

Introductory Sociology

SC00104 Introductory Society 2pm

SC00105 Introductory Society 1pm

Dr. A. Starr

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Office Hours: M12-1pm in McGuinn 520

All info is on the course blog: www.trabal.org/socio

Learning Objectives:

- 1) To develop skills in reading, discussing, writing, and applying theories about our social world.
- 2) To develop methods for the study of contemporary social institutions.
- 3) To develop the capacity to think critically and creatively about social problems.

About Sociology

Sociology is the academic study of those phenomenons which are specifically social, as opposed to individual. Sociology has significant overlap with history, economics, anthropology, and political science. We study social institutions, culture, and social change and we are interested in the interactions between them. For example, how does a particular kind of economy affect family structure? Sociologists do not accept that social change is good, natural, or inevitable, and take an interest in identifying the origins and interest groups behind various social changes. Sociology has always been liberal, in that, unlike history, sociological research often concludes with suggestions for “improving” society. This has meant different things to different people, but all see that it is important to analyze how we are living, even if that means questioning the social healthfulness of activities that are generally accepted.

Education for Democracy

One of the fundamental values of American sociology is its contribution to a democratic society. What does this mean in the context of a University? First, democracy is not about police and authority; it is about free and responsible collaboration. I am not a policeman, I am an elder working with you to expand your world by showing you things you haven't seen before and to challenge you, in order to increase your skills.

Second, much of our time in the classroom will be run democratically. It is up to all of us to maintain the quality of our space. Finding our voices and interacting with a balance of passion and respect need to become permanent aspects of our lives as citizens. We will collectively develop an ethic of “step up/step back”, which means: If you're someone who talks a lot, please look for opportunities to step back and let other people talk. If you don't talk a lot, push yourself to step up and share your thoughts. All of us have a responsibility to encourage each other to step up and back as appropriate.

Grading

Your grade will be based on 5 exams, one for each book/topic. The exams will be posted on the course blog, and will be turned in and graded on WebCT. Most of these assignments will be a one-page single-spaced essay on an assigned question. Some assignments may include an alternative media component, such as a photo-essay. The assignments will be graded out of 25 points. 15 points will be assigned based on your demonstrated grasp of course materials, including books, class discussion, in-class films, and any other materials assigned. The final 10 points will be based on your creative synthesis and application of course concepts beyond summary of course materials.

Exams are posted on the blog and must be turned in on Blackboard/WebCT. If there is a tech problem with Blackboard/WebCT late papers will be accepted once the system is working again. Do NOT email papers.

Exams are graded on an absolute scale but final grades are assigned based on a curve system. You CANNOT guess at your grade by doing math, like $17/25=68\%$ ="I'm getting a D!". A 17 is an average score on my exams, therefore it is in the B range. When assigning final grades, class participation will be used to bump borderline grades up or down.

Reading

Five books are assigned for this course and are available at the bookstore.

- Kevin Bales, Disposable People
- Naomi Klein, Shock Doctrine
- Mike Davis, Ecology of Fear
- Michael Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma
- Paul Hawken, Blessed Unrest

Additional readings will be posted to the class blog. Students are responsible for checking the blog.

Films will be shown in class and exam questions may refer to films. There is no way to "make up" a film, as most are from my personal collection.

Internet resources

WebCT will be used for grading.

The course blog will be used for announcements and discussion.

Schedule of Readings & Exams

This schedule may change.

14-30 January

Book 1: Kevin Bales, Disposable People

Exam 1 will be posted Friday 30 January and is due Thursday 5 February at 11 pm on WebCT

2-20 February

Book 2: Naomi Klein, Shock Doctrine

Exam 2 will be posted Wednesday 18 February and is due Wednesday 25 February at 11 pm on WebCT

*** You may want to go to the [lecture](#) on Tuesday 24 February***

23 February-20 March

Book 3: Mike Davis, Ecology of Fear

Exam 3 will be posted Wednesday 18 March and is due Tuesday 24 March at 11 pm on WebCT

23 March-8 April

Book 4: Michael Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma

Exam 4 will be posted Wednesday 8 April and due Thursday 16 April at 11 pm on WebCT

15-29 April

Book 4: Paul Hawken, Blessed Unrest

Exam 5 (Final) posted Wednesday 29 April and due Monday 11 May at 11 pm on WebCT

