

Introduction to Sociology (last updated Jan. 16)

Soci 001, Spring, 2018

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“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.
- 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. It is also available through Howard library as an e-book – contact the librarian if you need help accessing it online. All other texts will be available on the course Blackboard site.

- *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* by Safiya Umoja Noble

Note: Please consider the syllabus on Blackboard as the master syllabus, as it will be regularly updated.

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 often need them for small-group work.

How to Annotate a Reading

Annotation is more than highlighting and underlining. It means making written notes **as you read** to identify key terms and concepts, to flag questions that you have, and to assist you in following the arguments of the authors. This is usually done on the page of the text using underlining and circling of text and making notes in the margins. One advantage of working with printouts is that if you only print them on one side you can make more extensive notes on the blank side. Annotation helps you focus on the reading, improves comprehension, and helps you to better remember the content of the reading.

Annotation is kind of like having a conversation with a text while you read it. Some basic annotation techniques are:

- Identifying and underling key terms, concepts and passages.
- Circling definitions.
- Writing definitions in the margins.
- Writing questions that you have in response to the text.
- Writing opinions you have about particular passages.
- Summarizing the main points of sections as you finish them.

An especially useful technique is to make an outline of the whole reading on back of the last page, dividing it up into sections and sub-sections in order to see the overall structure of the argument being made. Annotation is crucial to making a close reading of any difficult text.

Names and Gender Pronouns in the Classroom

I will provide an opportunity in class for every student to share their preferred name and gender pronoun (he, she, they, etc.). For example, I will ask you to call me Dr. Perkins, and to reference my gender with the words “she” or “her.” Share whatever pronoun you feel most comfortable with in a classroom setting. Please make every effort to call your peers by their preferred gender pronouns for the duration of the semester.

Keep in mind the following campus statement on federal Title IX law:

“Howard University reaffirms its commitment to provide students with educational opportunities free from sexual harassment and discrimination based upon gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status. In furtherance of this commitment, the University strives to maintain an environment in which all members of the University Community are: (a) judged and rewarded solely on the basis of ability, experience, effort, and performance; and (b) provided conditions for educational pursuits that are free from gender-based coercion, intimidation, or exploitation.”

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

	Due date	% of course grade
Exam 1	March 7	30%
Exam 2	April 25	30%
Sociological Biography	May 4th (due via Blackboard by 11:59 pm)	30%
Attendance and Participation	n/a	10%

Attendance

All students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly. Class announcements related to schedule changes and grading will be made at the beginning of each class session.

- Attendance will 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.

Communications

- 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. Conceptual questions typically require lengthy responses and discussion, and are therefore 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.

- Please turn your cell phone off and leave it in your bag for the duration of class.

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 at Howard: <https://ous.howard.edu/tlss-tutoring-schedule>
- How to get tested for a learning disability: <https://www.howard.edu/specialstudentservices/DisabledStudents.htm>
- Howard University Counseling Service <https://counselingservice.howard.edu/>
- For your questions about using Blackboard
 - <http://www.howard.edu/technology/services/applications.html>
 - https://help.blackboard.com/Filter/Student/College_or_University
- For help finding information, ask a librarian! <https://library.howard.edu/friendly.php?s=library/contactus#s-lib-ctab-8716879-2>
- Tips on how to study effectively <http://www.howtostudy.org/index.php>

Class Schedule

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

January 15: Introduction

January 17: The Sociological Imagination

- Mills, C. Wright. 2000. "The Promise." Pp. 1-11 in *The Sociological Imagination*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- McNamee, Stephen J. and Robert K. Miller Jr. 2014. "The American Dream: Origins and Prospects." Pp. 1-22 in *The Meritocracy Myth*. Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

THE CHALLENGE OF CRITICAL THINKING

January 22: 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 24: Lies and Other Forms of Deliberate Misinformation

- Jack, Caroline. 2017. *Lexicon of Lies: Terms for Problematic Information*. New York, NY: Data and Society Research Institute.
- Shane, Scott and Sheera Frenkel. 2018. "Russian 2016 Influence Operation Targeted African-Americans on Social Media." *The New York Times*, Dec. 17. Accessed January 11, 2019 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/17/us/politics/russia-2016-influence-campaign.html>

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: CLASS

January 29: 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.

January 31: Class and Work

Class meets in Founders Library room 116

- 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.

February 5: 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.

February 7: Race, Gender and Social Mobility

- Higginbotham, Elizabeth and Lynn Weber. 1992. "Moving Up with Kin and Community: Upward Social Mobility for Black and White Women." *Gender and Society* 6(3):416-440.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: GENDER & SEXUALITY

February 12: 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 14: Gender and Intersectionality

- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43:1241-1299.

February 19: Gender and Sexuality

- Stryker, Susan. 2008. "An Introduction to Transgender Terms and Concepts." Pp. 1-30 in *Transgender History*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: RACE

February 21: Racial Formation

- Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 2015. "The Theory of Racial Formation." Pp. 105-136 in *Racial Formation in the United States*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

February 26: Color Blind Racism

- 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.

February 28: No class

Dr. Perkins at American Association for the Advancement of Science

March 5: Progress and Backlash

- Anderson, Carol. 2016. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
 - Prologue: Kindling
 - Ch. 4: Rolling Back Civil Rights

March 7: Exam 1

March 12 and 14: No classes (Spring Break)

COLONIALISM, GLOBALIZATION & IMMIGRATION

March 19: 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 21: 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 26: Class and Criminalization

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

March 28: Race and Criminalization

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

ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

April 2: Pollution

- Perkins, Tracy, ed. 2015. *In Her Own Words: Remembering Teresa De Anda, Pesticides Activist, 1959-2014*. Retrieved Aug. 23, 2015 (<http://www.rememberingteresa.org>)

April 4: No Class

Dr. Perkins at American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting

April 9: Climate

- Berwyn, Bob. 2018. "A Year of Climate Change Evidence: Notes from a Science Reporter's Journal." *Inside Climate News*. Accessed January 11, 2019
<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/24122018/climate-change-evidence-reports-2018-year-review-ipcc-arctic-emissions-gap-national-assessment>

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

CASE STUDY

April 11:

- Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
 - Introduction and chapter 1

April 16:

- Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
 - Chapters 2 and 3

April 18:

- Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
 - Chapters 4 and 5

April 23:

- Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
 - Chapters 6 and conclusion

April 25: Exam 2

May 2: Sociological Biography due on Blackboard, 11:59pm