2014

101 Introduction to Sociology

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Sociology is the study of the social structures and processes that make up society and the complex relationship between individuals and the societies in which they live.

Most of you are considering a career in medicine and as you have done so you have most likely interacted with many different individuals, groups, and organizations. Your family (some of whom may be in the medical field) probably had advice and opinions, as did your close friends. Perhaps you were inspired by a teacher or guidance counselor. The types of courses and programs offered by your high school may have contributed to your preparation for college and your interest in science and medicine. During your high school years you may have volunteered at or been employed by health-related organizations. You or your parents probably completed a federal financial aid form and depending on the outcome, you may have dealt with a college Financial Aid office, a bank or other lender, or a government agency or other organization that grants scholarships. It is also possible that you sought out information on current employment trends in the medical field. Whether you thought about it or not, during your decision-making process you interacted with many of the social units (family, peer groups, schools, banks, the medical system, national agencies and organizations) that form the structure of your society, and encountered some of the social processes (family socialization, education, medical care, government policies and procedures, lending, employment) that keep it running.

Thinking like a sociologist, or using a sociological imagination, will help you identify and analyze society’s structures and processes, such as those you encountered while deciding on a career in medicine. Understanding society and how it works will prepare you to be a better and more critical observer of social life, and most importantly, it will prepare you to be a more engaged and responsible participant in the world around you.

More specifically, it will contribute directly to your preparation to become a medical practitioner. In November 2011, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) issued a report titled, “Behavioral and Social Science Foundations for Future Physicians,” which stated, “a complete medical education must include, alongside physical and biological science, the perspectives and findings that flow from the behavioral and social sciences.” Reflecting this view, the AAMC substantially revised the MCAT exam for entrance into medical school. Beginning in 2015, approximately 25% of the points on the exam will relate to introductory sociology and general psychology. This section of the MCAT, the Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior, is based on five Foundational Concepts:

1. Biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors influence the ways that individuals perceive, think about, and react to the world.

2. Biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors influence behavior and behavior change.
3. Psychological, socio-cultural, and biological factors influence the way we think about ourselves and others.
5. Social stratification and access to resources influence well-being.

We will critically examine and apply these foundational concepts throughout the course.

**Course Goals and Objectives**

In this course you will learn how sociologists examine and understand the social world, including the research methods they use and the theories that guide their research. You will learn about some of the many concepts that sociologists focus on, and in the process you will begin to develop a sociological imagination – the ability to identify, analyze, and understand the many ways in which individuals affect and are affected by the societies in which they live. We will particularly focus on medicine as an institution in society and the majority of our discussion topics will relate to relevant issues in the sociology of health, illness, and medicine.

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Use the sociological imagination, the social world model, and the concepts of social structure, social processes, and culture to analyze real world issues and situations.
2. Evaluate the validity and reliability of different sources of information on contemporary social trends and issues.
3. Compare and contrast the central ideas, strengths, and weaknesses of the major theoretical schools of thought in sociology.
4. Analyze the operation of inequality and power in relationships, organizations, institutions, and societies.
5. Analyze the interrelationships between individuals and the social institutions of family, education, religion, politics, and economy.
6. Dissect the roles of socialization, interaction, and social control in shaping individual identity and experience.
7. Evaluate the potential impacts of demographic trends, globalization, technology and science, and social movements on social change.
8. Critique popular media representations of contemporary social trends and issues from a sociological perspective.
9. Design a basic research plan that uses the scientific method and a sociological perspective to address a relevant sociological research question.

Course readings, assignments, activities, and papers have all been chosen carefully to assist you in achieving these learning outcomes.

**Core Curriculum Goals and Objectives**

The Xavier University Core Curriculum is intended to help you develop as critical thinkers and responsible citizens of the global society in which we live through a firm grounding in the liberal arts. This course fulfills one or more requirements of the Core Curriculum.
Specifically, through course readings, activities, and discussions, this course is intended to help you achieve the following Core Curriculum goals and objectives:

Goal: Students will be effective communicators in writing and orally
   • Students will organize and express their ideas in writing and orally

Goal: Students will be critical thinkers
   • Students will analyze and interpret texts, images, objects, artifacts, and quantitative and qualitative data
   • Students will evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence

Goal: Students will be able to understand and appreciate the arts, humanities, and science disciplines, and reflect on connections among these studies
   • Students will explain the scientific method, including the difference between hypotheses, theories and laws, valid hypotheses and/or models
   • Students will apply social science methodology to relevant social issues

Goal: Students will be integrated individuals who articulate a coherent, ethical perspective on the world and their place in it
   • Students will relate their knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to their life experiences and the challenges confronting today’s world
   • Students will use information and resources responsibly in their communication and research

Goal: Students will be aware global citizens
   • Students will recognize relationships between diversity, inequality, and social, economic, and political power both in the United States and globally

**Academic Honesty**

The Xavier University Catalog states:

*The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation.*

*All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.*

If you have any questions about what is considered a violation of the Academic Honesty Code in the context of this class, I strongly encourage you to discuss this with me, either individually or in class. Any assignment, project, or exam that I find to be in violation of the Honesty Code will be assigned a grade of 0 points, i.e. an “F.” Repeated violations may result in a grade of “F” for the course.
**Attendance Policy**

*I expect you to attend every class*. I understand that absences are sometimes unavoidable. If for any reason it is necessary for you to miss several classes, for example, due to extended illness or athletic team travel, I will work with you to come up with an appropriate and fair solution for you to make up any missed work.

If religious observance will cause you to be absent from class or otherwise affect your ability to complete assignments, you must notify me in advance to make necessary arrangements to complete the work.

**Personal Technology in the Classroom**

The unauthorized use of personal technology in the classroom can be distracting and disruptive.

1. Cell phones should be turned off or silenced before class.
2. You may bring a tablet or laptop computer to class but it should not be used for any purpose other than taking notes or class-related work.
3. Your first unauthorized use of personal technology in class will result in a warning. Subsequent unauthorized uses will each result in 5 points being subtracted from your final course grade.

**Course Requirements**

**Required Reading**


*The Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins (Scholastic, 2008)

*Wait Till Next Year*, by Doris Kearns Goodwin (Simon & Schuster, 1997)

Additional required readings will be available electronically and/or through Library Reserves.

Either paper or electronic copies are acceptable for all required books.

**Homework Assignments**

Most of our in-class time will be spent on activities that will allow you to apply and analyze the concepts that are introduced in the assigned readings. Some limited amount of time will be used for lectures, but the vast majority of time will be spent actively engaging with the concepts through a variety of group discussions and exercises. Ultimately, the discussions and exercises will contribute to your success in achieving course learning outcomes.

In order for you to get the most from our in-class time, it is necessary for you to spend time between class sessions preparing for class.
First, you must complete the assigned readings and come to class familiar with the major ideas contained in the readings and ready to ask questions about those ideas that are unclear or in need of further explanation.

Second, you will need to complete a short assignment to bring to class with you or prepare for an in-class quiz. The assignments will take various forms and might involve answering brief questions about the reading, reflecting on your personal experience in light of the readings, searching for additional information on the internet, or completing a short exercise, to name just a few.

Assignments will be evaluated on a scale of 0-5 points, depending on accuracy and completeness. I strongly encourage you to submit your homework assignments electronically via email. Assignments are due at the beginning of class so you may submit an assignment electronically before 10:00 or if you prefer, you may bring a paper copy to turn in. (Assignments submitted electronically will be returned electronically). If you miss a class, you may electronically submit the preparation work by 10:00 a.m. on the day you miss class (whether the absence is excused or not), and receive up to 3 points. Assignments submitted after 10:00 a.m. and/or assignments slid under my door or left at my or the department office will not be accepted.

Your assignment grade for the course will be based on the percentage of possible points that you earn.

You should bring any assigned readings to class with you as we will at times use them for in-class activities. The assignments will often be integrated into our class discussions and activities so you may find it useful to have a copy of your assignment with you, either paper or electronic.

**Graded In-class Activities**

During many class meetings, you will work in small groups to complete an activity that involves applying sociological concepts to and analyzing a social problem or issue. To fully participate, you will need to complete any assigned readings and homework assignments. Activities will range in value from 5-15 points and will be evaluated on the basis of accuracy and completeness. Activities will be unannounced. Since the activities are an indication of in-class participation, you will not be able to make up any missed activities. Your in-class activity grade for the course will be based on the percentage of possible points that you earn. Be sure to bring assigned readings to class.

**Papers**

Four papers are due throughout the semester. More detailed instructions will be provided closer to the due dates.

1. **Analysis of a Journal Article** – You will read a research journal article related to the sociology of health, illness, and medicine, and in an approximately 2-3 page paper, will summarize and interpret the article using criteria provided in class.

2. **Reaction Paper in response to The Hunger Games** – You will discuss a sociological theme in the book in an approximately 4-5 page paper. (Prompts for the paper will be provided.)

3. **Reaction Paper in response to Wait Till Next Year** – You will discuss a sociological theme in the book in an approximately 4-5 page paper. (Prompts for the paper will be provided.)
4. **Sociological Autobiography** – You will use your sociological imagination to examine some aspect of your life experience in societal context. You will work on the autobiography in stages and hand in parts throughout the course. The final draft of the autobiography will be approximately 8-10 pages in length.

**Quizzes and Exams**

There is substantial evidence that students learn best when they receive frequent and immediate feedback. In addition to the regular class assignments, course quizzes and exams are intended to provide you with that feedback.

Quizzes are intended to assess your knowledge and comprehension of important sociological concepts. There will be 6 quizzes, each worth 20 points. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice questions and will use a “scratch-off” format that will be demonstrated on the first day of class. You will take the quiz individually, and then will be assigned to a group that will use a scratch-off to retake the quiz. If your individual score is higher than the group score, you will receive your individual score. Otherwise, you will receive the average of your score and your group’s score. The quizzes will cover readings assigned for the day of the quiz.

If you have an excused absence (documentation will be necessary) on a quiz day, you will be allowed to make it up, as long as you do so within 24 hours of the missed class. If you know you are going to be absent on a quiz day due to team travel, religious observance, or similar situations, you must take the quiz prior to quiz day. Questions on early or late quizzes will be different from those on the quiz given on the scheduled day. Your score on early or make-up quizzes will be your individual score. You will not have the opportunity to take advantage of the group score.

The midterm and cumulative final exams are intended to assess your ability to apply and critically analyze sociological concepts, theories, and research findings. Because the final exam is cumulative it is weighted more heavily in your final grade. Exams will cover all class readings, assignments, class discussions, lectures, and other course materials such as films. The exams will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

If you know you are going to be absent on an exam day ahead of time, due to team travel or similar situations, you need to make arrangements to take the exam prior to the absence. In the case of an unanticipated, excused absence (documentation will be necessary), you will be allowed to make up the exam within 24 hours of your return to class. Questions on early or late exams will be different from those on the exam given on the scheduled day.

**If you need extended test-taking time or other accommodations due to a documented disability, you are expected to take the exam in the Learning Assistance Center (LAC) on the day the exam is scheduled, and as close as possible to the class meeting time.**

**Grades**

The point distribution for all course requirements is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Homework Assignments     100
In-Class Activities      100
Quizzes (5 highest scores)     100
Journal Article Analysis        25
Reaction Papers      100 (50 points each)
Sociological Autobiography     100
Midterm and Final Exams     225 (100 and 125 points respectively)

Total points available     750

Your final grade will be based on the percentage of the total points that you accumulate, using the scale below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accommodations

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the Learning Assistance Center (LAC) at 513-745-3280 on the 5th floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, Room 514, to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Blackboard

Blackboard is the primary means of communicating class news and information, and disseminating the syllabus, reading and assignment schedule, assignment and project instructions, resources, additional readings, and other useful information. You should check Blackboard regularly. If you have questions about due dates, instructions, exam format, policies on attendance or late assignments, or other routine class matters, you should first consult the materials on Blackboard, especially the syllabus. If you do not find the answer to your question there, please consult with me.

Contacting Me Outside of Class

My contact information is at the top of the syllabus. During the indicated office hours, I will be available to answer questions, discuss course materials, continue in-class discussions, or chat with you about anything you find interesting. Feel free to drop in during my office hours – no appointment is necessary. If for any reason I will not be able to hold office hours as scheduled, I will let you know via Blackboard as
far in advance as possible and will identify alternate office hours. Note that on Tuesdays and Thursdays I will hold my office hours on the ground floor of Smith Hall outside Coffee Emporium.

If you find that my office hours are not convenient for you, I will be happy to make an appointment to meet with you at an alternative time. You are more than welcome to drop by my office at any time, but I can’t guarantee that I will be there. I will not be available on Wednesdays due to other Xavier commitments.

I will check and respond to email throughout the day. Please note that I am highly unlikely to check my email during the evenings or on weekends.

For class-related policy or logistical questions, please consult the syllabus first. There is no need to contact me about late attendance or an absence – the policy is on the syllabus.

**Schedule of Class Activities**

The course is divided into six modules. A detailed schedule of class meetings, topics, readings, and assignments for each module can be found in a separate document on Blackboard. The information on this schedule is subject to change so I strongly recommend that you look at this document prior to every class meeting.

Due dates for papers and the dates of exams are found below.

- **T 2-4** Journal Article Analysis due
- **R 2-20** *The Hunger Games* Reaction Paper due
- **R 2-27** Midterm Exam
- **T 4-15** *Wait Till Next Year* Reaction Paper due
- **T 4-29** Sociological Autobiography Paper due
- **R 5-8** Final Exam (8:30-10:20 a.m.)