SOCIOL 204: THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

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Office Hours: Th, 11-12:30 (and by appt)

Winter 2008
Tues/Thurs, 9:30-10:50am
Fisk Hall, Rm 217

You are responsible for all the information on this syllabus. If you lose it, another copy can be obtained from the course website on Blackboard.

OVERVIEW

This course aspires to provoke better appreciation of connections between the immediate, individual experiences of our everyday lives and the larger, more enduring dynamics of the social settings in which we are part. Making sense of our own lives demands considering how our own actions and circumstances crisscross those of others, as well as how our biographies intersect with the histories of the places and times in which we live. These sorts of abstract statements are readily acknowledged but seldom prompt more than occasional, haphazard contemplation. Our task is here instead to consider the social context of personal experience more thoroughly and with the help of accumulated insights from social science research and theory. While the intellectual base for this effort will be sociology, we will be making use of readings and examples from many other disciplines to achieve our ends, including psychology, economics, anthropology, history, political science, communication studies, and law.

READINGS

Frank, Robert H. 2007. *Falling behind: How rising inequality harms the middle class.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. (Ordered from the Northwestern bookstore; also widely available from online retailers)

Course packet of readings available both at Quartet Copies and on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Responses to readings

Each of the 17 lectures has a reading associated with it. For each lecture, you have the opportunity to submit a written response paper. You do not have to attend lecture to receive credit for a response paper for the reading assigned to that lecture. As discussed below, the only reading for which you are specifically expected to do a response paper is the book assigned for the course (*Falling Behind*, by Frank); otherwise, which and how many responses you do is up to you.

The reactions should contain four parts, with each clearly marked:

1. *Summary.* (150-200 words) Articulate what you understand to be the main points or arguments of the article. You should imagine yourself explaining the reading to someone who has not read it, but you want to make sure your summary makes clear that you have thoughtfully done the reading more or less in its entirety.

2. *Reaction.* (200-300 words) Discuss specifically your reaction to the reading, whether as a whole or in terms of particular points about which you have opinions. You might, for instance, consider why you found the author's arguments convincing (or not), how the article connects with material from lecture or other readings, or how the readings provide insight (or not) into experience of your own. What we want here are well-articulated thoughts of your own about the readings, as contrasted with rehearsing the paper's arguments in the Summary section.

3. *For discussion* (1-2 sentences). Provide one, briefly-stated idea connected to the reading for what might make an interesting topic for class discussion. This does not need to be ornately presented and can be completely redundant with something you present in the Reaction section of your response.

4. *Overall assessment* (1-2 words). Evaluate the reading in terms of whether you would recommend it for future incarnations of this course. The available categories are STRONGLY RECOMMEND KEEPING, RECOMMEND KEEPING, NEUTRAL, RECOMMEND DROPPING, STRONGLY RECOMMEND DROPPING. You may elaborate on your recommendation if you wish. Providing an overall judgment is required and you will not receive full credit if it is omitted, but its purpose is solely for providing feedback to us.

You may be subject to penalty if your Summary and Reaction combined are over 500 words.

Grading. Reading reactions will be graded from 0-5, with a 5 given for work that is fully satisfactory. A bonus point may be awarded to response papers that, in the judgment of the grader, are plainly better than fully satisfactory. (To be clear, such a bonus is awarded at the discretion of the grader, and we will not entertain queries about why a student's paper did not receive this bonus.) *Please note that the assistants for the course have been instructed to be efficient in grading, and so this is not a course in which you will receive detailed feedback on individual assignments.*

Additionally, you will receive an extra point each time you turn in a response before 9:00am on the morning of the class for which the reading is assigned.[1] Strictly speaking, this should not be considered a "bonus" because you will likely need some of these extra points in order to receive an A for the course. Conversely, you will have a point deducted if

[1] Why 9am? Why not just have it due at the start of class? *Because I do not want you showing up late to class because you were finishing your response paper at the last minute.*

you turn in a response more than one week after 9am of the lecture date for which the reading was assigned. Responses more than two weeks late will receive no credit and will not be read.

Your overall grade for reading reactions will be based on the sum of your grade for the *Falling Behind* reading and for the top 11 other grades you receive on reaction papers, counting all bonus points. (That is, if you get a 5 for the *Falling Behind* reading and for 11 other readings, and you turn them in before 9am on the appropriate day, you will receive **72** points total.)

Weekly quizzes

After the first week, each discussion section will begin with a quiz over the previous two lectures. If your section meets on Wednesday, this means your quiz will cover material from Tuesday and the Thursday of the preceding week. If your section meets on Friday, this means your quiz will cover material from the Tuesday and Thursday lectures of that week. You are not allowed to use any notes, etc., during the quiz. You do not have to attend lecture to receive credit for quiz items from that lecture, and those who miss lecture are encouraged to view the PowerPoint slides made available online (although adequate answers to quiz questions will not necessarily be possible solely from reading the slides).

Each quiz will comprise 5 questions, two or three from each lecture. Questions will be worth 2 points each, and thus each quiz will be worth **10** points total. No make-ups for quizzes will be allowed.

Your overall grade for quizzes will be based on the top 6 grades that you receive. Accordingly, you may receive up to **60** points from quizzes.

Attendance and participation

You will receive **2** points for each lecture after the first that you attend fully and without incident, up to a maximum of **30** points for the quarter. The qualifier "fully" means that we reserve the right to deduct some/all credit if you arrive late or leave early, especially if you arrive excessively late or depart excessively early. The qualifier "without incident" means that all credit is contingent on professional behavior during class, and we will deduct as many points as we deem warranted for incidents of unprofessional behavior. We are not obligated to notify students when deductions for either of these reasons have been made.

You will receive **2** points for each discussion section you attend, subject to the same rules of "fully" and "without incident" described above for attendance at lecture. You may earn up to **14** points for discussion section attendance (that is, you can miss one discussion section with no penalty beyond missing the opportunity for points from the quiz).

For neither the lecture nor the discussion section do we distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. Students are strongly encouraged not to miss class frivolously early

on in the quarter precisely because of the possibility of unexpected, unavoidable absences later.

At the conclusion of the quarter, your discussion leader will award a score of up to **6** points for your overall contribution to discussion, with the possibility of 1-2 bonus points for exceptional cases.

Exemplars

Course material should have some resonance with your past and ongoing experiences outside the classroom, including your consumption of cultural materials. Over the course of the quarter, you are asked to submit instances in which something discussed in the readings or in lecture is exemplified by something you have encountered in a novel, a television show, a movie, a newspaper, a magazine article, a discussion of a historical event, something online, etc.. You can also turn in one personal anecdote as an exemplar. You should think of this in terms of things that I could have used as examples myself in class, and perhaps might in the future now that you've apprised me of them. A submitted exemplar should not be longer than 200 words, and considerably shorter than this may be adequate. They do not have to be especially carefully written. Rather, they just need to be composed so that (1) I have enough information to track down the exemplar if I want to and (2) I can understand without exertion how the instance describes what you say that it exemplifies.

You may receive up to **3** points total for an exemplar, with a bonus point to be awarded in exceptional instances. Importantly, *you will not receive credit for pointing to an example someone else has already submitted.* You may receive up to **12** points for exemplars, *plus* whatever bonus points. However, to prevent a deluge of last-minute submissions, you may receive no more than 6 points for exemplars submitted after February 28th.

Special secret bonus points!

Sorry, no. Other opportunities for an extra point here and there might arise over the quarter, which serve as yet another reason to maintain good attendance. However, we will not allow individuals to propose their own opportunities for extra credit.

OVERALL GRADE

Your overall grade will be based on the total number of points you receive from the work described above. Grades will be given as follows:

180+	170-9	160-9	150-9	140-9	130-9	120-9	110-9	100-9	90-9
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	D-

No one will pass the course with fewer than 90 points.

ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

On-Time Arrivals and Departures

We will begin and end classes promptly. Tardiness is both a pet peeve of mine and a distraction to the class, so please do your best to be on time. If you must come in late, do so discreetly. Similarly, while I would greatly prefer that you do not leave lecture early, if you must do so try to be as inconspicuous about it as possible. As also noted, credit for attendance may be withheld for arriving particularly late or leaving particularly early.

Academic Integrity and Propriety

Northwestern University's statement of principles regarding academic integrity is available at http://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/advising/academic.html. Students are expected to be familiar with these principles and not to engage in academic misconduct of any form. Professors in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences are required to present any allegations regarding misconduct to the college for review and adjudication, and I will comply fully with this requirement.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student with a verified disability requiring special accommodations should speak to me and to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (847-467-5530) as early as possible in the quarter, preferably within the first two weeks of the course. All discussions will remain confidential.

COMMUNICATION

Electronic Mail and Blackboard

Students are presumed to be members of this century and therefore to have access to e-mail and check it regularly. We will use e-mail to send announcements to the class as needed.

I strongly prefer e-mail to the telephone as a means of contact regarding the course. If something regarding the course is decided by telephone or face-to-face interaction, I may ask you to e-mail me about it for documentation. If you do not do so, I am under no obligation to remember that our conversation ever happened.

Blackboard will be used as a repository for this syllabus, any updates to it, lecture slides, and readings. You are encouraged to use it accordingly. Please notify me by e-mail of any technical or other problems with materials provided on the webpage.

Office Hours

Please come talk to me if you have questions or concerns about issues related to the class. The scheduled office hours are the best time for us to meet with students, but I can make appointments with students unable to stop by during these hours.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Wk	Date		Topic	Reading
1	T	1/8	Orientation	None
	R	1/10	Rationality	Selection from Landsburg, *The Armchair Economist*
2	T	1/15	Nature	Selection from Colapinto, *As Nature Made Him*
	R	1/17	Meaning	Selection from Zelizer, *The Social Meaning of Money*
3	T	1/22	Identity	Selection from Brumberg, *The Body Project*
	R	1/24	Morals	Fong, Bowles, and Gintis, "Reciprocity and the Welfare State"
4	T	1/29	Ego	Selection from Tavris and Aronson, *Mistakes Were Made (But Not By Me)*
	R	1/31	Prejudice	Selection from Pager, *Marked*
5	T	2/5	Ambition	Frank, *Falling Behind*
	R	2/7	Impressions	Selection from Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*
6	T	2/12	Manipulation	Selection from Pratkanis and Aronson, *Age of Propaganda*
	R	2/14	Self-control	Ayduk and Michel, "When Smart People Behave Stupidly"
7	T	2/19	Memory	Selection from Schacter, The Seven Sins of Memory
	R	2/21	Sadness	Selections from Karp, *Speaking of Sadness* and Horwitz and Wakefield, *The Loss of Sadness*
8	T	2/26	Deference	Selection from Blass, *The Man Who Shocked the World*
	R	2/28	Rule-breaking	Selection from Katz, *Seductions of Crime*
9	T	3/4	Helping	Selection from Healy, *Last Best Gifts*
	R	3/6	Cooperation	Selection from Sunstein, *Infotopia*