1. About the Course

This course provides an introduction to the discipline of sociology with an emphasis on its hands-on and exploratory dimensions. Through a close reading of canonical texts and case studies, students will become familiar with key sociological concepts, frameworks, and fields of inquiry. Through active participation in classroom discussion, students will also develop the skill to apply this knowledge to the analysis of various social phenomena. Designed as an interactive seminar to encourage the practical application of sociological concepts, this course also requires careful reading and reflection.

2. Learning Objectives

Through a critical engagement with course readings and active participation in weekly seminars, students will:

- Develop an understanding of sociology as a discipline and an appreciation for its depth and breadth.
- Learn to analyze events using the sociological tools developed by scholars in the field.

3. Class organization

Each class will involve a brief lecture covering assigned readings followed by open discussion in which students are encouraged to consider how the assigned material might be used to analyze contemporary phenomena. Active student participation is a must. Being introduced to a new discipline can be intimidating; however, it can also be incredibly fun. A willingness to take risks will therefore be considered an asset!
4. Assignments and Grading

Class participation 20%
Students will be evaluated not solely on the basis of their regular attendance, which is expected, but on the basis of their active participation in classroom discussion as well. Receiving full marks requires that students repress their urge to indulge distractions like texting and Facebook.

Midterm Exam 30%
The midterm will be multiple choice and will cover material covered during the first three weeks of the course.

Reflection Paper 20%
Reflection Papers may draw upon material covered at any point during the course. The paper will 1) describe a current social event in New York in need of analysis, 2) describe the tools elaborated within course readings for conducting such an analysis, and 3) analyze the event using these tools. Additional details about the reflection paper will be provided during Week 2. Reflection papers will be due on the last day of class.

Final Exam 30%
The final will be multiple choice and will cover material from the entire course.

5. Required Text


The text is available at the university bookstore.

6. Policies

Attendance: This course requires regular attendance and active participation in class discussion. Students shall arrive on time and be prepared to discuss assigned material. Use of electronic communications devices during class is distracting to everyone and will negatively affect participation evaluations.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense, which will result in penalties ranging from reduction of class grade to failure in the course. All students are responsible for honestly completing and representing their work. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes plagiarism and for avoiding it.

Late Assignments: Late work will not be accepted without proof of extenuating circumstances.
7. Order of Business

Week 1 | Introduction / The Sociological Perspective

Wednesday July 5: Introduction to the course and to the field of Sociology


Week 2 | Research Design / Culture / Gender


Wednesday July 12: “Ritual and Magic in Everyday Life,” “Conforming to Internalized Culture,” “Following Rules We Don’t Even Know We Have,” and “Impression Management”

Thursday July 13: “Learning to Be Human,” “Learning to Be Male,” “Learning to Be Female,” and “Putting Boundaries Around the Sexes”

Week 3 | Social Groups / Review / Midterm

Tuesday July 18: “Gender and Selling Cars,” “Making Our Bodies Conform,” “Desexualizing Social Interaction,”

Wednesday July 19: “The Discards of Industrial Society,” “Preparing for Final Farewells,” and Midterm Review

Thursday July 20: Midterm

Week 4 | Deviance / Social Inequality


Wednesday July 26: “Physical Appearance,” “Gender Oppression,” and “Race-ethnicity and Identity,”


Week 5 | Social Institutions

Tuesday August 1: “Marriage and Family,” “Medicine,” “Education,”

Wednesday August 2: “Law” and “The Military”

Thursday August 3: Final Review

Week 6 | Final Exam

Tuesday August 8: Final Exam, Reflection Papers due