

# **SOCI 1810 - Understanding Social Life**

**Professor:** Casey Stockstill, PhD

## **Course Description**

At its core, sociology is about connecting individual problems with broader social issues. For example, when you decided what clothing to put on today, your choice was both constrained and enabled by gender norms, age norms, and even globalization and capitalism.

So, how can sociology be useful to you? Sociology can help you: (1) gain greater insight on how your lived experience fits into broader patterns; (2) learn how to assess your and others' opinions in light of empirical evidence; and (3) imagine how society might be different. At the end of the quarter, I hope you will have become used to seeing how experiences often thought of as "personal" are also deeply social.

## **Course Goals**

- Understand the interpersonal, institutional, and structural processes that shape social life
- Connect sociological theories to your own experiences and to current social issues
- Differentiate between opinions and empirically-based claims
- Describe basic principles of human functioning and conduct in social and cultural contexts
- Describe and explain how social scientific methods are used to understand the underlying principles of human functioning

## **Classroom Environment**

We will often discuss personal, and potentially uncomfortable, topics in class. My goal is not to make everyone totally comfortable—I wish that were possible. Instead, my goal is to keep the classroom civil and productive so that we can learn even while being uncomfortable. As such, racist, sexist, or otherwise offensive language will not be tolerated. I will call out such language in order to keep our classroom a productive learning space.

## **Course Structure**

I encourage you to attend every class in order to best learn in this class. Typically, I will spend the first half of class introducing material and in some cases expanding on your reading. We will spend the second half of class delving further into the material through discussions, videos, and activities.

## **Readings**

I very intentionally chose not to use a textbook. Instead, I chose some shorter texts to introduce you to an aspect of social life and some original sociological articles. These are available on Canvas. You will also need to devote some of your out-of-class

preparation time to reading your two books for book club. That said, please complete the readings listed for each date **before** coming to class for that day. My lectures will partially reference the readings and partially introduce new material. However, exams will cover the reading fully. You cannot pass the exams without keeping up with the reading and attending lecture.

### **Lecture Etiquette**

I really, really encourage you to take notes on paper. I do permit laptops and tablets as note-taking resources. Online shopping, Facebook, or even doing work for other classes are not permitted as they distract those around you.

For cell phones, I invite you to participate in an experiment this quarter. I will allow you to use your cell phone in class, but if you do so, I reserve the right to cold call you to ensure you are paying attention.

Lectures will begin promptly at 10am. Please be ready by that time. Please refrain from packing up your stuff until 11:50am. I promise to end on time, and in return I expect you to wait until the class is actually over before shuffling your stuff around. This ensures that your classmates do not miss out on lecture material because of noise. Please see me if you have a special circumstance that requires you to leave early.

### **Course Communication**

Please first check the syllabus for logistical information. If you need further help, contact me.

I am always available to discuss course content with you. Please try to attend student hours if possible, otherwise contact me for an appointment.

Please remember that email is a professional communication tool, and proper form matters (e.g. salutation, syntax, signature). This website has examples and guidelines about emailing professors: <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>. I try to respond to all emails within two business days.

### **Attendance & Participation**

We have 16 regular class sessions together (excluding exam days and Book Club days). I often do small activities and I will grade what you hand in.

### **Book Clubs – Inequality in American Higher Education**

In a book club with your peers, you will read and discuss two recent sociology books about higher education. First, you will read Dr. Armstrong and Dr. Hamilton's book *Paying for the Party* about inequalities within a public university in the Midwest. Next you will read Dr. Cottom's book *Lower Ed*, which analyzes the for-profit sector and students' experiences in it. Next Both books use qualitative research and describe college experiences that may differ greatly from your current experience at DU.

**Books:**

Armstrong, Elizabeth A., Hamilton, Laura T. (2013). *Paying For The Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0674088023

Cottom, Tressie McMillan. (2017). *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in The New Economy*. New York: The New Press. ISBN-13: 978-1620970607

**Grading**

Item	% of total grade
Exam #1	15
Exam #2	25
Book Club Assignment #1	18
Book Club Assignment #2	22
Class Participation	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Final grades will be assigned using the following point distribution:

93-100% = A	73-76% = C
90-92% = A-	70-72% = C-
87-89% = B+	67-69% = D+
83-86% = B	63-66% = D
80-82% = B-	60-62% = D-
77-79% = C+	59% or below = F

You may dispute exam or essay grades up to two weeks after exams and assignments have been returned. Requests to re-grade assignments after final grades are submitted will not be honored.

**Exam Policy**

Unfortunately, a class of this size cannot accommodate make-up exams, so please don't ask if you can take a test at a different time to accommodate travel plans. Exceptions to this policy include missing an exam because of a serious illness, a serious family emergency, or a religious observance.

**Topic Overview**

Week	Date	Topic	Due Dates
1	Sep 11	Introduction	
	Sep 14	Methods	
2	Sep 18	Culture	

	Sep 21	Socialization & Life Course	
3	Sep 25	Daily Interaction	
	Sep 28	Deviance and Social Control	Book Review due Sep 30 <sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm
4	Oct 2	Book Club #1- <i>Paying for the Party</i>	Reflection due Oct 4 <sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm
	Oct 5	Groups and Networks	
5	Oct 9	Exam #1	
	Oct 12	Social Class	
6	Oct 16	Race and Ethnicity	
	Oct 19	Gender and Sexuality	
7	Oct 23	Housing and Neighborhoods	
	Oct 26	Labor Markets	
8	Oct 30	Education	
	Nov 2	Families	Book Review due Nov 4 <sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm
9	Nov 6	Book Club #2- <i>Lower Ed</i>	Reflection due Nov 8 <sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm
	Nov 9	Religion	
10	Nov 13	Health & Environment	
	Nov 16	Social Change	
	Nov 20	Second Exam	

## Required Readings

### Week 1

#### Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>: Introduction

\*\*read the syllabus\*\*

#### Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>: Methods

Giddens, Anthony, Duneier, Mitchell, Applebaum, Richard P. and Deborah Carr. 2009. "Asking and Answering Sociological Questions." Pp 27-37 and 40-48. *Introduction to Sociology*. Seventh Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

### Week 2

#### Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>: Culture

Becker, Howard S. 2005. "Culture: A Sociological View," pp. 196-201 in *The Meaning of Sociology: A Reader*, edited by Joel M. Charon. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Peterson, Richard A. 2002. "Roll Over Beethoven, There's a New Way to be Cool." *Contexts* 1(2): 34-39.

#### Friday, September 21<sup>st</sup>: Socialization & The Life Course

Ausdale, Debra Van and Joe R. Feagin. 1996. "Using Racial and Ethnic Concepts: The Critical Case of Very Young Children." *American Sociological Review* 61(5):779-93.

Lareau, Annette. 2016. "Unequal Childhoods." Pps 241-252 in McGann, Kimberly. *SAGE Readings for Introductory Sociology*. Sage Publications.

### Week 3

#### Tuesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>: Daily Interaction

Wing Sue, Derald et al. 2007. "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice." *American Psychologist* 62(4):271-79.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. "Introduction" & "Performances." Pp. 17-25 in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York, The Overlook Press.

#### Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup>: Deviance and Social Control

Chambliss, William J. 1973. "The Saints and Roughnecks," Chambliss, W.J. *Society* 11(1)-24-31.

Kramer, Rory, Remster, Brianna, and Charles, Camille Z. 2017. "Black Lives and Police Tactics Matter." *Contexts* Vol. 16(3) 20-25.

### Week 4

#### Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>: Book Club Meeting #1 – *Paying for the Party*

No reading.

### **Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup>: Groups and Networks**

McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Matthew Brashears. 2008. "The Ties that Bind Are Fraying." *Contexts* 7(3): 32-36.

### **Week 5**

### **Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>: Exam 1**

No reading.

### **Friday, October 12<sup>nd</sup>: Social Class**

Wright, Erik O. and Joel Rogers. 2010. "Class," pp. 195-204 in *Contemporary American Society: How it Really Works*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Gans, Herbert J. 1972. "The Positive Functions of Poverty." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(2):275-289.

### **Week 6**

### **Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>: Race and Ethnicity**

Hooks, Bell. 1997. "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination." Pp. 338–46 in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2014. "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014.

### **Friday, October 19<sup>th</sup>: Gender & Sexuality**

*Class cancelled.* No reading today—but watch the video posted on Canvas and complete the quiz. The quiz is due by noon on Friday, October 19<sup>th</sup>.

### **Week 7**

### **Tuesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>: Housing and Neighborhoods**

Farley, John E. and Gregory D. Squires. 2005. "Fences and Neighbors: Segregation in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America" *Contexts* 4(1)33-39.

Desmond, Matthew. "Forced Out: For Many Poor Americans, Eviction Never Ends." *The New Yorker* Feb 8.  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/02/08/forced-out>

Aisch, Gregor, Buth Eric, Block, Matthew, Cox, Amanda, and Kevin Quealy. 2015. "The Best and Worst Places to Grow Up: How Your Area Compares." *The Upshot*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/05/03/upshot/the-best-and-worst-places-to-grow-up-how-your-area-compares.html>

### **Friday, October 26<sup>th</sup>: Labor Markets**

Pager, D., Western, B., & Bonikowski, B. (2009). "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment." *American Sociological Review*, 74(5), 777–799.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400505>

## **Week 8**

### **Tuesday, October 29<sup>th</sup>: Education**

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. 2006. "From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools." *Educational Researcher* 35(7): 3-12.

Jack, Anthony Abraham. 2016. "(No) Harm in Asking: Class, Acquired Cultural Capital, and Academic Engagement at an Elite University." *Sociology of Education* 89(1):1-19.

### **Friday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>: Families**

Coontz, Stephanie. 2016. "The Way We Weren't: The Myth and Reality Of The Traditional Family." Pps 133-141 in McGann, Kimberly. 2016. *SAGE Readings for Introductory Sociology*. Sage Publications.

Hochschild, Arlie. 2012. "Joey's Problem: Nancy and Evan Holt." Pp. 34-60 in *The Second Shift*. New York, NY: Penguin.

## **Week 9**

### **Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>: Book Club Meeting #2 – Lower Ed**

No Reading.

### **Friday, November 9<sup>th</sup>: Religion**

Collins, Randall. 1992. "The Sociology of God," pp. 30-59 in *Sociological Insight: An Introduction to Non-Obvious Sociology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## **Week 10**

### **Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>: Health & Environment**

Sapolsky, Robert. "Sick of Poverty." *Scientific American* 21 Nov 2005. 94-99.

### **Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup>: Social Change**

Meyer, David S. 2003. "How Social Movements Matter." *Contexts* 2(4):30-35.

## Tuesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>: Exam #2

No reading. Good luck on the exam!

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### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

#### **Students with Disabilities/Medical Issues**

The University of Denver is committed to equitable access and inclusion of those with disabilities. Students who have a disability (i.e., physical, medical, mental, emotional, learning, etc.) and who want to request accommodations should contact the **Disability Services Program (DSP)**; 303.871.3241; 1999 E. Evans Ave.; 4th floor of Ruffatto Hall. Information is also available online at [www.du.edu/dsp](http://www.du.edu/dsp)

#### **Religious Accommodations Policy**

University policy grants students excused absences from class or other organized activities or observance of religious holy days, unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship. You must notify me by the end of the first week of classes if you have any conflicts that may require an absence. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with me in advance to make up any missed work or in-class material.

#### **Honor Code/Academic Integrity**

*(Additional academic integrity statements can be found here)*

All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. For the consequences of violating the Academic Misconduct policy, refer to the University of Denver website on the Honor Code ([www.du.edu/honorcode](http://www.du.edu/honorcode)). See also <http://www.du.edu/studentconduct> for general information about conduct expectations from the Office of Student Conduct.

#### **Mental Health & Wellness**

As part of the University's Culture of Care & Support we provide campus resources to create access for you to maintain your safety, health, and well-being. We understand that as a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug concerns depression, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These stressful moments can impact academic performance or reduce your ability to engage. The University offers services to assist you with addressing these or ANY other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any challenges, you should reach out for support. You can seek confidential mental health services available on campus in the Health & Counseling Center (HCC). Another helpful resource is Student Outreach & Support (SOS), where staff work with you to connect to all the appropriate campus resources (there are many!), develop a plan of action, and guide you in navigating challenging situations. If you are concerned about one of your peers you can submit a report through our Pioneers Care System. More information about HCC, SOS, and Pioneers CARE can be found at:



Health & Counseling Services (<http://www.du.edu/health-and-counseling-center/>)  
Student Outreach & Support and Pioneers Care  
reporting <http://www.du.edu/studentlife/studentsupport/>

### **Title IX**

Gender violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, class, age, appearance, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The University of Denver is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex (gender), including sexual misconduct, sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. The Center for Advocacy, Prevention and Empowerment (CAPE) provides programs and resources to help promote healthy relationships, teach non-violence and equality, and foster a respectful and safe environment for all members of the University of Denver community. All services are confidential and free of charge.

For assistance during business hours, call 303-871-3853 and ask to speak to the Director of CAPE. After hours, please call the Emergency & Crisis Dispatch Line at 303-871-3000 and ask to speak to the CAPE advocate on call.