Course Syllabus **Sociology 4996 (Sociology: Capstone Course)** Fall 2019

Course: Sociology 4996

Classes meet: Mondays from 5:00 – 7:30pm in State Hall, room 0118

Dr. Zachary W. Brewster

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**Office Hours**: M/W: 1:00 – 4:00pm or by appointment (I can be available to meet on most days. If you are unable to meet during my office hours, send me an email and we can coordinate a time that works for you.)

Note: The honors section (501) of this course is a different course with different requirements from the non-honors section (001). To switch sections, you need to drop the honors section and add the non-honors section.  Students **cannot** change sections after the regular drop/add deadline and will be graded based on the section that they are officially enrolled in.

**Required Text:**

Gladwell, Malcolm. 2008. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Little, Brown and Company.

Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Broadway Books.

Diangelo, Robin. 2018. *White Fragility: Why it’s So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*. Beacon Press.

Kane, Emily W. 2012. *The Gender Trap: Parents and the Pitfalls of Raising Boys and Girls*. New York University Press.

**Recommended Text:**

One goal of this class is to review, in broad terms, the curriculum that each of you have worked through in pursuit of a degree in sociology. To this end, it is recommended that you purchase an introductory textbook. There are a variety of these textbooks available and you can purchase older editions online at a very modest cost. Below is the citation for a short introductory textbook that I have used in the past. Again, any introductory textbook would be a beneficial supplemental source.

Gould, Kenneth A. 2017. *Ten Lessons in Introductory Sociology*. Oxford University Press.

**Course Objective**:

This course reviews and expands the knowledge of sociology majors and represents the culmination of your undergraduate sociological training. We will explore the broad landscape of sociological concepts and ideas through the reading of four books addressing various aspects of the role that social forces play in shaping our thoughts and actions. In addition, each student will complete a term paper on a sociological topic of their choosing.

This course fulfills the university writing intensive requirement, which states: “All students must demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively with specialized or professional audiences by completing successfully the writing requirements (courses incorporating major writing assignments) specified by the departments.” Thus, writing is a critical part of the course requirements. Remember that the University has a great resource, the Writing, Resource and Technology Zone, located on the second floor of the Adamany Undergraduate Library in room 2310. You can make an appointment at the Writing Center by calling 313-577-2544 or going on-line at http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/writing. The WRC also has a YouTube channel with additional writing resources.

**Learning Objectives**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

 1. **Articulate** the sociological imagination and apply it to a specific social phenomenon.

 2. **Develop** sociological explanations for social phenomena.

 3. **Contrast** a sociologicalexplanation for a social phenomenon from other types of explanations.

 4. **Recall** and discuss touchstone concepts learned in the sociological curriculum.

5. **Locate** relevant sociological literature on a research topic using a scientific database.

6. **Write** a critical literature review that **synthesizes** and **evaluates** information from research articles.

7. **Draw** conclusions based on empirical patterns and discuss directions for future research and social policy.

8. **Develop** and give an oral presentation of your research findings using power point.

**Expectations**

This course will be facilitated as a seminar. A seminar by definition is a relatively small group of students who are intellectually advanced and who meet regularly with a faculty member to exchange ideas and actively discuss the current state of knowledge within any particular area. This style of learning can be intellectually rewarding. However, you should recognize that in a seminar the responsibility for teaching is shared equally among all of the participants. In other words, I will do very little lecturing in this course but will rather contribute to class discussions alongside each of you. As you should see, the success of the course is thus contingent on each of you attending class, reading the assigned readings before we discuss them in class, and contributing to class discussions.

To maintain a respectful and fruitful learning context, we will let the following principles guide our exchange of ideas: (1) You will be graded on your use of evidence, not your opinions; (2) All ideas are subject to scrutiny; (3) Constructive disagreement sharpens thinking and is encouraged; (4) Viewpoint diversity deepens our understanding of issues; and (5) Reasonable thinkers can draw different conclusions.

**Canvas**

Canvas is an instrumental part of this course and as such, you are expected to login to Canvas on a regular basis to access course materials, check email, communicate with classmates, review announcements, etc. etc. If you do not login to Canvas on a regular basis you will not know what is going on in the course and your chances for success will thus be diminished greatly!

**Student Conduct**

This is a college course; therefore, I expect that you are all adults and will act accordingly. The success of this class depends largely on the students, making class participation imperative. All expressions of ideas are welcome assuming that these expressions are not uncivil to your classmates. Harassment of any nature will not be tolerated. Students are also expected to maintain academic integrity and therefore, cheating of any sort may result in failure of this course. For additional information on academic integrity and related issues refer to the Student Conduct Services homepage (<http://www.doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct/index.html>). Remember, ignorance is not a viable defense of student conduct violations.

**Attendance**

Regular class attendance is expected. While there will be no formal attendance policy in this class excessive absences will inevitably be reflected in your final course grade. Excessive tardiness and leaving class early will be regarded as disrespectful. Further, if you are late you risk missing a weekly quiz. If there is a problem with getting to class on time or having to leave early, please see me as soon as possible. You are all adults and are capable of making the decision to attend class. In cases in which you unable to attend class you are responsible for obtaining missed information from a classmate (if you are sick, stay home and get better but **I do not need to see doctors’ notes** if this is the case). In the case of an emergency, where excessive absences result, please contact me as soon as possible so that I can work with you.

**Makeup Exams**

I understand that we are all human and unexpected events often occur in our lives. If a problem does arise and it is not possible to take the final exam on the scheduled date, contact me as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements. Students who miss the scheduled date of an exam are expected to arrange to take a makeup exam within a one-week period. If arrangements are not made in this time a makeup exam may not be permitted. Makeup exams may be essay format.

**Class Cancellations**

In the event that classes are cancelled for any reason I will communicate with you via Canvas so that you have up-to-date information about what to expect the following class session.

**Students with Disabilities**

**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. The SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-202-4216 for videophone use. Once you have met with your disability specialist, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your accommodations. 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. You can learn more about the disability office at**[**www.studentdisability.wayne.edu**](http://www.studentdisability.wayne.edu/)**.

To register with Student Disability Services, complete the online registration form at:**[**https://wayne-accommodate.symplicity.com/public\_accommodation/**](https://wayne-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/)

**Extra Credit**

I do not give extra credit. Focus your time and energy on the learning opportunities that I have provided you with, instead of hoping to do additional work toward the end of the course. If you follow the course plan, you will not need extra credit opportunities! This course is intentionally designed with several different types of assignments to give you multiple and varied chances to succeed. However, it is imperative that you keep-up with the readings and projects to avoid falling behind. If you run into any difficulties, please see me immediately so that we can develop a plan for you to meet your goals.

**Components of Final Grade (Note: Students are required to keep backup copies of all their work and check Canvas regularly to ensure that their grades are accurately posted.)**

*Weekly Preparation and Participation (10\*10 = 100 points)*

To facilitate the success of this capstone seminar you are required to complete each week’s readings before class begins. To reward students for doing so we will begin each class session by taking a short quiz that will assess your understanding of the week’s assigned readings. **Makeup quizzes will not be permitted**. Thus, if you miss class or you are late arriving to class you will be given a zero for that quiz. However, I recognize that life may intervene and preclude you from coming to class and as such, I will drop your lowest quiz at the end of the semester. Each weekly quiz will be worth a maximum of 10 points.

*“Jeopardy” Reviews and Final Exam (100 points)*

Most weeks, we will begin class with a game of Jeopardy that will review content from one or more of your required sociology courses. Students are encouraged to take detailed notes from these reviews. At the end of the course, there will be a final exam consisting of multiple choice questions that will be drawn from these review games.

Reaction Papers (25\*4 = 100)

For the Gladwell, Desmond, Diangelo, and Kane books you will write a short (3-4 page) reaction paper. There are many different, and yet equally acceptable, ways in which these papers can be organized and written. However, you should keep in mind that you should not merely summarize each of the three books. Rather, you should react to the content and provide a critical analysis of each book. Reaction papers should be typed in 11-12-point font and double-spaced and will be graded on content/coverage, structure/organization, grammar, and critical evaluation. Each reaction paper should is worth 25 points and should be submitted on Canvas on or before the specified due date.

In the process of preparing your reaction papers you can think about the following elements/points/questions.

* What is the primary purpose of the book? Why did the author write it? Why should anybody care about reading it?
* What is the author’s thesis or main argument? Are there any subtopics? How do these subtopics relate to the author’s primary argument?
* What sociologically relevance does the author’s thesis have?
* What types of data were used by the author (e.g., interviews, surveys, content data such as newspapers or historical documents, census data, observational data, etc.)?
* How does the author use her/his data to support his/her primary argument?
* How well do the data support the author’s thesis or main argument? Is the evidence convincing? Why or why not? Does the author interpret the data correctly? Are there alternative interpretations? Are there any “holes” in the argument?
* Is the author’s argument generalizable? Why or why not?
* How does the argument contribute to a larger literature? Why or why not?

*Final Term Paper (125 points)*

Each student will write an 8-10 page literature review on a sociological topic of their choosing. The final paper must cite at least 15 social science journal articles. While additional information about the final paper will be forthcoming, there will be three sequential steps in the process.

1. Select a topic- Each student must submit a brief description of their topic on Canvas by September 30th (10 points).
2. Bibliography- Each students will submit a properly formatted (e.g., MLA, ASA, APA, etc.) bibliography with 15 sources on their topic on October 28th. Bibliographies will be submitted on Canvas and are worth a maximum of 15 points.
3. Final paper. Final papers are to be submitted on Canvas by December 2nd. (100 points)

Writing Matters

* A difficult but important part of writing for a professional audience is to be as concise and precise as possible. Thus, do not waste space (or the reader’s time) with redundancy. For instance, do not make statements that an educated reader could reasonably be expected to know (e.g., Some people do not have health insurance) or information that can be ascertained from the bibliographic heading (e.g., the book’s title).
* You should use the author’s full name the first time you refer to him/her and the author’s last name will suffice in any subsequent reference to him/her.
* Any direct quotation from the text should be in quotation marks and followed by the page number in parentheses. However, you should avoid the use of quotations whenever possible. As a general rule you should only include a direct quotation when the author’s statement/claim/point is written so well that it cannot be rewritten in your own words and this should rarely be the case.
* Avoid using slang, contractions, and hyperboles.
* You should carefully proof read your papers. Words that are misspelled and obvious grammatical errors will be interpreted as an indication of laziness (i.e., you were too lazy to go back and proof read your own work). You should be proud of your work and as one of my professors told me, “you should not feel comfortable putting your name on crap.”

Grading Scale

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 97-100% A+ | 87-89% B+ | 77-79% C+ | 67-69% D+ |
| 93-96% A | 83-86% B | 73-76% C | 63-66% D |
| 90-92% A- | 80-82% B- | 70-72% C- | 60-62% D- |
|  |  |  | Below 60% F |

GRADING RUBRIC: Your grade is based on a total of **425** points.

**Tentative Schedule** (Tentative meaning that this is not sketched in stone and almost certainly will be altered according to class interest, time constraints, and other unforeseen events. As such, it is **your responsibility** to check Canvas **regularly** to verify what you need to do in order to be prepared for each class session. If you do not do so you will not do as well in this class as you otherwise could have done.)

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| **Week 1: September 2nd** Labor Day Holiday—No Class  |
| **Week 2: September 9th** Introduction to the Course; Course Requirements and Syllabus; Review of the sociological perspective |
| **Week 3: September 16th** Readings: 1) Gladwell pp. 1 - 90 |
| **Week 4: September 23rd** Readings: 1) Gladwell pp. 91 – 176 |
| **Week 5: September 30th** Readings: 1) Gladwell pp. 177 – 285Assignment: Brief (1-2 pages) description of term paper project submitted on Canvas. |
| **Week 6: October 7th** Readings: 1) Desmond pp. 1 – 107Assignment: Gladwell reaction paper submitted on Canvas |
| **Week 7: October 14th** Reading: 1) Desmond pp. 111 – 206 |
| **Week 8: October 21st** Readings: 1) Desmond pp. 207 - 336  |
| **Week 9: October 28th** Readings: 1) Diangelo pp. ix – 50Assignments: 1) Bibliography submitted on Canvas  2) Desmond reaction paper submitted on Canvas |
| **Week 10: November 4th** Readings: 1) Diangelo pp. 51 – 154 |
| **Week 11: November 11th**  Readings: 1) Kane pp. 1-81Assignment: Deangelo reaction paper submitted on Canvas  |
| **Week 12: November 18th** Readings: 1) Kane pp. 82-171 |
| **Week 13 November 25th** Readings: 1) Kane pp. 172-236 |
| **Week 14 December 2nd** Final Exam Review Assignment: 1) Final Paper and 2) Kane reaction paper submitted on Canvas |
| **Week 15 December 9th** Final Exam  |

**Important Dates**

* Last Day for Tuition Cancellation—Wednesday, September 11th
* Degree Applications Due—Friday, September 27th
* Last Day to Request Course Withdrawal—Sunday, November 10th
* Thanksgiving/Fall Break—Wednesday November 27th thru Friday November 29th
* Last Day of Classes—Monday, December 9th
* Final Exams—Wednesday, December 11th – Tuesday, December 17th.