

**Department:** Sociology

**Course No:** 107/W

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Introduction to Sociology

**Contact:** Bradley Wright

**Content Area:** CA2-Social Sciences

**WQ:** Writing

**Catalog Copy:** 107/W. Introduction to Sociology. Prerequisite: Engl 110 or 111 or 250.

**Course Information:** 1a. The course is designed to provide students with an introduction to the study of society, focusing on contemporary society. Particular attention is devoted to an analysis of social institutions and social roles, and the forces that are producing change in both.

1b. The course typically requires a textbook and supplementary text, and students are expected to read chapters each week. A midterm and final examination are standard, though some sections also require papers, and some have more than two examinations. The examinations are usually a combination of objective (i.e., multiple choice) and essay questions.

1c. Major themes include changes in: the place of religion in society, the form of contemporary families, patterns of crime and deviant behavior, the roles of gender, race, and ethnicity.

### Meets Goals of Gen Ed:

1. Acquire awareness of the era and society. This course provides a systematic overview of the contemporary social institutions that influence everybody's everyday life, providing students with a greater appreciation of the forces that shape their social world. American society is also examined in historical and comparative perspective, further increasing students' awareness of the distinctive and university features of our society. This also contributes to the next point:
2. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience. The comparative and historical approach to the institutions and roles of contemporary American society makes students aware of society variability, and also explains systematically what accounts for the variability among societies. Both #1 and #2 contribute to:
3. Acquire critical judgment. Logical and perceptive reasoning requires an awareness and understanding of one's assumptions and premises. In the social realm, this entails an ability to appreciate the distinctiveness of one's roles and experiences, take their effects into account, and consider one's social arrangements that one has not directly encountered.

### CA2 Criteria:

1. The course will introduce students to the major theorists whose writings have shaped the modern field of sociology: This notably includes Durkheim, Marx, and Weber. Much of the course deals with applications of these theorists' major concepts, including anomie, the division of labor, class consciousness, exploitation, rationality, and legitimization.
2. The course provides an overview of the major methods of sociological research: Experiments, field research, and sample surveys. The class will examine the ethical problems associated with each of the major methods, including subjects' informed consent, confidentiality, and value neutrality.
3. The core topics of this course examine the behavior of individuals and groups, how people's roles are shaped by institutions and in turn shape these institutions. The theoretical framework focuses upon interaction and influence, among people, groups, and other associations.
4. The theories, methods, and literature surveys provided by the course enhance students' abilities to analyze both local and intermediate groups, as well as larger and more exclusive collectivities. Issues related to race, class, and gender are examined.

**W Criteria:** 1. There are three learning objectives in this course: (1) students should understand and be able to apply theoretical and empirical tools introduced in the course to understand and evaluate sociological theories and research; (2) students should gain substantive knowledge of predominant sociological theories, and specifically should be able to critically analyze each theory's major concepts, assumptions, and claims about the social world; (3) students should gain a basic understanding of the basic social institutions, structures, and processes of society, and specifically should be able to critically analyze these. The writing component of this class is key in meeting these objectives as it requires students to explore and evaluate an aspect of sociology.

Students are required to write a paper (minimum 15 pages) analyzing a recent book presenting original research on some aspect of society [book selection varies by semester]. In the paper, students must explain the significance of the research for the field, summarize the author's arguments and research findings, and then critically analyze the content of the book by applying the theoretical perspectives, methodological principles, and empirical "facts" about society learned in class. The paper counts for 33% of the course grade and must be passed in order to pass the course (as stipulated in the syllabus).

Additional written work is required of students in the course, including approximately 15 short in-class essay quizzes that focus on comprehension of material in the readings (33% of course grade) and essay questions on the final exam (33% of course grade).

2. There are three modes of writing instruction employed in the course. First, early in the semester, the instructor provides formal instruction to the class regarding the requirements of the paper assignment, desired structure of the paper, and how to avoid common mistakes in academic writing (e.g., the use of passive voice, contractions, sentence structure). Second, students are required to turn in a complete, initial draft of their paper between weeks 8 and 10 of the semester. The instructor provides detailed written commentary on each student's initial draft focusing on mechanics (e.g., grammar, clarity, organization) and analytic quality (e.g., accurate comprehension of theory and research, creative application of theories from class). As well, the instructor provides in-class discussion of common problems evidenced in the students' initial drafts. Finally, the instructor actively encourages students to take advantage of one-on-one writing assistance during office hours, via email, and during appointments scheduled at the student's request.

3. All students must turn in a revised, final draft of their paper. For the revision, students are required to address all of the instructor's comments made on the initial draft (clearly stipulated in the syllabus as one criterion for grading). To ensure students fully address these comments in their revision, they are required to turn in a copy of the initial draft that includes the instructor's commentary along with their

final draft. Students' grade on the final draft reflects the analytic and creative quality of the substance of the paper, writing mechanics (e.g., grammar, clarity, organization), and the extent to which students successfully addressed the instructor's comments on the initial draft.

**Role of Grad Students:** Under the supervision of the teaching faculty member, graduate teaching assistants teach discussion sessions that meet once per week. Graduate teaching assistants also meet with the teaching faculty member.