

SOCIOLOGY 1000
(3 UT Credits)
Introductory Sociology – Section A2
Grande Prairie Regional College
Fall 2008

Instructor: Alan Segal asegal@gprc.ab.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 16:00 – 17.00 Or By Appointment

Office: C410, 539-2011

Course Prerequisite: None

Course Description: An examination of the theory, methods, and substance of sociology; of society, culture, economy, and individual

Required Texts:

Elements of Sociology - John Steckley and Guy Letts
A Lifetime of Secrets – Frank Warren

Assignments:

NOTE: All written work must comply with the College's policy on plagiarism. For a detailed explanation of what it is, refer to page 44 in your Grande Prairie Regional College 2007-8 Calendar.

- All submitted work must clearly stipulate your name and course number, and identify which assignment it is. Your assignments will be sent **only** by email. The address is gprc_assignments@operamail.com. Don't forget the underscore between 'gprc' and 'assignments'. Messages from hotmail accounts appear to be the worst for not receiving replies from me, or for not arriving after they've been sent to me. I strongly recommend you use an entirely different email provider. *The receipt date and time that accompanies your email messages will count as the official submission time for the work you're handing in.* **No attachments are acceptable.** Cut and paste your work and send it as a regular email.
- Academic assignments for this course emphasize synthesis of ideas in sociology, and the best questions you can think of to advance that synthesis. Conclusions can be valuable but it isn't obligatory to state one. Grammar is important to communicating precise meaning. Therefore, while it will not be valued as highly as content, it will be evaluated and therefore can affect your mark.

Two Journals (F, C+ to B)

Due October 9th and November 27th. Anything pertaining to sociology, class discussions or lectures, class interaction, personal life relevant to our examination of sociology, or course

observations and suggestions, is a suitable topic. No research is expected. The purpose is to allow informal communication with the instructor. If you do not hand in a journal you will receive a failing grade on that specific assignment. The minimum length is 300 words.

Film Reviews (F, D- to A+):

Throughout the term films may be shown to you. They will be discussed sociologically, employing a variety of ideas mentioned in the main texts. In each class following the conclusion of a film, you will write a sociological analysis, utilizing ideas from the course text. The assignment will be open-book. But you must display a workable knowledge of the ideas you mention. You gain if you can go beyond what is said in class discussion. Some concepts may be stipulated, meaning you must use them. More ideas, though, rather than fewer, will affect your mark positively.

Midterm (F, D- to A+)

This will be an essay assignment on October 23rd that you will write in class. You may use your textbook. However, the purpose is to display how you can deploy ideas sociologically.

Final Assignment (F, D- to A+):

Due the first class of December. Use at least 2 theories and 4 concepts from the main text. Be careful not to confuse concepts and theories. Theories are broad explanations that address substantive areas of human experience. Concepts are ideas that have more limited application or relevance. Analyze sociologically one of the following:

1. A book of fiction, a short story, or a body of work by an author of your choice
2. A television program or series, a movie or collection of films
3. A computer or online game
4. A body of work by a specific creator in any of these areas
5. A song or musical piece, or a body of work by a particular composer.
6. Anything I approve after we have discussed your suggestion.
7. A website with a particular orientation that can be discussed sociologically.

The **minimum length** of this assignment is 1600 words. The purpose is to use ideas from the course to analyze, as you imagine a sociologist would, whatever you write on. No research is required for this assignment.

ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS EXCEPT THE JOURNALS ARE SUBJECT TO LATENESS PENALTIES OF ONE GRADE LEVEL PER CALENDAR DAY BEYOND THE DUE DATE. JOURNALS WILL BE REDUCED BY ONE GRADE LEVEL FOR EACH TWO-DAY LATENESS PERIOD. THERE IS ALSO A ONE-GRADE PENALTY FOR ASSIGNMENTS THAT ARE LESS THAN THE MINIMUM LENGTH.

Discussion Bonus:

Everyone may (but not necessarily will) receive a bonus mark based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation. Discussion postings to a Backboard discussion forum also will be considered class participation. You will be eligible for a bonus mark only if you display commitment to the course by reading the books and completing all written assignments.

Although attendance is not relevant to the regular assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. If you receive a bonus mark, it will be added to your overall grade total prior to working out a final mark. If you are absent for more than 5 classes you will not receive a bonus grade. .

Tabulation of Marks:

Your final mark will be formulated by adding the grade point value for each letter grade you receive and dividing by the maximum Grade Point total you can attain given the number of required assignments.

NOTE: (1) No class averaging will be done. (2) All marks will appear on Blackboard. You are responsible for monitoring your grade input, and informing me that a mark has not been entered.

Grade Equivalency:

| | |
|----|---------|
| A+ | 95-100% |
| A | 90-94% |
| A- | 87-89% |
| B+ | 83-86% |
| B | 80-82% |
| B- | 77-79% |
| C+ | 73-76% |
| C | 65-72% |
| C- | 60-64% |
| D+ | 55-59% |
| D | 50-54% |
| D- | 45-49% |

NOTE: On the College's marking grid there is no D-. Therefore no such final mark will be recorded. However, for the assignments that will be evaluated on a full grading grid, I will use D- as a non-failing mark.

DISCUSSION SEQUENCE

As you consider the questions below for class discussion, keep in mind that quick judgments, or a quick expression of agreement or disagreement, is not what I expect of you.

1. Introduction to course.
2. *A Lifetime of Secrets*: Identify 6 of the entries that registered with you most profoundly. How do you explain their impact on you? At this very early stage of your exposure to sociology, speculate on why people have secrets. What are they, and what social and societal characteristics might contribute to the development of secrets and secretive behavior?

3. *Elements of Sociology*: Chapter 1

- What is sociology? What is a sociological imagination?
- What is a status quo? Provide some examples of this from personal observation.
- Is it possible to live in the world without some aspect of sociological analysis? Keep this question in mind throughout the course, and by the end, compare your response then to whatever yours is today.
- Prepare to explain the types of sociology mentioned. Remember these throughout the course.
- What is discourse?

4. *Elements of Sociology*: Chapter 2

- Research is pertinent to any systematized discipline of understanding. As you read this chapter, try to understand the assumptions of each branch of sociological investigation.
- What differentiates qualitative and quantitative research?
- What elements of research design are introduced here?
- What are semiotics and signifiers?

5. *Elements of Sociology*: Chapters 3 & 4

- What are culture, subculture, counterculture, mass culture, popular culture and cultural capital?
- Why distinguish values, mores, and norms from each other?
- What are taboos and whose purposes are advanced by their existence?
- What is ethnocentrism?
- What is socialization? When sociologists refer to agents of socialization, what do they intend to say about them? From your own life, identify as many such agents as you can think of.
- What have been the more substantial forms of socialization you have experienced? What has been the most significant socialization in your life? 'Substantial' and 'significant' do not always reference the same occurrence or development. Have you experienced conflicting types of socialization? Why include a discussion of agency and determinism in a chapter on socialization?

6. *Elements of Sociology*: Chapters 5 & 12

- Does the text convince you either that deviance inheres in each individual, or is developed by social circumstances? What theories on deviance are cited in the book?
- Why do the authors mention relativity in conjunction with deviance?
- Can the law be an instrument of oppression?
- How might you comment on deviance if you were 1) a conflict theorist, 2) a functionalist theorist, and 3) a feminist theorist?
- What assumptions about deviance did you uphold before reading this chapter? Do they persist?
- In sociology the concept of the 'other' is powerful and repeatedly cited. What do sociologists mean by 'otherness'?

- Why do you think I have combined chapters on deviance and social change for this section of your outline?
- Social Change is frequently alluded to by people. Regardless of purposes or goals, different groups use this same reference point. Why? How does the book explain social change? Is any difference a form of social change?
- How would you compare conceptually, modernism, conservatism, and postmodernism? From observations about your personal experiences, can you say if there has been social change or not? If so, offer an example and be ready to justify your choice. If not, prepare to explain its absence.

7. *Elements of Sociology: Chapters 8 & 11*

- What are social inequality and stratification?
- Could we easily continue conversations about inequality if we did not have such concepts as social class, class consciousness, and dominant ideology, to name only three?
- The authors connect to an extent, class as a social identity. As you reflect on your own lives, do you think identity of any sort, perhaps one emergent from inequality, plays a part in your development?
- Can you develop a case that connects globalization to stratification? What is globalization?
- How would you describe corporations to a friend? How closely aligned are they with neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism?
- Noam Chomsky is considered by some people to be one of the most negatively provocative people in the United States. What challenges does he articulate to established social system, as they are outlined in your text?

8. *Elements of Sociology: Chapters 9 & 10*

- Once again I have grouped 2 chapters together. Can you speculate about my reasoning? If you consider this a result of mental impairment, pretend you're preparing to write a 'fantasy' novel.
- Are some categories left out of the 2 chapters on inequality that you believe should be included?
- Race and ethnicity, as you now know, are important strands of sociological analysis. Does the book persuade you that each deserves such a prominent place in sociological thought and theory?
- Explain the link between colonialism and inequality.
- How is gender described and does it really fit into the discussion of chapter 9?
- Must all conversations about inequality include mentioning oppression?
- What is meant by hegemonic masculinity?
- If I surprised you with an unexpected quiz on feminism, what features of it would you conclude are some of its most notable features?
- Are you convinced that ideas of inequality contribute meaningfully to knowing the world sociologically?
- Why include sections on multiculturalism in a chapter on ethnicity and race? Can we connect multiculturalism and gender?

9. *Elements of Sociology*: Chapter 6 & 2006 Census Update (Back of Test)

- How would you explain 'family' to a being who had no understanding of the concept?
- How easily does your family life fit into the descriptions offered in the text?
- How would you explain social institutions to someone unfamiliar with the term?
- Does the book persuade you that social diversity is accurately and legitimately reflected in the experiences of family in this country?
- Examining the census appendix at the back of the book, what strikes you about family structure in this country?

10. *Elements of Sociology*: Chapter 7

- Before reading this segment of the Intro text, would you have imagined something called a medical culture? Why link culture to health?
- The authors allege that gender and race affect medicine. Explain this.
- We talk about health as if it has one meaning. Variation, however, is the norm more than the exception. How would you explain Health to someone who is unfamiliar with the concept?
- What is meant by the medicalization of society?