

Sociology 110: Comparative Societies
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
Monday and Wednesday 8:10-10:00am

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And by appointment

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Course Description

This course is designed to introduce you to the study of society and what Mills calls the “sociological imagination:” a way of viewing the events, relationships and social phenomena that shape our individual lives and much of our collective experience. I have three main goals. The first is to use sociological tools to examine local and international issues/problems and illuminate the social forces that impact our everyday lives. Second, I want to promote a “critical consciousness” in which you can engage the world on a deeper and substantive level. Finally, the last week will be devoted to discussing the concept of social justice and strategies for social change.

Required Texts

1. Sociology: A Global Perspective (8th edition) by Joan Ferrante.

Available in the bookstore, Amazon.com, or a digital copy (<http://www.cengage.com/us/index.html>)

Used copies are also encouraged.

2. Readings listed as “Polylearn” can be found on the course Polylearn.

Instructions for accessing the site are as follows:

First, log on to Polylearn with your username and password.

Search for our course by name and number. Please contact polylearn support if you have trouble logging on. You will not be able to log on unless you are formally registered for the course.

Course Goals

The goals for this course are for every student to:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive introductory understanding of key sociological concepts, terminology, theories, approaches, and perspectives.
2. Apply sociological analysis to contemporary examples and to your own life.
3. Improve your ability to think critically and to articulate their ideas in written and verbal formats.
4. Gain a broader understanding of the world.
5. Understand that although social institutions and differences are often socially constructed, they are also enduring formations that continue to structure and influence the life chances, experiences, interactions, and identities of individual social actors.
6. Discover ways in which you, as a “future leader of the world,” can combat inequality.

Class Procedure

This class will be pedagogically “mixed method.” Recognizing the various ways in which people learn, my goal is to meet you the student half way in this learning process. Below are my commitments to you and expectations of you as a student.

First, my main teaching style is lecture mixed with class discussion and activities. Lecture will be concise, relevant, and is central to the way this class is designed. Therefore, you are expected to be at every class (unless you have an emergency) having read the designated material. In addition, the exams will give you the opportunity to show how brilliant you are. I expect that you not only understand concepts but that you can also apply them to real life. My commitment is to judge your knowledge and effort as well as give you insightful feedback on your work.

Course Requirements

Portion of Final Grade:

Homework and attendance	20
Midterm #1	25
Midterm #2	25
Final Exam	30

Attendance and Reading

As noted above, attendance is a necessary part of this class. Much of the midterms and final are based on lecture AND I WILL NOT BE POSTING POWERPOINT SLIDES.

Readings—do them. I have chosen to go for depth rather than breadth so time should not be an issue. I recommend doing the reading and making notes in the margin, then going back later that day or the next day and reviewing the reading. This will help you “set” the information in your memory. These notes may also be useful as a reference for later classes or work.

Homework

Homework will be assigned throughout the quarter. It will often be a reflection paper asking you to connect the concepts and theories you have learned about to your own personal life. When you write the reflection paper, please underline the concepts or theories to which you are making reference. I also expect you to follow the standard writing procedures on all of your assignments. This means that you will: use normal margins (1 inch top and bottom, 1.25 on the sides), twelve point Times New Roman font, double space, title all of your work, and put a name, date, and course number on everything you hand in. All work should be type-written. Sloppiness will be judged accordingly.

Movie Reaction Paper

This paper is an opportunity for you to critically engage a popular medium on a deeper level. In two full double-spaced pages I want you briefly (less than one page) summarize the plot, how you saw an inequality played out (reinforced, rebuked, unquestioned, etc.), and back up your claims with examples. Then describe how this affected the plot. This paper may be turned in at any time during the quarter but before the due date. It is worth 5 points.

Participant Observation

You are required to spend one hour doing participant observation in a situation where race, class, or gender are being exemplified. Some examples include: spending time in a student group’s office or going to one of their activities, going to gendered activities, volunteering at a homeless shelter, etc. You may not do a participation in a coffee shop or the gym. I encourage you to push yourself and conduct participant observation with a group or in an area that makes you feel socially uncomfortable. Then please write a two page double-spaced reaction paper to this experience relating what you saw and felt to class concepts. It is worth 5 points.

Deviance Assignment

The goal of the deviance assignment is to showcase invisible informal social controls. You are simply asked to do something that is deviant. It is best to do this assignment with a classmate. Please do not do something that will either harm yourself or others or risk formal sanction. Once you have done your deviance, please write a

two page reflection relating it to at least three concepts (UNDERLINE) from the lecture or the readings. Please also note what sanctions were made to control your behavior. It is worth 5 points.

Social Change Reflection

The goal of the social change assignment is to understand the opportunities we have to be agents of change. This assignment has two parts. First, I would like you to explain what problem (inequality or issue) you would like to see change in the world. Then answer briefly why you think this problem exists. This should take about one page. Second, please write about how you can be an agent of change for this problem. What skills, resources (material, time, energy, enthusiasm, etc.), social networks (family, friends, business associates, etc.), and abilities do you have that make creating change feasible? I recommend addressing a small problem or a small part of a large problem. The paper should be two pages double-spaced and is worth 5 points.

Midterms and Final Exam

The midterms and final exam will consist of true-false, multiple choice, and short-answer questions. The true-false and multiple choice questions will gauge your knowledge of key sociological terms, concepts, and theories while the short-answer questions will have you connect these ideas to real life situations.

Other Issues

Cheating: I abhor efforts by students to turn in work that is not their own or to cheat the system in other ways. In my classes I take an extra effort to make sure that this does not happen. If I find a student has cheated, I will make sure the student is punished to the fullest extent by the Scholastic Conduct Committee. If you think that you may do this, I recommend taking another class.

Late and Make up policy: Tardiness is not accepted in other work environments and will not be accepted in this class. **Late homework and papers will not be accepted unless there is documented illness/other emergency.** If you cannot make it to class, please drop off your homework or paper in my box in the Sociology office on the 9th floor of the Social Science building **BEFORE** class with an attached note explaining why you cannot turn it in to class. If it is an emergency, please see me individually **BEFORE** the assignment is due. **Homework sent by email will not be accepted.**

Incompletes: No incompletes will be given unless you have a prior written agreement with me and will only be given out in rare situations with extenuating circumstances present.

Classroom Behavior: This is a college-level class. Therefore, I will treat you like adults. I expect you to participate often, engage the material both critically and constructively, and to have the highest respect for others, even if you disagree with what they say. We will have intellectual discussions, not petty arguments. It is my duty as an instructor to ensure that each student feels safe and respected when speaking in the classroom. Disruptive and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. If problems arise we will not spend class time solving them. You will be asked to leave and we will work on a solution after class. Remember, both learning and teaching requires humility. Open yourself up to being changed.

Cellphones and Texting: I believe that talking on the phone or texting during class is disrespectful of the professor and of other students. If I see you texting during class, I will stop lecture or discussion and ask you to leave to the room to finish your texting. Please do not do it.

Disabilities: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. I encourage you to contact me to discuss any individual needs for accommodations. The sooner you do the better.

Media/Speakers: I believe that technology and guest speakers are valuable tools to increase student learning. Therefore, various multimedia pieces will be used including movies, “You Tube” clips, speeches, and documentaries. These effects give life to the readings by showing real people and institutions being affected by race, class and gender.

Email: The simplicity of writing emails, I believe, has encouraged students to email their professor at every whim. I received dozens of emails last quarter in which the answer could have been found in the syllabus, from a classmate, during class, or during office hours. Please only email me if it is critically urgent.

Disclaimer: While I believe that it is important to treat the syllabus as a contract between us, I also reserve the right to make minor changes in the course as I see necessary. That said, I will do my best to maintain the syllabus as-is and if changes need to be made, I will alert the class in a timely and appropriate manner.

WHEN YOU ARE NOT SURE ABOUT SOMETHING OR HAVE A QUESTION:

1. First re-read the syllabus
2. Then check Polylearn
3. Then check with a classmate
4. Then wait until class or office hours
5. Then, or if it is an emergency, email me.

Week	Date: Week of	Themes	Readings Ferrante (Monday)	Polylearn Site Mostly From <i>Contexts</i> <i>Magazine</i> (Wednesday)	Assignments Activity (Due Wednesday)
1	March 26	Intro. to Sociological thinking	Chapter 1	“Good Sociology makes lousy TV”	
2	April 2	Intro to Methods	Chapter 2	“The Promises and Pitfalls of Going into the Field”	
3	April 9	Socialization/ Human Subjects	Chapter 4	Generations X, Y, and Z: Are they changing America?	Midterm #1
4	April 16	Economics and Politics	Chapter 11	“The Roots of American Decline”	Movie Review HW
5	April 23	Social Stratification	Chapter 8	“Is there social mobility in the United States?”	
6	April 30	Race and Ethnicity	Chapter 9	“Why are there so many minorities?”	Participant Observation HW
7	May 7	Deviance and Social Control	Chapter 7	“Essays from Inside”	Midterm #2
8	May 14	Gender and Sexuality	Chapter 10	“Learning from Drag Queens.”	Deviance HW
9	May 21	Education	Chapter 13	“The Black-White Test Score Gap”	
10	May 28	Creating change	Chapter 16	“What Happens When White People Change”	Social Change HW
11	Finals Week		Final—June 4, Monday 7:10-10am		Final Exam