SOC 101 | Block 7 2018-2019

Sociological Thinking

## Course Instructor

George Ellerbach

## Campus Address:

Prall House 102

## **Campus Phone:**

319-895-4806

## Email:

gellerbach@cornellcollege.edu

## Office Hours:

By appointment

## Class Meeting Location

Armstrong Hall 224

## Class Meeting Times

Generally we will meet Mondays and Wednesdays mornings and afternoons, and the mornings of Tuesdays and Thursdays. Fridays we do not meet due to scheduled work days for presentations. Our starting and ending time does vary, so please see the course schedule for details.

## **Course Site**

To access the course site, log onto Moodle: <https://moodle.cornellcollege.edu>

## Accommodations for Disabilities

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>.

## Course Goal and Objectives

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.

This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with emphasis on knowledge, inquiry, reasoning, communication and intercultural literacy.

By the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Explore essential sociological concepts, the logic of sociological inquiry, the nature of sociological theory, and the methods of sociological research
2. Investigate the kinds of questions sociologists typically ask, and identify and examine sociologically relevant problems and issues.
3. Gain an understanding of social inequality and an awareness of the complexity of social life
4. 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.

## Expectations:

This course incorporates involves a sociological exploration into the inequality. It requires stepping back from your own perspectives of social location and thinking critically and analytically about things that may seem inevitable or expected. It has an average reading load of 50-60 pages per night and requires group work outside of class. As such, it will require time, patience, and commitment to grasp the depth and nuance of the debates surrounding the media. This means it is imperative for students to commit several hours a night to preparing for class so you are equipped and willing to contribute to the academic discussion. You should not take this class if you feel that you are unable to (1) complete the required reading, (2) examine course material from an analytic, sociological perspective, and (3) engage in productive, challenging discussions in a non-combative manner.

This course is primarily discussion-based. That means that class time, for the most part will not be spent on me lecturing, but instead on discussion of the course readings and materials.

## As an instructor, I will:

Come to class having read through the assigned reading. I will be thinking about how the material fits into what we are trying to accomplish that day. You should expect me to be fully present in the class and to treat you with respect. You can also expect me to be available outside of class for help via email or help via office hours. You should expect that all of the materials will be prepared clearly and completely.

## You as a class member:

Like me, you are expected to come to class having read through the assignments. You should have some thoughts that you can use in our discussion from the day’s reading. You also agree to treat me and other class members with respect.

## Expectations for class sessions:

During our daily discussions, we will use this time to establish ourselves as a learning community. Students should be active participants. Students should be able to contribute their own perspectives and ask questions in a respectful way not just of me but of their fellow classmates. Together we will learn to engage in critical thinking about inequality.

## Required Readings

The required reading for this course will be made available through Moodle.

## Grading Criteria

Final course grades will be assessed based on the student’s performance in the following items:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Approximate % of final grade |
| Participation, Attendance and Daily Journals | 15% |
| Exam | 25% |
| Lifestyle Budget ProjectSocial Problem Presentation | 20%  20% |
| Final Paper | 20% |
|  |  |
| Total: | **100%** |

## Course Grading Scale:

A: 100-93

A-: 92.99-90

B+: 89.99-87

B: 86.99-83

B-: 82.99-80

C+: 79.99-77

C: 76.99-73

C-: 72.99-70

D+: 69.99-67

D: 66.99-63

D-: 62.99-60

F: 59.99-0

## A: Excellent Work

This shows a comprehensive command of sociological concepts and theories, excellent ability to apply these concepts and theories and excellent ability to organize and express ideas in writing.

## B: Good Work

Shows solid command of sociological concepts and theories, good ability to apply theories and concepts with minor issues and good written ability to organize and express ideas.

## C: Fair Work

Shows acceptable command of theories and principles, basic ability to apply concepts and moderate skill in organization and expression of ideas.

## D: Marginal Work

Shows little command of the concepts and principles from the course, some attempt at applying concepts and theories, and limited ability in the written organization and expression of ideas.

## F: Unacceptable Work

Shows lack of command of the subject matter, unable to appropriately and consistently apply concepts and concepts, and inconsistent use of format to organize ideas.

Each assignment will have a detailed description posted on Moodle which will include a rubric for that specific assignment.

## Course Structure

For this course, we will meet once a day (sometimes twice) to have discussion about the course readings and complete activities. Students will need to access Moodle regularly to retrieve the course materials (syllabus, assignments, schedules). For details of the course assignments and activities, see the “Course Work” section of this syllabus. Course content consists of the three assigned books, additional articles, and several web-sites.

Students are expected to visit the course site regularly to:

* Access assigned course materials
* Review the course homepage regularly for any updates related to the course “News”
* Submit assignments to the course instructor via Moodle “Assignments”.

Course Work:

## Readings:

Completing the reading is very important to success in this class. In general, when you read you should focus on the main arguments and evidence used to support these arguments. As you read, if something is unclear, you should note this and bring this up in discussion. I don’t expect that everything will be 100% clear to you in the reading, so part of what you can do to constructively participate is note questions as your read, which we can discuss in our class session. **I reserve the right to modify the readings as necessary. I will not increase the reading load for any given day, but only make substitutions.**

### Constructive Participation, Journals and Attendance (15%)

## PARTICIPATION:

You will be graded on your participation in the class. I aim to use a combination of resources for learning in the course including some brief lecture, readings, discussions, films and assignments. The discussions in particular will be the core of the class because in discussion we will work together to link and explain concepts and themes from the reading. We will move beyond descriptive knowledge to critically analyze the readings and arguments of each week. Thus, attendance and participation in this is imperative to learning the material as well as to the final grade. I see these discussions to be about collaboration, which includes not just responding to me but working with and responding to your classmates. This means all must be informed participants, students and instructor, and doing the reading and journal for that day will help with that.

In this class, we will be talking about what can be controversial topics. Sociology is about challenge to preconceived notions and things we often take for granted. The goal of this course is to create a safe and open environment. We will talk about ways to do this, but it involves having respect for your fellow students and me. We should avoid personal critique. In our class, we should focus on making arguments using evidence instead of relying on personal attacks. The goal should be for each of us to be open to opposing perspectives and to practice listening, engagement and respectful dialogue.

**Please note that 3 or more missed classes may result in a failing grade for participation.** If you must miss class, please keep me informed. You must talk to me if you have excessive absences. I expect that you will notify me in advance of any college-approved absences.

## JOURNALS:

To prepare for class participation and discussion, students will post a journal before class to the journal discussion forum linked on Moodle. There are 11 possible journal entries, one for each day we have reading. You are required to complete 9 of the 11 journals. Fewer will hurt your journal grade and more may help your grade. **Journals are due one hour before the start of class.** Please also print or be able to access your journal electronically to allow you to refer to it during class. Here are the requirements for each journal you complete:

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 (for the textbook chapters, which don't have a main argument or thesis, just give me a sense of a main idea/takeaway from the chapter);
* Identify and briefly explain at least 1 sociological concept or theory introduced that day (NOT for each article);
* Pose a “true” discussion questions that require serious reflection on the material and encourage analytical, engaged discussion. The question may be focused on one specific reading, compare readings, or address the readings as a group. 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. (Journals need only 1 reflection that gets at the readings, not one per article/reading.)

### Midterm Exam (25%)

There will be an in-class written midterm given on Thursday, March 28. This will include some short answer questions and essay questions. More information on this will be provided later in the course.

### Group Lifestyle and Budget Project (20%)

You will be placed into groups to work on a 15-20 minute presentation about budgeting and the lifestyle of a family you are assigned to. You will be assigned to a family that is upper-class, middle-class or lower-class. You will need to research what a typical family in this social class is like and discuss what their lifestyle and spending may look like. You will also have to complete an individual written reflection on social class after the presentation More details on this will be shared later in the course.

### Group Social Problem and Social Change Presentation (20%):

At the end of the course, you will present, in groups, on a social problem of your choice. In a 20-25 minute presentation, you will discuss what the social problem is, what the causes are, and what are some potential solutions. More specific information on this will be shared later in the block.

### Final Paper (20%):

Students will be assigned to write a 4 page (double-spaced) minimum final paper. The prompt for this paper will be passed out in the week before it is due. This paper will be an individual project that is related to the group work on the social problem presentation.

## Course and College Policies:

As a registered student of Cornell College, you are responsible for the course and college policies posted below.

## Course Policies:

## Email & Communications:

**Email is the official method of communication outside of class time for this course**.

If you have any questions via email, my goal is to answer your question as quickly as possible. My goal is to respond to all emails sent on a weekday in 4 hours or less. However, I may be less responsive on weekends. Before emailing me a question, I encourage you to take a look at the syllabus or the given assignment as it is possible the question has already been answered there.

## Due Dates and Missed Deadlines:

I encourage you to complete your work on time. All deadlines are provided here and thus you should be able to plan ahead. You are responsible for the material covered in class. If an extension is needed on an assignment, please consult with me prior to the assignment deadline. **Late work will be penalized at a rate of 5% per hour.**

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Students requesting services should 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 within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone in this class who has a particular need related to this course. While I am reasonably sure we can work out whatever arrangement is necessary, course accommodations should be requested within the first three days and before there is a failure to meet course requirements.

## **Academic Honesty:**

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 Catalogue, under the heading “Academic Honesty."

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 and may be formally charged with academic dishonesty.

## 15 Day Drop Policy:

A 15 day drop is only available to those students who have made, in the opinion of the instructor, a determined effort to learn the material, complete the work, comply with the attendance policy, and participate in the class. Students may relinquish their right to a 15-day drop if they do not keep up with daily journals, fail to turn in any assignments, or have excessive absences.

## **Additional Resources:**

I encourage you to utilize the services of Meghan Yamanishi, Social Sciences Librarian, Laura Farmer, Writing Consultant, Jessica Johanningmeir, Quantitative Reasoning Consultant, and Richard Berg, Academic Technologist. These professionals and their departments can provide additional perspectives and guidance to help polish your research, writing & 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?