

# SOC 1510 002 PRINCIPLES OF SOCIOLOGY

Methodist University  
Spring 2013; T TH; 14:00-15:15

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## Course Description

This is an introductory course, designed to achieve two goals: to open your eyes to sociological thinking about the world we live in and to get you excited about sociology as a discipline. To this end, instead of following a textbook where the purpose is to lay the foundation of sociological knowledge and concepts, we will focus on a number of selected topics and areas of sociological investigation. These topics are closely connected to our day-to-day experience: the nature of the economy, family, military, environment, identity, migration, surveillance and security, globalization, belief and religion, tourism, and sports. What can sociology say about these phenomena? How is sociological perspective different from common sense and taken for granted assumptions? Given all the sociological evidence, how can it be that such assumptions nevertheless play a major role in the way we understand the world?

## Readings

The following books are available at the university bookstore:

Orin Stern. 2012. *The Passion of Tiger Woods*. Duke Press  
Catherine Lutz. 2001. *Homefront: A Military City and the American 20th Century*  
Karen Ho. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*  
Heather Diamond. 2008. *American Aloha: Cultural Tourism and the Negotiation of Tradition*.  
Stephanie Coontz. 1992. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*  
Melissa Checker. 2005. *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and Search for Justice in a Southern Town*  
Henry Rubin. 2003. *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men*.  
Carolyn Nordstrom. 2007. *Global Outlaws: Crime, Money, and Power in the Contemporary World*  
Phil Zuckerman. 2008. *Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us About Contentment*  
Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz. 2010. *Labor and Legality: An Ethnography of a Mexican Immigrant Network*  
Vida Bajc and Willem de Lint. 2011. *Security and Everyday Life*

## Course Requirements

Book Review and Presentation (30% of the grade):

For each topic discussed in class, we will read a book that exemplifies how one aspect of that topic has been researched. The purpose is to learn how scholars identify a research problem, determine appropriate data collection method for that research question, conduct analysis, and present their findings or argument. You will choose one book which appeals to you most, read that book carefully, and:

a) write a two-page (single-spaced) summary;

Your summary should include: 1. Full bibliographic citation of the book, 2. Summary of each chapter in the book, 3. Definitions of major concepts and examples of their use in the text – make sure you provide page references, 4. Quotations and arguments that you find interesting and want to share in class – don't forget page references, 5. Your reactions, questions and comments to the book.

- b) prepare a presentation of the book contents which you will deliver to the class;
  - c) hand out to your classmates a one-page summary of the chapters (two or three sentences for each chapter) to help them follow your presentation.
- Summary (stapled!) and hand-out due in class on the day of your book presentation.

NOTE: No late assignments will be accepted! A partially completed assignment (for example, a student does not turn in his/her book summary) amounts to an F.

Weekly News Event Report (40% of the grade):

This will require that you follow the news through major newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Atlanta Journal of Constitution*, *The Chicago Tribune*

For each topic discussed, you will bring to class one current news article that pertains to that topic. You will tell us in class what the article discusses and turn in that article with a one-page reflection on its content. The report should:

- a) state the topic to which the news article pertains (i.e. the topic discussed that week, see the syllabus)
- b) state the title of the news article
- c) state the source of the news article (i.e. the name of the newspaper where you found it)
- d) summarize the main points of the news article
- e) explain clearly how that news article relates to the topic discussed that week

Due in class each Thursday (stapled!)

NOTE: Incomplete reports will not be graded. No late assignments will be accepted! Each missing Weekly Report amounts to an F for that assignment for that week.

Field Assignment (30% of the grade):

This assignment will teach you how to observe social life around you. You will choose one topic and “go to the field” to observe how people live their life in that particular place. I have proposed several possibilities but you can choose your own. You will go to a place and observe what people do, ask questions, and TAKE NOTES of what you see and hear. You will prepare a two-page (single-spaced) report on the subject and present your report in the last weeks of classes. You will turn in that report, together with the notes, on that day.

NOTE: A partially completed assignment (for example, a student does not present the field report in class or does not turn in the written report on the presentation date) amounts to an F for that assignment.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **WEEK 1: Introducing Sociology**

**Jan 8:** Review of the Syllabus

**Jan 10:** What does it mean to think sociologically? What is sociological theory?  
How do sociologists conduct research? How will I conduct my Field Assignment?

### **WEEK 2: Tools and Methods**

**Jan 15:** Workshop in class

How do I locate newspaper articles using the library website?

How can I use our classroom technology to present my field project and my book report?

**Jan 17:** Workshop at the Writing Center

### **WEEK 3: Sports**

**Jan 22:** Book discussion: *The Passion of Tiger Woods*

**Jan 24:** How sports relates to class, race, gender, and politics

Field Assignment ideas:

Collegial sports and learning; Sports bars; Family and sports

### **WEEK 4: Military**

**Jan 29:** Book discussion: *Homefront: A Military City and the American 20th Century*

**Jan 31:** How does the military shape our society and culture? How does it influence family and community relations?

Field Assignment ideas:

Military newcomers and urban planning in Fayetteville; life of a military wife/mother/child; military bases and civilian communities

### **WEEK 5: Economy**

**Feb 5:** Book discussion: *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*

**Feb 7:** What is the nature of production and consumption in a capitalist economy? How have these changed historically? How do workplace conditions, wages, labor laws, unemployment, economic crisis, and outsourcing shape the quality of our life? What is the nature of the Western culture of consumption? How do credit card debt, shopping malls, and consumption define our culture and way of life?

Field Assignment ideas:

A day with homeless people; observations at any kind of work environment: assembly line production, law office, farmland, a day in the unemployment office. A day at a shopping mall, fast food restaurant, bar.

### **WEEK 6: Tourism**

**Feb 12:** Book discussion: *American Aloha: Cultural Tourism and the Negotiation of Tradition.*

**Feb 14:** What is tourism? Why has tourism become such a central part of the global economy? How does tourism industry use history, heritage and culture to promote places and activities as tourist destinations?

Field Assignment ideas:

Revitalization of downtown Fayetteville, golf resort tourism, visit to Carolina Beach State Park, the Myrtle Beach resort; what goes on at the Tourist Information Center, visit to the downtown museums.

## **WEEK 7: Family**

**Feb 19:** Book discussion: *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*

**Feb 21:** What are the different family types in cross-cultural perspective? How have they been changing?

### Field Assignment ideas:

Visit to a family planning center; life in a single-parent family; how families divide their work and leisure time

## **WEEK 8: Environment**

**Feb 26:** Book discussion: *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*

**Feb 28:** What is global warming/Climate change? How do we contribute to environmental destruction? How are different political interests responding to these changes and why? What is the relationship between the economy and the environment? What are cultural differences in the way human beings relate to the environment?

### Field Assignment ideas:

Any example of how different cultural and social groups use (and abuse) the environment

## **WEEK 9: Identity**

**Mar 5:** Book discussion: *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men*

**Mar 7:** What is individual identity, group identity, cultural identity? How are identities formed? How do these processes vary historically and culturally?

### Field Assignment ideas:

A local gay bar; living in a family with a gay/lesbian parent(s); homosexuality and the military

## **WEEK 10 - Mar 12, Mar 14: SPRING BREAK**

## **WEEK 11: Globalization**

**Mar 19:** Book discussion: *Global Outlaws: Crime, Money, and Power in the Contemporary World*

**Mar 21:** What is globalization? What are global cultural (spread of music genre), economic (unemployment, loss of livelihood, homelessness, poverty), social (networking through the Internet), and political (G8, WTA, NAFTA) trends?

### Field Assignment ideas:

Any site in your community where aspects of globalization can be observed

## **WEEK 12: Religion**

**Mar 26:** Book discussion: *Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us About Contentment.*

**Mar 28:** What are sociological approaches to religion? What is secularization?

Field Assignment ideas:

A day in a place of worship (synagogue, mosque, church, temple), how religion structures family life, analysis of televised prayer sessions, a day at a place of worship

**WEEK 13: Immigration**

**Apr 2:** Book discussion: *Labor and Legality: An Ethnography of a Mexican Immigrant Network*

**Apr 4:** Lecture: Migration, immigration, emigration and policy

Field Assignment ideas:

Intimidation and fear in the life of undocumented migrants; immigrant working conditions

**WEEK 14: Security and Surveillance**

**Apr 9:** Book discussion: *Security and Everyday Life*

**Apr 11:** What is security? What is surveillance? Why does it matter?

Field Assignment ideas:

Gun ownership in a southern town. Private security contractors. University campus as a 'secure' environment.

**WEEK 15, 16, 17: In-Class Presentations of Your Field Reports**

**Apr 16** \_\_\_\_\_

**Apr 18** \_\_\_\_\_

**Apr 23** \_\_\_\_\_

**Apr 25** \_\_\_\_\_

**Apr 30** \_\_\_\_\_

**HAVE A NICE SUMMER!!**