

# SOCI-001: Introduction to Sociology



**Instructor:** Brian J. McCabe

**Email:** [mccabeb@georgetown.edu](mailto:mccabeb@georgetown.edu)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/ProfessorMcCabe](http://www.facebook.com/ProfessorMcCabe)

**Office:** Car Barn, 209-09

**Office Hours:** By appointment via [Google Calendar](#)

**Course Meeting:** Monday and Wednesday, 12:30 - 1:45

**Course Description:** “It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this: things are not as they seem,” wrote Peter Berger in *An Invitation to Sociology*. “People who like to avoid shocking discoveries, who prefer to believe that society is just what they were taught in Sunday school, who like the safety of the rules ... should stay away from sociology. People who feel no temptation before closed doors, who have no curiosity about human beings, who are content to admire scenery without wondering about the people who live in those houses on the other side of that river, should probably also stay away from sociology ... And people whose interest is mainly in their own conceptual constructions will do just as well to turn to the study of little white mice. Sociology will be satisfying, in the long run, only to those who can think of nothing more entrancing than to watch men and to understand things human.”

This course is an opportunity to develop your sociological imagination, as C. Wright Mills wrote, by exploring the broad set of topics that sociologists study. It is a chance to delve deeply into the social world, thinking critically about the social structures, rules and norms that shape our participation in society. Together, we will explore issues of race, class and gender in contemporary society – three core categories studied by sociologists. We will look at the role of social movements in creating societal change and the way power and privilege function in society. Our course will ask about changing institutions, including religious organizations, family structures and the role of marriage in society. Finally, we will investigate the ways that people develop social networks and form communities, including the way technology has reshaped these processes.

**Learning Goals:** This course is designed to encourage students to develop their sociological imagination. By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Identify the primary set of topics studied by contemporary sociologists, including key theories and concepts from the major sub-disciplines of sociology;
- Understand the core methods used by sociologists to study the social world and select appropriate methodologies to answer research questions;
- Apply their knowledge of sociology to everyday life by critically analyzing the world around them;
- Appreciate the importance of social structures, norms and rules for shaping the practices of everyday life.

**Course Readings:** The required books for this course are available from the Georgetown University Bookstore. They are also widely available on-line.

Manza, Jeff, Richard Arum and Lynne Haney. 2012. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*.

Edin, Kathryn J. and Luke Shaefer. 2015. *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*.

Kahn, Shamus. 2011. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*.

Additional articles list on the syllabus are available on Canvas.

**Course Requirements:** Students are required to attend *every* class and participate regularly in classroom discussions. Students will complete four short written assignments applying course concepts to their everyday lives. There is a midterm and final exam.

- **Attendance:** Students are required to attend *every lecture* and participate actively during classroom discussions. Students who arrive after attendance has been taken will be marked as absent. Students are expected to participate actively during class by volunteering to answer questions, engaging regularly in classroom discussions and demonstrating engagement with course material. We will use a Socratic method to encourage critical thinking and active participation throughout the semester. Students will lose one point for every class they miss during the semester. Attendance and active participation are worth 25 points.
- **Everyday Sociology Essays:** Students are required to complete four short essays. These papers are limited to 800 words. These essays are an opportunity for students to apply concepts and tools developed in the course to their everyday lives. Course prompts will be made available one week before each assignment is due. Additional instructions will be provided with the first assignment. Each paper is worth 5 points for a total of 20 points.
- **Midterm and Final Exam:** The midterm exam is worth 25 points. The final exam, which is cumulative, is worth 30 points. The final exam will take place on the date assigned by the Registrar. Except with the written permission of your Dean, there will be no changes to the date of the final exam.

**Electronic Devices:** We will not be using laptops during the semester. Using cell phones and other electronic devices is prohibited.

**Plagiarism:** Students are required to adhere to the Academic Honor Code, and should review the [Undergraduate Honor Council statement on plagiarism](#). Any student caught plagiarizing will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.

## **Course Schedule:**

August 31: Course Introduction

September 5: No Class – Labor Day

September 7: Cultivating the Sociological Imagination

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 1

Read: Mills, C. Wright. 1959. “The Promise,” in *The Sociological Imagination*.

September 12: Methods for Studying the Social World

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 2

Read: Kahn, Shamus. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite*. Introduction.

September 14: Social Roles and Rituals

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 3

September 19: Social Structures and Agency

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 4

Desmond, Matt. 2016. “Forced Out: For many poor Americans, eviction never ends.” *The New Yorker*.

September 21: Social Structures and Agency

Read: Kahn, Shamus. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite*. Chapters 1 and 2.

**Due: Social Structure Essay**

September 26: Social Movements and Social Change

Read: Cobb, Jelani. 2015. “The Matter of Black Lives.” *The New Yorker*.

September 28: Social Movements and Social Change

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 17

October 3: Stratification and Mobility

Read: Edin, Kathryn and Luke Shaefer. *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Chapters 1 and 2.

October 5: Stratification and Mobility

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 9

October 10: No Class – Columbus Day

October 12: Poverty

Read: Edin, Kathryn and Luke Shaefer. *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Chapters 3 – 5, Conclusion.

October 17: Midterm

October 19: Privilege

Read: Kahn, Shamus. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite*. Chapters 3-5.

October 24: Gender and Sexuality

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 11

Read: Slaughter, Anne-Marie. 2012. "Why Women Still Can't Have It All." *The Atlantic*.

October 26: Gender and Sexuality

Watch: *Paris Is Burning*

October 31: Marriage and the Family

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 13

**Due: Gender Assignment**

November 2: Marriage and the Family

Watch: The Pilots of *Modern Family* and *Black(-ish)*

November 7: Race and Ethnicity

Read: Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2014. "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*.

November 9: Race and Ethnicity

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 10

November 14: Crime, Deviance and Social Control

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 16

**Due: Deviance Assignment**

November 16: Crime, Deviance and Social Control

Read: Bauer, Shane. 2016. "My Four Months as a Prison Guard." *Mother Jones*.

November 21: Community and Social Networks

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 8

November 23: No Class – Thanksgiving Recess

November 28: Culture

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 5

**Due: Social Networks Assignment**

November 30: Populations and Health

Read: Manza et al. *The Sociology Project: Introducing the Sociological Imagination*. Chapter 19

Read: Murphy, Tim. 2014. "Sex without Fear: The new pill that could revolutionize gay life is reawakening old arguments." *New York Magazine*.

December 5: Course Review