

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY 111 Fall 2023

TOOLS TO OBSERVE, INTERPRET, AND ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN SOCIAL LIFE

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office hrs Monday 10-11 or by appointment

*“Revolution is not a one-time event. It is becoming always vigilant for the smallest opportunity to make a genuine change in established, outgrown responses; for instance, it is learning to address each other's difference with respect” – **Audre Lorde***

*“There is but one coward on earth, and that is the coward that dare not know.” -**W. E. B. Dubois***

“Freedom is not merely the opportunity to do as one pleases; neither is it merely the opportunity to choose between set alternatives. Freedom is, first of all, the chance to formulate the available choices, to argue over them -- and then, the opportunity to choose.”
– **Charles Wright Mills**

WELCOME TO SOCIOLOGY 111

We are living in interesting and turbulent times. Observing and interpreting the world around us is a crucial element of participation. Sociology provides a useful toolkit for informed engagement in social life.

Consider these quotes and the kinds of questions they seek to address: What is revolution? What is cowardice? What is freedom? Each is a question about the relationship between individuals and the larger social world. These types of questions are at the core of sociology.

Sociology is the study of society and social relations. Like anthropology, economics, political science, and psychology, sociology is a social science discipline. These disciplines apply observation and analysis to phenomena of social life.

While traditional sociology focused most heavily on labor, the family, religion, and deviance, today, sociology is a discipline that is as multifaceted as social life itself.

WHAT BOOKS OR SUPPLIES DO I NEED?

There are two required books for this class. If for any reason you are unable to access the books needed for class please contact me as soon as possible.

Freedom is a Constant Struggle - Davis

Poverty, By America - Desmond

All other readings and video materials will be on our course site on pweb. You will find readings and videos in folders that are organized by module.

HOW WILL THIS CLASS BE TAUGHT?

This course uses a mixture of discussion, hands-on activities, informal lecture, writing, and media engagement to meet the course learning objectives. IT IS NOT A LECTURE BASED CLASS. I know many students “love” lecture, but it’s not something you will get in this class (or any class with me at Grinnell College).

Why? Because numerous studies show that lecture is ineffective as a means of instruction.

Here are a few studies, feel free to read them if you’re interested: Bajak, A. (2014). Lectures aren’t just boring, they’re ineffective, too, study finds. *Science*, 12. OR Ganyaupfu, E. M. (2013). Teaching methods and students’ academic performance. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 2(9), 29-35.

I also understand that lecture can exacerbate power inequalities. It is true that I have quite a bit more formal training than you, but that doesn’t mean that my ideas and interests are the only ones that matter. This course is interactive and collaborative by design.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO LEARN?

In any course there are many different learning objectives. In the following lists I outline my main objectives for this class. They are divided into conceptual objectives, practical objectives, and relational objectives.

CONCEPTUAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Those who successfully complete this course will be able to answer the following questions at an introductory level:

- What is sociology?
- What is the sociological imagination?
- What are some of the common methods used in sociology?
- What are some important theories in sociology?
- What are agency and structure?
- How do sociologists think about inequality and power?
- How do sociologists think about race, gender, and sexuality?
- How do sociologists think about social norms?
- How do sociologists think about social movements, protests, and social change?

PRACTICAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Those who successfully complete this course will be able to do the following at an introductory level:

- Apply course concepts to observations of the social world

Locate sociologically relevant peer-reviewed articles using a variety of databases
Read a peer-reviewed article and draw connections to observations of social life
Access and understand data from databases like Social Explorer and LexisNexis
Read / generate data visualizations that are commonly used in sociological research
Collect a data sample from publicly available social artifacts
Express ideas in clear and well-reasoned writing
Use American Sociological Association (ASA) style in formal written work

RELATIONAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Those who successfully complete this course will be able to do the following:

- Engage in sociologically informed discussions with peers
- Give thoughtful consideration to ideas that differ from their own
- Approach questions and challenges collaboratively
- Be generous in their analysis of writings especially those from other times or cultures
- Slow the pace of their responses to allow time for thinking before speaking
- Reflect on their thoughts in a way that allows them to consider how new ideas are being integrated into their thinking

WHAT ABOUT GRADES?

Each professor has a different approach to grading and it is important to me that my students understand how I think about grades and assessment.

First, let me assure you that I understand that there are very good reasons for a student to focus on grades. There are risks and rewards attached to grades; this is especially true for those with scholarships. And regardless of risks and rewards, the majority of students entering college have been trained for twelve or more years to see grades as the most significant outcome of any course. **I do not believe this to be true.**

**The intellectual / personal development of my students is my primary goal in teaching.
Prioritizing grades over growth is counterproductive to this mission.**

That said, evaluation of your progress is a critical part of any class and I will be evaluating how well you meet the course objectives.

In SOC 111 conceptual objectives are assessed via all forms of student work. Basically, anything you write or say should reflect your growing understanding of the concepts we cover in class. Does this mean that you can never say something that's not accurate? Or that you can't ask questions? No. **Growth means getting things wrong and then trying again.** Wrangling with difficult concepts until they are understood is an expected part of the learning process. Please ask questions and make mistakes so that your conceptual grasp of sociology can flourish.

Relational objectives are primarily assessed through student participation in discussions, group activities, and challenges. I will be looking for your ability to be collaborative, creative, and generous with others as we work together.

Practical objectives are assessed largely through your written work. Some assignments focus on helping you develop and demonstrate specific practical skills. For example:

Activity: Engaging the Literature

- Locate sociologically relevant peer-reviewed articles using a variety of databases
- Read a peer-reviewed article and draw connections to observations of social life
- Read / generate data visualizations that are commonly used in sociological research

Activity: Using ACS Data

- Access and understand data
- Generate and interpret basic statistics
- Read / generate data visualizations that are commonly used in sociological research

We will have two **challenge days** where I will present the class with a series of tasks to complete. These tasks will require you to demonstrate your conceptual understanding of the course materials, your ability to utilize the practical skills you've built, and an opportunity to work collaboratively with others toward a common goal.

I am happy to meet with you at any time to talk about your progress. If there is any particular assignment that you do poorly on (a C or lower), I will let you know immediately and provide you with an opportunity to revise and resubmit your work. Anyone who is willing to put in the time and effort will be more than capable of doing very well in this class.

The mission here is to ***stop worrying about grades and start focusing on your learning.***

WHAT COUNTS AS PARTICIPATION?

Participation can mean many things, but some examples of what I would call meaningful participation include:

- Providing an insight into the topic being discussed
- Offering a relevant example for analysis
- Contributing to an ongoing analysis
- Demonstrating logical connections between observations and interpretations
- Drawing connections to course materials
- Raising relevant questions

WHAT IF I MISS A CLASS?

Ideally, students should come to all class meetings and participate in meaningful ways during each class session. But then there is reality...

IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE SICK PLEASE STAY HOME. Check on pweb for the assignments or any make up assignments posted in discussion boards. If you are going to miss a challenge day please contact me as soon as possible so that a make-up can be scheduled. If you miss more than 3 classes it will be important to arrange participation make up, contact me promptly.

WHEN IS IT DUE?

In this section you will find a very thorough outline of class meetings and assignments. It is subject to change, but will likely remain mostly as it. Changes will be posted clearly on PWEB.

AUG 25 - Get to know each other. Goals, interests, questions

MODULE ONE - Introduction to Public Sociology and Key Concepts

Week 1 (Aug 28 - Sep 1) : Sociological Imagination

Monday

Before class - Look at the website for ASA sections and make a list of the five sections that sound most interesting to you with 1. Being the most interesting and 5. Being the fifth most interesting. Bring the list to class

In class - discuss interests and look at the Contexts journal.

Wednesday

Before class - Read "The Sociological Imagination" from Key Concepts in Sports Studies

In class - Close reading and discussion of "The Promise"

Friday

Before class - Check activities folder and read / watch any materials for today.

Week 2 (Sep 4 - 8) : CONTEXTS READINGS -themes tbd

Monday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)

Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?

Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb

In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Wednesday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)

Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?

Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb

In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Friday

Before class - Check activities folder and read / watch any materials for today.

Week 3 (Sep 11 - 15) : CONTEXTS READINGS -themes tbd

Monday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)

Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?
Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb
In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Wednesday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)
Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?
Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb
In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Friday

Before class - Check activities folder and read / watch any materials for today.

Week 4 (Sep 18 - 22) : CONTEXTS READINGS -themes tbd

Monday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)
Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?
Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb
In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Wednesday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)
Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?
Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb
In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Friday

Before class - Check activities folder and read / watch any materials for today

Week 5 (Sep 25 - 29) : CONTEXTS READINGS -themes tbd

Monday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)
Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?
Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb
In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Wednesday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)
Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?
Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb
In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Friday

Before class - Check activities folder and read / watch any materials for today.

Week 6 (Oct 2 - 6)

Monday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)
Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?
Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb
In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Wednesday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)
Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?
Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb
In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Friday

Before class - Check activities folder and read / watch any materials for today.

Week 7 (Oct 9 - 13)

Monday

Before class - Read Either : Article A or Article B (selected based on student interest)
Consider what was the research question being asked in this article? How did they collect the data needed to answer the question? What was the finding?
Also check for any additional video or reading material on pweb
In class - Discuss readings and mini-lecture / activity

Wednesday

CHALLENGE DAY ONE

Friday

No Class. Enjoy Break

MODULE 2 : POVERTY, POWER, and DIFFERENCE

Week 8 (Oct 23 - 27)

Monday

Before Class Read Prologue Ch 1& 2
Summaries and Response Ch 1

- 1.
- 2.

Summaries and Response Ch 2

- 1.
- 2.

Wednesday

Before Class Read Ch 3 & Ch 4
Summaries and Response Ch 3

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Summaries and Response Ch 4

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Friday

Before class - Check activities folder and read / watch any materials for today.

Week 9 (Oct 30 - Nov 3)

Monday

Before Class Read Ch 5 & Ch 6

Summaries and Response Ch 5

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Summaries and Response Ch 6

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Wednesday

Before Class Read Ch 7 & Ch 8 and epilogue

Summaries and Response Ch 7

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Summaries and Response Ch 8

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Friday

Before Class Read Ch 9 and epilogue

Summaries and Response Ch 7

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

MODULE 3 - Social Movements and Social Change

Week 10 (Nov 6- 10)

Monday

Before Class Read CH 2 & 3 of Davis

As you read generate a list of concepts, names, and historical events that are unfamiliar to you. Look some of these up and be prepared to share them with others.

Wednesday

Before Class Read Ch 5 of Davis

As you read generate a list of concepts, names, and historical events that are unfamiliar to you. Look some of these up and be prepared to share them with others.

Friday

Before class - Check activities folder and read / watch any materials for today.

Week 11 (Nov 13-17)

Monday

Before Class Read Ch 7 of Davis

As you read generate a list of concepts, names, and historical events that are unfamiliar to you. Look some of these up and be prepared to share them with others.

People below also draft a two page analysis of key sociological concepts that appear / are relevant to this section of text.

Wednesday

Before Class Read Ch 9 of Davis

As you read generate a list of concepts, names, and historical events that are unfamiliar to you. Look some of these up and be prepared to share them with others.

People below also draft a two page analysis of key sociological concepts that appear / are relevant to this section of text.

Friday

CHALLENGE DAY 2

Week 12 (Nov 20-24)

Monday

Building teams for the final presentations.

Week 13 (Nov 27-Dec 1)

Monday

Work day to finalize

Wednesday

Team 1 presents

Friday

Team 2 presents

Week 14 (Dec 4-Dec 8)

Monday

Team 3 presents

Wednesday

Team 4 presents

Friday

Team 5 presents

WHAT ABOUT...?**WHAT ABOUT ACCOMMODATIONS?**

If you have an accommodation letter please check in with me early to make sure that I have received it and to discuss any concerns you might have about your participation in this course.

In general I aim to design a course that is accessible to all, but I am always learning and will be happy to work with you in any way I can if further changes need to be made.

If you have not spoken with the college about accommodations and wish to do so please contact the Coordinator for Disability Resources, located on the ground level floor of Steiner Hall (641-269-3124).

It is important to be aware that at Grinnell you are not required to: register with disability resources; identify yourself to instructors, staff, or other students as having a disability; or accept accommodations you do not need or want. However, if you need and want accommodations, you are responsible for contacting disability resources and completing the process for requesting accommodations.

<https://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/accessibility-disability/students>

WHAT ABOUT ACADEMIC HONESTY?

IS IT CHEATING IF I WORK WITH A FRIEND?

Grinnell College has a handbook on academic honesty which you can read at: https://www.grinnell.edu/sites/default/files/documents/AcademicHonesty_2017-18.pdf

Generally in this class my expectation is that you will often treat each other as colleagues and collaborators. It is therefore 100% acceptable to work together on activities, papers, and collaborative portions of the challenge day.

Although you will be sharing ideas **it is your responsibility to write your own findings**. In other words, no two papers or activities should say the exact same thing.

If you receive support from a peer on an assignment that is not explicitly a group assignment indicate this in an acknowledgement. For example : Acknowledgements – Thank you to Jan Smith for her review and suggestions.

Citation is the other major form of acknowledgement that must be attended to in this course. Whenever you are summarizing, paraphrasing or directly quoting anything you must provide ASA formatted citation. This is a way of giving credit to the original source of the information that you are using.

You can find how to form an ASA citation at the following website

https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_ASA_Style.pdf

IS IT CHEATING IF I USE CHATGPT OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

Maybe.... If you use AI you must cite your source and AI generated materials should not account for more than a small portion of your work. That said, I try to generate assignments that are unlikely to benefit much from the use of AI.

CAN I RECORD / REPOST PARTS OF THIS CLASS?

No. In general, no aspect of this course should be recorded / screenshot or shared in anyway outside of this course. This policy is to protect the privacy and intellectual rights of all those involved.

HOW SHOULD WE WORK TOGETHER? WHAT IF A GROUP HAS A PROBLEM?

This class relies heavily on collaboration and community. It is essential that we work well together. Sociology is in many ways about connections so please prioritize making connections and developing your ideas both while engaging course materials and while engaging with each other.

Our ability to cultivate and maintain good relationships is our best chance for a just future. Remember that we must stay humble. None of us knows everything. None of us is perfect.

In this class there will be many occasions when you will be working with other people. It is critical that we all respect the time, boundaries and contributions of those we collaborate with.

If you find that you are in an unworkable situation, please contact me immediately baconjul@grinnell.edu and I will sort things out.

WILL THERE BE CONTENT WARNINGS? / WHAT ARE CONTENT WARNINGS?

Content warnings are notices that precede potentially sensitive content. Almost every issue that sociology explores i.e. race, gender, class, sexuality, social control, requires us to consider situations that are often unjust, violent, and upsetting. In other words these issues are the content of sociology. That's my warning.

WHAT IF I NEED HELP WITH SOMETHING?

If you need help with something specific to this course or have general questions about sociology you should email me. I will either answer your questions through email or arrange a time for us to meet.

If you need help with writing a paper I am happy to talk with you. However, you may also benefit from working with folks at the Writing Lab. The Writing Lab offers one-on-one instruction to support student writers. They can be reached at: writing@grinnell.edu

We also have writing mentors for this course (Saniya Kelkar & Aaron Peters. They will be visiting us at some point to give you more information about how they can support your work.

There are a number of similar labs which may be of use to you as a student beyond this class. Here are some helpful links:

Math Lab - <https://www.grinnell.edu/academics/majors-concentrations/math-stats/math-lab>

Reading Lab - laniuska@grinnell.edu Phone (641) 269-3118

Digital Liberal Arts Collaborative (DLAC) - dlac@grinnell.edu

Data Analysis and Social Inquiry Lab (DASIL) - dasil@grinnell.edu Phone (641) 269-9734

If you need help with your computer or with a program you are running for class, reach out to Information Technology Services - ITservices@grinnell.edu Phone (641) 269-4901

If you need to contact Student Health and Wellness please call SHAW at (641)-269-3230

If you need to talk to a counselor call the 24/7 Counseling Hotline – (641)-269-4404

REALLY THOUGH...WHAT ABOUT GRADES?

It's true, at the end of the term I will need to submit a grade.

Here's how I will calculate your grade.

Strict Deadlines

Poverty summary and response paper : 10%

Challenge 1 : 10%

Challenge 2 : 20%

Team presentations : 10%

Can be turned in up to one week late no problem

Context Article summary and response paper : 10%

Davis HW : 10%

In class writing : 10%

Activities : 20%

Ultimately, a large chunk of your grade is based on consistently making an effort. If you show up and turn in work regularly it is **highly likely** that you will do well in this course.