Introduction to Sociology  
School of Continuing and Professional Studies  
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“Sociological thinking is a vital help to self-understanding, which in turn can be focused back upon an improved understanding of the social world. Studying sociology should be a liberating experience: sociology enlarges our sympathies and imagination, opens up new perspectives on the sources of our own behaviour, and deepens a sense of cultural settings different from our own.” Anthony Giddens

“Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.” C. Wright Mills

“Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand.” Karl Marx

Course Description
As we shall examine in this class, sociology enables us to understand the structure and dynamics of our society and their connections to us as individuals. Sociology helps us understand social life, social change and the causes and consequences of our individual and collective behavior. It exposes the issues and problems that face us as people and as a society. Areas that sociologists examine include culture, socialization, conflict, power, inequality, social control, violence, order and social change.

This course offers an introduction to sociology as a discipline, its major thinkers, critical perspectives, theoretical foundations, research methods and fields of inquiry. Using different mediums such as written text, newspapers, critical documentaries and relevant contemporary media clips, we will focus on the ways that social forces shape culture,
groups, social interaction and institutions and structures in the United States and other comparative contexts.

**Course Textbook**

There is only one book required for the course, which you must purchase as soon as possible. That book is “Introduction to Sociology” by Giddens et al. I will provide you with a pdf copy of the textbook. You may be required to purchase documentaries through youtube.com but the cost will not exceed $10 for the semester.

**Our Learning Atmosphere**

*Active involvement:* In my experience, I find that students fare best when they are actively involved in their learning process. This is an interactive online course, where you will learn by critically engaging with both the reading materials and your fellow classmates and instructor. The academic online classroom functions as an arena of thought where ideas are created, debated, and challenged. Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we will sometimes tackle provocative themes in our class discussions. Take this as an opportunity to consider another viewpoint other than your own. Be open to challenging your own assumptions as well as that of the authors we read in class and your fellow classmates.

*Opinions versus critical thinking:* One of the major skills you will gain from this course is how to think, read and write critically. This of course is the bedrock of a liberal arts education and will continue to be enforced throughout your undergraduate career here at Fordham. You will learn to identify, construct and evaluate arguments. This means that instead of relying solely on opinions or anecdotal evidence, you will learn to critically engage with an author or classmate’s argument. When you read, you should be able to extract the author’s main thesis and the evidence he/she uses to support arguments *as well as* to critically evaluate the logic of their argument, how they use their evidence and to what end. I will give you a separate handout on how to foster these skills in our time together.

*Learning is hard work:* While much of what we will learn in the course may seem commonsensical, learning to think sociologically is actually an acquired skill that takes effort and practice. I want to remind you all that we are in this together. So, do not get discouraged if some of the readings/concepts/themes are initially hard to grasp. We are not born with a certain level of intelligence that remains static throughout our life. You can always improve your critical thinking skills, reasoning skills, writing skills, ability to absorb information. However, this will take some initiative on your part. Learning thus entails a little suffering. *Do not be disheartened. It simply means that you are getting smarter.* 😊

*Respect:* I do not expect all of us to agree with a given topic. That would make for a boring class. We are all unique individuals, coming from different walks of life and that is what makes life wonderful! What I do expect is that you participate in an informed manner. If you highly disagree with an author, fellow classmate or myself, I encourage
you to critique the logic of their argument and support your claims with evidence. I will not allow personal attacks in our online discussions.

**Course Goals**

Students will be able to develop the following:

1. To understand how our individual lives and concerns are part of a larger framework (social structures).
2. Learn to identify and evaluate an author’s main points and supportive arguments, and articulate it in their own words.
3. Understand what a sociological perspective on social life looks like, including applying the concepts we learn in class to our social world, see how they hold up to social reality and adjust them accordingly.
4. Learn how to build convincing arguments (both in speech and in writing) using theoretical concepts and empirical evidence.
5. Appreciate and respect the different ways people have tried to make sense of our social world.

**Assignment Breakdown:**

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Op-ed Essay (2 pages)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field notes Assignment (2-3pages)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm (2-4 pages)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Critical Essay (2-4 pages)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (6-8 pages)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Weekly Discussion Posts 15%:**

Even though this is an online course, we will do our best to participate and hold discussions. Each module is divided into weekly units consisting of assigned reading and lecture and media clips. At the end of each unit, there is a discussion thread for you all to participate in. You have **until the following Wednesday by 9pm** to respond to the question on the discussion board and to engage **at least two other posts** in the thread. I leave the latter to your discretion (depending on the topic you may find one person’s take interesting etc). You must end your post with a critical question for the rest of the class at the end of your post.

*Instructions for the Response Posts:* The responses to the question posed should be a minimum of 150 and a maximum of 500 words. Please refrain from using ‘anecdotal evidence,’ (i.e personal family history, stories, etc) unless the question specifically asks you to share your personal experience, I am looking for critical engagement with the reading material and this means directly quoting from and reflecting on the assigned reading

***Caveat: I will penalize you for the posts if you do not follow these guidelines.***
All written assignments will be handed in through blackboard in the folder labeled assignments***

Op-Ed Assignment: 10%
For this assignment, you are asked to write an op-ed piece for the New York Times. The op-ed must be written on a contemporary issue in the world today viewed from the lens of the sociological perspective. You may choose a topic we have discussed in class, or you can read through major newspapers and television news for a contemporary topic/event/issue that you feel strongly about and want to critically engage the general public with. The op-ed piece should be no more than 2 pages double-spaced. See separate handout under assignments folder. This assignment is due on Wednesday, May 3rd.

Field notes Assignment: 10% Visit a field site of your choice, observe the everyday activities taking place there, and analyze them in terms of class, race or gender. Write up a 2-3 page reflection on what you saw and experienced. Before you conduct your field-visit, you should take notes about your expectations as to what you will see, so that you can compare them to what you actually witness. See separate handout under assignments folder. This assignment is due March 1st.

Midterm Exam: 20%
The take-home midterm exam will be an essay format. I will make the essay prompt available on Wednesday, March 1st and you will hand it in the following Wednesday in class.

Short Critical Essay 15% For this short paper, you will be asked to critically engage with at least two authors and one theme we have read/discussed in class. This assignment is due Wednesday, April 12th. Guidelines will be posted on blackboard.

Current Events/Concepts Paper: 30% For the final paper, you will examine a current/contemporary event through the sociological perspective. Guidelines for the final paper will be available on blackboard. You must hand in a topic to me (short paragraph discussing your topic and what you intend to research) by March 1st. The final due-date for your paper is: Wednesday, May 12th.

Grade Translations:
A = 93-100  A- = 90-92  B+ = 87-89  B = 83-86  B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79  C = 73-76  C- = 70-72  D = 64-69  F=0

Academic Integrity
All assignments submitted for credit must be your own work. Plagiarism, according to Fordham University Policy on Academic Integrity occurs “when individuals attempt to present as their own what has come from another source...whether accidental or deliberate”. According to Fordham University Undergraduate Faculty Handbook, examples of plagiarism include:
1. Failing to acknowledge the ideas of another person, whether or not such ideas are paraphrased, from whatever source including oral, print, broadcast, or computer-mediated communication. 2. Attempting to rewrite borrowed material by simply dropping a word here and there, substituting a few words for others, or moving around words or sentences. 3. Failing to place quotation marks around borrowed material in the approved style. It is no defense to claim that one has “forgotten” to do so. 4. Presenting, as one’s own an assignment, paper, or computer program partially or wholly prepared by another person, whether by another student, friend, or by a business or on-line service that sells or distributes such papers and programs. NOTE: Internet plagiarism: includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the Internet without citing the source, and “cutting and pasting” from various sources without proper attribution. Cheating and Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and if it occurs you will not receive credit for the assignment.

**Further Questions about the course**

-My goal in this online class is to make learning engaging so I ask that you communicate with me directly. This will also help other students who may be shy about asking for clarifications. I do not look down on such questions because for me they are part and parcel of critical thinking and learning. I actually will get very worried if no one wants clarifications. So with that in mind, please email me any time you have questions and let me know how I can better accommodate your concerns.

-I check my email daily (*after 5pm*) and I will respond within 48 hours.

**Reading Course Schedule**

***Please Note:*** Weekly readings will be supplemented with media clips and current event articles. I do reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, which you will be notified well in advance of. ***

"*Whatever sociology may be, it is the result of constantly asking the question, what is the meaning of this?*" C. Wright Mills

**Orientation Module**

**Friday, January 13th:** Introduction to the Course  
**Read:** Course Syllabus and Requirements  
*Blackboard Post Due by following Wednesday, January 18th by 9pm.*  
Please introduce yourself by stating your name, your major, why you took this course (or any other interesting fact about yourself).

**Module #1 What is Sociology: the foundations**  
**Unit #1 January 18th:** Sociology as a Discipline  
**Read:** Chapter 1 (Giddens) “What is Sociology”  
“The Promise” by C. Wright Mills (bb)
Unit #2 January 25th: Sociological Theories (Part I)
Marx and Engels *Manifesto* (excerpts on bb)

Unit #3 February 1st: Sociological Theories (Part II)
Weber “Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” (pg 50-56) (bb)

Module #2 Research Methods (2 weeks)

Unit #4 February 8th: Research Methods (Part I)
Read: Chapter 2 (Giddens)- “Answering and Asking Sociological Questions”

Unit #5 February 15th: Research Methods (part II)
“Researching Crack Dealers” (Jacobs)—pdf- blackboard
Ethnographic Fieldnotes (excerpt bb).
**Preliminary Topic for Final Research Paper due**

Module #3: Culture, Socialization and Interaction
Unit #6: February 22nd: Culture and Society
Read: Chapter 3 (Giddens) “Culture and Society”
“Body Ritual among the Nacerima,” by Horace Minor (bb)

Unit #7 March 1st: Socialization and Gender
Read: Chapter 4 (Giddens) “Socialization and the Life Cycle”
Lorber “Night to His Day: Social Construction of Gender” (bb)
Recommended: Michael Kimmel “Masculinity as Homophobia” (bb)
**Final Paper Topic due**
**Field notes assignment due**

Unit #8 March 8th: Social Interaction
Read: Chapter 5 (Giddens) “Social Interaction and Everyday Life in the Age of the Internet”
Goffman: “Presentation of Self”
**Midterm Exam is due**

Unit #9 March 15th: Families and Intimate Relationships
Read Chapter 15 (Giddens)
Engels “Origin of the Family” (excerpt bb)
*Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage* (excerpts bb)

Week #10 March 22nd: NO CLASSES Spring Recess
Module #4: Deviance and Crime (2 weeks)

Week #11 March 29th: Deviant Behavior
Read chapter 7 (Giddens) Conformity, Deviance and Crime
Goffman “Characteristics of Total Institutions” (bb)
Watch: Stanford Prison Experiment

Week #12 April 5th: Deviant Behavior (part II)
Ta-Nahesisis Coates “The Clocks Didn't Start with the Riots” (bb)
Excerpt from “Policing the Planet”
Watch: 13th

Module #5: Structural Inequalities: US and Globally (4 weeks)

Week #13 April 12th: What is Social Class?
Read: Chapter 8 (Giddens) “Stratification, Class and Inequality”
Dorothy Allison “A Question of Class” (bb)
**Short Critical Essay is due

Week #14 April 19th Race and Ethnicity (this is our last unit)
Read: Chapter 11 (Giddens) “Ethnicity and Race”
Omni and Winant “Racial Formation (bb)
Watch: Race: The Power of an Illusion

Unit #15 April 26th: Globalization and work
Read: “Economic Globalization and Its Effects on Labor”
Watch: Documentary TBA

Week #16 May 3rd: Automation and the future of work
Read: “The End of Capitalism Has Begun”
“Automation and Anxiety” The Economist
**Op-Ed Essay Due

**Final Research Paper is due Wednesday, May 12th by 9pm**