

Introduction to Sociology — GSS 103

Course Syllabus

Course Description:

Sociology is the study of the social causes and consequences of human behavior. It investigates the structure, development and interactions of groups, organizations, and societies. Since all human behavior is social, the subject matter of sociology ranges from the loving family to the hostile mob, from crime to religion, from the divisions of race, gender, and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture, from the sociology of work to the sociology of sport. In fact, few fields have such broad scope and relevance. Sociology synthesizes from all of the other social sciences including psychology, geography, anthropology, political science, economics, and history, yet has its own special methods and theories.

Course Objectives:

- A. To develop a “sociological imagination” informed by Christian values and perspective.
- B. To examine the social aspects of human existence in contrast to its philosophical and metaphysical dimensions.
- C. To understand the basic language, concepts, theories, and methodologies of sociology
- D. To cultivate the ability to apply a critical perspective to the perception of self and one’s various social worlds (family, school, workplace, etc.) as they relate to individual, group, and societal processes.
- E. To understand the process of socialization and how we become social beings.
- F. To discover different ways in which people act, feel, think, and define their situations based on their gender, social class, age, ethnicity, geographical region, family, etc.
- G. To instill confidence in your ability to articulate and interpret your own experiences so that you will take action as agents of personal and social change for Christ and his body.

Text:

Curry, Jiobu, Schwirian. *Sociology for the Twenty-First Century*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004 (4th ed.).

Requirements:

A. Class Participation

This class is not structured to reward the passive listener. The portion of class time devoted to lectures will concentrate on clarifying or augmenting the assigned reading in the text, and the balance of time will be devoted to examining and analyzing sociological concepts in class discussions. Your regular participation in class discussion, or your lack thereof, will be noted and reflected in your final course grade. You may also be required to post submissions to online discussions.

B. Reading

The material in the text will serve as a foundation for the course and must be both read and comprehended in timely fashion for intelligent participation in class discussions. Articles and essays supplemental to the regular text will also be assigned from time to time. Each student is to keep a record of reading done and report the result on the mid-term and final.

C. Quizzes

Quizzes for each chapter of the text, and possibly for other units will be made available online at www.rosedale.edu/studentapps/quiz. The class login is *GSS103* and the password is _____. From the fifteen or so quizzes that will be made available, you are required to take *at least* 12, but you may take as many as you like. I will keep your best dozen quiz scores.

D. Examinations

1. Mid-term – April 2
2. Final – May 21 or 22

E. Participant Observation (See Attachment)

1. As one might expect at a Bible college, the intersection of sociology and religion is of particular interest. Therefore each student should participate in a religious service conducted by a Christian group with a tradition and style distinctly different from their own. The greater the difference from comfortable habit, the greater the likely clarity in sociological observation.
2. Notes should be taken either during the service if they can be taken without fear of giving offense, or as soon as possible after dismissal. (When in doubt, wait it out!)
3. Observations should be made in the following areas of sociological significance: *Social class, Style of worship and liturgy, Sermon content, Hymnody, Friendship patterns among church members.*
4. The report. Based on your notes and responses to the above questions, type up a report of your visit. Be sure to include your own personal reaction to what you observed/experienced and what you found surprising or interesting about it. The report should be *at least* three pages in length.
5. Selected students may be asked to present their report to the class.
6. The report is due by **May 7**.

F. Application/Reflection Essays

Four written assignments of at least one page (and preferably not more than two!) will be assigned from time to time. They will vary in content and may be based upon an assigned supplemental reading or the personal experiences of the student. Expectations for each paper will be explained in class at least four days before they are due.

Due Dates:

Learning to submit projects on time is an integral part of a good education. Extensions of due dates are discouraged by RBC policy and will only be granted in unusual cases. Work submitted late will be marked down one letter grade for every calendar day it is tardy.

Grading Summary:

40% Examinations

- 20% Writing Projects
- 15% Quizzes
- 15% Participant Observation
- 5% Reading
- 5% Class Participation

Attendance:

Absences should be cleared in advance with the academic office or the nurse if they are to be excused. The student is responsible to present the instructor with signed excuse notes.

Unexcused absences may result in two-point reductions in the final grade. Habitual tardiness may also be assessed as an unexcused absence.

Office Hours:

I am generally available for conversation or consultation any time my door is open. No appointment is necessary, though making one can help both parties with time management. Specifically, my formal office hours for student consultation are Monday and Wednesday, 3:00 – 5:00 P.M.

Web Resources:

The course syllabus, a link to the quizzing application, and a description of interesting sociological sites on the web is available at <http://www.rosedale.edu/pweber>.

Attachment I
2009 Syllabus – Introduction to Sociology

Participant Observation
(Adapted from an assignment by Dr. Ron Burwell)

As one might expect at a Bible college, the intersection of sociology and religion is of particular interest. Therefore each student should participate in a religious service conducted by a Christian group with a tradition and style distinctly different from their own. The greater the difference from comfortable habit, the greater the likely clarity in sociological observation.

1. Notes should be taken either during the service if they can be taken without fear of giving offense, or as soon as possible after dismissal. (When in doubt, wait it out!)
2. Observations should be made in the following areas of sociological significance:
 - a. **Social class.** What kinds of clothes, hair styles, manners and speech patterns do you observe? What kinds of cars do they drive? What is the church building like? Architecture of the building? Are there stained glass windows? How many microphones do you observe? What is the pulpit/platform area like? What kinds of pews/chairs are used? Carpeting? What is the sociological significance of these observations—how do they serve as indicators of social class?
 - b. **Style of worship and liturgy.** Is it formal or informal? Is a church bulletin used which outlines the service order or are they spontaneous in their "organization?" Is there a choir? Are they trained singers? Do they wear choir robes? Where do they sit? Is the atmosphere one of inspiration and awe or mundane commonness? Do people talk loudly in the sanctuary or kneel and pray? Are candles used? What about loud music? How is prayer used?
 - c. **Sermon content.** Is the minister trained theologically? How do you know? Does he/she speak from notes? What themes are stressed in the sermon? Does the minister use scripture? Literally or allegorically? Does the minister address everyday events in our lives? Is the message inspirational? Fire and brimstone? What social values are expressed? Political views? What does the general message pertain to? Is it helpful? *Note: You may comment on the theology, but don't be distracted from sociology by theology on this particular day.*
 - d. **Hymnody.** What kinds of songs are selected? What do they stress? What is the hymnbook like? Who published it? Are the hymns relatively older or more recently written? What religious values are expressed? What musical instruments are in use in the service? Pipe organ? Orchestra? Piano? What kind of special music is used in the service? Solos? Duets? Special choir number? Do they perform classical works (Bach, Mozart, Handel, etc.) or recent, more popular songs? Do they perform in front, side, or rear of the church?
 - e. **Friendship patterns among church members.** Are they intimate and close? Formal and distant? Does the congregation function more like a theater audience or an intimate family? What is the value of children expressed? Are there Sunday School facilities? What kind? Are children an important part of the worship service?
3. The report. Based on your notes and responses to the above questions, type up a report of your visit. Be sure to include your own personal reaction to what you observed/experienced and what you found surprising or interesting about it. The report should be *at least* three pages in length.
4. Grading. The reports will be evaluated in the following categories. In each category, up to three points

will be awarded, yielding a potential score of 30 points.

- a. Grammar/Usage
- b. Spelling/Capitalization/Punctuation
- c. Introduction and Conclusion
- d. Logic and Clarity of the Body
- e. Observations on Social Class
- f. Observations on Liturgy and Worship
- g. Observations on the Sermon
- h. Observations on Hymnody
- i. Observations on Friendship Patterns
- j. Personal Reaction