

SEP. 19 2002

SOCIOLOGY 1000  
Introductory Sociology  
Grande Prairie Regional College  
(Fall 2002)

Instructor: Alan Segal

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Office hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 15.00 - 15.50  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 13.45 - 14.20  
Or By appointment

Course Prerequisite: None

**Course Description:** An examination of the theory, methods, and substance of sociology, of how societies and individuals are shaped and modified. Culture, socialization, deviance, stratification, group processes, industrialization and social movements will be covered.

**Text:**

*Seeing Ourselves: Classic, contemporary, and cross-cultural readings in sociology, Fifth Edition*, - John Macionis & Nijole Benokraitis

**Assignments:**

**Two Focus Papers**

- These are based on the list of questions found below.
- Due dates: The first class of October and November. All written work must be submitted by email, as a regular message. *Do not send it as an attachment.*

- Assignments cannot exceed 3 pages.
- Focus Papers will be graded on a 1-4 system.
- **There is a lateness penalty of 1 stanine per day, including weekends.**
- Focus Papers are not meant to have full discussion and analysis. They are for one purpose only. You must tell me what questions, or types of questioning, you would use or ignore if you were actually to analyze the topic you select. And you must explain your use or non-use of these questions/approaches. The goal here is a framework for investigation, not discussion or conclusions.
- All work must clearly stipulate your name, ID number, and course and section numbers.
- Grammar is important to communicating precise meaning. Grammar will not be valued as highly as content, but it will be evaluated, and therefore can affect your mark.

### Focus Paper Questions

1. Can someone who is heterosexual study homosexuals?
2. Why would anyone want to study the personal records of dead people?
3. Is it appropriate to lie to a research subject?
4. Are all cultures equally valid?
5. Why do teenagers rebel against authority?
6. Socialization is intended to turn us into conforming members of society. Why, then, do people deviate from social norms?
7. Do humans need verbal and non-verbal forms of communication?
8. Why do poverty and social inequality persist in Canada?
9. As some forms of work become more and more 'faceless' due to advances in technology, will gender inequality among workers be minimized?
10. Has the push toward gender equality led to women who mimic men?
11. Is ethnic or cultural assimilation of immigrants to a dominant culture the only workable public policy for North America?
12. Should we ban research-sponsorship by think tanks?
13. Some sociologists believe work is important because it provides status and meaning. If this is so, what explains the eagerness of some individuals to retire as soon as possible?
14. Do partners in successful relationships consider the division of household work when they gauge the success?
15. Can education be a liberating social influence?
16. Might social pressure lead high school students become violent?
17. Compared to the United States a much larger percentage of Canadians report having no religious affiliation. What might account for this difference?
18. Is social class a factor in the religious preferences of residents in Canada?
19. Canadians are not equally likely to become sick or injured. Can this difference be

- explained, at least partly, by referring to sex and social class?
20. If you could decrease crime in Canada, what strategy(ies) would you adopt?
  21. Is early intervention into the lives of children considered 'at risk' justifiable?
  22. If you were a city planner whose proposals were opposed by developers, how could you resolve the conflict of interests?
  23. Are social movements a problem or a solution for our society?

### Three Journals

- Each journal is due the first class of each month, beginning in October.
- Each journal is worth a maximum of 1.5 stanines. **However, all journals will be graded using a benchmark of 1.**
- Journals must be at least one page. They must specify your name, and course and section numbers. Remember that written work must be sent as an email message.
- Anything pertaining to sociology, class discussions or lectures, class interaction, or course observations and suggestions, is a suitable topic. No research is necessary or expected. The purpose is to allow informal communication with the instructor.

### Two Quizzes

- Both quizzes will be multiple choice or true-false questioning, and will be taken during the last class of the specified weeks. *You must inform me in the next week if you are unable to meet the requirement during the specified time. If you do not disclose to me that the schedule is difficult for you (for appropriate reasons), I will not allow other arrangements to be made.*
- Quiz 1: All readings we have covered from 1 - 38 - Week of October 7 - 10
- Quiz 2: All readings we have covered from 39 - 77 - Week of November 18 - 21
- Each quiz will be given a percent and then converted to a stanine from 1-9. At the end of the term, both quiz grades will be averaged into a single stanine mark out of 9. This will be added to the total of your other marks.

### 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 on webCT also will be considered class participation.
- You will be eligible for a bonus mark only if you display commitment to the course by reading and completing the required assignments. *Although attendance is not relevant to the regular assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. If you are absent for more than 5 classes, you will not receive a bonus grade. The number for the evening section is 3.*

- The bonus mark will have a range of 1-3. If you receive a bonus mark, it will be added to your overall grade total prior to its conversion to a percentage.
- The course has a webCT discussion forum. I will read it periodically, but I will not participate unless requested to do so. Your participation in this, as in class discussion, is not mandatory, but if you do contribute I might gain a better sense of your overall contribution to our discussions.

### Tabulation of marks

The total of all stanine marks available for assignments is 17.5. Your marks will be totaled out of 17.5, a percentage will be obtained, and the percentage will be reconverted to a final stanine grade according to the following table.

Stanine Grade	Percentage Equivalent
9	90 - 100
8	80 - 89
7	70 - 79
6	60 - 69
5	55 - 59
4	50 - 54
3	40 - 49
2	20 - 39
1	0 - 19

NOTE: (1) No class averaging will be done. (2) All marks will appear on webCT. If you are unfamiliar with this system, employees of the library will instruct you for access. *You are responsible for monitoring your grade input, and informing me that a mark has not appeared for which you deserve credit.*

### 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. Think comprehensively and insightfully about these questions. All classes will begin with an overview discussion of the reading, and move on to consideration of specific issues.

1. Introduction to course

2. Readings 1 - 3

- What kinds of questions might we label collectively a 'sociological perspective'?
- What is the promise of sociology and how might it connect with the sociological imagination?
- Whatever your gender, do you feel trapped by life?
- Do we need cherished values? Do you have any?
- Prepare to discuss the biography you live out, as biography is briefly mentioned on page 3.
- Why does Berger value jolts to self-conception? What does he mean by this? Although stated as a broad comment about sociology, have you ever experienced this yourself?
- What does 'debunking' mean?
- Before reading these excerpts, had you ever linked sports with religion?
- Do some of the findings referred to by Coakley reflect what you have observed in sports?
- Assume you are a sociologists whose area is sport. What analysis would you bring forward for discussion? Analysis requires you to think of questions to be raised, tentative generalizations, and challenges for future investigation.

3. Readings 5 - 7

- What is value-free sociology and is it achievable? What social conditions might bring us close to such a state, and what conditions obstruct or nullify its realization?
- Is it self-deceptive to think that social research can provide a realistic, reliable, and accurate analysis of social life?
- What does Brewer mean by "epistemological issues"?
- What sensitivities are vital to solid, reputable, and valuable research?

4. Readings 8 - 11

- Speculate: what is culture? What do you think of when we refer to subcultures, and multiculturalism?
- What are folkways and mores?
- What is the assumed value of symbols, and are you persuaded by White that they are fundamental to human existence?
- Identify a couple of norms and mores that have powerfully influenced your

- life.
- Is there such a thing as authentic culture, and is virtual culture a less authentic form of it? How can we evaluate 'authenticity' to begin with?
- What is the difference between manifest and latent functions?
- In what respects| can we say rape is cultural?
- Ask yourself the same question about cows in India.
- What is social change?
- Distinguish between collective behaviour and social movements.
- What is mass society?
- What theories do the authors mention when they discuss social movements? Are they logical?
- Are all widespread movements social movements?
- Ask yourself the same questions about crowd behaviour and social change.
- What are modernization and postmodernity?

5. Readings 12 & 13

- What is class antagonism?
- In Marxism, what relationship connects the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and exploitation?
- What are the tenets of Tönnies' analysis, and do they assist us in any way when considering Marx's ideas?
- How might you explain social institutions and their purpose in social life? Identify as many of them as you can.
- What is society? What is social structure?

5. Readings 16 & 17

- How are body, self, and consciousness correlated with each other?
- Why write of organization and rules when referring to the self?
- What is the generalized other?
- Sociologists sometimes speak of social products. Speculate about what this could mean. Mead said the self and the mind are social products. What did you think he meant by this statement?
- What is an image? How does an image 'become itself'? Should we interpret images as social products?
- Explain Gerbner's criticism of the question, 'does television violence incite real-life violence'?
- What is cultural policy? Are the ideas of image and power, also introduced here, importantly wrapped up with cultural policy?
- How would you explain the statement on page 84, that "[t]elevision tends to

cultivate and confirm stable conceptions about life"? How would you explain the structure of violence?

6. Readings 20 - 22

- What are Goffman's notions of the self, and how do they compare with Mead's views of it?
- Are the differences cited between men's and women's talking conceptually powerful or merely sociological babbling?
- Are there examples from your own experience that coincide with those described in selection 22?

7. Readings 23 - 26

- What are the characteristics of bureaucracy?
- Are the characteristics different in an ideal, compared to a real bureaucracy?
- In our culture, we often apply the word 'dysfunctional' to various contexts. Bureaucracy is one such context. Is the very idea of dysfunction helpful to us?
- What is the sociological value of 'primary groups'? Aren't all groups the same? Why does Cooley spend time on this concept?
- What is 'McDonaldization'? Conjecture on what Cooley and Weber might say about it and Japanese etiquette.
- What are corporations, and do their business practises invariably lead to outcomes evident in this group of readings?

8. Readings 27 & 28

- Explain some connections between deviance and labeling theory?
- How might deviance and gender overlap?
- Have you ever been considered deviant, in your own or others' eyes? Remember that this is a social category that can mean more than a single act of misbehaviour.
- Did you have a viewpoint on deviance when you started the course?
- Can we organize our lives without resorting to deviance as a social concept, and without thinking of it as a form of behaviour?

9. Readings 30 - 32

- What is meant by sexual orientation? Is it really intended for some groups in



- society rather than for everybody?
  - Would we be better off sociologically if we saw sexuality in the broadest terms imaginable, without contemplating people's orientations?
  - Why do we become preoccupied with how many sexual partners people have? How sociologically informative and valuable is this information?
  - Has reading 32 impacted your understanding of sexuality, differences in society, etc.? What generalizations about sexuality are genuinely viable?
10. Readings 33 & 34
- Is it reasonable to assume there is no classless or unstratified society? If so, can you think of other reasonable assumptions that would serve as different starting points?
  - What is social stratification?
  - What is social mobility and what influences it sociologically?
  - Are you motivated by stratification considerations? What rewards are inducements for you? What rewards are available in our society?
  - Are the rewards sufficient to create loyalty to, as opposed to mere compliance with, this society?
  - What do sociologists mean by social inequality, and what contributes to or reduces it?
11. Reading 37
- What is sex discrimination to Benokraitis? What are some of its subtle manifestations?
  - What is gender stratification?
  - Have you seen, participated in, or personally experienced such discrimination?
  - What is subjective objectification?
12. Readings 39 & 40
- Drawing from these two excerpts, offer a conceptual explanation of race and ethnicity.
  - Why are these politically volatile concepts?
  - What are the souls of black folk that Du Bois refers to? Is his declaration generalizable to other groups?
  - What is Collins' point about controlling images? Can you think of other groups to whom her ideas could be applied?



13. Readings 43 - 45

- Why should sociologists look at aging?
- What is gerontocracy?
- Do you think about aging? If so, what are your perceptions, hopes, or fears about growing old? How do they mesh with or diverge from the accounts of aging offered in these selections?
- Have you ever had a close tie with an elderly person? If so, has this influenced your perceptions of that period of people's lives?

14. Readings 46 & 47

- What is alienated labour? Before you read chapter 46, did you have other interpretations of alienation?
- What are commodities?
- In Marxist terms, what is objectification?
- Disappearing work is given a deeper analysis in this reading assignment than we are usually exposed to. What social context is brought to our attention? What assumptions about community, social influence, etc., are present in the analysis?

15. Readings 49 & 50

- Who or what are the power elite? Is this more than a fancy label?
- What makes any body of people an elite? What creates subordinacy?
- Does MacKinnon's sociological analysis of pornography contain features similar to Mills' analysis of power?
- Do you find MacKinnon's position on the liberal analysis of pornography, as stated on the bottom of page 295, persuasive?
- Are obscenity and pornography synonyms of each other?

16. Readings 52 - 54

- What is a family? There are many varieties of groupings that people refer to as families. Assuming you identify membership in a family, how do you describe yours?

- What social assumptions support a preference for romantic and arranged marriages?
- Is there an objective reality in marriage? What is objective reality? Would you add to or delete from the questions mentioned in the last full paragraph on page 317?
- Does divorce signify the erosion of confidence in marriage?
- Do you agree that fatherhood is declining? If so, do you detect a relationship between marriage and constructive fatherhood? What is fatherhood?

17. Readings 55 - 57

- Before reading these chapters, did you think religion had a sociological function? Could you have imagined it might have economic implications? Do you consider Weber's analysis intellectually credible?
- What is rationality? What relationship does Weber see between it and religion?
- What is Weber's intent when he writes of 'ethos'?
- What does Hunter have in mind when writing of culture wars?
- Does Hunter cogently develop his analysis?
- Cultural wars can grab hold of any issue in society, but Hunter's allegation is that religion is a significant medium of such conflict in the United States. Does cultural warfare exist in Canada, and if it does, identify the most visible conflict[s].
- What dis/similarities do you perceive regarding women and their relationship to whatever religion is important to you, and women's relationship to Islam, as outlined in reading 57?
- What illuminates, validates, activates, our interpretations of religious text?

18. Readings 58 & 60

- Consider some of the differences between schooling and educating.
- What historical and political allegations about education are presented by Bowles and Gintis?
- What is the connection between stratification and education?
- Can you foresee a day when all schooling will be accomplished through cyber connections? If this transpires, would this change the purposes and implicit ideology of schools stipulated in these readings?

19. Readings 61 & 63

- Explain health.
- Can you speculate what structural functionalism is, based on Parsons' discussion of the social structure of medicine? And what features of medicine does he say are structural?
- In contemporary society, what concepts of medicine compete for our allegiance? When we sometimes talk about a medical establishment, do we visualize what Parsons writes about, or is it another 'entity'?
- What response do you have to the description of the patient's role?
- Recently, writings have appeared that purport to connect our beliefs about and practises of, masculinity, to our state of health. Do you think masculinity is a threat to health?
- Do you think you will understand differently what health is when you are old, compared to what you think it is today?
- When should we allow for cultural differences despite our unease or disagreement? When should we disregard strictures of cultural difference, and condemn what we think we see?
- What parallels to female circumcision [mutilation in the article] exist in our culture that merit condemnation? What social practises do you endorse, that could be seen in the same light as those cited in reading 63?

20. Readings 64 - 66

- What is urbanization? Are Simmel's and Wirth's ideas about cities compatible? Do their analyses convince you?
- Do you concur with Simmel's psychological depiction of urban life, as expressed on page 399?
- What can an analysis of the real estate industry tell us about urban existence? What can it tell us about the political structure of our society?

21. Reading 70

- Durning's position outlines more than one reason for defending cultural diversity. Know the reasons, and prepare to discuss the kinds of support does he advocates for indigenous people.

22. Readings 71 - 73

- What is a social movement? Is it the same thing as social change? If not, what is social change, and in what ways might it be aligned with social

movements?

- Critically evaluate the propositions listed by Freeman.
- Do you belong, or have you been part of, social movements?
- What is the relationship between organization and outcome?
- When a group is co-opted, what has occurred?
- Do you classify animal rights activists as members of a social movement? Does it meet Freeman's criteria?
- Can you think of groups vying for your support?
- Is abortion the core of social movements in all the countries looked at by Hadley?

23. Readings 74 - 76

- What is anomie in Durkheim's perspective?
- Do you think he would detect it in current Canadian society? If so, what might he say to us about ourselves?
- Do you think Durkheim's logic of society as the moral authority in our lives is solid? Would you have discussed your society in a similar manner?
- Critically evaluate Durkheim's outline of the discipline of society, on pages 478 and 479.
- What does Weber intend to communicate when he writes of disenchantment? Have you ever experienced this?
- Is disenchantment Weber's term for what Durkheim was talking about?
- Does Canada have national mores? If so, are they sufficient to establish national coherence?
- What is coherence?
- Speculate about the criteria of modernity. Does selection 76 tie modernity to television in any way?
- What is your response to the comments on television written on page 486?
- In the last reading, what do the authors mean by "reconstituting the social world"?