

Sociology 1—Fall 2005
Introduction to Sociology

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Discussion Sections
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“It is true that sociological analysis hardly makes concessions to narcissism and that it carries out a radical rupture with the profoundly complaisant image of human existence defended by those who want, at all cost, to think of themselves as ‘the most irreplaceable of beings.’ But it is no less true that that it is one of the most powerful instruments of self-knowledge as a social being, which is to say a unique being...it also offers some of the most efficacious means of attaining the freedom from social determinisms which is possible only through knowledge of those determinisms.”—Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*

Introduction. Welcome to discussion section for Introduction to Sociology. Sociology can be difficult to understand, but it is also a rewarding perspective. Over all, my job is to introduce you to this unique way of thinking about world around you. Specifically, my primary tasks as your GSI are to help you better understand the material from lecture and the assigned reading. Secondary, but no less important, tasks are to help you develop as a critical thinker and analytic writer. The format of the section is intensive discussion.

Section Requirements. Section counts for 20% of your overall grade in the course. Section grades are composed of four elements: regular attendance, class participation, mandatory office hours, and occasional short writing assignments.

Attendance. Section attendance is mandatory. However, three (3) unexcused absences are permitted over the course of the semester. An absence is excused when you have contacted me before section (e-mail is best), and have received written acknowledgement from me that your absence is excused. Do everything possible to be punctual; section begins promptly ten minutes after the hour.

Participation. The quality of the section is dependent on all of us being well-prepared. On your part, this means coming to class having done the reading carefully and having at least one question or comment prepared. It is best to write it down before, although this is not required. Participation also means being engaged with discussion. Presence does not equal participation. Bring the readings to class to reference them during discussion.

Office Hours. Please come to my office hours during the semester. Timing is up to you, but I strongly encourage you to do this earlier rather than later. (Do not cram your meeting into my last office hour.) This is a less formal opportunity for me to get to know you better. If you are shy, you can come in small groups (no more than three, please.) Any topic of discussion relating to the course, the readings, or sociology is encouraged.

Writing Assignments. There will be occasional short writing assignments related to the course. They will be assigned at the end of Wednesday section, and are due first thing Monday section. Assignments must be typed and legible. Late assignments will not be accepted.

On Discussion. There are several general rules for how we will discuss the material together. Please try to reference comments and questions to the readings and lecture materials. We will discuss material related to race, sexual orientation, class, inequality and politics quite a bit in this course, so be aware that others may have a different perspective than you. Above all, personally disrespectful remarks are unacceptable and are not tolerated. Keep an open yet critical mind during discussion.

On Reading. The reading for this course is dense and heavy. It requires careful reflection, and it is likely that you will have to read it more than once to understand it well. Take extensive notes on the reading, and try to write out questions that you have about it. Never simply move your eyes across the page; instead, try to focus on a question that you have about the reading, and then search for the answer to it. Often, either Dr. Swidler or I will give you guidance, but it is crucial that you develop the ability to ask these sorts of questions yourself.

On Writing. Clear written expression is the companion of clear thinking. Clear writing, moreover, requires a great deal of *rewriting*. Friends are helpful for this, and take advantage of the writing tutoring at the Student Learning Center. It goes without saying, however, that the thinking in the paper must be your own.

I also strongly encourage you to pick up a writing guide. For formatting, the *MLA Handbook* and *The Chicago Manual of Style* are standard. The best general introduction to writing available is *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White; not only is it cheap, but it will repay its cost many times over. For a more advanced introduction, see George Orwell's excellent essay "Politics and the English Language."

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. Plagiarism means reproducing someone else's thought, writing, or research without reference or citation. It is unacceptable at any time, but especially so in written work. If you are caught, you will receive an F, and will be punished to the fullest extent possible. This policy explicitly applies to material taken from the internet.

Special Needs. If you have special learning needs, please see me as soon as possible. Special needs are defined broadly—this can include a learning disability, athletic participation, parenthood, etc. While you are not required to inform me about personal matters, if you are struggling with the course it is crucial that you let me know as soon as possible. If I do not know that you are having trouble I cannot help you.