

Nashville State Community College
Introduction to Sociology
SOCI 1010

Instructor: Peter Vielehr, MA

Times: Thursday, 5pm & Select Tuesdays, 5pm

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Course Introduction:

The discipline of sociology developed to make sense of a changing society. The Great Transformation—the shift from traditional to modern society including the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the French Revolution of 1789—consisted of intellectual, economic, and social changes that required new explanations. Sociology was used to understand and explain how these changes occurred and their consequences. Early sociologists, including Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and W.E.B. DuBois, all sought to explain how European and American societies had changed and, in doing so, developed the sociological discipline.

I believe that sociology is important for understanding our own position in society and creating social change. As C. Wright Mills claimed, sociology studies the “interplay of biography and history” and that personal troubles are also public issues of social structure. If we can understand how individuals’ troubles are related to social structure we can begin to make changes that can alleviate injustice and reduce suffering. Max Weber, one of the founders of sociology, argued that sociological research requires *verstehen*—an empathic understanding of other peoples’ lives. Throughout the semester, I will encourage us to think about issues from many perspectives.

Sociology, however, is not just opinion or one person’s experience. Sociological claims must be based on evidence that shows *how* society operates. Throughout the semester, we will practice asking sociological questions, designing research to answer those questions, conducting the research, and reporting findings. The fact that this course is taking place inside of a prison means that your work and your voice will be situated within a specific historical and institutional context. The build-up of mass incarceration since the 1980’s in the United States is unprecedented globally and historically. Recently, however, there is great skepticism about America’s carceral experiment. On April 26th, 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice announced that the total number of adults under correctional supervision declined for the ninth consecutive year. These social changes require explanation and the voices of people affected by mass incarceration are important for identifying social problems and changing policy. This course will use sociological tools to examine this phenomenon.

Catalogue Course Description:

An introduction to the study of society, social groups, and social interaction. Topics include culture and society, socialization, social stratification, minorities, education, religion, and social change. **Note:** SOCI 1010 meets the requirement for a Social Science elective.

Prerequisites:

English: Level 2 placement or concurrent enrollment in ENGL 1010 and ENGL 0815, Reading: Level 2 placement or concurrent enrollment in READ 0815.

Credits: 3

Course Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Know that sociology is a social science by being familiar with the methods used in the field;
- Know major theoretical assumptions in the field by reviewing the history and applications of the major paradigms;
- Know how society and individuals are mutually created by studying the process, concepts, and relationships of social interaction;
- Know that sociology examines all of social life by focusing on topics such as culture, social institutions, and issues of deviance, race, social class, and gender.

Required Text:

Conley, Dalton. 2015. *You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Thinking Like a Sociologist, 4th Edition*. W. W. Norton & Company. New York.

Purpose and Goals of the Course:

This course is intended to introduce you to the basic principles, concepts, perspectives, and methodologies used in sociology to develop a more scientific approach to understanding society. I intend to assist you in developing your critical thinking skills and social awareness using sociological insight. This course is designed to be challenging, but you will receive support throughout the semester.

The lectures, class discussions, and readings will expose you to the terms and ideas that represent sociological principles, concepts, and perspectives. It is expected that you will learn the meaning of these terms and ideas as well as how they apply to "real life." I will devote class time to explaining the material thoroughly. You will be required to demonstrate your understanding of these terms and ideas in class discussions, exams, and written work.

This course will require you to plan and implement a sociological research study. Sociologists use rigorous empirical research to understand the complexity of the social world. My goal is that you will develop a better understanding of the research process and systematically investigate a question that is important to you.

Teaching Philosophy:

Many students assume that sociology classes will be easy. While it's true that some of our findings feel like common sense, sociologists often challenge easy explanations of social life and show how our "common sense" is often based on faulty assumptions. In our current

sociohistorical context, examining assumptions is particularly important. I expect that all of us, myself included, will have our assumptions and perspectives challenged in this course.

Scrutinizing ideas and belief that we have understood to be true can be very uncomfortable. Discussions of sensitive topics like family, inequality, poverty, race, gender, sexual orientation, and politics can be difficult. To fully understand our society; however, we must dive into these challenging topics with open minds and respect for one another. Individually, each of us will need to work to figure out why we feel uncomfortable. Collectively, we need to create a classroom where everyone’s experiences and opinions are respected.

You may find that many of the readings outside of the textbook are difficult. I chose all readings purposively because they represent good sociological scholarship. While challenging readings can be frustrating, learning to read a scholarly article is an important skill. We will discuss in-depth strategies for reading complex articles. I do not expect you to understand everything in the articles. Often, I don’t understand everything in academic journals when I have never seen the theory or methods being used. I do expect, however, that you familiarize yourself with the supplemental readings as best you can and to come to class with questions prepared.

Grading and Assignments:

Grading:

15%-Participation & in-class work

15%-What would you change?

70%-Final Project (see handout)

Grade Scale:

A: 93-100; A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 60-62

What would you change?: Short (1-2 page) paper discussing an aspect of society that you would change if you had the ability. Instructions will be given on first day of class.

Final Project: The final project for the semester is a group research assignment. In small groups, you will be designing, carrying out, and reporting results from an original research project.

Research Workshops:

Throughout the semester, we will have four research workshops. These workshops will be on Tuesday nights and are required to make up for the shortened semester length. We will focus on the logistics of your final research project by working collaboratively to design and conduct your project. See the final project assignment sheet for more information.

Course Schedule:

| Class Session | Date | Topic | Reading | Due |
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| <i>Part 1: Sociological Foundations</i> | | | | |
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| 1 | 5/25 **Friday** | What is Sociology? Sociological Traditions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1 • Mills, “The Promise” | |
| 2 | 5/31 | Sociological Methods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 2 • Best, “Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists” in <i>SAGE Readings for Introductory Sociology</i>. | What would you change assignment |
| 3 | 6/7 | Culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3 • Sykes and Messinger. (1960). “The Inmate Social System” in <i>Theoretical Studies in the Social Organization of the Prison</i>. | |
| 4 | 6/14 | Socialization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 4 • Lopez-Aguado, “The Collateral Consequences of Prisonization: Racial Sorting, Carceral Identity, and Community Criminalization.” <i>Sociology Compass</i> | |
| Workshop 1 | 6/19 **Tuesday** | Design and research questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flick. “From Research Idea to Research Question.” • Kreager, Derek A., and Candace Kruttschnitt. (2018). "Inmate Society in the Era of Mass Incarceration." <i>Annual Review of Criminology</i>. (1) 261–283. • | Research Questions |
| 5 | 6/21 | Groups and Networks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 • Borgatti et al. 2009. “Network Analysis in the Social Sciences,” <i>Science</i> | |
| Workshop 2 | 6/26 **Tuesday** | Methods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babbie-qualitative methods | Paper Introduction |

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| 6 | 6/28 | Social Control and Deviance | • Chapter 6 | |
| <i>Part 2: Inequality/Intersectionality</i> | | | | |
| Workshop 3 | 7/3 **Tuesday** | Data Collection | • TBD | Research Methods |
| 7 | 7/5 | Stratification | • Chapter 7 • Gans, “The Positive Functions of Poverty and Inequality” in <i>More Equality</i> . | |
| 8 | 7/12 | Race | • Chapter 9 • Omi and Winant. “Racial Formation in the United States” • Anderson and Collins. “Race, Class, and Gender.” | |
| Workshop 4 | 7/17 **Tuesday** | Analysis and Writing, peer review works in progress | • TBD | Rough Draft |
| 9 | 7/19 | Gender | • Chapter 8 • Ridgeway. “Persistence of Gender Inequality | |
| 10 | 7/26 | Final Presentations | | Final Paper and Presentation |

Writing Format:

All writing should be typed using 12 pt. Times New Roman font. The lines should be double spaced with 1” margins on all sides. Your name, the assignment name, and date should be in the document header, not the document body. The page number should be in the document footer. In-text citations should be given for all sources. In-text citations should include author and date as well as page number if it is a direct quotation—for instance, lecture can be cited as (Vielehr 2018). Quotations should be used sparingly; paraphrasing is usually more effective. Sources from course materials do not need to be included on a separate reference page. If you use sources outside of course materials, please provide a reference page. Since you have limited access to online information about formatting you will not be graded on citation or reference format but please use the following general guides:

For a book:

Author's full name, inverted so that last name appears first. Year. *Book Title in Title Caps and Italicized*. Publishing City: Publisher.

For a scholarly article:

Author's full name, inverted so that last name appears first. Year. “Article Title in Title Caps and in Quotes.” *Journal Title in Title Caps and Italicized* Volume Number(Issue Number):page numbers of article.

Attendance/Withdrawal Policy:

Absences in excess of the total number of class hours in one week may result in a drop in a letter grade.

Failure to attend class will result in a final course grade of “FA” or “FN”

- FA – Failure – attendance related (last date of attendance required)
- FN – Failure – never attended class

It is the student’s responsibility to check D2L and MyNSCC email on a regular basis. These are the official communication channels between the college and students. Students are responsible for the information communicated through those channels. D2L contains specific course information and MyNSCC contains information important for other purposes.

Nashville State Community College has implemented an Early Warning System to notify students via e-mail about academic problems such as poor classroom attendance, poor performance on assignments/tests, poor communication skills, late/missing assignments, and/or lack of classroom participation. Please note that Early Warning Alerts do not affect a student’s academic standing.

Accommodations:

Nashville State complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Consult with the office of Student Disability Services. If you need any accommodation(s) for this class, notify the instructor by the second class meeting.

Classroom Misconduct and Procedures:

Nashville State Community College has a zero-tolerance policy for disruptive conduct in the classroom. Students whose behavior disrupts the classroom will be subject to disciplinary sanctions. The instructor has primary responsibility for control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity. He/she can order temporary removal or exclusion from the classroom of any student engaged in disruptive conduct or conduct which violates the general rules and regulations of the College. Disruptive behavior in the classroom may be defined as, but is not limited to, behavior that obstructs or disrupts the learning environment (e.g., offensive language, harassment of students and professors, repeated outbursts from a student which disrupt the flow of instruction or prevents concentration on the subject taught, failure to cooperate in maintaining classroom decorum, etc.), the continued use of any electronic or other noise or light emitting device which disturbs others (e.g., disturbing noises from beepers, cell phones, palm pilots, lap-top computers, games, etc.). Each student should refer to the current Nashville State Student Handbook for guidelines for student conduct.

Academic Dishonesty:

Any form of academic dishonesty, cheating, plagiarizing, or other academic misconduct is prohibited. "Plagiarism may result from: (1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your works" (A Writer's Reference, 331). Academic dishonesty may be defined as, but is not limited to, intentionally trying to deceive by claiming credit for the work of another person, using information from a web page or source without citing the reference, fraudulently using someone else's work on an exam, paper, or assignment, recycling your own work from another course, purchasing papers or materials from another source and presenting them as your own, attempting to obtain exams/materials/assignments in advance of the date of administration by the instructor, impersonating someone else in a testing situation, providing confidential test information to someone else, submitting the same assignment in two different classes without requesting both instructors' permission, allowing someone else to copy or use your work, using someone else's work to complete your own, altering documents, transcripts or grades, and forging a faculty/staff member's signature.

In addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed through regular college procedures as a result of academic dishonesty, the instructor has the authority to assign an "F" or a "Zero" for the exercise, paper or examination, or to assign an "F" for the course.

If a student believes that he/she has been erroneously accused of academic dishonesty and if his/her final grade has been lowered as a result, the student may appeal the case through the appropriate college grade appeal procedures.