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## **SOCIOLOGY BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY: USING YOUR MAJOR IN THE REAL WORLD**

Senior Projects / Sociology 4966 / TTh 2:30-3:45 / Blegen Hall 10

**Course Overview:** This course is designed to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned as a sociology major and to think ahead about how the knowledge, skills, and insights of the sociological enterprise can be used and applied in your lives and careers outside of the University. It is, in short, a capstone course. The focus is on the role of sociological knowledge, research, and thought in public life in contemporary American society and on how the study of sociology helps to promote critical thinking, effective communication, an appreciation of diversity and ambiguity, and social responsibility. Specific topics include: the status of sociological research and writing in politics and public policy implementation; the ways in which sociological thinking and research inform movements for social change; the presence (or absence) of sociological research and thought in popular culture and the mainstream American media; the day-to-day work of professional sociologists in the academy; the professions and careers where sociological methods and insights are most practical and prominent; and the utility of situating one's life in sociological perspective. This will all be situated in the context of a consideration of the role of ideas, information, intellectuals, and experts in the complex, contemporary global world. Indeed, the larger intellectual goals of the course are to encourage you to think critically about your place in society and history, to reflect on the role of knowledge in the contemporary world, and to understand what skills and understandings you will take with you from your study of sociology to your future careers and lives beyond the academy.

**Readings:** The required readings for the course include one book (see publication information below) and a collection of relatively brief articles, book chapters, and commentaries that will be available on electronic reserves. Reading will be limited to approximately two or three articles (or book chapters) per week. Students are also recommended to purchase one of the two volumes on careers in sociology and criminal justice listed below.

Kidder, Tracy. 2004. *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World*. New York: Random House.

Also recommended: Stephens, W. Richard, Jr. 2004. *Careers in Sociology*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon; And/or: Stephens, W. Richard, Jr. 2002. *Careers in Criminal Justice*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

**Course Requirements:** In addition to regular attendance and active participation, the main purpose and primary requirement of this course is for students to complete the senior paper required for a sociology degree here at the University of Minnesota. It is anticipated that most of these papers will be somewhere between 15 and 20 pages in length. Students have a choice of three options for writing their senior papers, two of which are service learning-based. Brief descriptions are provided below. More information will be provided as the course progresses.

(1) Service Learning Research Report

This option will involve writing a rather traditional sociological report and analysis based on community service learning with a local community organization of your choice. This paper will be based on thirty hours of community service during the course of the semester. Field notes from your service learning experience will be submitted every other week and you will receive feedback but will not be graded. Your final paper should focus on how sociological insights and concepts have helped you to better understand participants in this organization, their goals, and the organization's ability or inability to attain its goals. The final paper should connect what you have learned in your sociology classes to what you have observed in the community.

(2) Service Learning Action Project

The project will be primarily service-based as well but instead of a traditional report the paper would involve creating a grant proposal or action plan on some issue, initiative or problem of direct relevance or immediate concern to a local organization, agency, initiative or movement. This project must establish the sociological significance of the issue, justify the need or utility of sociological research on the matter, and then lay out a plan for conducting that research in conjunction or collaboration with relevant social partners.

(3) Research Paper / Extended Essay

This option would involve writing a more traditional research paper or extended reflective essay on the relevance of sociological theory and research for some aspect of contemporary society and social life. Topics will be worked out in collaboration with the TA and instructor and might include: (1) effective communication and cultures of evidence: how do sociologists communicate their findings about the social world to non-academic audiences and what are the most effective strategies for doing so?; (2) critical thinking and the sociological imagination: what are the taken-for-granted assumptions that sociological

research brings to light and how does sociology help to foster self reflection and value awareness; (3) appreciation of diversity: what are the promises and pitfalls of diversity in democratic societies and what does the study of sociology contribute to our understanding of diversity in complex advanced industrial societies?; (4) citizenship and democracy: what are the responsibilities of citizens in democratic societies and how does the study of sociology help us to better understand the nature of these responsibilities?; (5) sociology and social change: what role should sociology play in fostering social change? This paper may be based on interviews with sociological practitioners and professional sociologists, more theoretical reflections on the role of ideas and intellectuals in American society, or studies of how key sociological works or ideas have been interpreted and used by movement activists, newspaper reporters, or public officials.

**Grades:** Final papers will constitute 60% of your grade. An additional 20% of your grade will be based upon writing and drafts that lead up to the final submission—these include, a formal proposal, introduction and annotated outline, and a first draft. The final 20% of your grade will be based on (mostly) in-class active learning exercises and participation in the course as a whole. To receive an A or A- for the course, you must complete all assignments, including all in-class exercises, and be an active participant in course meetings. If you have a documented illness/other emergency that might warrant an exception to these rules, this must be discussed and confirmed with the instructor.

**Incompletes** will be given only in rare circumstances and only if you can provide prior written documentation.

**Course Websites:** The course syllabus as well as service learning materials, in-class exercises, handouts, and relevant website links are available at the class Vista WebCT site. You can log in to Vista directly at <http://www.vista.umn.edu> or through the “MyU” portal at <http://www.myu.umn.edu>. Please see the handouts on WebCT for more information on configuring your browser and logging in. For those taking one of the service learning options, the website for the Career and Community Learning Center (CCLC) is: <http://www.csl.umn.edu>. CCLC also provides resources about service-learning, including a Student Guide to Service-Learning, at <http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu/students/resources/index.html>. Finally, you can register for a pre-service training workshop offered by CCLC at <http://www.cclc.umn.edu/workshops/index.html#4a>. For more information, see the service-learning handout you received in class.

**Community Service Learning Journals:** If you choose to take one of the service learning options, you are required to perform at least two hours per week (for a total of at least 30 hours) of community service at a local social community organization. We will provide you with a list of possible sites for your project as well as a panel of potential supervisors on the first day of class. If you are going to miss a scheduled time at your CSL site, please be sure to notify the staff member to whom you report at the site in advance that you will be absent. If your service is to

be of value to the organization, people need to be able to count on your contribution. Your weekly journal entries provide an opportunity for you to connect your community experience with readings and class discussions and exercises. The field notes in these journals should be a record of what you observed at your site along with thoughts about how these observations can be connected to lectures, readings, and class exercises. Come prepared to discuss your entries during section meetings and be sure to bring your CSL journals to section meetings. **You must keep track of your hours on the CCLC website at <http://www.csl.umn.edu> and have your hours approved by your supervisor by the time you turn in your final paper.**

**Disabilities:** It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Individuals should contact the course instructor to discuss any individual needs for accommodations.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Week 1

#### 9.5 Introductions, Course Overview and Objectives

No reading

Panel presentation on service learning opportunities.

### **Unit 1: Sociology, Knowledge and Contemporary Society**

#### 9.7 So, one more time: What is sociology?

Readings: \* Calhoun, Craig and Troy Duster. 2005. "The Visions and Divisions of Sociology." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 12: B7-B8.

Johnson, Allan. 1991. Chapter 1 from *The Forest for the Trees: An Introduction to Sociological Thinking*.

### Week 2

#### 9.12 From Tocqueville and Marx to Bellah and Burawoy: A Brief History of Engaged Sociology

"Escape to Duty." Christine Stansell, *The New Republic*, May 15, 2006: pp. 30-36. (Review of *Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy* (Louise W. Knight, Chicago).

#### 9.14 The Foundations of Engaged Sociology, Continued

Part 1 ("Dokte Paul"), *Mountains Beyond Mountains*.

### Week 3

#### 9.19 Sociology in American Culture

Gans, Herbert J. 1997. "Best-Sellers by Sociologists: An Exploratory Study." *Contemporary Sociology*, 26 (2): 131-135.

Also: a chapter from a sociological best seller of your choice (bring reading to class for a participation exercise).

#### 9.21 The Social Role and Function of Intellectuals in Public Life

Boyte, Harry C. "The Struggle against Positivism: Academics can be Public Intellectuals but They Can't Pose as "Experts." *Academe*, July-August, 2000: 44-52

Mills, C. Wright. 1963. "The Social Role of the Intellectual." Pp. 292-304 in *Power, Politics, and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*. New York: Ballantine Books.

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\* Please complete reading prior to the class period for which they are assigned.

**\*\*Project Proposals due\*\***

**Unit II. Different Brands (or Types) of Sociology**

Week 4

9.26 Burawoy's Typology and Preference

Burawoy, Michael. 2004. "Public Sociologies: Contradictions, Dilemmas, and Possibilities." *Social Forces*, 82 (4): 1603-1618.

Begin: Part II ("The Tin Roofs of Cange"), *Mountains Beyond Mountains* (to be completed by week 5).

Scheduling of one-on-one meetings with TA or Instructor

9.28 Two Variations on the Theme of Public Sociology

Bellah, Robert, et al. 1985. "Social Science as Public Philosophy." Pp. 297-307 in *The Habits of the Heart*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stoecker, Randy and Edna Bonacich. 1992. "Why Participatory Research? Guest Editors' Introduction." *The American Sociologist*, 23 (4): 5-14.

Week 5

10.3 Minnesota Visions and Variations

Aminzade, Ronald. 2004. "The Engaged Department: Public Sociology in the Twin Cities." *Footnotes*, November: p. 9.

Uggen, Christopher. 2005. "Public Criminologies and Sociological Education." *Sociograph*, Spring: p. 7.

10.5 No class

Extra credit event: Sociologists of Minnesota Keynote Speaker: Barbara Risman, University of Illinois, Chicago and Co-Chair of the Center for Contemporary Families ([www.contemporaryfamilies.org](http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org)). Details to follow.

Begin: Part III ("*Medicos Aventureros*"), *Mountains Beyond Mountains* (complete by week 7).

Week 6

10.10 Policy Sociology

Kleidman, Rob. 2006. "Public Sociology and Community Organizing." *Applied Social Science*, 1 (1).

Maris, Peter. 1990. "Witnesses, Engineers, or Storytellers? Roles of Sociologists in Social Policy." Pp. 75-87 in *Sociology in America*, edited by Herbert Gans. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

10.12 Guest Speaker from the Sociology Department: Professor Erin Kelly.

Week 7

10.17 Critical Sociology

Charon, Joel M. 2004. "Is Sociology Important? The Necessity for a Critical Understanding of Society." Pp. 284-297 in *Ten Questions: A Sociological Perspective*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.

10.19 Critical sociology, continued

No new reading.

Week 8

10.24 Going Global with Engaged Sociology

Robinson, William I. 2006. "The Local and the Global: Critical Globalization Studies."

or

Smith, Jackie. 2006. "The Struggle for Global Society in a World System."

10.26 Global engagement, continued

Part IV ("A Light Month for Travel"), *Mountains Beyond Mountains*.

**\*\*Introductions and Annotated Outlines Due\*\***

**Unit III. Sociology, Society, and You**

Week 9

October 30-November 3: Individual meetings on writing progress and paper drafts.

No class, no new reading.

Week 10

11.7 Professional Sociology

Berger, Bennett M. 1990. A chapter from *Authors of Their Own Lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

11.9 Discussion Panel on Going to Graduate School in Sociology

Ault, Brian. 1999. "View from the Inside: The Disabling Structures of Graduate Education." Pp. 496-502 in *The Social Worlds of Higher Education*, edited by Bernice A. Pescosolido and Ronald Aminzade. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Week 11

11.14 Guest Presentation on Careers in Sociology (and Criminal Justice): Angie Whitney, Career and Community Learning Center

Selections of your choice from one of the two careers books (W. R. Stephens).

11.16 Careers in Sociology (and Criminal Justice): Discussion Panel

No new reading—bring and review careers books.

\*Cover letter writing exercise distributed\*

Week 12

11.21 No class

**\*\*First drafts due\*\***

11.23 Thanksgiving break: No class

Week 13

11.28 Sociological Citizenship

Loeb, Paul Rogat. 1999. Introduction (pp. 1-13) and Ch. 1 (pp. 14-33) from *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time*.

Gitlin, Todd. 2003. "On Duty, Love, and Adventure, or Some Leaps of Faith." Pp. 1-7 in *Letters to a Young Activist*.

Scheduling for individual meetings with TA or instructor.

**\*Cover Letter Writing Exercise due\*\***

11.30 Individuals, Social Change, and the Idea of Praxis

Part V ("O for the P"), *Mountains Beyond Mountain*.

Week 14

12.5 Praxis, continued

Charon, Joel M. 2004. "Does the Individual Really Make a Difference?" Pp. 212-242 in *Ten Questions: A Sociological Perspective*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.

12.7 Wrapping Up and Looking Ahead

No new reading.

**\*\*Final Papers Due: Thursday, December 14\*\***