

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

## **Understanding Human Society**

SOC 2000

Wayne State University

Detroit, MI

Fall 2014

3 Credit Hours

Wednesday 1:55pm – 4:40pm

Prentis Building, Room 0002

### **Instructor: Michael Sabbagh**

ay3127@wayne.edu

#### **Campus Office Hours:**

**Wed: 11:30 PM – 1:30 PM & by appointment**

**Office Location:** 2264 Faculty Administration Building

**Office Phone:** 313-577-2930

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:** *You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Thinking Like a Sociologist / Core*  
3<sup>rd</sup> Edition by Dalton Conley ISBN: 978-0-393-91945-5

Note: There is a longer, non 'Core' version of this textbook which students are welcome to purchase. The material covered in this this course is identical in both texts.

Additional assignments to be passed out in class or available on Blackboard.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Introduction to Sociology! Whether you are a student passionate about sociology or one of the many who take their first sociology course with little idea of what it is, I hope that you will find the following 15 weeks to be engaging, exciting, informative and fun. I look forward to working with each one of you and sharing my love of the discipline. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to enhance your learning experiences in this course.

### **GOALS**

Students who successfully complete this course will develop a rich understanding of the basics of sociology. This course is not focused on purely "factual" learning, or learning facts for the sake of facts. Rather, the focus will be on "conceptual" learning. It is more important to me that you walk away from this class understanding the complex relation of concepts in sociology than being able to recite the facts.

There are many times that we will problematize the definitions that we are learning, and understand the concepts for their strengths and some of their weaknesses. How do these concepts change meaning in time or space? With that being said, the main goal of this class is to learn concepts in sociology through a lens of critical thought.

*Learning objectives for this course*

1. State and illustrate how the sociological imagination can assist in explaining your life
2. Articulate the usefulness of sociological theory and research in your everyday experience
3. Analyze how social structure operates and impacts our lives
4. Recognize and demonstrate the importance of race, ethnicity, social class, and gender diversity in our society and the world
5. An understanding of basic concepts in sociology.
6. An elementary knowledge of sociological research.
7. The capacity to evaluate the dynamics between cultures, the economy and politics.
8. Proficiency in reading and comprehending scholarly texts.
9. The ability to construct an academically sound essay.
10. Accomplishing sound research techniques and presentation skills.
11. Develop internet and computer skills needed for college-level work.
12. Ability to construct complex ideas and to “connect the dots” of concepts.
13. Develop superb critical thinking skills and be able to think deeply about our social lives.
14. And, above all, enjoy yourself while accomplishing the above tasks.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

### **Overview of Student Expectations:**

1. The core of all expectations for this course is **respect**. I expect that you will respect yourself, your fellow classmates, ideas presented in the classroom, diversity, the instructor and any guests to the classroom. Likewise, I pledge to respect you and your ideas.
2. I consider this classroom to be a safe space free of any types of hate. Any form of racism, sexism, misogyny, classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia or other kind of bigotry will NOT be tolerated here. Check your privilege at the door.
3. You are expected **to actively attend each scheduled class**. This means that you are to prepare thoroughly for each class, participate in the class discussion, actively listen and take notes.
4. **You will write your own assignments and cite all external sources**. Cheating and/or plagiarism may result in an automatic failure for the course.
5. **All assignments will be completed with care and scholarly diligence**. Please use complete sentences, refrain from slang, spell and grammar check before turning in any assignments.

If you are to miss a class, you are expected to get notes from a fellow student. Room is provided at the bottom of this syllabus to take down the contact information of three of your colleagues.

### **Instructor Expectations:**

*I pledge to:*

1. Be respectful of myself, students, ideas presented in class, and classroom guests.
2. Always be prepared for every class.
3. Offer a wide array of opportunities for students to be successful in this course.
4. Exude excitement for topics presented in the course.
5. Offer my support.
6. Be fair, reasonable.
7. Be flexible when needed.
8. To give more than adequate feedback on your performance in the class.

### **Attendance Expectations:**

According to the Norwegian pop band D'Sound, "Bein' there is half the walk." Class discussion in this course is just as important as the readings and assignments, alas, if you are not in class, you are not participating in class discussion. Students are expected to be in class on each day on time.

Attendance is taken daily at the beginning of the class session. If you walk in late, it is your responsibility to check in with me at the end of the class to be certain that you were marked as present/late.

### **Number of Preparation Hours:**

As with any undergraduate course you will take, the calculation to determine the amount of time you need to spend on a course to be successful is to spend two hours outside of class for every hour in class. Class will be in session for two and a half hours per week in this class, which means students should expect to spend **at least** five hours per week outside of class on readings, studying, assignments, journals and the research paper.

### **Learning Groups**

In the beginning of the semester, you will be placed into learning groups. Your group project will be completed in this group and periodically you will do work with this group. Room is provided at the bottom of this course outline to take down the contact information of students in your learning group. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a member of your group.

### **Technology:**

*Blackboard:*

**The use of Blackboard is mandatory for this course.** Using Blackboard, students are required to watch videos or link to podcasts, post on the discussion board, and check for notices from the instructor. There will be a Blackboard training the first week of class to ensure all students know how to use this service.

*Cell Phones:*

Please turn all ringers off. Cell phone conversations and texting are prohibited in the classroom. If you need to use your phone, please leave the classroom to make your phone call or send your text and return promptly. If you must constantly interrupt the classroom to use your phone, I may ask you to leave for the day and accept an absence as attendance. These situations will be dealt with on a case-to-case basis.

*Laptops and iPads:*

I do not encourage students to bring laptops or iPads to class. This isn't because I am opposed to computers in general, but computers can be flirtatious monsters, inviting students to engage in non-class activities such as visiting websites or checking e-mail. If you must take notes on your laptop, you must ask permission **before** the start of class **and** send your notes you took during class to me via email.

*Voice Recorders:*

Personally I do not mind lectures being recorded but you will need to notify me before class starts if you'll be recording. This way, I can check with the other students in attendance that day (which

should be all of you, by the way) to ensure they are comfortable being recorded. This is because the class is structured as more of a conversation than lecture, with the instructor as the facilitator.

## **OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Applied Theory and Media Paper**

As writing a solid academic paper takes skill, time, patience and endless practice, we will be working on the paper both in and out of class. You will be discussing your paper topic with your learning groups, peer-reviewing one another's paper, and will be given one re-write option. Details on this will be given around the mid point of the course.

If you are having difficulty in any stage of writing your paper, it is highly suggested that you use the resources the WSU campus has to offer. Please visit the Writing Center in the David Adamany Undergrad Library for assistance with your research assignment.

#### **Writing Center**

David Adamany Undergrad Library  
Second Floor, Room 2310

#### **Drop In Office Hours**

Monday – Tuesday 10am – 6pm

Wednesday 10am – 5pm

Thursday 10am – 6pm

Friday 11am – 3pm

**Website:** <http://www.clas.wayne.edu/writing>

#### **Online appointment scheduling:**

<http://www.clas.wayne.edu/writing/OnlineSchedulingInstructions>

### **Exams**

There will be two exams in the semester: one midterm and one final. Exams may include both short and long essay questions, along with some multiple choice questions. Exam #2 will be cumulative, meaning that it will require you to be able to refer to any information discussed throughout the entire term.

Students are permitted to bring **one page of handwritten notes** to the exams. Notes can be on the front and back of one standard letter sized page. Students must turn their notes in with their exam. Photocopied notes are not permitted.

It is highly suggested that students make every effort possible to take each of the two exams on the scheduled date. In the event that a student misses a test, a substitute test will be offered. This will be completed on an agreed upon appointment time with the instructor, with no notes allowed.

### **Weekly Readings Reflection**

Students are expected to write a one-page reflexive essay for each week's readings. It can be about anything relating to the reading, personal anecdotes, what you liked or didn't like and so on.

### **Group Presentation Project:**

You will be given an assignment this semester where you will lead the class discussion for one day. This will be a group project and each group member will submit a reflection on this as part of your assessed work. See separate handout for details.

### **Extra Credit:**

Students have several options for earning extra credit in this course. Please note that no extra credit is accepted the final two weeks of class and I typically do not accept essays for extra credit.

1. Students may bring in a newspaper or journal article related to the topic of the day with a short (1-2 paragraph) explanation of how it is relevant to that day's discussion.
2. Attend an activity, presentation or exhibition on a class topic. Then, write up a 1-2 page review on this activity, presentation or exhibition that must be submitted within 72 hours of the event.
3. Creativity can definitely be rewarded in this class. Students can design and submit a creative project that helps illuminate sociology terms, concepts or theories. **Please speak with me before beginning down this path to ensure the project is appropriate for this course. Otherwise, there is no guarantee a submitted creative project will receive credit.**

### *Evaluation of Assessments*

Your performance in this course will be evaluated in the following manner:

Attendance: 5 points / class – 70 points total

Readings Reflection: 5 points / essay – 50 points total

Group Presentation: 100 points

Midterm Exam: 100 points

Term Paper: 100 points

Final Exam: 100 points

Total: 520 points

### **Point & Grade breakdown**

520 – 468 / 100% - 90%	A
467 – 442 / 89% - 85%	A-
441 – 416 / 84% - 80%	B+
415 – 390 / 79% - 75%	B
389 – 364 / 74% - 70%	B-
363 – 338 / 69% - 65%	C+
337 – 312 / 64% - 60%	C
311 – 286 / 59% - 55%	C-
285 – 260 / 54% - 50%	D+
259 – 234 / 49% - 45%	D
233 – 208 / 44% - 40%	D-

Anything below this threshold will receive a failure for the course.

**Note:** I will be diligent about getting grades up on Blackboard in as timely of a fashion as possible.

It is up to each student to keep track of her or his marks as the semester goes on. Please see me if you have concerns about your point total or if you are having problems in the course. Do not wait until the last minute to inquire about your grade.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### ***Accommodation Statement***

If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services' mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University." Please refer to the SDS website for further information about students with disabilities and the services we provide for faculty and students:  
<http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/>

### ***Plagiarism Statement***

Assignments that have been copied from another student or another source will not be scored. Your term papers will be run through the SafeAssign plagiarism system which detects attempts at copying text. "Academic misbehavior means any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution or subvert the education process. All forms of academic misbehavior are prohibited at Wayne State University, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct." (*WSU Dean of Students Office Statement, 2014*). The following website gives the university's full policy on academic integrity: <http://doso.wayne.edu/academic-integrity.html>

As I was an undergrad myself at onetime, I understand there are many gray areas when it comes to plagiarism. Don't hesitate to contact me or stop by during office hours if you have questions or need guidance.

### ***A Final Note:***

Due to the nature of the topic of this course, some points discussed in class may be controversial, uncomfortable or may lead to heated debates. Learning something new isn't always comfortable and often our personal judgments cloud our ability to learn to the fullest. Please try to keep those judgments outside of the 'classroom' and focus on gaining new knowledge while in class or reading the assigned texts. If you have strong feelings about anything brought up in class by either your fellow classmates, or me please feel free to make an appointment with me. I am more than willing to listen to your concerns.

The instructor may make changes to this course outline as needed during the course. Please be attentive for possible modifications.

## **COURSE TIMELINE**

### **LAST DAY TO DROP COURSE WITHOUT PENALTY: SEPTEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>**

Week 1: Introductions + Syllabus Review + Group Project Sign Up  
Required Reading: None

Week 2: The Sociological Imagination and Methodology  
Required Reading: Chapter 1, *You May Ask Yourself* (Conley)

Week 3: Culture and Media  
Required Reading: Chapter 3, *You May Ask Yourself* (Conley)

Week 4: Socialization and the Construction of Reality  
Required Reading: Chapter 4, *You May Ask Yourself* (Conley)

Week 5: Groups and Networks  
Required Reading: Chapter 5, *You May Ask Yourself* (Conley)

Week 6: Social Control and Deviance  
Required Reading: Chapter 6, *You May Ask Yourself* (Conley)

Week 7: Review + Midterm Exam + Term Paper Assigned  
Required Reading: None

Week 8: Stratification  
Required Reading: Chapter 7, *You May Ask Yourself* (Conley)

Week 9: Sex & Gender  
Required Reading: Chapter 8, *You May Ask Yourself* (Conley)

Week 10: Race  
Required Reading: Chapter 9, *You May Ask Yourself* (Conley)

Week 11: Poverty & Inequality  
Required Reading: Available on Blackboard

Week 12: Social Movements  
Required Reading: Available on Blackboard

Week 13: Guest Lecturer – Contemporary Detroit Social Movement  
Required Reading: Available on Blackboard

Week 14: No Class – University Holiday

Week 15: Review + Final Exam + Term Paper Due