

Sociology S1000, Summer 2015 (Session 2: 7/6 to 8/14)
Location: Knox Hall rm 103
Instructor: Ryan Hagen
Mon/Wed 9:00a – 12:10p

The Social World

“The fascination of sociology lies in the fact that its perspective makes us see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives.”

- Peter L. Bergerⁱ

This course is an introduction to sociology, the study of humans in interaction. We begin by working to understand how sociologists think about the world – what we can call the *sociological imagination* – and then go on to survey several areas of research that are central to the work sociologists do today. Sociology as a discipline contains multitudes. It concerns itself with problems at all scales of human social life, from the formation and breakup of intimate relationships to the sweep of global history. But in our tour of sociology we will peek in on just a few areas of interest. The first week of the course will introduce us to the core insight underpinning the sociological imagination: that much of what we consider important about the human experience – including our sense of who we are as individuals and the way we understand the world around us – is based in our interactions with other people. In each of the next five weeks, we will consider pairings of related topics. Week Two’s readings cover network theory (the pattern of ties that bind us together) and stratification (the ways we pull apart). In Week Three we take advantage of New York City by using it as a setting in which to explore the social lives of cities and what a metropolis can teach us about our changing relationship with nature. Week Four explores our ways of knowing about the world: how social problems are constructed, how science gains (and loses) its authority, and how technology shapes our lives. In Week Five we look at the power of categories through work on race and gender. Finally, in Week Six, we look at crime and deviance: how people and organizations “break bad” and get “weird.” Along the way we will confront classical and contemporary approaches to more general social issues including power and authority, culture and communication, poverty and discrimination, and popular uses of sociological concepts.

Reading material:

Because of the compressed time frame of the course, and because it is designed as a survey of the discipline, the assigned readings will consist of academic journal articles and selections from monographs. Electronic copies of all assigned readings will be available for download on CourseWorks, under the "Syllabus" tab in the navigation menu at left.

In-Class Technology policy:

In the interest of promoting group solidarity and focus, the use of personal digital devices, such as laptops and tablets, in the classroom is allowed only if the device's internet connectivity is disabled. Students are encouraged, though not required, to place mobile phones in 'airplane' mode during class sessions. It is strongly recommended that students print reading material and bring copies with them to class. Internet-connected printers are available in all Columbia libraries.

Office Hours:

"It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous I make appointments with all"
- Walt Whitmanⁱⁱ

Office hours will be held every Monday from 12:30pm to 2:00pm in Knox Hall, room 709. Students are always welcome to make an appointment to discuss the course material, assignments, or any other topic. Appointments are scheduled in Google calendar, available through CourseWorks and the course Wiki. While the calendar offers appointment slots of 15 minutes in length, students may sign up for multiple contiguous slots.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

As a Columbia student, you are bound by a pledge to uphold the academic integrity of our intellectual community. The pledge, as ratified by the Columbia College Student Council, is as follows:

We, the students of Columbia University, hereby pledge to value the integrity of our ideas and the ideas of others by honestly presenting our work, respecting authorship, and striving not simply for answers but for understanding in the pursuit of our common scholastic goals. In this way, we seek to build an academic community governed by our collective efforts, diligence, and Code of Honor.

In addition, all Columbia College students are committed to the following honor code:

I affirm that I will not plagiarize, use unauthorized materials, or give or receive illegitimate help on assignments, papers, or examinations. I will also uphold equity and honesty in the evaluation of my work and the work of others. I do so to sustain a community built around this Code of Honor.

Assessment Criteria:

- 1) Attendance and Participation (20%)

All seminars are dependent on the collective efforts of their participants. To receive a top grade for participation, students should routinely participate in class discussions, asking questions and offering comments about the ideas and texts covered in the course, and engaging constructively with their peers. Quizzes will be administered to gauge reading comprehension. Each individual quiz will be fairly low-stakes, but cumulatively they will influence the overall course grade. Finally, students should attend each class session. Because of the compressed time frame of the course, **only one excused absence will be permitted**. Additional absences will result in a small grade penalty.
- 2) Midterm Essay: Technological breaching experiment (30%)

In week 3, in an exercise meant to sensitize participants to how fully their experience of the world is mediated by complex socio-technical systems in modernity, students will take a day "off the grid," exploring New York City without the advanced technologies and techniques of modern life to guide and sustain them. They will handwrite field notes documenting their experience as it happens, taking careful note of: the obstacles they encounter that are routinely overcome or obscured by technological devices; how the quantity and quality of their interactions with others are different in the absence of mediating technologies; how people around them do or do not try to 'repair' their behavior; how their experience of geographic space and the environment is different. They will write a 750-word essay reflecting on their experience, drawing specific illustrations from their field data, and interpreting it in the context of theoretical material from the readings where appropriate.
- 3) Weekly Responses (20%)

For the readings in each session, students will be responsible for making a contribution to the course wiki. There are three categories of contribution: (A) Summarizing the assigned reading, drawing attention to the central thesis and key points; (B) Formulating and asking five questions about the readings (at least one for each reading); (C) Writing answers to two of the questions posed by other students.
- 4) Final Essay: *Estival Review of Sociology* article (30%)

Students will complete the course by writing a 1,500 to 2,000-word paper reviewing the sociological literature on a topic of their choice. The paper will take the form of an article submission for the *Estival Review of Sociology*, an academic journal that exists exclusively within the confines of this course, surveying the state of current research in the discipline. Proposals should be made to the instructor by the end of week 3 and must be approved by the instructor by the start of week 5. Papers are due in Session Twelve, the final day of the course. Students may choose whether or not they would like to 'publish' their paper in the journal. After grading, copies of the journal will be emailed to all students, as a resource for future engagement with sociology.
- 5) Extra credit
Students may earn extra credit through a number of optional assignments that will be assigned over the course of the semester, which involve interpreting city resources or outside materials in light of the assigned texts and concepts taught in class. For example, during the week on cities and the environment, students may attend the "Mapping Brooklyn" exhibit at the Brooklyn Historical Society, and write a short essay (no more than 400 words) considering the exhibit in light of that week's coursework.

Schedule:

Week 1 // The Social Construction of Reality

Session One | The social self

Readings

- a. Mills, C. W. (1960). "The promise of Sociology." In *The Sociological Imagination* (pp 3-24). Oxford University Press.
- b. Cooley, C. H. (1902). "As a Sense of Speciality or Differentiation in a Social Life" and "The reflected or looking-glass 'I'." In *Human Nature and the Social Order*. (pp 147-153). Charles Scribner's Sons.
- c. Goffman, I. (1967). "On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction." In *Interaction Ritual: Essays in face-to-face behavior*. (pp 5-45). Doubleday.

Session Two | Culture: Living in second-hand worlds

Readings

- a. Becker, H. S. (1953). Becoming a marihuana user. *American Journal of Sociology*, 59(3), 235-242
- b. Hofstadter, R. (1964). The paranoid style in American politics. In *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (pp 1-40). Harvard University Press.
- c. Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 51(2), 273-286.

Week 2 // Networks & Stratification

Session Three | Networks: The importance of what's between us

Readings

- a. Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.
- b. Bearman, P. S., Moody, J., & Stovel, K. (2004). Chains of affection: The structure of adolescent romantic and sexual networks. *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(1), 44-91.
- c. Burt, R. S. (2004). Structural holes and good ideas. *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(2), 349-399.

Session Four | Stratification: The distribution game

Readings

- a. Piketty, T. (2013). *Capital in the 21st Century*. (Introduction, pp 1-35). Harvard University Press.
- b. Jencks, C. (2002). Does inequality matter? *Daedalus*, 131(1), 49-65.
- c. Massey, D. S. (1990). American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass. *American Journal of Sociology*, 96(2), 329-357.

Week 3 // Cities & The Environment

Session Five | Cities: How they change us; how we change them

Readings

- a. Simmel, G. (1971 [1903]). The metropolis and mental life. In *Georg Simmel: On individuality and social forms* (pp. 324-339). University of Chicago Press.
- b. Jacobs, J. (1961). "The Uses of Sidewalks." In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (pp 29-54). Vintage Books.
- c. Zukin, S. (2007). "The City that Lost Its Soul." In *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (pp 1-34). Oxford University Press.
- d. Filler, M. (2015). New York: Conspicuous construction. *The New York Review of Books*, April 2, 2015.

Session Six | The Environment: Making the natural world

Readings

- a. Gandy, Matthew. (2003). *Concrete and Clay: Reworking nature in New York City* (Introduction, pp. 1-19). MIT Press.
- b. Jerolmack, C. (2008). How pigeons became rats: The cultural-spatial logic of problem animals. *Social Problems*, 55(1), 72-94.
- c. Kelman, A. (2003). "An Act of God." In *A River and its City: The nature of landscape in New Orleans* (pp 157-196). University of California Press.

Week 4 // Knowledge, Science & Technology

Session Seven | Technology is society made durable; Science is society made invisible

Readings

- a. Latour, B. (1992). "Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artifacts." In W. E. Bijker & J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping Technology / Building Society: Studies in sociotechnical change* (pp. 225-258). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- b. Shapin, S. (1989). The invisible technician. *American Scientist*, 77(6), 554-563.
- c. Gauchat, G. (2015). The political context of science in the United States: Public acceptance of evidence-based policy and science funding. *Social Forces*. doi:10.1093/sf/sov04.

Session Eight | The construction of public problems: Terrorism as a way of knowing

Readings

- a. Juergensmeyer, M. (2003). "Cosmic war" and "Martyrs and demons." In *Terror in the Mind of God: The global rise of religious violence* (pp. 145-163 and 164-182). University of California Press.
- b. Stampnitzky, L. (2013). "Terrorism fever" and "The road to preemption." In *Disciplining Terror: How experts invented "terrorism"* (pp 109-138 and 165-185). Cambridge University Press.

Week 5 // Race & Gender

Session Nine | Race: Categories and consequences

Readings

- a. Baldwin, J. (1955). "Stranger in the village." In *Notes of a Native Son* (pp 159-175). Beacon Press.
- b. Jiménez, T. (2008). Mexican immigrant replenishment and the continuing significance of ethnicity and race. *American Journal of Sociology*, 113(6), 1527-1567.
- c. Pager, D. (2003). The mark of a criminal record. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(5), 937-975.

Session Ten | Gender: Bodies and control

Readings

- a. Bordo, S. (1993). "Reading the slender body." In *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body* (pp 185-212). University of California Press.
- b. Beisel, N. and Kay, T. (2004). Abortion, race, and gender in Nineteenth-century America. *American Sociological Review*, 69, 498-518.
- c. West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 125-151.
- d. Willer, R., Rogalin, C. L., Conlon, B., & Wojnowicz, M. T. (2013). Overdoing gender: A test of the masculine overcompensation thesis. *American Journal of Sociology*, 118(4), 980-1022.

Week 6 // Crime & Deviance

Session Eleven | The Seductions of crime

Readings

- a. Katz, J. (1988). "Sneaky Thrills" and "Seductions and Repulsions of Crime." In *Seductions of Crime: Moral and sensual attractions in doing evil* (pp 52-79 and 310-324). Basic Books.
- b. Rios, V. (2012). Stealing a Bag of Potato Chips and Other Crimes of Resistance. *Contexts*, 11(1), 48-53.
- c. Martin, P. Y., & Hummer, R. A. (1989). Fraternities and rape on campus. *Gender and Society*, 3(4), 457-473.

Session Twelve | Deviance in individuals and organizations

Readings

- a. Becker, H. (1963). "Kinds of Deviance: A Sequential Model." In *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. (pp 19-39). The Free Press.
- b. Vaughan, D. (1999). The dark side of organizations: Mistake, misconduct, and disaster. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25, 271-305.

ⁱ Berger, P. (1963). *An Invitation to Sociology*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.

ⁱⁱ Whitman, W. (1992) [1855]. "Song of Myself." *Leaves of Grass*. New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States.