Sociology 102
Sociology of Social Problems

Instructor: Dr. Richard Coon
Office: Rm. BLT house, 124 Wright St.
Email: rcoon@carrollu.edu
Office Hours: T, R 11:00 – 12:00 and by appointment
Class will be held in Rankin rm. 204B
Required text (Social Problems) may be purchased at Carroll bookstore

“The instructor and the College reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, etc.) as the curriculum and/or program require(s).”

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, or any student considering obtaining documentation should make an appointment with Ms. Martha Bledsoe, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, no later than the first week of class. She can be reached by calling 262-524-7335 or contacting her via email at mbledsoe@cc.edu.

“The Carroll University Academic Integrity Policy is located in your student handbook (http://www.carrollu.edu/campuslife/pdfs/handbook.pdf). I encourage you to familiarize yourself with it. If a student violates this policy in any way, I reserve the right to impose a sanction of failure on the assignment/assessment or failure in the course. If you have questions about appropriate citations, please ask.”

GENERAL ORIENTATION

“This is the dismal science par excellence of our time, an intrinsically debunking discipline that should be most congenial to nihilists, cynics, and other fit subjects for police surveillance.” Peter Burger, A Rumor of Angels

This statement by Peter Burger gives you some idea of the seemingly irreverent and iconoclastic* nature of sociology. This is so, at least partly, because sociologists tend not to work with the vested interest of the status quo as their guide. Rather, s/he attempts to “look behind the scenes” at the societal, historical, and cultural forces which produce the “scenes” that the average person takes for granted as simply the way things are in everyday life. The sociologist is interested in analyzing the relevant forces acting in society which create and underpin the patterns of social existence. Hence, in this class, we will be shaking some of the very foundations of your “taken for granted” everyday life. “It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem” (Peter Burger, Invitation).

What this all boils down to is that in order for you to get as much as you can out of this class, you will need to approach the subject matter with an open mind. Because the course is oriented to social problems, much of what we do will be somewhat critical in nature. That is, we will be critically examining our society and its major institutions: i.e. economy, politics, family, military, etc., as well as our general value system, to see if/how these elements of our society and culture contribute to the formation of specific social problems.

MY PERSPECTIVE: CRITICAL ECO-HUMANISM

My approach to examining social problems is directly related to my humanitarian and ecological concerns relative to the human and more than human world. I am critical of our society and its institutions whenever they act to the detriment of life in general. I “adopt a bottom-up perspective and examine social problems from the viewpoints of the exploited and oppressed groups” (Feagin, 1982). My approach, then, parallels that of the U.S. Bishops in their November 1985 Pastoral Letter when they note, “our fundamental norm in judging economic policies has been this: What will this approach or policy do to the poor and deprived members of the human community?”

*General Explication of the Meaning of Critical Thinking as it Pertains to this Class:
The concept of critical thinking has become a buzzword in contemporary education of late, really meaning little more than being thoughtful. In this class we will be using the term to refer to a method of thinking similar to what Descartes called the “method of doubt”. It is a method wherein one questions the world as an a priori stance. This might be understood as corresponding to the approach, used in science and statistics, of proving the null hypothesis. Rather than assuming the world is as we are told, we will question the taken for granted world of everyday life. We will attempt to see what forces shape our world and how these forces came into being and are upheld today. We will question the institutions of the modern global market system. Our guiding standard will be whether the cultural and behavioral systems of the modern social order work to enhance or at least maintain the health and wellbeing of the human and more than human world. As such, this class may seem irreverent to many of you.

Remember, as I quoted Peter Berger at the beginning of this syllabus, if you “prefer to believe that society is just what (you) were taught in Sunday school… (you) should stay away from sociology.” The events starting with 9/11/01 have created an atmosphere of insecurity and intolerance in America, which are now being used to hinder us from pursuing the fundamental ideals of liberty and justice for all. Our job, as morally grounded, educated citizens, is to examine the social world so that we may work to create a society which serves all life, not only a certain segment thereof. In order to do this, we need to be tireless in our examination of the social forces at work in modern society.

Grounding our analysis in the footsteps of people such as Martin Luther King Jr., Aldo Leopold, Lewis Mumford, and Mahatma Gandhi, we will use moral questions regarding the nature of the present social order as or compass. Our goal will be to expose social patterns that create injustice and distort our understanding of the human project. As King stated in his Letter From Birmingham Jail, “Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.” For this class, we will expand this statement to read, “Any (life way) that uplifts human personality (and the other than human world in general) is just. Any (life way) that degrades human personality (and the other than human world in general) is unjust.”

One of the great early ecologists, Aldo Leopold, along with the historian Lewis Mumford, recognized the paucity of creating an ethical system merely based on economic value. In “the Land Ethic”, Leopold writes, “(t)he key-log, which must be moved to release the evolutionary process for an ethic is simply this: quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” (Italics added). We need to examine the contemporary emphasis of grounding all value and worth on econometric standards and concepts. This is no longer only a question of a land ethic but has become a question of life ethics in general.

For our own good and the good of future generations, we must critically examine the dominance of the economic market system with regard to how all aspects of life are now becoming subservient to economic determinants. Our ability to call into question the taken for granted world and to critically examine the social world patterns we are so seldom even aware of constitutes much of what, in this class, we will understand to be critical thinking.

**Learning Outcomes for Sociology**

1. Demonstrate an awareness of the scope and diversity of societal/cultural elements addressed by the field of sociology.
2. Use and apply sociological concepts, research methods and theoretical perspectives to make sense of our social world.
3. Use the sociological imagination to recognize and describe how institutional patterns and social structural forces shape many aspects of individual life.
1. Upon completion of this course students will have a preliminary working knowledge of the sociological perspective (sociological imagination).

2. By applying the theoretical and conceptual knowledge obtained from this course students will learn to make connections between their personal lives and public issues, which will prepare them to be more informed citizens in our culturally diverse and changing world.

3. Students will learn to better comprehend their own values and assumptions associated with the causes and solutions of social problems in American society.

4. Students will study a number of specific social problems.

5. Students will be more astute analysts of the societal forces that create the broad social conditions in our society.

7. After completing this course a student will be better able to practice the Art of Critically Analyzing Modern Culture.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/ASSESSMENT METHODS

- There will be three exams of equal value given throughout the semester; two midterms and a final. The final will not be cumulative. This will be used to assess each student’s grasp of terms, concepts and materials presented in the text. (See Learning Outcomes 1, 2 & 3.)

- You will create a research poster, which utilizes the sociological perspective to examine some aspect of contemporary society. Research for the poster must utilize scholarly journals as well as information/data from the Internet. You will present the poster in an open forum the 13th or 14th week of class. See the section titled Research Support for help in preparing your poster. (See Outcomes 2 & 3)

- At times the last day of the week will be set aside for discussion day. You will be expected to have read the chapter and be able to articulate your position in the discussion as it related to the present social world you find yourself in. (See Outcomes 1, 2 & 3)

- You will each be placed in a group and (1) write a detailed group outline of the chapter you are assigned and (2) present this chapter as a general overview to the class. You will be evaluated on the clarity, conceptual accuracy, detail, and general organization of the written aspect of this assignment and the organization, clarity, delivery, composure, engagement and effectiveness of your oral presentation. The written aspect of the assignment is to be carried out using a computer word processing program. On the day of, but prior to your actual presentation, you are to give to me your written (typed) element so I can follow your presentation as you give it.

- Let it be known that you should feel free to make comments and/or ask questions at any time. Part of my final evaluation of your performance will be based on your course preparedness and participation. Thus, your in-class participation will be part of your final grade. In general, I will not subtract any grade credit if you do not talk in class; however, on the same token, if you do not talk or participate in class you will not receive any credit either.
***Presentation Criteria***

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Composure/presentation of self

Interpretive (explicate information)

Delivery (pace, articulation, etc.)

Clarity/easy to follow

Engagement of audience (eye contact, rote, conversational)

General

**POINT OF INTEREST**

My choice of terms/language in the classroom may seem offensive to some of you. Let me point out, however, that using a euphemistic and/or neuter term does not carry the same impact as does the hard, cold, emotion packed street vernacular; which, in fact, is how the majority of social issues are described and defined. Hence, since humans actually participate in the social construction of reality through the terms they use to communicate that reality to each other, to use watered-down neutral language actually changes one’s perception of the issues and thereby potentially trivialized the impact of the issues. Consequently, at times my language is hard because society is equally abrasive and you will not appreciate that fact if I cleanse my presentation of any offensive properties.

**RESEARCH SUPPORT**

Hi, my name is Sue Riehl, and I am the library liaison to the Sociology discipline. If you should need any assistance finding materials to complete your assignments please do contact me at either sriehl@carrollu.edu or (262) 650-4832

Generally, my office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. It would be beneficial for both of us if you could make an appointment with me but do feel free to stop over unannounced.

There are two important research tools that you can access from the library’s web page http://divisions.cc.edu/library/ to assist you with completing your assignments in sociology.

the library catalog http://piocat.cc.edu/
You can search the library catalog for books and electronic books, dvd and vhs tapes, journal titles and electronic journal titles, reference materials, and other audio visual materials. Remember the importance of using subject headings to find materials.

the Research by Subject Guide for Sociology http://piocat.cc.edu/screens/subject_guides.html
This guide will provide you with a list of general and subject specific encyclopedias to assist you with determining appropriate search terms as well as providing you with a general introduction to your topic. There is also a list of databases that you can search for journal articles on your topic. The best databases to use for topics in Sociology are Jstor, and Academic Search Premiere.

Jstor
All articles in Jstor are in full text and are scholarly. Indexing of articles begin in 1900 to the present. Please be aware that Jstor will not provide you with the most current articles. It has been specifically designed to serve as a repository for articles therefore there will be an embargo or a time delay of 2-5 years on all articles.

Jstor indexes 36 sociology journal titles.

Search Tips for Jstor
When using Jstor please use the Advanced Search. Limit your search to article and limit your search to English. Limit your search to Sociology Discipline(s) and/or Journal(s). You may also limit your search to a particular year or time period. Please remember that this is a full text database so it is best if you use field searching with your search terms. After entering your search terms use the adjacent drop down box to select article title or abstract. This means that when you enter your search terms you will want to retrieve only those articles where your search terms appear in either article titles or abstracts. If your search terms appear in the article title or the abstract there is a better chance that the entire article actually discusses your topic. An abstract is a summary of the article itself.

Academic Search Premiere
All articles in Academic Search Premiere will have an abstract (summary) of the article. Most articles will be in full text. Indexing of articles begin in 1970 to the present. Please be aware that some articles may have abstracts only because there is an embargo (time delay) on that journal title by the publisher.

Search Tips for Academic Search Premiere
Limit to Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals
Limit to Publication Type of periodical
Additional limiters you may use are:
  - Date or time period
  - Apply related words – to retrieve variations of your search terms: race, races, racial, racially
  - Full text -- check this and you will retrieve only full text articles

To locate articles in full text when you only have an abstract please follow the procedure listed below.
Copy the journal title (The journal title is always listed next to the heading SOURCE)
Open another browser session (Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.)
Go to the library's web page http://divisions.cc.edu/library/
Click on "Search the Library Catalog"
Click on tab labeled "Journal Title"
Paste in your journal title ; Click on the Submit button

If the library catalog indicates that we do not have the title then--
Go back to the library's web page
Click on "Full Text Journals Index" under "Articles and Databases"
In the search box paste in your journal title ; Click on the Search button
You should see that the Journal of Marriage & Family is in full text in JSTOR Arts & Sciences II Collection 1964 – 2002. However, my article is dated August 2008 so I will have to consider Interlibrary Loan or find another article to use.

When citing your sources in your assignments please refer to the American Sociological Association style guide at http://www.calstatela.edu/library/bi/rsalina/asa.styleguide.html
Again, should you have any questions or need any assistance in locating materials for your assignments please do contact me.
12/2008

FINAL GRADE PROPORTIONS
Exams = 75%
Group outline & presentation = 10%
Poster = 15%
Overall Performance = + or - %

***FINAL NOTE

I want to stress that the majority of the test question will be drawn for the reading in the text. Thus, be sure to read these materials closely because I do not feel compelled to cover each chapter fully in class. Rather, I will be highlighting and discussing what I consider important issues in class.
## WEEKLY READINGS

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<td>1 (1/24)</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to Sociology</strong>&lt;br&gt;General definition of sociology&lt;br&gt;Defining a social problem&lt;br&gt;Sociological concepts&lt;br&gt;Micro-Macro perspective&lt;br&gt;Sociological Imagination <strong>(see Answers.com for “sociological imagination” &amp; “sociological perspective”)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Social theory and methods&lt;br&gt;What is Culture and how it relates to History&lt;br&gt;Perspectives on human nature&lt;br&gt;Sociological perspectives and masters&lt;br&gt;Establishing truth, data and analysis&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The Environment&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 4</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The Economy and Politics&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 2</td>
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<td>5 (2/21)</td>
<td>Population&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 3</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td># Poverty&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 7</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td># Race &amp; Ethnicity&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 8</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td># Work&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 14</td>
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<td>9 (3/28)</td>
<td># Family&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 15</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td># Education&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 16</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td># Sex Discrimination&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 9</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td># Variant Sexual Behavior&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 10</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td># (Posters due on Tues. 4/25 &amp; Thurs. 4/27)&lt;br&gt;Text: Chapter 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 (4/26)</td>
<td># Chapter on Drugs -- Group Presentation</td>
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**Thurs = EXAM 1**

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****Spring Break (3/10-19)**

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**Thurs = EXAM 2**

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*** FINAL EXAM (5/8, 11:00 A.M.)***