

Sociology 101: Introduction to Sociology
Spring 2015

Pierce Hall 102
Mondays & Wednesdays 2:30-4:10pm

Instructor: Alexandra Vinson

Email: alex.vinson@emory.edu

Office hours: Fridays 9am-10am and 12pm-1pm, or by appointment
Office location: Modular Unit 1, Room 4

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is composed of a foundations unit and three substantive units that discuss sociological concepts as they apply to common everyday phenomena: language; schools, prisons and hospitals; and dirt, water and labor. In this class you will learn how broad social forces shape the life chances of individuals, how individuals participate in their social groups, and how social institutions—like government, school and family—shape how people act. Your performance in the course will be assessed on four written exams and your in-class participation. After you complete this course you will be able to apply sociological perspectives to the issues discussed in this course and to other social issues you encounter in the news and in conversation with family and friends.

COURSE MATERIALS

All assigned readings can be found on the e-Reserves site for this course.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

It is important to be in class because lecture expands upon, rather than replaces, assigned readings. It is also your responsibility as a member of this class to show up and contribute what you know in order to enrich our class discussion. In light of the importance of your presence, each absence above two will reduce your total score by one point. Please arrive on time and ready to learn.

Academic Integrity

The Oxford College Honor Code and Conduct Code are in full effect for every aspect of Soc 101. Each time you sign your name to any required work, including the attendance sheet, you are pledging yourself to the Honor Code. Signing another student's name on any attendance sheet is a violation of the Honor Code.

Accessibility & Accommodations

Please send me an email or come to my office hours before the Add/Drop/Swap period ends if you need assistance arranging accommodations through the Office of Disability Services or if you would like to discuss accessibility issues as they relate to your performance in this course.

GRADING POLICY

Your grade in this course will be based on your performance on four written exams, in-class assignments, and your in-class participation, which includes attendance, being prepared to participate in discussion and small group work, and giving short presentations as assigned. There may be occasional reading quizzes, so come to class prepared.

Full participation credit (8 points) will be given to students who (1) attend every class session, (2) have done the reading, (3) participate actively in discussion, and (4) make comments that enrich the quality of the discussion.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

	Grading Scale			
Test #1—20 points	A	93-100	C+	77-79
Test #2—20 points	A-	90-92	C	73-76
Test #3—20 points	B+	87-89	C-	70-72
Test #4—20 points	B	83-86	D	60-69
Assignments—12 points	B-	80-82	F	below 60
Participation—8 points				
TOTAL—100 points				

COURSE SCHEDULE

READINGS (Full citations below)

Unit 1: FOUNDATIONS

Jan 14—The Sociological Imagination
Jan 21—Elements of Social Structure
Jan 26—Social Organization & Deviance
Jan 28—Social Organization & Deviance
Feb 2—Test #1

Gopnik (2015)

Unit 2: LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Feb 4—Introduction to Culture
Feb 9—Language & Culture
Feb 11—Cultural Membership
Feb 16—Childhood & Movie viewing: “7 Up (1964)”
Feb 18—Sociological perspectives on race & class
Feb 23—Discrimination, Prejudice & Racism
Feb 25—Test #2

Becker (1953)
Kiesling (2004)
Bucholtz (1999)
Lareau (2003)

Unit 3: SCHOOLS, PRISONS & HOSPITALS

Mar 4—Foundations of Social Institutions
[SPRING BREAK]
Mar 16—Schools
Mar 18—Schools
Mar 23—Prisons
Mar 25—Movie Viewing: “The House I Live In”
Mar 30—Hospitals
Apr 1—TEST #3

Gowan (2010) [Introduction]
Hamilton & Armstrong (2012)
Armstrong & Hamilton (2013)
Gowan (2010) [Conclusion]
Lara-Millán (2014)

Unit 4: DIRT, WATER & LABOR

April 8—Theorizing the Economy in Sociology
April 13—The Great Transformation (Lecture 1)
April 15—Movie Viewing: “Tapped”
April 20—The Great Transformation (Lecture 2)
April 22—Tour of the Oxford College Farm
April 27—TEST #4

In this unit we will read selections from Karl Polanyi's (1944) *The Great Transformation*.

ASSIGNMENTS

In this class you will complete four assignments. Three of the assignments are worksheets relating to each film we watch. It is unlikely that you will be able to answer all of the questions while you are watching the movie in class, so I have put the movies on hold in the library. Some of them are also available on Netflix. The fourth assignment is a reflection paper you will write following our visit to the Oxford College Farm. All assignments will be discussed in class and you will receive written instructions with specific guidelines. **See the end of this syllabus for a sample assignment.**

COURSE READINGS (All readings are available on the Course Reserves website)

Armstrong, Elizabeth & Laura Hamilton (2013). *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Becker, Howard (1953). “Becoming a Marihuana User.” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 59(3):235-242.

Bucholtz, Mary (1999). “Why be normal?: Language and identity practices in a community of nerd girls.” *Language in Society*, 28, pp. 203-23

Gopnik, Adam. “The Outside Game: How the Sociologist Howard Becker Studies the Conventions of the Unconventional.” *The New Yorker*, Jan 12, 2015.

Gowan, Teresa (2010). *Hobos, Hustlers & Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Hamilton, Laura & Elizabeth Armstrong (2012). “The (Mis)education of Monica and Karen.” *Contexts*, 11(4):22-27.

Kiesling, Scott (2004). “Dude.” *American Speech*, 79(3).

Lara-Millán, Armando (2014). “Public Emergency Room Overcrowding in the Era of Mass Imprisonment.” *American Sociological Review*, 79(5):866-887.

Lareau, Annette (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Polanyi, Karl (2001 [1944]). *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Books.

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT: Film Worksheet, "The House I Live In"

This completed worksheet is due at the beginning of class on Monday. If you would like to review the movie, it is available on Netflix and I will put a copy on reserve in the library. This homework assignment is worth 3 points.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRUCTURE & AGENCY

1. What role did drug dealers play in the community at 77 Cromwell Towers? How did young people gradually become dealers themselves?
2. "What about personal responsibility?" Describe the interplay between social structure and individual agency in a person's decision to deal drugs. In the context of 77 Cromwell towers and the surrounding neighborhood, are kids making rational or irrational choices (an exercise of agency) when they use dealing drugs as a route to social mobility?
3. How does having a criminal record limit a person's life chances? What are the job prospects for someone who has a criminal record? Educational limitations? Ability to access public benefits (social welfare benefits)?

RACIALIZED POLICY

4. What are the financial and professional incentives for police officers to participate in drug busts? For police precincts as a whole?
5. What spurred the criminalization of opium, cocaine, and marijuana in the United States?
6. What is the difference between crack and cocaine, both chemically and legally? How is crack/cocaine use stratified by race and class?
7. What is a "mandatory minimum" sentence? What population does this sentencing practice disproportionately affect?

THE WAR ON DRUGS TODAY

8. Compare and contrast crack and methamphetamines. Who are the primary users? What do crack users/dealers and meth users/dealers have in common? What is the role of the Great Recession and capitalist work structures in producing drug dealers?
9. What is the prison industry? Give examples of the players involved. What does it mean to say that the War on Drugs has been a success?