

SOCIOLOGY 115 A: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, Fall 2014

PROFESSOR VIRGINIA ADAMS O'CONNELL

Office: PPHAC 315

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Class: PPHAC 330, MW 11:45 am - 12:55 pm

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Office Hours: To be determined. Please check the Blackboard site in a few weeks.

Abstract: In this class, we will explore the basic concepts and methodologies of the field of sociology. We will explore what it means to view the world with a “sociological eye” and to use a “sociological imagination.” Human beings all over the world and across time have organized themselves in a myriad of ways. We will explore how the different structures and functions of social institutions impact the human experience.

Goals of the Course:

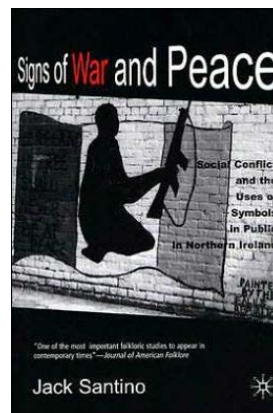
- Become familiar with the basic conceptual and theoretical frameworks used by sociologists to explore the human experience.
- To review the various methodologies sociologists use, and begin to use some of these methodologies (for example, observation, interviews, and surveys).
- To begin to appreciate what it means to “write like a sociologist.”

Required Texts:

NYU Department of Sociology: The
Sociology Project: Introducing the
Sociological Imagination



Jack Santino's Signs of War and Peace



There will also be supplemental short readings distributed in class and posted on Blackboard.

I will not thoroughly review every definition and every reference in these books—this is not my teaching style and there are other kinds of information that I feel is important for you to know that is not necessarily covered in this book. I will expect that you will have read the assigned chapters and any supplemental readings before the lecture since they will help set the stage for our sociological explorations. You will discover what I think are the major conceptual frameworks and definitions by attending the lectures and taking notes. You will demonstrate your familiarity with the text by participating in class discussions, through your essays, and through in-class exercises. I purposefully do not assign significant amounts of reading so that I can reasonably expect that you will be prepared for class.

Binder/Folder: I highly recommend that students get/keep a binder to collect handouts and supplemental readings for they will significantly help you successfully complete the assignments. I do often use handouts in class and students who keep these work organized benefit significantly.

Grading:

Assignments will be graded on the following scale:

A+ (97-100) = 4.3

A (93-96) = 4.0

A- (90-92) = 3.7

B+ (87-89) = 3.3

B (83-86) = 3.0

B- (80-82) = 2.7

C+ (77-79) = 2.3

C (73-76) = 2.0

C- (70-72) = 1.7

D+ (67-69) = 1.3

D (65-66) = 1.0

F (below 65) = 0.0

Grades will be posted on Blackboard so you should check the site regularly to make sure that your grades are recorded correctly on the site once an assignment is returned. I try to be as careful as possible when recording grades, but sometimes I do make mistakes, so please review both that your grades are recorded and recorded correctly. **And please be aware, it is within the instructor's purview to apply both a quantitative and qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment and/or for the course.**

Assignments: Short papers (about four pages, double-spaced) will be submitted over the course of the semester. A goal of this class is to get students accustomed to and comfortable with writing in the field. Your papers will be on a series of different topics and may sometimes include field notes/observations. There will be some choice in topics from week to week. You will write a total of **four short papers** over the course of the semester. The number of papers may vary depending on the use of other kinds of assignments during the course of the semester. There may also be short assignments such as some basic interpretation of data, or collection of data (such as distributing short surveys to classmates and/or family members).

I will try to make it as clear as possible what I expect from the short paper assignments by distributing examples of good writing, outlines, and basic writing guidelines, but if **at any time**

you do not understand, contact me before the assignment date. You will be posting the papers on Blackboard and I will discuss notable papers when I return your assignments—students who get on the notable essay list earn extra credit. You become a better writer in this class by taking a look at the notable essays. Sometimes a paper excels because it is well constructed and argued. Sometimes a paper catches your attention because it has been written with great passion. We will collectively explore how various elements of writing are used to make an argument and how to develop your own voice while writing within a discipline's paradigm.

I use extra credit points to move students between grade categories when calculating final grades. So, for example, if a student ended up with a 3.5 for the overall class GPA, and had earned some extra credit points over the course of the semester, that student would likely earn an A- (3.7) for his/her final grade rather than a B+ (3.3).

I recognize that everyone may experience the occasional “bad week,” a time when you felt overwhelmed with your normative social roles and obligations (sociological terms!), and even the “best” student might find himself/herself performing below his/her own expectations. Given this reality, I will allow students to redo one of their papers and resubmit it in order to help increase their grade. I give feedback on all individual papers. Students can incorporate my edits as well as expand on the paper and resubmit. The new grade will be averaged with the old grade for the new grade. So the student who got a “C” but then earned an “A” on the revised version will end up with a “B” for the new paper grade.

It is never my policy to offer extra credit to individual students. Any extra credit assignments are offered to the entire class. So please do not request special extra assignments.

There is **no final exam for this class**. You will have an optional take home final essay which will be due during what would have been during your scheduled final exam.

Class attendance/participation is mandatory. If you are going to miss a class, I expect that you will contact me prior to class to let me know, either by phone or email. Although I understand that people might occasionally miss class due to illness or personal emergencies, patterned absences will result in a lowering of your class attendance/participation grade and I will contact your advisor/the dean's office. Regular attendance and minimal participation will yield a class attendance grade of a 3.0 (B). Regular and engaged participation will increase that grade upwards, and patterned absences will decrease that grade. Basically, everyone will start out with a B. What you do with that B is your responsibility. Unexcused absences will result in a lowering of the B. Active participation will be assessed on the basis of volunteering thoughtful answers on a regular basis, and passive participation as merely being there, taking notes, and looking attentive. And the “looking attentive” is key here—please do not fall asleep in my class. Even in a larger introductory class, it is very hard to hide and sleep. I understand that you might not be feeling well or had a very late night, but if you are sleepy before class, please grab a cup of coffee. Students who come to class but sleep do not get credit for class attendance—sleeping in class will earn you an unexcused absence.

Lunch during class: Given the meeting time of this class, I am more than happy to have students bring their lunch to class as long as you are not overly distracted by your food. I will not excuse late arrival because the lunch line was long, so make sure you plan ahead.

Students who miss an in-class activity due to an excused absence will not get credit for the assignment but will not be penalized. Often, the in-class activities cannot be “made up” outside of class time, but you will be responsible for knowing what we did in class in case it is referenced in future classes. You will lose the designated points for the assignment which means that your other remaining assignments will count more towards your final grade. For example, if the total of all in-class activities ends up counting for a total of 200 points, but you missed an activity due to an excused absence that was worth 20 points, and your total points earned was 160 points, your final grade for class activities will be scored as 160/180 instead of 160/200. If you, however, miss an in-class activity due to an unexcused absence, you will earn a zero for that class activity and as noted above, you will not be able to “make up” the lost points. We often do in-class activities since I believe this creates a more dynamic learning environment.

Students who miss a class are responsible for getting notes and copies of handouts from a fellow student. I advise that every student find a partner(s) in the class that will share notes and collect handouts for them when they have an anticipated or unanticipated absence. I will not be responsible for collecting or keeping track of handouts for students who miss class, nor will every handout be scanned and posted on Blackboard. You must also collect the notes and review the material covered in class before you ask me “what did I miss the other day when I was not here.” I am not responsible for repeating one of my lectures in a private session with students who miss class. While I am happy to review material that students do not understand during office hours, you must review the material before you schedule a meeting. Do not wait until a couple of weeks have passed before you realize that you are missing certain key handouts necessary to complete an essay or assignment—trying to track down handouts a few weeks down the road can be a nightmare.

In addition to expecting regular class attendance, I also expect students to arrive to class “on time.” Patterned late arrivals will also be penalized. Being a commuter, I understand the challenges associated with traffic, accidents and other unanticipated delays, but it is your obligation to arrive to class on time. If you are commuting from South Campus, I understand that the shuttle system may be a nightmare, but you need to catch the earlier bus if there is a chance that the shuttle might be a few minutes late getting up to North Campus. Again, I understand that “stuff happens” and you may “every now and then” arrive late, but it cannot be a regular pattern. You would not regularly arrive late for a job (it would not be tolerated by your employer and you would eventually be fired). Think of your college career as one of your current jobs. If you are late, however, come into the classroom as soon as you do get to PPHAC. Do not wait outside the class for some optimum time to enter as all this will do is make you miss more of the class instruction. Quietly and unobtrusively enter the classroom and take a seat.

Cheating/plagiarizing: If any student is caught plagiarizing, you will automatically fail the class. If there are any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please review drafts of your

assignments with me. Please also see Moravian College's Academic Honesty policy (on the website) to review the institution's definitions of cheating and plagiarism. Plagiarism is easier to recognize than you might think—I have caught a number of students in the past.

Due Dates and Formatting:

Due dates will be spread out over the course of the semester, but I like to maintain some flexibility in order to accommodate a variety of variables such as diversion from the lecture series, bad weather, illness, etc. Papers will be assigned when we have sufficiently covered the material that will be reviewed/discussed in the short papers. I know this might be frustrating for students who really like fixed due dates, but “real life” demands flexibility.

I expect **assignments to be handed in on time**, on the day that they are due. Late assignments will be docked one full grade for each day that they are late. So an “A-quality” assignment that was due on Tuesday that is handed in on Wednesday will drop to a “B.” If handed in on Thursday, the grade will drop to a “C.” A “D-quality” assignment handed in late is an F. I know students occasionally run into computer/printer problems, and if you are in this situation, email me as soon as possible. If you are having a printer problem, you can send me your assignment as an attachment so that you can still get credit for handing the assignment in on time. I do not have much sympathy for students who wait until a few minutes before class begins to print up their assignment and then discover that they are having trouble. So try to make it part of your schedule that you will finish and print up your assignments at least the night before the assignment is due. This way, you will have time to either solve your problem or contact me.

I also expect assignments to follow whatever **formatting and page instructions** given when the assignment is assigned. For example, if I assign an essay question that I suspect will take at least two pages to answer, I expect a full two pages of writing will constitute your response. This is two pages, word processed, double-space, one inch margins, Calibri, 12-point font, without additional spaces between your name and date at the top of the page, and between the title of your essay. Assignments that fall short of the page requirement will automatically lose points.

More details on classroom behavior:

Recording Devices:

Students have my permission to use audio recording devices in class. I know some students like to use these devices in order to review lecture notes, so this statement serves as my “informed consent” to be taped.

Cell phone, texting, email, web surfing: I expect that students will NOT be using their cell phones, texting, sending emails or web surfing during class time. Students who are caught engaged in any of these activities will immediately lose **one full grade** of their class participation grade (i.e. a B will drop to a C). If you engage in this behavior multiple times, then getting caught a mere three times in the course of a semester will earn you an F for class

participation. For students who take notes on laptops, I know the temptation to check your Facebook page, or answer a few emails during what you might think is a less interesting part of my lecture may be overwhelmingly tempting, but please resist the urge. You may think you are pretty good at hiding this activity from me, but it is actually fairly easy to tell when a student is engaged in other activities. Sometimes your neighbor actually gives you away, so why you are making sure to keep looking up at me, your neighbor might get very interested in looking at your newly posted profile picture. So best just not to do it, so matter how good you think you are at it. And even if you think you might be so good, I will not necessarily confront you in class if I catch you. I will merely dock your class participation grade and you will not be aware of the penalty until the end of the semester.

There are some circumstances under which I will allow students to take a phone call or surf the web during class.

Phone calls: I know some students occasionally have family, work and/or personal obligations that may need their immediate attention. For example, there may be students who have a sick child at home and need to be reachable during class time in case there is an emergency. If you find yourself in this kind of situation, please contact me before class via email or approach me at the beginning of class. I will expect your phone to be on vibrate, but I will allow you to leave the room to take the call.

“Facilities” Break: I have had the experience of students regularly leaving class for what I can only assume is a “bathroom” break, leaving class for a few minutes during basically every class period. Unless there is an underlying medical issue, I do think it is necessary for students to regularly leave the class for what is only a one-hour ten-minute class period. If you need to use the facilities, please make sure you make your visit before the beginning of class. If you do have some underlying medical condition that requires you to regularly leave class, then please make sure I get a note from disabilities support (see contact information below). If I do not get official notification from disabilities support, then the regular bathroom break will be considered a series of “unexcused” absences and will result in a lowering of your class attendance grade. I have absolutely no problem with an occasional bathroom visit, but please limit your visits.

Web surfing: Sometimes a class activity might actually involve searching the web for resource materials. In this case, I may ask students with laptops to help search for a piece of data or reference during class. But I will expect that students will be searching for the task assigned and not looking up newly posted videos.

In-class Activities/Quizzes/Short Assignments: We will have a number of **in-class activities/quizzes** throughout the semester—this is another reason why regular class attendance is so important. These activities will help to solidify the concepts of the course. There will also be **sporadic short out-of-class activities**. These two kinds of assignments will constitute the short assignment/quizzes grade. I expect people to keep up with the readings for the class, otherwise you will not be able to successfully complete the in-class activities.

If I suspect that students are not keeping up with the readings (this suspicion arises when the professor asks a question about the reading and no one responds...), I have the habit of distributing **pop quizzes**. I do not think that pop quizzes are “unfair, unjust!” They are just one tool to help keep you on track and to help cement the concepts. I would like to treat you like college students, so please make sure that you keep up with the work and I will not feel compelled to give pop quizzes.

Breakdown of grade:

Class attendance and participation: 15%

Short assignments/quizzes: 35%

Short papers: 50%

I understand that students sometimes need to “get up to speed” with their work, especially in an introductory class where you are learning a new paradigm. Because of this, it is my policy to weight the later short papers more than the earlier paper. So, for example, if you write four short essays for this class, than each essay would logically be worth 12.5% of your total grade since $4 \times 12.5 = 50$. But the first essay where you earned a B- might actually only be worth 8% and the final paper where you earned an A- might be worth 22% since by the end of the semester, I think your writing will typically only get better.

Since you have the grade distribution points defined above, at any point of the semester, you can calculate your grade. You would just use the following formula:

$0.15 * X1$ (average class attendance and participation grade) + $0.35 * X2$ (average short assignment/quizzes grade) + $0.50 * X3$ (average short paper grade) = average for class

The class attendance and participation grade will be assigned on a 0.0-4.0 scale.

The short assignment/quizzes grade will be recorded as a percent of points earned over total possible points.

The short paper grade will be on a 0.0-4.0 scale.

This is basic math with a few minor conversions, so I will trust everyone will be able to do this! You can ask me about your class attendance/participation grade if you are unsure how you stand.

Professor/Student dialogue: I highly value good communication between us, and I therefore encourage you to contact me at any time in the semester to talk about the class in general or your individual performance. Few things are as frustrating for me then to get to the end of the semester to find out someone struggled with some aspect of the course (for example, understanding the assignments!). If you do not understand some aspect of the course material, or my assignment instructions, then please send me an email, call, or stop by my office hours. I am more than willing to read and respond to drafts of your work, so please take me up on my

offer to read work before final due dates. I typically ask for at least one week to turn work around.

Blackboard and Email: Moravian College recognizes email as a form of official communication between faculty and students and I will use both Blackboard and email as a communication device. I will occasionally send out a message for you to take a look at an article online, or check a new posting on Blackboard before the next class. Therefore it is your obligation to regularly check your email account for messages from me. You should check your email accounts at least once a day. Failure to complete an assignment/request because “I did not see your email—I did not check my account,” will not suffice as a legitimate excuse.

Students with Disabilities:

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1401. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

I. A Review of Basic Sociological Conceptual Frameworks and Early Work with Using Your Sociological Imagination

Week 1: Review of Class Syllabus and Basic Frameworks of the field of Sociology

How do sociologists use the concepts of structure, function and culture?

- Writing Tips for Sociologists

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 1: The Sociological Imagination

Chapter 4: Social Structure

Begin reading Signs of War and Peace.

Week 2 and 3: Review of some of the classical theorists

We will review a very concise history of human societies, from hunter-gathers to modern capitalist systems.

- first sociology essay description

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 3: Social Interaction

Week 4: Methodology

What are the major methodologies of the field of sociology? We will review the different forms. **Quantitative and Qualitative Methodology:** How the two forms are in dialogue with one another.

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 2: Studying the Social World

You should be about halfway through Signs of War and Peace.

First essay due.

Week 5: Culture, Socialization and the Construction of Reality

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 5: Culture, Media and Communication

Chapter 15: Education

Chapter 16: Crime, Deviance and Social Control

- commercial assignment description

Week 6: Social Institutions

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 6: Power and Politics

Chapter 7: Markets, Organizations and Work

Chapter 8: Cities and Communities

Commercial assignment due.

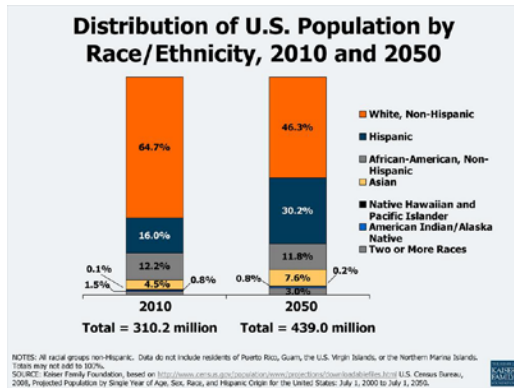
II. Conceptual Categories—Classic Variables

Week 7: Race

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 10: Race and Ethnicity

Chapter 12: Immigration



Week 8: Class

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 9: Social Stratification, Inequality and Poverty
 Finish reading Signs of War and Peace.

Week 9: Gender

The Sociology Project

Chapter 11: Gender and Sexuality

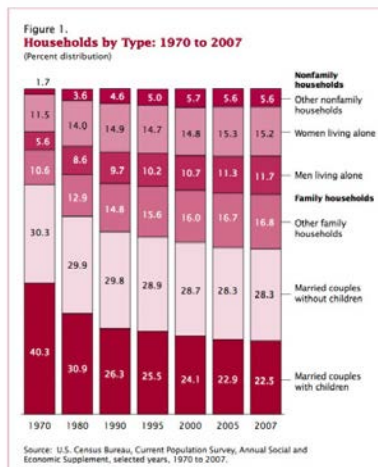
Essay on Signs of War and Peace due.

Week 10: The Family: Agent of Socialization, Changing Institution

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 13: Families and Family Life

- **Marriage wanes as American families enter new century, University of Chicago research shows**

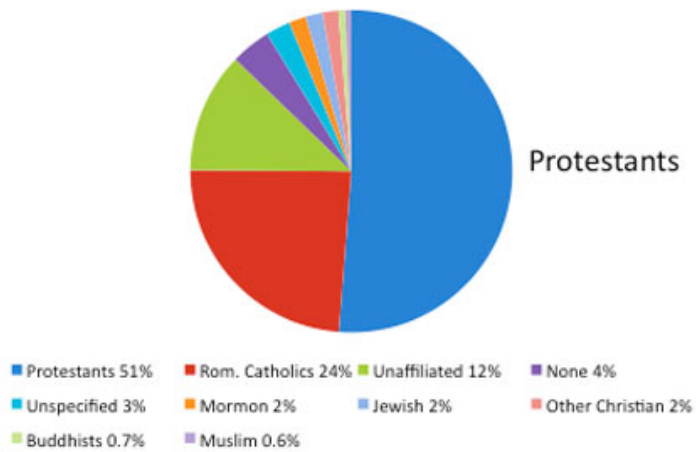


Week 11: Religion

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 14: Sociology of Religion

US Percentage of Major Religions: Ranked in Descending Order Clockwise



2008

III. How Do Societies Change?

Week 12: Forces of Social Change

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 17: Social Movements and Revolutions

Chapter 18: Environmental Sociology

Social experiment essay due.

Week 13: Global Dynamics and Aging Populations

The Sociology Project:

Chapter 19: Population, Aging and Health

Chapter 20: Globalization

Week 14: Review and Preparation for Final Essay