dr. Brandi Summers, Virginia Commonwealth University

- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2014. "The (Color-Blind) Emperor has no Clothes: Exposing the Whiteness of Color Blindness." Pp. 301-315 in *Racism without Racists: Color blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America*. Oxford, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

March 1: Case Study: Rachel Dolezal

- Harris, Tamara Winfrey. 2015. "Black Like Who? Rachel Dolezal's Harmful Masquerade." *The New York Times*, June 16. Retrieved Aug. 23, 2015 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/opinion/rachel-dolezals-harmful-masquerade.html>)
- Hobbs, Allyson. 2015. "Rachel Dolezal's Unintended Gift to America." *The New York Times*, June 17. Retrieved Aug. 23, 2015 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/17/opinion/rachel-dolezals-unintended-gift-to-america.html>)

COLONIALSIM, GLOBALIZATION & IMMIGRATION

March 3: Colonialism

- Hall, Stuart. 1996. "The West-and-the-Rest: Discourse and Power." Pp. 184-227 in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* edited by Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

March 8: Immigration and Globalization

- Holmes, Seth. 2013. "Introduction." Pp. 1-29 in *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

CRIME AND CRIMINALIZATION

March 10: Class and Criminalization

Quiz #3

- Chambliss, William J. 2015. "The Saints and the Roughnecks." Pp. 241-254 in *Readings for Sociology*, edited by G. Massey.

March 15 and 17: No classes (Spring Break)

March 22: Race and Criminalization

Guest Speaker: Dr. Bahiyyah Muhammad, Howard University

- Alexander, Michelle. 2011. "Introduction." Pp. 1-19 in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

HEALTH, SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

March 24: Individualism and Healthy Behaviors

- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2009. "Smile or Die: The Bright Side of Cancer." Pp. 15-44 in *Bright Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

March 29: Environmental Inequality

- Perkins, Tracy and Julie Sze. 2011. "Images from the Central Valley." *Boom: A Journal of California* 1(1):70-80. Retrieved on March 30, 2015 (<http://www.boomcalifornia.com/2011/03/images-from-the-central-valley/>)
- Perkins, Tracy, ed. 2015. *In Her Own Words: Remembering Teresa De Anda, Pesticides Activist, 1959-2014*. Retrieved Aug. 23, 2015 (<http://www.rememberingteresa.org>)
- Look at www.voicesfromthevalley.org

March 31: No class (Dr. Perkins attending the annual meeting of the American Association of Geographers)

April 5: Climate Change

Quiz #4

- McKibben, Bill. 2012. "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math." *Rolling Stone*, July 19. Retrieved Aug. 23, 2015 (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>)
- Patterson, Jacqui. 2010. "Climate Change is a Civil Rights Issue." *The Root*, April 23. Retrieved Aug. 23, 2015 (http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2010/04/climate_change_is_a_civil_rights_issue_2.html)

SOCIAL CHANGE

April 7: Technology and Social Change

- Packer, G. 2013. Change the World: Silicon Valley transfers its slogans—and its money—to the realm of politics. *The New Yorker*. May 27.

April 12: Online Activism

- White, Micah. 2010. "Clicktivism is Ruining Leftist Activism." *The Guardian*, Aug. 12. Retrieved Nov. 17, 2015 (<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/aug/12/clicktivism-ruining-leftist-activism>)
- Williams, Stereo. 2015. "The Power of Black Twitter." *The Daily Beast*, July 6. Retrieved Nov. 17, 2015 (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/07/06/the-power-of-black-twitter.html>)

April 14: Intersectionality and Intra-Movement Politics

- Breines, Winifred. 2006. "Introduction." Pp. 3-18 in *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement*. 2006. New York: Oxford University Press.

CASE STUDY

April 19:

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, chapters 1-3

April 21:

Quiz #5

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, chapters 5-6

Final Exam: Saturday, April 30, 6pm-9pm