

Introduction to Sociology

Instructor: Nicolas Pinet

Email: np2156@columbia.edu

Course website: <http://pratt.alterinfos.org>

Course forum: <http://pratt.alterinfos.org/forum>

Office hours: by appointment

Introduction:

This course offers an introduction to one of the social sciences – sociology – in both its theoretical and practical dimensions.

(1) In the first part of the course, we will consider what constitutes sociology as such, how the discipline emerged in the nineteenth century, and read selections from foundational works by Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber.

(2) In the second part of the course, we will discuss in broad outline the various methods used by sociologists in their research. These methods can be roughly divided between qualitative (participant observation, in-depth interviewing...) and quantitative (statistics). For the “practical” dimension of the course, we will pay special attention to in-depth interviewing. Your final paper will present the results of your analysis of the interviews you will have conducted regarding a topic of your choosing. You are also expected to integrate course readings into your final paper.

(3) The third section of the course will concentrate on key themes (class, gender, race, citizenship, and globalization) considered from a sociological point of view.

Course requirements:

The course is designed to combine lectures, individual presentations and group discussions. I will generally lecture during the first session of each week, while the second session will be dedicated to group discussion. Requirements include (1) class attendance and active participation, (2) thorough reading of each assignment and memos posted to the online forum by 6 pm the day preceding the first session of each week, (3) one individual presentation on a required reading, and (4) a final research paper (10-13 pages). Topics are to be approved by the instructor by week 10 and papers are due on week 16. Recommended books have been ordered at the university bookstore, all of the readings are available online as pdf files.

This course demands a strong commitment and a large amount of work (readings, interviews, writing, and thinking). *All* of the reading must be completed before the first session of each week. You must attend every session, as each one builds on previous discussions. I strongly encourage you to take extensive notes on the readings and during class, it will help you to assimilate them and to keep convenient records of the topics studied (if you need to go back to the readings, you will be able to use your notes and will not have to read all the texts again). Do not take this course if you think you will be unable or unwilling to dedicate the required time and energy.

Grading and Evaluation:

30% Reading memos and forum participation

20% Oral presentation

10% Attendance and class participation

40% Final research paper

Students are to write weekly memos on the readings. Memos are graded as H (outstanding, or 10 points), P (fine, or 8 points), NC (no credit, or 0 points). NC grades arise either because the memo is unacceptable or late. Memos have to be submitted through the website forum (see: <http://pratt.alterinfos.org/forum>). The final paper will be graded on a standard 0-100 scale, where a 100 is great and a 0 is no-credit. Late papers lose 10 points for each day or part of a day late up to a total of 30 points deducted. Class participation grades are based on quality of comments not quantity, every student will have a chance to talk. ****Plagiarism or cheating is not tolerated.**** You are responsible for having read and understood the regulations described in the “Undergraduate Academic Standards” published on the College website.

Memos

Weekly memos should be approximately one single-spaced page, no longer. You are to focus on one aspect or theme in the readings and to discuss why it is interesting, how it relates to other matters of interest, what relevance it has for our course or more broadly for the contemporary world, etc. Students in the class are expected to read each other’s memos and think about them for the discussion session.

Oral presentation

The oral presentations will serve to introduce the discussion session (generally the second session of each week). They should be no longer than 10 minutes, and must be concise and clear.

Final Research Project:

The research project will make use of in-depth interviews. Your paper can be collective or individual but each student will have to conduct at least 2 interviews (at least 45 minutes long each), and the length of the research paper will be proportional to the number of students in the group. The course is designed to allow you to devote a special period of time to the project. For two weeks in November, students will use time normally devoted to class and reading to work on their research project.

Individual research project: 3 to 5 interviews – 10-13 pages

Group of 2: 4 to 8 interviews – 13-16 pages

Group of 3: 6 to 10 interviews – 15-18 pages

Group of 4: 8 to 12 interviews – 17-20 pages

No groups bigger than 4.

Required material:

- a tape recorder (around \$20) and a few tapes

- books (strongly recommended):

Massey, Garth (ed.). 2006. *Readings for Sociology*. New York: Norton.
ISBN: 0-393-92700-8.

Durkheim, Émile. 1997. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press.
ISBN: 0684836386

Weber, Max. 2001. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Routledge Classics.
ISBN: 0-415-25406-X

New York Times. 2005. *Class matters*. New York: Times Books.
ISBN: 0805080554

Class and readings schedule

Week 0 – Introduction (syllabus, projects & methodology)

August 29

August 31

Part I: What is sociology?

Week 1 – Sociology as a critical stance

September 5

September 7

- Plato. 2004. *The Republic*. Translated by C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett. Pp. 208-211 (The Allegory of the Cave, book VII).
- Mills, C. Wright. 1992. "From *The Sociological Imagination*". In *Seeing Ourselves*, edited by John J. Macionis and Nijole V. Benokraitis. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Pp. 1-5.
- Berger, Peter. 1992. "Invitation to Sociology". In *Seeing Ourselves*, edited by John J. Macionis and Nijole V. Benokraitis. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Pp. 6-9.
- Becker, Howard S. 1992. "Whose Side Are We On". In *Seeing Ourselves*, edited by John J. Macionis and Nijole V. Benokraitis. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Pp. 23-26.
- Dumont, Louis. 1990. *Homo Hierarchicus*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 1-20 (Introduction).

Week 2 – Sociology and the study of social facts

September 12

September 14

- Mauss, Marcel. 2005. *The nature of sociology: two essays*. New York: Durkheim Press. Pp. 1-20 (First essay, first part: "The Subject-matter of Sociology").
- Durkheim, Émile. 1982. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: Free Press. Pp. 50-59 (Chapter 1). [Also found in *Readings for Sociology*, edited by Garth Massey. New York: Norton. Pp. 19-26].

Week 3 – Case study: the individual as a sociocultural construction >> lots of readings

September 19

September 21

- Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien, 1966. *The 'Soul' of the Primitive*. New York: Praeger. Introduction, §1; chapters I, §2; II, §5; III, V, §1; VI, §4-5; VII, §1-2.
- Mauss, Marcel, 1985. "A Category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self. In *The Category of the Person, Anthropology, philosophy, history*, edited by Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins and Steven Lukes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 1-25.
- Walton, Anthony, 1996 (2006). "My Secret Life as a Black Man". In *Readings for Sociology*, edited by Garth Massey. New York: Norton. Pp. 130-135.

Part II: Founding Fathers – Sociology & Modernity

Week 4 – Durkheim >> lots of readings

September 26

September 28

- Durkheim, Émile. 1972. "A Review of Ferdinand Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*". Published as "An Exchange Between Durkheim and Tönnies on the Nature of Social Relations". *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 77, n. 6 (May, 1972), p. 1191-1200.

- Durkheim, Émile. 1997. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press. Pp. 11-87, 329-342 (book 1, chapters 1-3, conclusion).

Week 5 – Weber >> lots of readings

October 3

October 5

- Weber, Max. 2001. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Routledge Classics. Pp. xxviii-xlii, 3-50, 102-125.

Week 6 – Marx

October 10

October 12

- Marx, Karl. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: Norton. Pp. 473-491.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1944 (2001). *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press. Pp. 171-174.

Part III – Qualitative & Quantitative Methods

Week 7 – methods

October 17 – In depth interviewing (class on methodology)

October 19 – Qualitative & quantitative (discussion on readings)

- Bearman, Peter S, & James Moody. 2004. “Suicide and Friendships among American Adolescents”. *American Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 94, n. 1. 2004. Pp. 89-96.
- Anderson, Elijah. 1978. *A Place on the Corner*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 235-267.

AND (pick one):

- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 1996 (2006). “Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By in America”. In *Readings for Sociology*, edited by Garth Massey. New York: Norton. Pp. 228-247.
- Coleman, John R. 1992. “Homeless on the Streets of New York”. In *Seeing Ourselves*, edited by John J. Macionis and Nijole V. Benokraitis. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Pp. 81-91.

Part IV – Key issues

Week 8 – cultures, globalization & immigration

October 24 – NO CLASS

October 26

- Anderson, Elijah. 1996 (2006). “The Code of the Street”. In *Readings for Sociology*, edited by Garth Massey. New York: Norton. Pp. 171-183.
- Smith, Robert C. 2006. *Mexican New York, Transnational Lives of New Immigrants*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 207-242 (chapter 9, “Defending your Name: The Roots and Transnationalization of Mexican Gangs”)
- McKibben, Bill. 1996 (2006). “An Alternative to Globalization”. In *Readings for Sociology*, edited by Garth Massey. New York: Norton. Pp. 500-507.

Recommended:

- Kamber, Michael. 2001. “Crossing to the Other Side”. 3-part series published by the *Village Voice*. April 2001. (<http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0115.kamber.23782.1.html>, <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0116.kamber.23953.1.html> & <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0117.kamber.24158.1.html>). 27 p.

Week 9 – citizenship

October 31

November 2

- Putnam, Robert D. 1996. "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America". *The American Prospect*. Vol. 7, n° 24.

Reactions:

- Schudson, Michael. 1996. "What If Civic Life Didn't Die?". *The American Prospect*. Vol. 7, n° 25.

- Skocpol, Theda. 1996. "Unravelling From Above". *The American Prospect*. Vol. 7, n° 25.

- Valelly, Rick. 1996. "Couch-Potato Democracy?". *The American Prospect*. Vol. 7, n° 25.

Response:

- Putnam, Robert D. 1996. "Robert Putnam Responds". *The American Prospect*. Vol. 7, n° 25.

Recommended:

- Skocpol, Theda. 1999. "Associations Without Members". *The American Prospect*. Vol. 10, n°45.

- Putnam, Robert D. 2002. "Bowling Together". *The American Prospect*. vol. 13, n° 3.

- Skocpol, Theda. 2004. "The Narrowing of Civic Life". *The American Prospect*. Vol. 15, n° 6.

Week 10 – race

November 7 – research projects are due (1 page single-spaced)

November 9 – research projects handled back (hopefully)

- Omi, Michael, & Winant, Howard. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge. P. 53-76.

- Fields, Barbara Jeanne. 1990. "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America". *New Left Review*. 181. May-June 1990.

Week 11 – Field week 1

November 14

November 16

Field-based project time. No reading. Class attendance is not expected. Students should be working on their projects. I will be in class in order to discuss issues and provide guidance as needed.

Week 12 – Field week 2

November 21 – field-based project time.

November 23 – NO CLASS

Week 13 – class >> lots of readings

November 28

November 30

- Marx, Karl. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: Norton. Pp. 133-135.

- Weber, Max. 1946. *From Max Weber*. Edited by Gerth & Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 180-195 ("Class, Status, Party").

- Thompson, Edward P. 1985. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage Books. Pp. 9-11.

- New York Times. 2005. *Class matters*. New York: Times Books. Pp. 1-26, 87-104, 192-201, 244-268 (chapters 1, 6, 13 & appendix). See also: <http://www.nytimes.com/class>.

- Gans, Herbert J. 1996 (2006). "Uses of the Underclass in America". In *Readings for Sociology*, edited by Garth Massey. New York: Norton. Pp. 248-260.

Week 14 - gender

December 5 – interviews transcriptions are due (tape and paper in a envelope with your name on it & through email)

December 7 – Transcriptions handed back.

- Messner, Michael A. 1996 (2006). “Boyhood, Organized Sports, and the Construction of Masculinities”. In *Readings for Sociology*, edited by Garth Massey. New York: Norton. Pp. 88-103.
- Scott, Joan Wallach. 1999. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. ix-xiii, 28-50 (“Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” – first published in *American Historical Review* in December 1986), 199-222 (“Some More Reflections on Gender and Politics”).

Week 15

December 12 – research & writing session. No reading. Class attendance is not mandatory. Students should be working on their projects. I will be in class in order to discuss issues and provide guidance as needed.

December 14 – last class, wrap up. PAPERS DUE by 5 pm (email & mailbox).