

# SOCIOLOGY 10002: UNDERSTANDING SOCIETIES - Fall 2015

Dr. Christian Smith (Flanner Hall 816) ([chris.smith@nd.edu](mailto:chris.smith@nd.edu) - *feel free to contact me, I like students*)

Office Hours: by appointment with the professor (email to set up)

Class Meeting: MWF 10:30-11:20, DeBartolo 136

Grad TA: Katie Comeau ([Katherine.R.Comeau.7@nd.edu](mailto:Katherine.R.Comeau.7@nd.edu))

Office hours: Flanner Hall 820, Mondays 8:45-10:45AM

## Course Description

What does it mean that humans are *social* creatures and how does that influence people's personal life experiences and outcomes? How and why do people together create and sustain cultures, groups, institutions, and organizations? And how do those shape people's relationships, actions, and life experiences? This course introduces students to the sociological perspective as a way to better understand how personal behaviors and life outcomes are profoundly influenced by a variety of social structures, and how their actions in turn maintain and can transform those social structures. Course readings and discussions will focus on the power of social networks, the experience of community in modernity, emerging adult culture, inequality and poverty, and global religious movements.

A major course objective is to learn how to "*see*" and *think sociologically* about our lives and the world. This means cultivating in ourselves a "sociological imagination" through an investigation of culture and social structures, networks, institutions, and social change. We will focus on exploring different, *particular* social institutions, settings, and concepts to see how better understanding them can help us better understand human action, motivations, communities, institutions, and societies *generally*—which can then help us much better understand and explain our *own personal* lives and those of people around us. (Keep this interplay of particular-general-personal in mind.)

Along the way we will be asking ourselves questions like: What is the "glue" that holds society together? What is morality, where does it come from, and how does it affect our actions? In what sense are people really "free?" Why are there deviations from normal life? What or who determines what *is* "normal life?" How is life in modern society different from the past? Does modern society erode community? What social forces shape the personal experiences of 18-23 year olds in the U.S. today? Why do people tend to seek power and social status? How do differences in wealth and power shape the fate of people's lives? Why are some people poor? And so on. Those who apply themselves to wrestling with these kinds of issues and questions will discover how very interesting and important the sociological perspective is.

When you have successfully completed this course, you ought to be able to:

- (1) see and think sociologically about many kinds of social experiences, events, and problems;
- (2) better understand and explain how and why human social life works the way it does generally;
- (3) better understand how social influences profoundly shape people's lives and experiences (including your own);
- (4) contribute to informed discussions about important aspects of social reality in your own life, this country, and the world beyond;
- (5) go on to enjoy richer, better, fuller personal lives, with broadened horizons, greater self-understanding, more critical minds, improved communication abilities, and better understanding about life and the world.

## Required Readings

The books that you are required to read for this course are available for purchase in the ND Hammes Bookstore (note the specific page number assignments):

- Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler. 2009. *Connected: How your Friends' Friends' Friends Affect Everything You Feel, Think, and Do*. New York: Back Bay Books. Pp. 3-140, 156-164, 167-192, 287-305.
- Kai Erikson. 1978. *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. New York: Simon and Schuster. (entire)
- Stephen McNamee and Robert Miller. 2009. *The Meritocracy Myth* (3rd Ed.). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. (pp. 1-214, skip Ch 9).
- Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori. 2007. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (entire)
- Christian Smith et al. 2011. *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*. New York: Oxford University Press. (entire)

Also assigned are three articles/essays that the professor will distribute by email (all copyrighted materials are paid for by ND):

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. 1848. *The Communist Manifesto*. (selections, public domain)
- Christian Smith. 2010. "Emergence against Reductionism" (chapter excerpt, pp. 25-42, plus notes). From Smith. *What is a Person?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Susan Sprecher. 1998. "Social Exchange Theories and Sexuality." *The Journal of Sex Research* 35(1): 32-43.

The reading load is somewhat *uneven* over the course of the semester, varying by day and week. See the Course Schedule below for the specific required reading timetable.

## Evaluation

Grades for this class will be based on the following:

**1. Class Attendance & In-Class Writing Exercises:** Regular class attendance is expected and will be recorded. Constructive participation by students in class discussions will be looked upon favorably. On occasion we will do informal, in-class writing exercises in response to lecture and reading ideas. Participation in them will also affect final grades. Missing more than (an obviously legitimate) 1-2 *excused* classes during the semester (for being very ill, pressing doctor's appointments, family problems, etc.) *will count against one's final grade*. Students who miss no classes the entire semester will likely be rewarded. Students who are absent from classes are of course responsible themselves to get any handouts, lecture notes, or discussion or movie materials from any missed classes. The TA will inquire about the reasons of missed classes.

**2. Reading Quizzes:** There will be short, *announced* (the class or two before or by email) quizzes covering particular readings given at the beginning of class on days we will discuss those readings, in order to provide an incentive to complete the readings fully and on time, and to focus our attention for the discussions of the readings. The quizzes will cover basic ideas that anyone carefully reading and adequately comprehending the assigned readings should be able to understand and retain. Altogether, the quizzes are worth 20% of the final grade. Keep up with the assigned readings!

**3. Four Exams:** The first three exams will be given during the scheduled class meeting times of **September 16, October 9, and November 13**. The final exam is **Thursday, December 17, 4:15-6:15 pm**. Exams will cover all materials from class meetings and readings assigned for the time period covered, per the schedule below. Exams will consist of short-answer questions. The professor will distribute exam study guides beforehand to help you prepare well for them. Each exam will count for 20% of the final grade; altogether, the four exam count toward 80% of the final grade.

**Important Info re Exams:** *Students must take the exams at the times scheduled!* The *only* exceptions *might* be instances of *severe* illness or family tragedy, in which case the student must contact and make alternative arrangements with the TA or professor *before* the scheduled exam and officially document the extenuating circumstances. You may *not* simply skip an exam, then come afterwards and announce that you could not make the exam and want a make-up exam. *No after-the-fact exam make-ups will be given and missed exams will hurt one's final grade in a huge way. Consider yourself well warned about this!*

### **Final Grades**

Grades for the semester will be calculated and assigned based on the following distribution and scale:  
90-100% = A-, A ; 80-89% = B-, B, B+ ; 70-79% = C-, C, C+ ; 60-69% = D-, D, D+ ; <60% = Fail  
Note: The professor *never* gives extra-credit assignments. Don't even ask. Just do your very best the first time and live with the consequences.

### **TA Office Hours**

The TA will hold regular office hours during the week and make efforts to create conversation times otherwise. Please take advantage of this help when you have any questions about the readings or lectures, concerns about doing well in the course, need for clarifications, etc. If the TA is unable to help you or solve your problem, please contact Prof. Smith for a meeting, which he will be *very happy* to have with you. Do not hesitate to ask.

**Honor Code:** All provisions of the University Honor Code—which prohibits giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on graded course work—will be in effect for all exams and written assignments. You will be required on each exam to sign your name to the Honor Code. If you have *any* questions about the application of the Code in a specific situation, please talk with a TA or Prof. Smith beforehand. More generally, study ND's Honor Code information at: <http://www.nd.edu/~hnr/code/docs/index.htm>.

## Rules of the Road

During class, no (1) eating, (2) texting, (3) surfing the web, checking social networking websites, or checking email, or (4) leaving class before it's over.

*Re Arrival Time:* Come to class *on time* so that you will not miss important announcements and handouts, and so you will not disrupt a class that has already started.

*Re Departure Time:* Class is over when the professor says so. Leaving early is disruptive, so don't do it (at least without explaining to the professor beforehand why you must, if you must).

*Re Texting:* You cannot learn and text at the same time. You may NOT text during class. The TA will monitor for texting. Recurrent texters will have the class attendance part of their grades docked. More generally, consider whether communication technologies have taken over your life for the worse. It is healthy for you to turn off your devices sometimes, definitely during class.

*Re Cell Phones:* TURN THEM OFF BEFORE CLASS STARTS! Warning: If anyone's cell phone rings in class, I, your professor, hereby reserve the right to answer it and tell the caller that you are in class and please not to call during that time.

*Re Laptops:* You may use laptops to take notes, but NOT to check email, social networking sites, or to surf the web; non-class laptop activity often distracts others who are trying to learn, not to mention the laptop user. The TA will monitor laptop use. *Please report to the professor or TA after class anyone who may be bothering you with their inappropriate laptop use.* If students start abusing laptops in class, I will ban *all* laptops from class. But we are too mature for something like that to happen, right?

*Re Talking:* In class it can be difficult for your classmates to hear lectures with side conversations going on around the classroom, so please be respectful of others and the professor and do not have conversations during class-time.

## Suggestions for Success

1. If you develop any worries, confusion, frustrations, logistical difficulties, or other problems related to this course or your personal life, *please, please, please* talk to your TA or Professor Smith in time to take constructive action. We can help, and ND makes available various resources for different kinds of needs. If, for example, you suffer anxiety or become depressed about life, *please* talk to your TA and/or the professor and/or take advantage of the ND counseling services: <http://ucc.nd.edu/>. Address your problems and concerns *proactively* and *early*.

2. Two keys to success in academic work are: *planning* and *self-discipline* (conversely, the keys to failure are disorganization and laziness). *Planning* involves assessing your resources and goals for a given period of time and developing a realistic schedule and strategy for accomplishing your goals, given your resources. This means stepping back and organizing the big picture, rather than always and only focusing on whatever obligation confronts you next. Academic calendars/planners—in which you record all of your assignments, appointments, and deadlines—are essential. *Self-discipline* means exercising the willpower to overcome the laziness and inertia that would prevent us from carrying out what we have planned. Things don't just happen—we have to *make* them happen, and that usually requires that we discipline ourselves to work at them. Students who plan best and exercise the most self-discipline definitely not only learn most and get the best grades, but are also the ones who are freest to enjoy their extra-curricular activities—they get their work done early and efficiently, then go out to play with nothing hanging over their heads. Do that.

3. When reading, studying, and note-taking, always distinguish the *centrally important* issue or argument in the reading or lecture from the less-important details, facts, and other data that are meant to illustrate, support, or nuance the central issue or argument. The danger of not doing so is treating all material as equally important, becoming overwhelmed with information, and failing to see and grasp the major point. It's not that supporting details and illustrations are unimportant and can be disregarded, only that they should not be cognitively processed in a way that obscures the reading's or lecture's *main* argument. A helpful exercise here is to *try to summarize concisely the essential point of a reading or lecture in one or two sentences*. If you can't, something is wrong, and you probably need to go back and work at it more or change your approach. Talk to your TA about learning to do this.

# Course Schedule

## Assigned Readings

### **WEEK 1:**

AUG 26 – Syllabus, Orientation, House Rules  
AUG 28 – The Sociological Imagination

\* begin Smith *Lost*  
\* Smith *Lost* pp. 3-47

### **WEEK 2:**

AUG 31 – The Sociological Imagination  
SEPT 2 – Culture and Socialization  
SEPT 4 – Culture and Socialization

\* Smith *Lost* pp. 48-69  
\* Smith *Lost* pp. 70-109  
\* Smith *Lost* pp. 110-147

### **WEEK 3:**

SEPT 7 – Culture and Socialization  
SEPT 9 – Culture and Socialization  
SEPT 11 – Culture and Socialization

\* Smith *Lost* pp. 148-194  
\* Smith *Lost* pp. 195-225  
\* Smith *Lost* pp. 226-243

### **WEEK 4:**

SEPT 14 – Review and Discussion  
SEPT 16 – **EXAM #1**  
SEPT 18 – What Makes Social Life Work?

\* Finish and review Smith *Lost*  
\* Marx & Engels “Communist Manifesto” (entire)

### **WEEK 5:**

SEPT 21 – What Makes Social Life Work?  
SEPT 23 – What Makes Social Life Work?  
SEPT 25 – What Makes Social Life Work?

\* Sprecher “Social Exchange Theories” (entire)  
\* Christakis & Fowler *Connected* pp. 3-60  
\* Christakis & Fowler *Connected* pp. 61-94

### **WEEK 6:**

SEPT 28 – Social Relations, Networks, Institutions  
SEPT 30 – Social Relations, Networks, Institutions  
OCT 2 – Social Relations, Networks, Institutions

\* Christakis & Fowler *Connected* pp. 95-140 (skip 141-156)  
\* Christakis & Fowler *Connected* pp. 156-164, 167-171 (skip 165-166)  
\* Christakis & Fowler *Connected* pp. 172-192, 287-305 (skip 193-286)

### **WEEK 7:**

OCT 5 – Seven Crucial Concepts  
OCT 7 – Seven Crucial Concepts  
OCT 9 – **EXAM #2**

\* Smith “Emergence of Personhood” chapter excerpt (entire pdf)  
\* Finish and review readings

### **WEEK 8:**

OCT 12 – Modernity  
OCT 14 – Modernity  
OCT 16 – Modernity

\* Erikson *Everything* pp. i-50  
\* Erikson *Everything* pp. 51-93  
\* Erikson *Everything* pp. 94-134

## ➤ **FALL BREAK**

### **WEEK 9:**

OCT 26 – Multiple Modernities  
OCT 28 – Postmodernism/Postmodernity  
OCT 30 – Postmodernism/Postmodernity

\* Erikson *Everything* pp. 135-185  
\* Erikson *Everything* pp. 186-229  
\* Erikson *Everything* pp. 230-259

### **WEEK 10:**

NOV 2 – Religion  
NOV 4 – Religion  
NOV 6 – Religion

\* Miller & Yamamori *Pentecostalism* pp. 1-67  
\* Miller & Yamamori *Pentecostalism* pp. 68-128  
\* Miller & Yamamori *Pentecostalism* pp. 129-183

### **WEEK 11:**

NOV 9 – Religion  
NOV 11 – Religion  
NOV 13 – **EXAM #3**

\* Miller & Yamamori *Pentecostalism* pp. 184-224  
\* Miller & Yamamori *Pentecostalism* finish and review

**WEEK 12:**

NOV 16 – Social Inequality  
NOV 18 – Social Inequality  
NOV 20 – Social Inequality

\* McNamee & Miller *Meritocracy Myth* Ch 1  
\* McNamee & Miller *Meritocracy Myth* Ch 2  
\* McNamee & Miller *Meritocracy Myth* Ch 3

**WEEK 13:**

NOV 23 – Social Inequality

\* McNamee & Miller *Meritocracy Myth* Ch 4

➤ **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**WEEK 14:**

NOV 30 – Social Inequality  
DEC 2 – Social Inequality  
DEC 4 – Social Inequality

\* McNamee & Miller *Meritocracy Myth* Ch 5  
\* McNamee & Miller *Meritocracy Myth* Ch 6  
\* McNamee & Miller *Meritocracy Myth* Ch 7

**WEEK 15:**

DEC 7 – Social Inequality  
DEC 9 – Course Review and Discuss

\* McNamee & Miller *Meritocracy Myth* Ch 8  
\* review readings

➤ **FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 17, 4:15-6:15 PM**

**HAVE A GREAT CHRISTMAS BREAK!! (OR HANUKKAH,  
CHINESE NEW YEAR, ETC. AS THE CASE MAY BE!!)**