

Sociology 210: Survey of Sociology
Fall 2016
Classroom: Sewell Social Science 6117

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Sections:

DIS 307: WF 12:05–12:55pm
DIS 308: WF 1:20–2:10pm

Office Hours: T 12:30-1:30pm,
R 2:30-3:30pm, or by appointment

**SURVEY OF SOCIOLOGY:
DISCUSSION SECTION**

“We maintain that the teaching of sociology is justified insofar as a liberal education is assumed to have a more than etymological connection with intellectual liberation. Where this assumption does not exist, where education is understood in purely technical or professional terms, let sociology be eliminated from the curriculum. It will only interfere with the smooth operation of the latter.”

—Peter Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*

Purpose of Discussion Section

The purpose of discussion section is to wrestle with the concepts, themes, and texts first presented in lecture—but in a small group setting. As a class, we will explore many of the dominant sociological issues of our day, linking theoretical insights with current events that matter. We will develop the “sociological imagination” required to view our own histories not as elements of randomness, but as lives patterned by social structures largely invisible to us. And together, throughout the course, we will make these structures visible.

Classroom Policy

How to Turn in Assignments:

All written assignments must be handed in during class and ALSO submitted to [TurnItIn.com](https://www.turnitin.com). Failure to submit both a print and electronic form will constitute an incomplete submission, and you will not receive credit.

Attendance:

Attendance at every class is mandatory, and is an essential component of your participation grade. However, I understand that there are extenuating circumstances, such as illness and family emergency, that may prevent you from coming to class. No matter the cause of your absence, please email me as early as possible to let me know. If you plan to be absent for a religious holiday, please contact me within the first two weeks of class. Whether or not your absence is excused, deadlines for assignments will not change unless you make explicit arrangements with me.

Contacting Me:

The best way to contact me is by email, at mcoleman5@wisc.edu. Though I will try to respond in a timely manner, I do have other obligations, including research and coursework. Expect to hear from

me within 48 hours. You are also welcome to meet with me in person, either during office hours or by appointment. If you have concerns that are sensitive or complex, I especially encourage an in-person visit. I may ask you to meet in office hours if a question is too difficult to answer by email.

Laptops, Cell Phones, and Other Electronics:

Unless you receive special permission from me, the use of laptops, cell phones, and other electronics is strictly prohibited. Studies have shown that these technologies distract from classroom learning even when used for noble purposes—for example, notes taken by hand are better remembered than notes taken on the computer. Cell phones must be turned off or silenced (I put mine in Airplane mode to prevent calls). Finally, your covert texting skills are not as impressive as you think—and even if I do not catch you, it is extremely distracting to other students. Please be respectful.

Food in the Classroom:

You are welcome to eat lunch or snacks in class, as long as you do so neatly and quietly. Please avoid noisemakers like potato chip bags, carrots, and subwoofers.

Academic Integrity:

All TAs take academic integrity very seriously, and are required to report violations to the course instructor (Professor Goldberg). My advice to you is simple: never cheat on exams (a no-brainer); zealously cite every idea that comes from another author, *even if it is not a quote and even if you paraphrase*; always do your own work; and check with me if you're worried about potential plagiarism. For more information, see "[How Do I Avoid Academic Misconduct?](#)" on the Dean of Students' website.

Disabilities and Mental Health:

If you have any disabilities that will impact your participation in or work for the course, please write me an email or come and speak with me as soon as possible. And if at any time during the semester you find yourself battling mental health issues that are impacting your participation in or work for the course, then please contact me.

For adjustments to course requirements or classroom policy, such as extended test-taking time, please contact the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) within the first few weeks of class. For mental health resources, students can obtain free counseling and consultation through [University Health Services](#). Your well-being is and should be a top priority.

Course Requirements

You may earn a total of 100 points in this course. These points are based on participation, two oral presentations, four short (2–3 page) papers, a midterm and final, and a research project.

The grading scale is as follows:

A = 93-100, AB = 88-92, B = 83-87, BC = 78-82, C = 70-77, D = 60-69, F = 59 or below.

Participation (15 points):

Students are expected to be active participants in class discussions. Though I recognize that some students are more talkative than others, it is important that you try to contribute at least once per class period; this constitutes evidence that you are engaged and have done the assigned readings. If

for some reason you do not feel comfortable talking in class, please contact me so we can arrange another form of participation (e.g., chatting in office hours). Students are also expected to remain active and alert throughout the discussion, so avoid dozing off, texting, or staring longingly out the window. In academics as in life, much of your success depends on “face work” (a term from sociologist Erving Goffman): so if you’re not feeling up to class, fake it till you make it.

In addition to class attendance, your participation grade will also come from the following sources:

- Completion of the “topic statement” (a one-page proposal for your research project)
- Peer review of another student’s research project
- Meeting with me to discuss at least one of your short papers during office hours
- Revised version of at least one of your short papers, attached to the original (this will give you participation credit in addition to whatever grade improvement you earn)

Four short writing assignments (5 points each):

Four times throughout the semester, you will be expected to write a short, 2–3 page analysis of a required course reading. You are welcome to choose whichever reading you like—but with a catch. To prevent procrastination on your part, I have divided the semester into four parts. You must turn in your papers according to the following deadlines:

First paper due by September 23.

Second paper due by October 21.

Third paper due by November 18.

Fourth paper due by December 9.

Each paper will be due at the beginning of class the day after the reading is listed on the syllabus. For example, if you wish to turn in a paper on one of the three “What is sociology?” readings (see September 13), you must do so at the beginning of class on September 14.

Your paper should have three components:

1. *Summarize the author’s argument.* Be as precise as possible, highlighting the key components of the argument without being too verbose. Avoid quotations, unless you’re naming a key concept like “commodification of labor.” This summary should go beyond what was discussed by Professor Goldberg—show me that you’ve actually read the material and digested it.
2. *Put the argument in context.* How does the argument complement, or challenge, previous articles we’ve read or discussed? Does one of the key concepts in this article remind you of something else we’ve explored? In reviewing an article on racial inequality, for example, you might use another sociologist’s work to show how racial discrimination and gender discrimination have similar roots. As always, *be brief!* Your entire paper is only 2–3 pages.
3. *Critique the argument.* Is the author’s logic convincing? What are its strengths and weaknesses? If the argument has holes in it, how might you fill them? (In other words, how would you expand the argument to make it more convincing?) In providing a critique of the article, you might challenge the assumptions the author makes, the evidence he uses, or even the

structure of the argument itself. Be specific, and most of all be *charitable*—that is, assume that the author is intelligent and has good intentions; interpret the work in light of what the author meant to convey. Don't be mean-spirited: the best critique is one that takes the author at his word and kindly shows him how his argument could be made better. If you can represent the author's argument *at its best*, and yet still manage to show what is wrong with it, you have provided a very strong critique indeed.

IMPORTANT:

All Communication-B courses require students to revise at least two papers per semester. In addition to your research project (see below), you will need to revise at least one of these short papers for a better grade. At any point during the semester, but preferably sooner than later, you will need to meet with me during office hours so we can discuss your paper and how to improve upon it. This will also give us a chance to chat about how you're doing in the course. Meeting with me during office hours, and turning in a revised version of your paper attached to the original one, is required for your participation grade. But you will earn an additional grade boost since I will replace your old grade with a new-and-improved one—assuming you have done the work, of course! I would recommend choosing your lowest-grade paper, but you are welcome to submit all four papers for revision, if you so choose. Writing is a process, and allowing you to revise encourages you to improve your work. Please take advantage of this!

Two oral presentations (5 points each):

To make our 50-minute classes more efficient, each session will begin with short student presentations designed to summarize the readings and stimulate discussion. At the beginning of the semester, you will sign up for two presentation days, each focusing on a particular course reading.

The purpose of these presentations is to draw a link between course readings and current news events. This will give you a chance to apply your sociological imagination. Choose *one* key concept you have encountered in your scheduled reading (e.g., “social capital,” “deviance,” or “emotional labor”), and analyze this concept in light of a recent news article. For example, if you signed up to present on Randall Collins's work “The Normalcy of Crime” (October 6), you might choose an article about how Donald Trump casts Mexican immigrants as “deviant” and dangerous, drawing on Collins's understanding of deviance.

To give you ample time to find an article that interests you, I will allow you to choose any article published up to three months before your presentation. To aid in your quest, you may wish to consult sociologically minded publications like *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The New Yorker*, *The Nation*, *The National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, etc. (Of course, each of these magazines has its own political biases, which you are free to point out in your analysis.)

Your presentation should do the following:

- Briefly summarize the news story (this should take no more than a minute).
- Review your key concept and its connection to the story. To demonstrate that you have done the course reading, you must draw on at least one article assigned in class.
- Show how the news story illustrates your concept. What does it reveal? What can we learn from this example? Why does it matter?
- If relevant, comment on how the journalist herself frames the concept. Does her understanding of “deviance,” for example, mirror the one discussed in your readings? How

does it differ? Keep in mind that sociologists have their own unique jargon, so journalists may use a different word to refer to the same concept.

Your presentation should last five minutes, so please be both detailed and concise. Once the presentation has ended, please be prepared for follow-up questions, either from me or from other students. I may ask you to elaborate on, or clarify, a specific point. Ideally, your presentation should serve as fodder for a lively student discussion.

Research project (25 points total):

Throughout the semester, you will work on a research project devoted to the topic of your choice. The topic should be as specific as possible, and should include a clearly defined research question. To make the process easier on you, and to prevent procrastination, the project is divided into six components.

1. **Topic statement (due September 23):** Provide a summary of your proposed research project. This should be no more than one page, double-spaced. This statement should outline the subject of your paper as well as the sources you intend to use. You do not need to provide a formal bibliography, but please do list several reputable sources (i.e., academic articles and monographs) on which you plan to draw. Your topic statement must include a *specific, narrow research question*. Do not write “I plan to explore gender inequality in American society.” Instead, write down a question: “Why has the wage gap between American men and women—where women earn 77 cents for every man’s dollar—remained so large? What factors prevent this gap from closing?” In fact, even the latter question can be narrowed: “What *cultural* factors prevent this gap from closing?” “What *institutional* factors . . . ?” With a research project like this, it’s best to be, as they say, “an inch wide and a mile deep.”

The topic statement is part of your participation grade.

2. **Annotated bibliography (due October 14) (3 points):** An [annotated bibliography](#) is a list of academic sources, along with a paragraph for each source explaining its relevance to the paper you plan to write. You must include at least six academic sources (journal articles or monographs), and your annotations must include the following: (1) a summary of the book or article and (2) how it is relevant to your paper. For example, you might include an article by an author you really disagree with—and after summarizing the article, you might write: “This author provides an alternative explanation of gender inequality in America. I will show why her argument is unconvincing.” You are free to include assigned readings as part of your bibliography, but the bulk of the sources should be your own.
3. **Outline (due November 2) (4 points):** To help with your first draft, you should write a detailed outline of approximately 2–3 pages. The outline should *clearly present* the structure of your argument, including specific points you intend to make. To receive full credit, the introduction section of your outline must include a thesis statement: a succinct summary of your argument. For example: “The relative improvement in women’s wages has more to do with *men’s* difficulties in the labor market than any gains that women themselves have made.” For help on thesis statements, visit the [UNC–Chapel Hill Writing Center](#) website. For help on outlines, visit the [Purdue OWL](#) website.

4. **First draft (due November 18) (8 points):** Your final paper will be about 10 pages double-spaced, so plan to write a first draft of 7 to 8 pages. The paper must include the thesis statement you developed in your outline (or a revised version, of course). Put your thesis statement at the end of the very first paragraph of your paper. That way, you introduce your research question right away and avoid any confusion about your topic. You should also follow the proper American Sociological Association (ASA) formatting—see my handout “Writing Conventions in Sociology.”
5. **Peer review (due December 2):** Around November 22, I will email you the first draft of another student’s paper. You should edit the paper and provide constructive feedback, mostly ignoring grammar and spelling and focusing instead on content and structure. Is the argument convincing? Is it well-organized? What would you expand upon or cut out? If there are consistent grammar or spelling issues, you are welcome to (kindly) point them out, but the main focus should be on the research itself. Before class on December 2, you will need to email your classmate with an edited version of the paper. You may use the “Track Changes” feature on Microsoft Word, or simply include a paragraph at the end of the paper with your suggestions. You must ‘cc’ me in the email to receive participation credit!
6. **Final draft (due December 14) (10 points):** Your final draft should be 10 pages, double-spaced, and should incorporate the suggestions made by your classmate during peer review. A strong paper will include a clear and convincing thesis supported by evidence; excellent organizational structure; and proper spelling and grammar conventions. The paper must also adhere to ASA formatting (see my handout “Writing Conventions in Sociology”). No exceptions will be made for late papers; if you cannot make the December 14 deadline, please contact me well in advance.

Midterm (October 27) (15 points):

See Professor Goldberg’s syllabus.

Final (December 15) (15 points):

See Professor Goldberg’s syllabus.