

SOCI114: CONTEMPORARY U.S. SOCIETY

Summer 2020

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Preferred pronouns: she, her, hers

~~~ Making the Invisible Visible ~~~

In this course, you will be introduced to Sociology as a discipline. We will look at the major components of what makes sociological inquiry and thinking different from (and sometimes similar to) other disciplines. You will examine the terminology and jargon specific to Sociology, get an overview of the major theories and methods used by sociologists, and get an introduction to some of the major topics and issues addressed by sociologists.

We will focus on current American society because it is the culture in which most of us are immersed most of the time, so it is the one that is most familiar to all of us and the one that we all have in common. We will talk about other cultures in comparison whenever possible to show how reality and culture is SOCIALLY CREATED.

I want to help you “*make the invisible visible*”. I want you to start noticing things in your life that you take for granted because they “are what they are” or you see them all the time so don’t notice them. The process of starting to really SEE things is most transformative when using things that are most familiar to our personal experiences.

Course Goals:

1. Learn, understand, and be able to apply key sociological concepts.
2. Learn how to look at the world through a “sociological lens”, seeing how concepts, principles, theories, and methods are used in various ways and can be applied to our day-to-day lives.
3. Understand the “relative” nature of the world in which we live and how using the “sociological imagination” can help us see our life and the world around us in new and more critical ways.
4. Learn to think critically about information you are given, question the agenda or perspective of the source of your “knowledge”, and develop your own perspective. Knowledge is not “objective”, humans make it up and it is thus “socially created”.
5. Understand how power and the various systems of inequality (race, class, gender, sex, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.) affect the organization of human interactions as well as what we study and how we study it in sociology. And how the people with power (financial, social, physical, military, etc.) organize society and social institutions to maintain their power.

Everyone must abide by the Randolph College Honor Code

Cheating or plagiarism will be reported immediately

You may work with classmates on assignments, but each student must turn in their own work

Required Materials:

(US) *Understanding Society: An Introductory Reader, 5th edition.* (2015). Margaret L. Anderson, Kim A. Logio, and Howard F. Taylor, editors. Cengage Learning.

The Four Agreements. (2003). Don Miguel Ruiz

(MOO) Articles available on Moodle

Grading Scale:

A (1000 – 930)	C+ (799 – 767)	
A- (929 – 900)	C (766 – 733)	
B+ (899 – 867)	C- (732 – 700)	
B (866 – 833)	D+ (699 – 667)	D- (632 – 600)
B- (832 – 800)	D (666 – 633)	F (599 and under)

Each writing assignment will be given a numerical grade, and the averages will be calculated online.

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*In this online course, we are going to co-create a BRAVE SPACE and a SAFE SPACE.*

*A brave space is a space where people feel safe to be communicative and vulnerable without the fear of retaliation, ridicule, or dismissiveness. I encourage open discussion, critical thinking, and a sharing of various viewpoints, experiences, and ideas.*

*A safe space is one in which one can challenge, encourage, support, and respectfully disagree with one another. Students are expected to feel safe in expressing ideas and opinions that are different from those expressed in the readings, by Dr. Currier in her comments, or in the online forum discussions*

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Disabilities: Randolph College is committed to providing learning experiences that are accessible for all students, and will make reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented disabilities. If you have a learning difference or a disability – mental health, medical, or physical impairment – please contact Diane Roy at (434) 947-8132; or at droy@randolphcollege.edu.

ASSIGNMENTS and RESPONSES TO VIDEOS to be submitted on Moodle

- All assignments are due by the end of each week (Sunday at 5pm) in which they are listed; do them in the order they are listed and in the groupings I have given you. You can do them at your own pace and I will comment on them and grade them as you turn them in.
- Each week is broken up in to various “sections” that you can/should read together. Each section (indicated by Roman numerals – I, II, III, etc) has a list of readings and the assignments that go along with those readings.
- You will be submitting things to the Moodle Forum, through the links that I am providing online.

- You will be required to respond to other students' respondents. I will assign a number required once the full enrollment is known.
- I suggest you watch the lecture videos I have posted for each week (or section) before you do your assignments. I will explain some things in there that may help you understand the concepts.

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of Dr. Currier and with sufficient notice

*******Week 1: (7/7 – 7/14) What is Sociology? What is the “Sociological Imagination”?**

Watch Dr. Currier video: “Introduction to Dr. Currier and this course; going from macro to micro”

Post video: Introduction to yourself and what you hope to learn from this class ~ 2-5 minute video
(by 5pm Friday, July 10)

(I) Watch online video: “Discovering Psychology” – Social Construction of Reality (url on Moodle)

Readings: (US1) The Sociological Imagination
(US2) Invitation to Sociology
(US5) Body Ritual among the Nacirema

Assignments:

1 – In your own words, write definitions of sociology and the sociological imagination.

2 – For each article, make a list of 5+ interesting or central points. This can include things that made you go “ah hah” or you didn’t understand.

3 – Write a short reaction paper to the people/culture in the Nacirema article (max 1 page!). What do you think of these people and their rituals? Who are they?

(II) Reading: *The Four Agreements* (whole book)

Assignment:

After reading the book, make a list of at least 5 ways you see people either following or not following the “four agreements” {Make 4 lists – one for each agreement}. Be specific about the situation/context in your descriptions. This book is meant to help you see different ways of seeing the world and recognize that we all have perspectives, yet we are all human and have many commonalities.

*******Week 2: (7/13 – 7/19) ~ Life, Sociological Research, Culture, Socialization, the Life Course, Groups & Organizations**

Watch: Dr. Currier video: “How do we do research in Sociology?”

(I) Watch online video: “Discovering Psychology” – Methods (url provided)

Readings:

(US3) Human Inquiry and Science

(US4) Promoting Bad Statistics
(MOO) The Case for Value-Free Sociology

Assignments:

- 1 – For each article, make a list of 5+ interesting or central points. This can include things that made you go “ah hah” or you didn’t understand.
- 2 – After reading the “Case” article, make a list of reasons you agree and/or disagree with idea that teachers should be “objective”. Be specific and detailed.

(II) Readings:

(MOO) Women and the Birth of Sociology
(MOO) Symbol: The Basic Element of Culture
(MOO) Manifest and Latent Functions
(MOO) *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*

Additional Assignments:

- 1 – In your own words, write a definition of the following terms: symbol, manifest function, latent function, *gemeinschaft*, and *gessellschaft*.
- 2 – For each article, make a list of 5+ interesting or central points. This can include things that made you go “ah hah” or you didn’t understand.

(III) Readings:

(US7) Global Culture: Sameness or Difference
(US9) Klaus Barbie, and Other Dolls I’d Like to See
(US10) Leaving Home for College: Expectations...
(US11) Anyone’s Son Will Do

Additional Assignments:

- 1 – For each article, make a list of 5+ interesting or central points. This can include things that made you go “ah hah” or you didn’t understand.
- 2 – Make a list of things done in places other than the US that the “typical American” would think is strange or wrong
- 3 – Make a list of things that we do in the US that people in other cultures would think is strange or wrong

*******Week 3: (7/20 – 7/26) ~ Who We are and How We get that Way / How the Family affects Us
Defining “Right” and Wrong” (Deviance and Crime)**

Watch Dr. Currier video: “Socialization – what it is and why it is important”

(I)

Watch online video: TBD

Readings:

(MOO) The Self
(US12) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life
(US14) Code of the Street

Assignments:

- 1 – For each article, make a list of 5+ interesting or central points. This can include things that made you go “ah hah” or you didn’t understand.
- 2 – Make a list of all your own identities, things that make up your “self”. This is not a list of personality traits (like kind or friendly), it is a list of labels that you and others apply to you (daughter, athlete, etc).
- 3 – Make a list of ways that you have a “code” in your own life – what are the “rules of engagement” in your own personal environment?

(II)

Watch Dr. Currier video: “Reminders of Macro to Micro, self to society”

Readings:

- (MOO) Primary Groups
- (MOO) The Characteristics of Bureaucracy

Assignments:

Make a list of all the primary, secondary, and reference groups in your own life

(III)

Watch Dr. Currier video: “What is Deviance and what does it mean that it is socially constructed”

Readings:

- (US18) The Functions of Crime
- (US20) The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison
- (MOO) The Saints and the Roughnecks
- (MOO) If Hitler Asked You to Electrocute a Stranger, Would You?
- (MOO) Eating Your Friends Is the Hardest: The Survivors of the F-227

Assignments:

For each article, make a list of 5+ interesting or central points. This can include things that made you go “ah hah” or you didn’t understand.

(III)

Watch “The Outsiders” film and answer questions on Moodle

*******Week 4: (7/27 – 8/2) ~ Various Forms of Social Stratification: Class, Race**

(I)

Watch Dr. Currier video: “Stratification, Inequality, Privilege, and Oppression”

Watch online (url provided on Moodle): “People Like Us”

Writing Assignment for Video:

Make a list of things that struck you while watching the video. What things did you agree with, disagree with, or think have changed since this documentary was made?

(II)

Readings:

(US21) The Communist Manifesto

(MOO) "Why Are People Poor in America" (Rodgers)

(MOO) "What's Wrong with the American Dream?" (Hochschild)

(MOO) "Inheritance and Privilege" (Shapiro)

(MOO) "Low-Wage Workers are Finding Poverty Harder to Escape" (NYT)

(MOO) "Single Mothers are Not the Problem" (NYT)

Assignments:

1 – For each article, make a list of 5+ interesting or central points. This can include things that made you go "ah hah" or you didn't understand.

2 – Make a list of ways that your class/SES have affected you in positive ways and a list of ways they have affected you in negative ways. Be comprehensive.

3 – Make a list of all the things that can be considered "inheritance". Keep in mind it is not just the things that you get when someone passes away...

(III)

Readings:

(US29) The Souls of Black Folk

(US30) Toward a Framework... Racial Inequality

(US31) Racial Formation

(US32) Color-Blind Rage

(MOO) Controlling Images and Black Women's Oppression

Assignments:

For each article, make a list of 5+ interesting or central points. This can include things that made you go "ah hah" or you didn't understand.

Watch either "Just Mercy" or "13th" online and answer the questions posted on Moodle.

*******Week 5: (8/3 – 8/9) ~ Finishing up with Sex/Gender/Sexuality and our Human Future**

(I)

Watch Dr. Currier video: "What are Sex, Gender, and Sexuality and how are they Connected?"

Readings:

(MOO) Male Privilege and White Privilege (MacIntosh)

(US34) The Social Construction of Gender

(MOO) The Importance of Being Beautiful

Assignments:

1 – Make a list of any items that you think MacIntosh should have included on her list of privileges, either for sex, gender, race, or sexuality.

2 – Write a definition of "the social construction of gender" and make a list of 5+ interesting or confusing points from this article.

3 – Make a list of specific ways you have been socialized in terms of sex & gender. What did you learn from others about being a “girl” or a “boy”? What were the messages you got about what “to do” and what “not to do” regarding sex/gender? Be specific, whether or not you followed or agreed with norms.

(II)

Readings:

<https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-lgbtq-term-definitions/>

Assignment for website:

List any questions you have about terms or things you want addressed or answered.

(III)

Readings:

(MOO) Heterosexual Questionnaire

Assignment for questionnaire:

1 – What is your overall response to this questionnaire?

2 – Comment on any questions that struck you, make you think, made you go “ah hah”, etc.

Don’t just put the numbers, put the actual question.

(IV)

Readings:

(MOO) Your Daughter Says She Wants Hormones

Assignment for article:

1 – Make a list of 10+ interesting or confusing points about this article.

2 – Write a 1-2 paragraph essay about why you think trans issues have come to the forefront of American society in the past few years.

Readings:

(US60) Poisoning the Planet

(MOO) Anomy and Modern Life

(MOO) The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty

(MOO) Why Humanity Faces Ultimate Catastrophe

Assignment:

1 – Make a list of 5+ interesting or important points for each of the four articles

2 – Go online and research “Malthusian theory” and write a short description of what he is saying, in your own words. Max 1-2 paragraphs.

FINAL APPLICATION OF WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED and EXAM (August 10-12)

Readings:

(MOO) “The Nuclear Family was a Mistake”

Assignment:

- 1 – Make a list of 10+ important points from this article.
- 2 – Make a list of things you agree and disagree with about this article.
- 2 – Comment on why the Family as a social institution is so important to study and pay attention to and how it relates to all other social institutions (max 2 pages).

“Scavenger hunt” assignments is due to me by 5pm on August 12.