

Sociology 166- Fundamentals of Sociology¹

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Required books

- Basirico, Cashion and Eshleman. 2007. Introduction to Sociology. Best Value Books. ISBN: 9781602299993
- Howard, Eve. 2007. Classic Readings in Sociology. Thomson Wadsworth. ISBN: 0495187399

Introduction

Welcome to "Fundamentals of Sociology". This course examines human relationships in society, analyzes concepts of culture, socialization, values, norms, stratification, and causes and effects of inequalities. Sociology could be viewed as a *perspective*. That is, sociological reasoning is a distinctive way of processing everyday information. While everyone has some degree of sociological insight about their experiences, sociology is about systematically bringing these and other social forces to recognition. Sociological reasoning will drastically alter the way we view the world. We shall use sociology to explore social class relations; poverty patterns; global relations between nations and groups; gender and racial inequalities; education; popular culture; and many more topics that we will be exploring throughout the semester. Our treatment of these topics is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to see how the sociological perspective works in a variety of contexts. I hope that you will come to appreciate, as I have, the profound differences that sociological reasoning can make in your understanding of human experience.

Keys to success in this course

Sociology is a complex subject that will require your full attention all semester. Some students wrongly assume that this subject will be "easy." I hope that sociology comes to you without undue difficulty, but I know that most students will need to struggle with the materials just as much, if not more, than with other courses. So, be prepared, and work hard. Here are some basic suggestions:

¹ A copy of this entire document is available on Blackboard.

- Read assignments on time, I prepare lectures and lead class discussions on the assumption that you already have understood the more elementary aspects of the readings.
- Attend class on a regular basis. There is no substitute for “being there,” and being attentive during class.
- Develop your own notes and other study aids. Other people’s notes cannot replace your own reflections on readings, class notes and lectures. Take notes as you read, during lectures, and at other times, as you re-assess what you have learned.

Projects

There will be some short projects assigned throughout the semester. The purpose of the projects is to help students synthesize the course material and analyze the subject matter critically.

**** I do not accept projects that are: 1) late, 2) not typed, 3) e-mailed to me (only hard copies are accepted). Papers that include several sloppy grammar and careless spelling mistakes will not be accepted and is subject to a grade of zero.

Exams

I will administer two in-class exams to test your knowledge of required readings and of lecture material. The format of the exams will be multiple-choice.

Policy on missed exams and projects

If you miss any of the exams, you must bring me a written note from an official such as a police report regarding an accident that you were involved that day, doctor’s note indicating that you were sick the day of the exam, and so forth. In other words, unless you have a good and reasonable excuse, you will not be given a make-up test.

Summary of requirements

| | | |
|---|----------------------------|------------------|
| In-class exams | 2 exams, 100 points each = | 200 points |
| 3 short projects, 25 points each | = | 75 points |
| <u>Class attendance and participation</u> | = | <u>25 points</u> |
| | | 300 Points |

Note on class attendance and participation: Attendance is mandatory for this course. You will start losing points if you miss more than one class (10 points for each missed class). Since we are meeting for a total of 13 weeks, it goes without saying that you can not afford to miss more than a few classes. Otherwise you run the risk of failing the course.

Also, please try to be on time for every class! To be fair to other students who manage to get to the class on time, I can not count you present if you are more than 20 minutes late.

Cell phones: Cell phones MUST be turned off before entering the class. It goes without saying that when someone’s cell phone rings in the middle of the lecture and/or class discussion, it is very disruptive, annoying and plain

rude to all of us in the class. So please make sure you turn it off before entering the class.

Respect for others opinion: Class discussion and participation is an important part of your learning experience during my classes. We will be discussing many issues regarding the topic of the day and I expect intelligent, informative class participation from each one of you. It is important to be respectable to each other's opinions and perspectives. I will not tolerate any "put downs," "foul language," and humiliation of your classmates and myself. I reserve the right to dismiss you from the class if I see any disrespect toward any of my students and myself.

Academic integrity: The College as a higher education institution believes that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of this institution and are binding upon all its members. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards are confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions. Included among the most rigorous sanctions for student academic misconduct is a lowered overall course grade, a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, and /or expulsion from the College. Feel free to speak with me or refer to your student handbook for further clarification on academic integrity policy.

COURSE OUTLINE

The following outline is a tentative schedule of course progression. Specific instructions for upcoming readings and other assignments will be given during lecture and discussion sections. You are responsible for in-class announcements.

Part I. The Foundations of Sociology

Weeks 1,2 and 3:

Chapter 1—The Nature & Uses of Sociology
Chapter 2—The Development of Sociology
Chapter 3—Methods of Studying Society

Article 1. The Promise of Sociology, by C. Wright Mills
Article 2. Invitation to Sociology, by Peter L. Berger
Article 5. Manifest and Latent Functions, by Robert K. Merton

Part II. The Foundations of Sociology—continued

Weeks 4, 5 and 6:

Chapter 4—Culture & Society
Chapter 5—Social Structure, Social Groups, and Social Organizations
Chapter 6—Socialization & Social Interaction
Chapter 7—Deviance & Social Control

Article 4. Body Rituals Among the Nacirema, by Horace Miner
Article 6. The Self, by George Herbert Mead
Article 8. The Normality of Crime, by Emile Durkheim
Article 9. On Being Sane in Insane Places, by D. L. Rosenhahn

Project 1 due (Body Rituals among the NACIREMA)

Midterm Exam

Part III. Social Inequality

Weeks 7, 8 and 9:

Chapter 8—Social Differentiation & Stratification
Chapter 9—Racial & Ethnic Differentiation
Chapter 10—Gender Differentiation

Article 10. The Uses of Poverty: The Poor Pay All, by Herbert J. Gans
Article 13. The Power Elite, by C. Wright Mills

Project 2 due (Project on the documentary: "Killing us Softly")

Part IV. Social Institutions

Weeks 10 and 11:

Chapter 12—Family Groups & Systems

Chapter 14—Educational Groups & Systems

Chapter 17—Health Care Groups & Systems

Article 14. Savage Inequalities, by Jonathan Kozol

Part V. Social Change

Weeks 12 and 13:

Chapter 19—Population & Ecology

Chapter 20—The Changing Community

Project 3 due (Population Change Module)

Final Exam

Frequently Asked questions

1) Can I turn in my project late or get an extension?

The answer is absolutely NOT. I have a responsibility to be fair to other students. Everyone has a busy life. Time management is the key to survive a busy life that you and I have. If you wait until the last minute to finish the work, chances are something will go wrong with your computer, printer, family life, work, etc. Please plan ahead and have your work printed out at least a day ahead. The projects must be handed in the day that is due.

2) Are there any extra credits for this course?

No extra credit work is given for this course.

3) If I miss class, can I e-mail you and you will be able to tell me what I had missed?

I am sorry that I cannot cover two and a half hours of class in one e-mail. What we cover every class is listed in your syllabus. You should also be in touch with a classmate in any of such cases.

4) If for some reason class is cancelled (i.e. thunderstorm, snow, etc.) how would I know?

I will e-mail your Lehman account as soon as a decision is made and will also place a note on Blackboard under "announcements."

5) If I am not able to make it to class, what should I do with my assignment?

If you need to leave any work during the semester that is due the same day or days before it is due (I do not accept late papers), please slip your paper under my office door (Carman Hall, B062). Make sure your name and my name is on the paper. Please do not leave anything in my mailbox in the main office. Sometimes mail gets mixed up and is placed in the wrong mailbox. The safest place to leave anything for me is under my office door. Carman Hall is open as early as 6:00 AM and as late as 11:00 PM even on weekends.

Handout: Related to Chapter 2—Research Methodology

Useful Concepts and Simple Statistical Terms

Attributes or values are characteristics or qualities that describe an object (e.g. female, intelligent, dentist, republican).

Variable is a measurable trait or characteristic that is subject to change under different conditions.

Example: Gender is the variable while male and female are the values or attributes.

The variable in a causal relationship that is subject to the influence of another variable is called an **independent variable**.

The variable that its action “depends” on the influence of the independent variable is the **dependent variable**.

Example: In the statement “smoking causes cancer,” smoking is the cause of cancer so it is the independent variable. Cancer “depends” on smoking, so it is the dependent variable.

| | | |
|-------------|--------|-----------|
| Smoking | -----> | cancer |
| Independent | | dependent |
| Variable | | variable |

A measure of central tendency is a value that represents a typical, or central, entry of a data set. The three most commonly used measures of central tendency are the mean, the median and the mode.

The **mean** is the sum of the data entries divided by the number of entries.

The **median** is the middle data entry when the data set is sorted in ascending or descending order. If the data set has an even number of entries, the median is the mean of the two middle data entries.

The **mode** is the data entry that occurs with the greatest frequency. If no entry is repeated, the data set has no mode. If two entries occur with the same greatest frequency, each entry is a mode and the data set is bimodal.

Example:

Below is the list of grades for students in a sociology class:

59, 66, 72, 72, 72, 72, 77, 77, 77, 85, 86, 86, 87, 87, 89, 89, 94, 94, 95, 95

What is the mean?

$59+66+72+72+72+72+77+77+77+85+86+86+87+87+89+89+94+94+95+95=$

$1631 / 20 = \underline{81.55}$ (the mean is simply the average)

What is the mode? 72 (the case that occurs the most often)

What is the median? 85 (To find the median; arrange the cases in order-either from highest to the lowest or the lowest to the highest. Then look for the middle case, the one that falls halfway between the top and the bottom is the median)

To calculate **percent change** in a population or event, use the formula below:

$\% \text{ change} = [P2 \text{ (population at a later date)} - P1 \text{ (population at an earlier date)} / P1 \text{ (population at an earlier date)}] * 100$

$\% \text{ change} = [(P2-P1)/P1] * 100$

Comparing Major Theoretical Perspectives

| | FUNCTIONALIST | CONFLICT | INTERACTIONIST |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| VIEW OF SOCIETY | Stable, well integrated | Characterized by tension and struggle between groups | Active in influencing and affecting everyday social interaction |
| LEVEL OF ANALYSIS EMPHASIZED | Macro | Macro | Micro analysis as a way of understanding the larger macro phenomena |
| KEY CONCEPTS | Manifest functions Latent functions Dysfunction | Inequality Capitalism Stratification | Symbols Nonverbal communication Face-to face |
| VIEW OF INDIVIDUAL | People are socialized to perform societal functions | People are shaped by power, coercion, and authority | People manipulate symbols and create their social world through interaction |
| VIEW OF SOCIAL ORDER | Maintained through cooperation and consensus | Maintained through force and coercion | Maintained by shared understanding of everyday behavior |
| VIEW OF SOCIAL CHANGE | Predictable, reinforcing | Change takes place all the time and may have positive consequences | Reflected in people's social positions and their communications with others |
| PROponents | Emile Durkheim Talcott Parsons Robert Merton | Karl Marx C. Wright Mills W.E.B. Du Bois | George Herbert Mead Charles Horton Cooley Erving Goffman |

Institution of Education as an example

Functionalist perspective: Education provides social benefits

Manifest functions of schools

- Teaching of knowledge and skills
- Cultural transmission of values such as individualism, competition, and patriotism
- Social integration of students-helping to mold students into a more or less cohesive unit
- Gate-keeping-determining who will enter what occupations, tracking-sorting students into different educational programs on the basis of real or perceived abilities, and social placement-funneling people into various positions
- Promoting personal change through critical thinking
- Mainstreaming- incorporating people with disabilities into regular social activities
- Replacing family functions (e.g. child care and sex education)

Latent functions of schools

- Plays the role of a babysitter
- People become part of social networks through schools
- Help to stabilize employment (keeping unskilled individuals out of the labor force)

Conflict perspective: Education helps maintain social inequality

- The educational system is a tool used by those in the controlling sector of society to maintain their dominance.
- The hidden curriculum is unwritten rules of behavior and attitude taught in school in addition to the formal curriculum (e.g., obedience to authority, conformity to cultural norms).
- Values/work habits taught to help students "prepare for life" are merely devices to teach the middle and lower classes to support the capitalist class. In other words, the purpose of this hidden curriculum is to perpetuate existing social inequalities that are to teach the middle and lower classes to support society's elite.
- Public schools are largely financed by local property taxes; there are rich and poor school districts. Unequal funding works against minorities and the poor.
- The educational system's agreement with the status quo perpetuates society's prevailing inequalities. The U.S. educational system promotes Capitalism and maintains existing social inequalities.
- Regardless of ability, children of the wealthy are usually placed in college-bound tracks and children of the poor in vocational tracks. The educational system helps pass privilege (or lack thereof) across generations.

List of Short Projects

Project 1: Body Rituals among the NACIREMA

Due date _____ (will be announced in class)

Sociological perspective involves a conscious effort to question the obvious, to remove ourselves from familiar experiences, and to examine them critically and objectively. Horace Miner's (article 4) satirical piece is a good example of what Peter Berger (article 2) calls "debunking." Miner debunks the ordinary, everyday cultural practices of Americans and describes to the reader as if the NACIREMA are an unknown tribe.

For your essay, identify different cultural practices and rituals and write a similar essay as if you were looking at the NACIREMA society as an outsider. Describe at least two NACIREMA rituals from an outsiders' point of view as Miner does. Pretend that you have just been exposed to their society and find some of their traditions and rituals bizarre. Use your sociological imagination and perspective when writing the paper. Be creative!

Note: The paper should be a full 3 to 4 pages long if double spaced or at least a full 2 pages long if single spaced. It should be typed on 8 ½-by-11-inch, white paper, stapled together. Please do not bind your paper or enclose within a plastic cover sheet. Hand in your paper in person and in a form of a hard copy (no e-mailed papers will be accepted). If you miss the class the day the paper is due, please slide your paper under my office door (Carman Hall, room B62).

*******I will not accept late papers.**

Project 2: Gender, Race, Images and Advertisements

Due date: _____ (will be announced in class)

Related to the film "Killing us Softly 3" by Jean Kilbourne:

For this project you will use method of content analysis² to analyze how men, women and different racial, ethnic groups are depicted in advertisements. Refer to the film we watched "Killing us Softly 3."

Analyze at least three ads of your choice. Compare the ads with the ones you watched in the film. You could choose ads from television, billboards, magazines, newspapers and the internet. If they are chosen from a magazine, cut out the ads or make photocopies to use as an illustration in your paper. If you use a television or billboard ad, describe it in detail. This project is not about summary of three or more ads. It is a sociological analysis of the ads. Refer to your text for background reading-- chapters on "Socialization," "Social Interaction," "Culture," "Social Inequality," "Gender Inequality," "Race and Ethnicity."

Be creative!

Note: The length of the paper should be a MINIMUM of 2 FULL pages, SINGLE SPACED, excluding the pictures and copies of the ads. It should be typed on 8 ½-by-11-inch, stapled together. Please do not bind your paper or enclose within a plastic cover sheet. Hand in your paper in person and in a form of a hard copy (no e-mailed papers will be accepted).

******No late papers please!**

² A content analysis is a serious investigation of the situations, dialogue, dress, activities, etc. in a written, spoken, or pictorial piece of work. Look carefully for details in the pictures and advertisement script that relates to gender roles, and the depiction of racial and ethnic groups.

Understanding Demography, Page 1 of 2, Prof. Haghghat

Due Date: _____ (will be announced in class)

Your name _____

Understanding Demography:
Population Change

*****Your answers MUST be typed. Electronic version of this project is on blackboard. Please download it to your computer and type in the answers. Hand in a hard copy on the day that is due. No late papers will be accepted.**

In this project we are exploring population dynamics of different countries. This relates to our discussion about patterns of global inequality, economic development and uneven distribution of goods between and within countries.

Part I: To start, click on

<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/>

- This will take you to U.S. Census Bureau’s IDB Summary Demographic Data.
- Select four countries (one at a time—listed under “country summary”):
Afghanistan, Mexico, Sweden, and the United States.
- Write down the following demographic information in the table provided below.
- Compare Afghanistan and Mexico with Sweden and the U.S.

| | Afghanistan | Mexico | Sweden | United States |
|--|--------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Total population (the latest year available) | | | | |
| Male population in 2005 | 15,320,127 | 52,080,453 | 4,458,812 | 145,308,783 |
| Female population in 2005 | 14,608,860 | 54,122,450 | 4,542,962 | 150,425,351 |
| Male/female ratio (# of males divided by number of females multiplied by 100) | | | | |
| Total Fertility Rate | | | | |
| Life Expectancy at Birth | | | | |
| Infant mortality rate (per 1000 births) | | | | |
| Under age 5 mortality rate | | | | |

Understanding Demography, page 2 of 2, Prof. Haghghat

1) Explain the following:

Male/female ratio=
Life expectancy at birth=
Total Fertility Rate=
Infant mortality rate=

2) Write about at least three interesting findings from the table. Compare and contrast the countries' demographic characteristics.

Part II:

Social scientists and policy makers often use **Population pyramids** to understand demographic and social changes in different societies. Population pyramid is a bar chart, arranged vertically, that shows the distribution of a population by age and sex. By convention, the younger ages are at the bottom, with males on the left and females on the right.

Click on:

<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/pyramids.html>

Create population pyramids for Afghanistan, Mexico, Sweden and the United States for the year 2000 (or the latest available).

3) Compare the population pyramid of the two less-developing countries (Afghanistan and Mexico) with the two more-developed countries (Sweden and the United States).

4) In comparing the male and female age distributions of each pyramid, What patterns do you see?

5) In comparing population pyramid of the four countries, what differences do you notice?

For FUN and extra credit:

Click on **animated population pyramid** of the U.S.:

<http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/Animation/pyramid.html>

6) What changes do you notice when comparing population pyramid of the U.S. for the period of 1950-2050?