SOCIETY 110
Introduction to Sociology
Winter 2013

Instructor: Anthony S. Chen
Lecture Times: Mon., Wed., Fri., 4 – 4:50pm
Classroom: Technological Institute Auditorium
Office: Room 105, 1808 Chicago Avenue, Evanston
Office Hours: Thursdays, 9am – 12 noon

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociology is one of the most intellectually and methodologically diverse branches of the social sciences. It originally arose at the end of the nineteenth century as part of a broad inquiry into the fall of traditional societies and the rise of modernity. Today, it is a discipline that is firmly institutionalized in the academy. Every respectable university in the United States has a sociology department. There are scores of journals that publish sociological research about a massive array of topics—many more topics than the nineteenth-century founders of the discipline could have possibly imagined. Sociologists study everything from the way perceptions of social status affect the quality of our judgment about the prices of goods and services to the causes and consequences of residential segregation in metropolitan areas throughout the United States.

But sociology is not only an academic pursuit. In fact, sociology is a whole way of seeing and thinking about the world. A sociological insight is not something that only a sociologist can formulate or appreciate. It is a thought or idea that stems from a broad and coherent sensibility about the sine qua non of human life. In the eyes of sociologists, people are not simply atomistic individuals who always and everywhere act to maximize their individual utility or promote their individual self-interest. Nor are they merely following their genetic blueprints or acting out the underlying tendencies of their individual psyches. What defines a sociological intuition about human behavior is the belief that human beings are social creatures who act in myriad ways that reflect their belonging and commitment to social groups, variously defined. Sociologists think of human life as a collective phenomenon—as a product of our group affiliations—and not just the aggregation of individual responses to the supply and demand of scarce resources.

This course is hence meant to introduce you to sociology as a field of scholarship and a mode of inquiry. It is designed not only to acquaint you with a specialized body of academic knowledge but also to cultivate your ability to reason sociologically. Unit I offers a brief overview of sociological theory and sociological methods. We will begin with a survey of classic works in social theory, familiarizing ourselves with the kinds of questions that have historically motivated sociological research. Next, we will review the methods commonly used by sociologists to gather and analyze data
for answering the kinds of questions they have tended to pose in more recent times. Unit II goes on to examine core areas of empirical research in sociology. We will consider well-known or important examples of sociological research on such topics as education, stratification and inequality, gender, and urban poverty.

READINGS

This course has no textbook. The readings consist instead of original texts, whether they are theoretical tracts, journal articles, or book chapters. This makes things more challenging for you, but it will also give you a more realistic sense of the sociological enterprise than just reading a textbook would. All of the readings are posted on Blackboard. A coursepack with the assigned readings is available for purchase at Quartet Digital Printing (825 Clark Street, Evanston).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

The course requirements are straightforward. Three non-cumulative exams will be administered in class. Each exam will consist of a combination of true/false, multiple choice, identification, short answer, and essay questions; you will be responsible for material from the lectures, readings, and class discussions. To do well in the course, students will need to complete the readings in a timely fashion, attend lectures consistently, participate in section actively, and take notes clearly. Each of the three exams counts for 25 percent of your overall grade. The remaining 25 percent is your section grade, which is to be wholly determined by your GSI.

GENERAL POLICIES

- Lectures begin at 4 pm.
- The use of cell phones in class is not permitted.
- Every reasonable allowance will be made to enable students to carry out their religious observances without academic penalty; students are responsible notifying their professor or teaching assistant in advance of any conflicts that may arise.
- All students are expected to adhere to the standards of academic integrity outlined in Academic Integrity: A Basic Guide (2012), published by Northwestern’s Office of the Provost. An online copy may be readily found by using the search engine on Northwestern’s home page. Please contact the instructor if you are having difficulty locating it. Suspected violations of academic integrity will be referred to the administration of Weinberg College for appropriate action.
COURSE SCHEDULE

[1] January 7 Course Overview

Unit I: Theory and Method

Classical Traditions in Sociological Thought: Marx and Weber


<January 25: First In-Class Exam>

Sociological Methods and Evidence


Unit II: Empirical Research in Sociology

Education


The Bell Curve Controversy


<February 18: Second In-Class Midterm>

Sociology of Gender


Urban Poverty


[24] March 8  Course Summary

<**March 11: Third In-Class Exam**>