

Introduction to Sociology

Monday and Thursday

12:35-1:55 PM

Cook/Douglass Lecture Hall (CDL), Room 110

Instructor: John T. Lang

E-mail:

URL:

Office Hours: Thursday, 2pm-3pm at Dudley's Cafeteria in the Food Science Building and by appointment

REQUIRED READING

Textbooks are too expensive. Besides, sociology textbooks are often wrong and boring. For this class you buy one book and access the other readings on the web. This means that this class does not cost a lot and you can access the materials for the class from nearly any computer. There are times, however, that our computers or the Internet are not as reliable as we would like. Avoid disaster - get the readings well before the class in which they will be discussed. Definitely make sure you get the readings long before we have a test. Connectivity problems are not acceptable excuses for not being ready.

Clarke, Lee. 2006. *Worst Cases: Terror and Catastrophe in the Popular Imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (ISBN: 0226108597).

You can find it at [Amazon](#) or your favorite bookseller, including the [Rutgers University Bookstore](#) and the [Cook/Douglass Co-op Bookstore](#). One copy of the book is also on reserve at Douglass Library.

Other readings are available online or in the [Rutgers Library Reserves](#).

GRADING

The exams are multiple-choice, and are not cumulative.

Test 1: 30 questions, worth 30% of grade

Test 2: 30 questions, worth 30% of grade

Test 3: 40 questions, worth 40% of grade

You must complete all parts of the course to pass. In other words, skipping one exam means you will fail this course, even if you have perfect grades for everything else.

Exams will cover the readings, lectures, and anything else we do during class. I do not give extra-credit assignments, nor will I allow make-ups on the exams without a superb, legitimate explanation (bring me medical records, phone numbers of surviving relatives, etc.). Weddings, personal holidays, oversleeping, the Rutgers bus system, etc. are not acceptable excuses for missing exams. Drop the course now if there is a conflict between the test days and your personal schedule. The make-ups are essay tests, consisting of several questions. Since these tests must replace a huge percentage of your total grade, the answers for the make-ups must be extremely thorough to warrant a high grade. It is not to your advantage to miss my scheduled tests.

CURVE

I will not curve each individual test. I will only create a curve at the end of the course.

90-100 = A; 80% of the top grade = B; 65% of the top grade = C; 51% of the top grade = D; 50 points or less = F

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Sociology! Sociology is the systematic, scientific study of the patterns and processes of social life, touching on all of its major dimensions - economic, political, religious, familial, and criminal, to name a few - and investigating it at both the level of grand social and historical developments, and the level of everyday, mundane interactions. It studies both individual actors, and the informal groups and formal organizations that populate the social landscape.

This course cannot be comprehensive in its coverage of the discipline of social science. But it will introduce you to some basic concepts in sociological analysis, to some fundamental arguments about the constitution of society and the individuals who comprise it, and to important substantive topics and problems in a variety of the subfields of sociology.

We will explore some of the big questions we face as social beings, and talk about some of the intriguing answers - and questions, for that matter - that sociologists have provided.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I will hold you responsible for the information in this syllabus, so I expect you to read it, understand it, and ask questions about anything you don't understand. I put a lot of material on the website, including the syllabus and course calendar. I do not print the syllabus, so you'll need to get it from here. In fact, I won't hand out anything in class, except for the tests.

READINGS

Your most basic duty in this class is to read all of the assigned texts. Be sure to read the calendar of class meetings, readings, assignments, and exams. All readings are due on the day they are listed. You must have read them carefully, taken notes, and be prepared to pass a quiz and discuss them intelligently. Some of the time I won't cover the readings in class, but the lectures will make more sense if you've done the reading ahead of time.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I expect you to be familiar with the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity, which defines all forms of cheating and the procedures for dealing with violations. As is always the case, you are responsible for your own work. If you find yourself questioning whether you have documented or cited your sources properly, it is your responsibility to come see me about these issues prior to submitting an assignment. If you find yourself thinking about submitting work that is not your own due to pressure, frustration, perfectionism, or any other reason, please talk to me. I am here to help you resolve these issues before they become a problem for your academic career.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The course schedule is tentative and may change slightly. Although I will do my best to keep us on schedule, it is possible that some adjustments will be made as we progress through the semester. I will give as much notice - both in class and on the course website - when changes are necessary.



means the linked file is in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format.



means the linked file is available from the Rutgers University Library Electronic Reserves.



means the reading is from Worst Cases by Lee Clarke.

CLASS SCHEDULE

- Thurs. 1/18 Introduction To The Course
Review: Syllabus
- Mon. 1/22 Introduction To Sociological Thinking
What is the sociological perspective? Why is it important?
 Reading: C. Wright Mills, "The sociological imagination"
- Thurs. 1/25 Introduction To Sociological Thinking
 Reading: Peter Berger, "An invitation to sociology"
- Mon. 1/29 Methods and Tools of Sociology
To the extent that sociology forsakes myth, folklore, and wishful thinking and bases its conclusions on scientific evidence, it is a science. How would you go about studying something sociologically?
Reading: National Academy of Sciences, "Science and Creationism" (from Preface to Appendix)
- FEBRUARY**
- Thurs. 2/1 Methods and Tools of Sociology
 Reading: Emile Durkheim, "What is a Social Fact"
- Mon. 2/5 The Self & Social Context
This class concerned with central ideas and theories on formation of self, agents of socialization, and re-socialization. How does someone acquire their individual identity?
 Reading: Charles Horton Cooley, "The Looking-Glass Self"
- Thurs. 2/8 The Self & Social Context
 Reading: Georg Simmel, "The Stranger"
- Mon. 2/12 Culture
What is culture and what does it do? Explains what sociological concept of culture is, and the crucial place of language and symbolism in shaping social reality.
 Reading: Harold Garfinkel, "Studies of the routine grounds of everyday activities"
- Thurs. 2/15 Culture / Review for Exam 1
 Reading: Andrew Cherlin, "Should the government promote marriage?"
- Mon. 2/19 EXAM 1**
Bring pencils. Be on time.
- Thurs. 2/22 Race & Ethnicity
What difference does it make if someone belongs to a particular race?
In-Class Movie: Ethnic Notions
 Reading: Charles Mingus, "Liner notes" from Let My Children Hear Music
 F. James Davis, "Who is black? The one-drop rule examined"
- Mon. 2/26 Race & Ethnicity
 Reading: Herbert Gans, "Race as class"

MARCH

- Thurs. 3/1 Social Stratification
With hard work and determination people can be anything they want to be, right?
 Reading: Kathleen Gerson and Jerry Jacobs, "The work-home crunch"
- Mon. 3/5 Social Stratification
Does it matter if you get a high school diploma? A college degree?
 Reading: Maureen Hallinan, "Tracking: From theory to practice"
- Thurs. 3/8 Social Stratification
 Reading: Jay Gabler and Jason Kaufman, "Chess, cheerleading, Chopin: What gets you into college?"
- Mon. 3/12 No class.
Spring Break.
- Thurs. 3/15 No class.
Spring Break.
- Mon. 3/19 Deviance & Crime
 Reading: Howard Becker, "Becoming a Marihuana User"
- Thurs. 3/22 Deviance & Crime
 Reading: David Rosenhan, "Being sane in insane places"
- Mon. 3/26 Deviance & Crime / Review for Exam 2
Come prepared with questions.
- Thurs. 3/29 EXAM 2**
Bring pencils. Be on time.

APRIL

- Mon. 4/2 Authority
Why do we follow others? Why do we do what we're told?
 Reading: Philip Zimbardo, "Pathology of Imprisonment"
 Stanley Milgram, "The Perils of Obedience"
- Thurs. 4/5 Organizations & Rationalization
What organizations shape your life as a student at Rutgers?
 Reading: Frank Elwell, "Bureaucracy"
- Mon. 4/9 Organizations & Rationalization
 Reading: Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital"
- Thurs. 4/12 Trust
Who can you trust? Did we ever trust anyone?
 Pamela Paxton, "Trust in decline?"

- Mon. 4/16 Risk
How do you decide what is risky? How do we decide what risks to take?
 Reading: Barry Glassner, "Why Americans Fear the Wrong Things"
 Lee Clarke, Worst Cases
- Thurs. 4/19 Disasters
Were Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans or the collapse of the World Trade Center towers in NYC disasters? Were they worst case scenarios?
 Reading: Kathleen Tierney, "Disaster Beliefs"
 Lee Clarke, Worst Cases
- Mon. 4/23 Disasters
 Reading: Lee Clarke, Worst Cases
- Thurs. 4/26 Disasters
 Reading: Lee Clarke, Worst Cases
- Mon. 4/30 Review for Final Exam
- MAY**
- Friday 5/4 FINAL EXAM**
Starts promptly at 8am
Bring pencils. Be on time.

Good luck. I'm looking forward to a great semester.