

## **SOC 101 Sociological Thinking Block 4 2017-18**

Professor Barnes-Brus

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Class meets in Durham Classroom, Thomas Commons  
MWF 9-Noon, TuTh 9-11AM, 1-3PM, with a few variations.

Check the course schedule as any changes will be posted.



**"Whatever sociology may be, it is the result of constantly asking the question, what is the meaning of this?"**

**~ C. Wright Mills**

### **Course Description:**

Do you wonder why people do the things they do? Why society works as it does? Ever think the world is "unfair"? Sociologists study people in the world, looking at patterns, at differences, at inequalities. Thinking sociologically is like "entering a new and unfamiliar society--one in which things are no longer what they seem." It creates "culture shock without geographical displacement." This course requires us to look at society with a new perspective, to question our taken-for-granted assumptions, to investigate people's actions, and to explore the organization of society. It provides a basis for being engaged citizens, thinking about social alternatives, and imagining possibilities for social justice.

Broadly speaking, sociology is the study of human societies and the interactions we engage in. Looking at the world through the lens of sociology allows us to move beyond an individual understanding of the world to explore the patterns that emerge when we unveil the connections between individual experiences and the larger social context. In this course we learn to step back and look at the "big picture" and "pull back the layers" of society to understand the complexity of social world in which we live.

### **Course Objectives**

Through readings, discussions, written work, group projects and research, we will:

- Explore essential sociological concepts, the logic of sociological inquiry, the nature of sociological theory, and the methods of sociological research.
- Investigate the kinds of questions sociologists typically ask, and identify and examine sociologically relevant problems and issues.
- Gain an understanding of social inequality and an awareness of the complexity of social life.
- Develop critical thinking, oral communication, and writing skills which demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze social issues and to apply these skills to our lives and the world around us.

*This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with introductory level emphases on Knowledge, Inquiry, Reasoning, Communication, and Intercultural Literacy.*

### **Course Information**

#### **Student Responsibility**

As students at a liberal arts college, you are responsible for your own engagement in the academic conversation. This means being a prepared and active participant. This includes reading the syllabus and all the assigned material, but more importantly, this means thinking critically, asking questions,

coming to class having formulated your own ideas and responses to the course material, and engaging in dialogue with others. If you do not understand a topic of discussion, an assignment, a grade, or have any other questions or concerns, please come and talk with me.

SOC 101 is a demanding course with a lot of critical reading, thinking, and communicating. Be prepared to work hard. We have an average of 60 pages of reading a night. You should not take this class if you do not feel that you are able to (1) complete the required reading, (2) examine course material from an analytic, sociological perspective, and (3) engage in productive, non-combative discussions.

### **Class Structure**

This class mixes a lecture and a discussion format and is designed to promote interaction and exchange. I expect everyone to contribute to discussion—which requires that you read carefully and think about the assigned material before every class. No one—neither professor nor student—can participate effectively without having completed and contemplated the course readings. Be an informed participant—your comments should be related to the course material and should add to the topic being discussed. I also expect people to listen to each other—which requires patience, empathy, and mutual respect. You should be willing to share your ideas and be open to opposing perspectives. It is possible to disagree and still interact respectfully. Listening carefully, asking questions, and responding to what people have said demonstrate respectful engagement. On the other hand, inattention, sleeping, talking to neighbors, texting, and rude or disconnected responses all show a lack of respect for the members of this class and for your own intellect.

### **Class Meeting Times**

We will generally meet *MWF 9-Noon, TuTh 9-11AM, 1-3PM*

See the reading schedule for dates and times so you can plan your extracurricular responsibilities accordingly. You should bring the day's assigned reading to class with you.

### **Course Texts**

There is one required for this course. Additional readings accessible on Moodle.

Morris, Theresa. 2013. *Cut It Out: The C-Section Epidemic in America*. New York: New York University Press.

### **Evaluation and Grade Scale**

Evaluation of your work is based on an assessment of the following elements: (1) quality of argument and development of ideas; (2) demonstration of knowledge of material and level of sociological analysis (3) use of course materials and empirical information; (4) organization, coherence, writing/presentation style. See Moodle for a more detailed grading matrix.

For your final grade, I will use the following scale: **A** 93-100; **A-** 90-92; **B+** 87-89; **B** 83-86; **B-** 80-82; **C+** 77-79; **C** 73-76; **C-** 70-72; **D+** 67-69; **D** 63-66; **D-** 60-62; **F** Below 60

**Failure to complete a course assignment and/or excessive absences may result in a failing course grade.**

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS/Graded Work:**

Informed Participation	15%
Exam	25%
Lifestyle and Expenditure Project	20%
Technology Project	20%
Morris Essay	20%

### **Informed Participation (15%) (Attendance, Participation, Journals)**

The quality of your learning and of each class session is highly dependent on completing the reading and coming to class prepared to engage the material. Students will be evaluated based on the quality of their presence in the classroom. "Quality" here is defined as informed and respectful participation in class. "Quality" participation is impossible to obtain without carefully reading and thinking about the assigned reading before every class, attending class, and interacting respectfully with others in the classroom.

Your participation grade will not be based on how often you talk but on how well your presence in the classroom facilitates discussion and comprehension. This means not only speaking constructively but also refraining from activities that inhibit class discussion. You are expected to be alert, attentive, and prepared. Sleeping, facebooking, or texting in class is not acceptable. There may be occasional classroom assignments and unannounced quizzes that allow you to illustrate your comprehension and analysis of the readings. You are responsible for all assignments and material covered in class, whether or not you attend and regardless of the reasons for any absence. I will encourage and support your participation in our classroom community, but the final responsibility is yours.

### **Analytic Journals:**

Students will post a short analytic reflection on the day's reading to the **"Daily Journal" forum on Moodle**. These journals will help you process your readings and prepare for class discussion.

Journals should **NOT** be a summary of the readings. **Each journal must:**

- **Identify the main argument or thesis statement from each of the day's readings;**
- **Identify and briefly explain at least 1 sociological concept introduced by the authors for that day;**
- **Pose a "true" discussion questions that require serious reflection on the material and encourage analytical, engaged discussion** Questions should not solicit simple summaries of the reading, simple pronouncements of opinion, or require significant factual knowledge outside of the reading material. We will use some of the questions generated in our class discussion so be prepared to discuss the questions that you pose.
- **Reflect on the readings** by offering a response to the discussion question, connecting the readings/theory to a real-world example, explaining how the theory/concepts applies to the readings, or explaining a key example or quote from the readings. This response should be approximately 100-200 words and include direct references to course material and illustrate your engagement with this material.

***There are 12 days of readings. You must complete 10 journals by to earn full credit. Each missing blog has a severe negative impact on your participation grade, completing more than 10 may positively impact your participation grade. Journals are due at 7:30 AM unless noted otherwise. Late journals are not accepted.***

### **Exam (25%)**

There will be an in-class, short answer & essay exam on **Wednesday, 12/5**. The exam will take place in Cole Library 212 so students have access to word processing (access to internet, course materials, etc. will not be available).

### **"Life Happens" Lifestyle & Expenditure Project and Presentation (20%)**

In collaboration with other students, you will research and illustrate the typical expenditures of a family at specific income level. You will provide a detailed illustration of how these expenditures translate into a lifestyle that reflects your family's socioeconomic status, and *analyze* the implications for your family's opportunities and outcomes in spatial and narrative forms. This project consists of a class presentation as well as individual analytic reflection and group evaluation. Specific instructions and additional

guidelines for this project will be discussed further in class and will also be available via Moodle. As a group, you will submit a work plan (due **Wednesday, 12/5 @ 7 PM**) and present on **Monday, 12/10**. Individually, you will submit a comparative analysis essay by **10PM on Tuesday, 12/11**.

### **Technology & Society Project & Presentation (20%)**

This project allows students to apply the sociological imagination to the contemporary world. In small groups, students will research the role of technology in everyday life, then present their findings to the class. More information on this project will be posted on Moodle. Students will have Monday, 12/17 as a work day with their group and conference with the professor about the project. **Presentations will take place on Tuesday, 12/18 and Wednesday, 12/19** (if needed). Attendance at all presentations, group meetings, and conferences with the professor is imperative. Failure to attend presentations may result in a one-letter grade reduction of your grade per presentation session missed.

### **Morris Cut It Out Essay (20%)**

Individually, students will write an essay analyzing Morris's *Cut It Out*. Prompts for the essay will be posted on Moodle. **Final essays are due Wednesday, 12/19 at Noon.**

### **Course Policies & Resources**

#### ***Missed/Late Work***

Students are responsible for all assignments and materials covered in class, whether or not they attend and regardless of the reasons for absence. Without either prior approval or evidence of a serious emergency, late work may not be accepted or may be penalized. Late blog entries and make-up work for classroom assignments will not be accepted for participation credit. Classroom presentations and exams may not be made-up except under extreme circumstances.



#### ***Accommodations***

[College Policy](#) regarding students with disabilities: Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes.

At the beginning of each course, **the student must notify the instructor** of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course. If you would like to request course accommodations for any reason, see me after the first class or make alternative arrangements to meet with me within the **first 3 days of the course**. While I am reasonably sure we can work out whatever arrangement is necessary, course accommodations should be requested before there is a failure to meet course requirements. I would appreciate hearing from anyone in this class who has a particular need related to this course.

#### ***Academic Honesty***

College Policy: Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for

honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Compass, our student handbook, under the heading "[Academic Policies – Honesty in Academic Work](#)" and may be found at on Registrar's website.

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any student in this course who is involved in academic dishonesty (portraying another person's work or ideas as their own, submitting the same or similar papers in more than one course without permission from the course instructors, facilitating plagiarism, etc.) will not earn credit for the relevant assignments, may be formally charged with academic dishonesty, and may fail the course.

### **Additional Resources**

There are a number of resources on campus to support your academic work. In developing and completing your assignments, I strongly encourage you to utilize the support of Meghan Yamanishi, Consulting Librarian; Jessica Johanningmeier, the Quantitative Reasoning Consultant; Laura Farmer and other consultants in the Writing Studio; and Richard Berg in the Academic Media Studio and Meghan Yaminishi, Social Science Librarian. These individuals and offices can provide both basic help as well as advanced guidance to help polish your research, writing, and presentation skills.

### **HOW TO PREPARE FOR CLASS**

A good way to prepare for class and think about your daily reflections would be to ask yourself these questions:

1. **Key Premises of the Reading:** What is the main point of the reading(s)? How does the author support the main point? What evidence is offered? What assumptions about society/social relationships are being made in the reading? Who wrote this, and does it make a difference? Who is the audience for this reading?

2. **Context of the Reading:** Why would the professor have us read this material? How does the reading relate to the other readings this week – is it saying the same thing? Something different? How does the reading fit with class discussions? Your own experiences? Material from other courses?

3. **Course Themes:** How does the reading engage any or all of our sociological concepts? Does it coincide with or challenge an individualist view of society? Why or why not? How does the reading offer a sociological approach? How does it address patterns in society?

4. **Your Stand on the Reading:** Do you agree with the ideas in this reading or do you think it's off the mark? Why? What makes you feel this way – class discussions? Other course readings? Your own experiences? Material from your other courses, reading, or your job/career? What evidence can you offer to support your stand on the reading? Does this reading have any bearing to your own life experiences?