

Kennesaw State University – Fall 2015

Introduction to Sociology – Online Class

SOCI 1101- W02
CRN 81271

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Questions about the class should be addressed in D2L

Required Text:

The course uses one major textbook: Sociology: A Global Perspective, by Joan Ferrante, 8th Edition.

Everyone in the course is required to have a copy of this text. You can find it at the book store on campus as well as on Amazon.com or abebooks.com

Read the syllabus entirely and mark your calendar accordingly.

Course Content Description

Are humans really free? What holds society together? Why does inequality exist? How do social movements begin? These are but a few of the many types of questions that sociologists seek to answer. In this course we will learn about the concepts, theories, and methods that sociologists use in their struggle to understand social groups, culture, social stratification, and social institutions. At the conclusion of this course you should be able to (1) define important sociological concepts; (2) describe major sociological perspectives and theories; (3) explain the importance of social class, race/ethnicity, gender, and religion in structuring our material and social lives; and (4) critically analyze the way social structures and social interaction create, maintain, and change social behavior. The sociological insight you gain from this course will help you choose the best course of action when faced with complex and difficult social and political decisions in this rapidly changing world.

Learning Objectives

This is a broad and introductory course with several broad and general objectives:

1. Students will become familiar with the broad themes of the discipline of Sociology. This will be measured by assessments [exams] that test comprehension of major themes and terms in each chapter.
2. Students will engage and interpret the course chapters and themes by participating in discussion forums for each chapter specified in the syllabus, and by preparing for the two examinations scheduled at the end of each module.
3. Students will translate the primary Sociological theories, methods and themes into their real life by expressing how these relate to themselves in the discussion threads.
4. Students will develop their communication and critical thinking skills by actively participating in discussion forums for each chapter and practicing responsible and civil engagement of complex, varied and sometimes controversial issues. Communication skills will also be developed by careful consideration of key terms, comparisons and contrasts framed in the multiple choice questions on the exams.
5. Students will reflect on each chapter and determine what they need to understand better, what they do or do not agree with, and what questions they wish to ask. These will all be reflected in the discussion forums, and will give students a chance to clarify information and concepts before each exam.
6. Students will learn to articulate a position on an issue and support it by evaluating evidence relevant to the position, considering opposing positions or evidence, and documenting sources according to convention.

Minimum Technology Requirement

Course Strategies and Methods

This is an entirely online course and will be conducted entirely through D2L. You will begin by logging in here:

<https://kennesaw.view.usg.edu/>

Students are expected to have the necessary computer background to work in this format, and are advised to seek additional technical assistance from computer services if needed [See *Student Resource Links Page* in *Start Here-Welcome Documents* Module]. Students will be expected to read each assigned chapter carefully, and then to use the linked PowerPoint presentations and Chapter Objectives under each module, as review material. The reading schedule is not “written in stone” but we will advance largely according to the schedule specified at the end of the syllabus.

Communication

The **D2L-based e-mail** and the **News** feature (in D2L) will be our forms of communication. I will often post under News important updates and general comments, so please make sure you always check the course homepage.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings. Your main readings will come from the textbook book though other hands- outs may be uploaded in D2L as PDF files for some chapters - so make sure you check under Content to cover all readings for the week.

(1)General Board Participation (10%).

For each weekly topic students will be expected to make at least 1 substantive dialogue contribution to ongoing discussions that will occur on discussion boards.

The topics are grouped together into 3 modules of several chapters each. As you can see in the schedule below, after Module 1 there will be a Quiz, after Module 2 - a Midterm and after Module 3, the Final. Questions will be multiple-choice but the Final may include an essay.

How it works:

1.Introduce yourselves. The first participation will be Student Introductions, the Discussion Thread for which will be found in **Start Here - Welcome Documents**. Instructions will be found at the top of the Discussion Thread, and this will take the place of the typical in-class go-around introductions. Also, please make sure you add a picture to your profile. I will be delighted to have a chance to attach a face to the name! ☺

2.Participation on discussion boards. Students are required to participate in the discussion threads for each chapter as we proceed through the syllabus, **with the very minimum of one post per chapter, and more strongly encouraged.** This is the best way for you to ask questions, make comments, clarify notions, and demonstrate that you have read, understood and taken interest in the chapters. The discussions will be multi- directional: *student-student* (agree/disagree, add, clarify, ask related question, critique) *student-content* (share understanding of readings, ask questions, critique, add) *student- instructor* (answer/ask questions, critique, agree, etc) and *instructor-student* (general key posts, reply to specific posts, etc).

From past experience, more than 1000 postings will likely be made by students during our term. As such, **the instructor will reply to about 10-20% of the total postings**, often engaging a whole thread at one time.

The last date when you can post your response to the weekly question(s) is Friday midnight.

At all times, we will attempt to stick to the readings schedule specified on the last page of this syllabus. However, the instructor will often post in retrospective. This is to allow all students to finish their posts for the week and to provide summary replies/responses in accordance to the needs of the class. Therefore, students are encouraged to visit back on recent boards for feed-back. This will sometimes be provided as replies from the instructors, brief audio commentaries or brief videos with clarifications.

3. Instructor's posts (as well as Discussion Board Leaders' posts - as explained further below) are mandatory reading. While I allow for the possibility that you may skip some other posts, Instructor's and Discussion Leaders' posts are **mandatory** reading each time. This is how the instructor will guide and facilitate student learning. This is similar to lecturing, clarifying concepts or moderating discussions in live, face-to-face classes. It is the nature of an online class that students end up a bit more "on their own" than it might be the case for a traditional, face-to-face class. This is my way of ensuring that students are not left with unaddressed issues or misunderstood, disconnected, erroneous or disorganized knowledge.

4. *Content of posts.* The instructor is more interested in the *content and substance* of your comments, than their length. In fact, long postings should generally be avoided, as it is expected that everyone in the class will read all the postings as they develop into a large group conversation.

Basic grammar should be taken into account; spell checking and proof reading are mandatory. If needed, consult the Writing Center [see: Links Page in Welcome Module] for assistance with writing. The instructor will qualitatively evaluate students' posts throughout the semester based on the degree to which posts reflect a thorough and accurate understanding of the issues discussed. The instructor will evaluate your discussion postings for:

- consistency of engagement,
- depth of commentary (superficial posts with simplistic arguments will be graded less).
- logic
- evidence that the student has an accurate grasp of the sociological concepts studied
- engagement with chapter concepts
- engagement with other students in the discussions!!

Regarding the latter criterium, **students should write at least one post in reply to the thread started by one of the "Board Leaders" of the week** (details further below, under the "Real World" Discussion Leader requirement). If you only post one time on a board, make sure it is in response to one of the Leaders' threads!

When your time comes to act as a Discussion Leader you will definitely want your colleagues to engage, so do the same for them. Make sure your reply brings further substance to the conversation and is not reduced to something along the lines of "*I agree with Jenny, she makes a good point*". That kind of post will NOT count. You will need to explain why you agree with Jenny and add more arguments in support of what she said.

Finally, DO NOT give boring titles to your posts and do not simply summarize what the book said. Avoid titles like "Ch 2" or a mere summary, as nobody will be interested in reading what you have to say, let alone posting a reply. Choose some attention-grabbing titles that will prove you are trying to make an interesting point related to the readings and will entice colleagues into the conversation.

5. *Sociological, NOT psychological, perspective!!*

Students are required to address issues from a sociological perspective; mere talk about personal feelings or random anecdotes, without placing such example in sociological context or linking them to sociological themes/ theories, will not be good enough for a maximum score on participation

6. *Statistics.* At the end of the course, the instructor will get statistics for how many postings each student read, how many posts were made, and how many hours the student spent on the site. These statistics combined with the general content of your post will be used to determine an overall “Board Participation” grade.

7. *Impact on final grade.* A total of 10% of your grade will be determined by the online course participation as a partial measure of individual work on the readings.

8. *Board interaction guidelines.*

Critical thinking is highly advisable. Questions are encouraged. Polite disagreements are fine. However:

- a. *Respect is a basic necessity in all online interactions.* When critiquing a theory, point of view, etc., the arguments must be sound, well-reasoned, logical (or based on evidence) and respectful. DO differentiate between critiquing an idea (which is not only fine, but also advisable) and ad-hominem attacks! The latter means attacking the person who expressed a point of view you tend to disagree with.
- b. *Language and tone are important.* According to KSU Computer Usage Policy and Guidelines [www.kennesaw.edu/infosec] you may not employ lewd or threatening language in any electronic communication. This would violate the bounds of good taste as well as laws and regulations. Please see the Etiquette Statement in the Welcome Module for a more detailed discussion.

(2) “Real World” Discussion Board Leader (20%)

Each student will get a chance to act as a Discussion Board Leader one time during this semester. A list with time slots, topics and Discussion Leaders will be uploaded under the Module Syllabus and Other Guide Lines right after the Drop/Add period.

Each week, Discussion Board Leaders, usually 2-4 students, will communicate with each other in advance and choose a relatively current (five years old at the most) article from a reputable news source. Then they will analyze it on the board by starting a new thread. Alternatively, the leaders can provide a link to a video material, whether in the form of a documentary (ideally not too long), news piece, etc. The article/video should address a significant social issue relevant to the concepts of the week. Good source choices can be New York Times, Newsweek, Time Magazine, US News, World Report, etc.

In their main post, which will have to take the form of an essay/reflection paper, the discussion board leaders will:

- a. Provide a very brief summary of the article (say what it is about in no more than a few

lines) and provide a link to it.

Only one of the DLs will post the material and the summary but the others should have agreed upon the article and the summary in advance. **This means that you are a team and you have to communicate with each other before the moment when you have to post your material.**

- b. Each DL has to address at least one question posed by the instructor and explain how the article they chose is related to some of the concept/theories of the week, as well as the questions the instructor asked. DLs must draw some clear links between the ideas/concepts we study that week and the “real world” situation highlighted by the article you chose as a Discussion Board Leaders. Ask yourselves: how can the ideas/theories of the week apply to the social issue presented in the article? **It is very important that you emphasize how the theories of the week are relevant to the topic of the article.**
- c. On the boards, each DL has to encourage the class to engage in a critical dialogue by formulating an argument and asking questions of their own. By critical dialogue I mean the ability to engage in a conversation in which you might disagree with your colleagues without resorting to attacks. When critiquing a certain point of view, the arguments must be sound, well-reasoned (or based on evidence) and respectful.
- d. Discussion leaders will title their main/first post using Capital letters like this: **DL – TITLE.....**Use lower case letters to title all other posts.

In sum:

Each DL will have to answer to at least one of the instructor’s questions and must reply to at least 4 posts made by fellow students, including other discussion leaders.

This means that during the week when the student is DL, he/ she must have at least 5 posts.

**The due date for the Discussion Leader’s main post is Tuesday of the week in question!!!
Prepare your main posts in advance!**

That means EARLY - so that the class will have enough time to engage in the discussions you will be starting. Everybody else’s posts will not be due until the end of the week (Friday midnight).

The week during which a student will be designated to act as Discussion Board Leader is NOT negotiable! If your brother’s wedding happens to be during that week you will just have to make it work. ☺ This is because it is hard for the instructor to reconcile so many requests for specific weeks.

(3) Exam Schedule and Format

a. Strategy

Please make a note of the exam schedule and plan accordingly. Exams are essentially open book; students can take them wherever they can log on to a high-speed computer. But study and preparation are necessary because the exams are *timed* and the clock starts as soon as you begin, so there will not be time to look up answers. You must be prepared in advance to do well on the tests. The Quiz will have approximately 25 questions (allotted time 30 minutes) and the exams will have approximately 50 questions (multiple-choice format) with an allotted time of 90 minutes. The questions asked in exams will primarily cover the major issues and concepts covered in the text, lectures notes and on the discussion boards. The Midterm will provide feedback for students as the course gets underway.

b. Exam Study Assistance and Study Guides

To help you prepare for exams, the textbook comes packaged with a Study Guide. It also has a useful companion website with glossary and a host of exercises to help you study. Use these aids extensively when preparing for exams. However, for every exam, your best study guide will be the CORE CONCEPTS in each chapter. I will also provide a brief Study Guide before the exam to make sure you pay close attention to specific concepts that are likely to be on the exam but I do not recommend you rely strictly on this guide.

(4) Extra-Credit

I will offer only one extra-credit opportunity for those of you who will want to excel in this class. The assignment will consist of reading a book titled “**Amusing ourselves to death**” by Neil Postman. You are strongly advised to start reading this book early on semester so you will have enough time to digest it over the next 15 weeks. Realizing that you need extra points to your Final Grade at the last minute and starting to read the book a night before the extra-credit assignment is due will not work in this case.

You will write a book review in which you will have to demonstrate that you read, understood and critically reflected on the book’s overall message. You will submit the paper in Dropbox. The requirements for the book review will be posted on D2L under the module **Syllabus and Other Guidelines**.

This reading assignment is entirely optional and it will be the only extra-credit opportunity available in this class. It will add a maximum of 4 points to your final grade.

Disabled Student Services Statement

Kennesaw State University welcomes all students, recognizing that variations of abilities contribute to a richly diverse campus life. A number of services are available to help students with disabilities with their academic work. In order to make arrangements for special services, students should visit the disabled Student Support Services office and/or make an appointment to arrange an individual assistance plan. For more information, visit the office's website at: http://www.kennesaw.edu/stu_dev/dsss/dsss.html, or navigate to the Links Page in my

Welcome Documents on the course's homepage. Please also feel free to contact the instructor directly with any questions or concerns you may have, using the WebCT email platform.

Website Links

Item 6 in the Welcome Documents Folder on the course's homepage is a list of useful links you may refer to throughout the semester. These include links to: Disabled Student Services, the Department of Sociology, KSU Financial Aid, the Counseling Center [CAPS], computer Tech Support, the Writing Center, KSU's Student Code of Conduct, and the Student Development Center.

Grading Formula

- 10% General Board Participation
- 20% Discussion Leader Assignment
- 20% Quiz
- 25% Midterm
- 25% Final

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE – may change over the semester

* MODULE 1 *		
WEEK / DATE	READING	TOPIC
01/17-23 Aug		Introduction – Introduce yourself Syllabus – read it carefully
02 /24-30 Aug	Chapter 1	The Sociological Imagination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is sociology, what do sociologists do? • Having a “sociological imagination”. • Social Structure and Individual Agency: the eternal interplay • Founding Fathers of Sociology - and what prompted them to found this discipline in the first place.
03 / 31-6 Sept	Chapter 2	Theoretical Perspectives and Methods of Social Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociological theories: Different ways of looking at society. • Methods of research: How do sociologists know what they know?
04 / 7-13 Sept	Chapter 5	Social Interaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A social animal: solidarity and “the ties that bind”

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status and roles: Who's who and who does what? • Social life is a "theater" 	
05/14-20 Sept	Chapter 3	<p style="text-align: center;">Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How culture shapes us and our social lives. • Elements of culture • What does the contemporary American culture look like? How is it different from that of previous generations? 	
06 /21-27 Sept	Chapter 7	<p style="text-align: center;">Deviance, Conformity and Social Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialization as a means of social control: • Why do most people conform? • When socialization fails: Why do some people deviate from norms? • Labeling theory; Structural Strain theory 	
07/28-4 Oct	MODULE REVIEW	Quiz – Friday, Oct. 2nd	
*	MODULE 2		*
08 /05-11 Oct	Chapter 6	<p style="text-align: center;">Formal Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups and organizations • Bureaucracy • Rationalization and the McDonaldization of society 	
09 /12-18 Oct	Chapter 8	<p style="text-align: center;">Social Stratification I (Class): A Hierarchical Animal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stratification systems • Theories of stratification/inequality • What is "class"? • Social Mobility and the American Dream 	
10 /19-25 Oct	Chapter 9	<p style="text-align: center;">Race and Ethnicity (Social Stratification II)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism, Prejudice, Discrimination • Minority groups • Immigration in a diverse society: Melting Pot, Salad Bowl or Pressure Cooker? 	
11/26-01 Nov	Chapter 10	<p style="text-align: center;">Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The social construction of sex differences • Is Biology Destiny?: Sociobiological interpretations of gender • Social Construction of Gender • Patriarchy, Feminism 	
12/02-08 Nov	MODULE REVIEW	MIDTERM EXAM – Friday, Nov. 6th	

* MODULE 3 *		
13/09-15 Nov	Chapter 12	<p style="text-align: center;">Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the oldest social institution breaking down or merely changing? • Family structure, family functions. • Historical Changes in family structure: the traditional extended family; the modern- nuclear breadwinner system; the contemporary dual-earner family.
14 /16-22 Nov	Chapter 11	<p style="text-align: center;">Economics and Politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological revolutions and changes in economic systems • Modern economic systems: capitalism and socialism as “ideal-types”. • World-systems theory and “The Story of Stuff”
15/23-29 Nov		FALL BREAK ☺
16 /30-06 Dec	Chapter 16	<p style="text-align: center;">Social Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does society change if social structures are so rigid? • Changes since 1700’s and the Transition to Modernity - the most dramatic social change to date
17 /07-13 Dec	Module Review	FINAL EXAM – Friday, Dec.11th

The instructor reserves the right to bring modifications to this syllabus as necessary, at any point during the semester.

