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# Introduction to Sociology

Fall 2010 at Occidental College  
M&W 3:30-4:55  
Fowler 202

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## Welcome to Introduction to Sociology!

...without firm parental guidance, teenagers make all sorts of irrevocable decisions before they're old enough to appreciate the consequences—they drop out of school, they get pregnant, they major in sociology.

– Jonathan Franzen, *How To Be Alone*

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## CLASS DESCRIPTION

Sociology involves rethinking “common sense”; it involves a re-examination of our society and a reconsideration of our assumptions about basic social dynamics. During the semester, we will examine the ways in which society and social processes shape our lives. To do so, we will explore the structure of ideas that contextualize our lives, the ways in which these ideas are institutionalized in formal and informal social organizations, and how this institutionalization forms a social structure that constrains and enables change.

My goal for this course is for you to develop a “sociological imagination” or the ability to understand human lives as shaped by historically-conditioned social forces. I expect that this will be a useful cognitive tool to add to a set of tools that you learn in your life. Adding a sociological tool to your toolkit (as with adding any tool) enables you to develop a more sophisticated understanding of your social world and, thus, yourself. For this reason, I take the cultivation of a sociological imagination very seriously and believe that each person with such an ability makes for a better world.

To develop a sociological imagination you will need to think honestly and critically about the information you are receiving. You will need to examine your own experiences and observations, and you will need to be receptive to sociological data and analyses that challenge your assumptions.

To think critically in this way, it is necessary (but not sufficient) to attend class and complete the reading. Each reading will be discussed in class as a group and, thus, not having read the material will put you at a significant disadvantage in the classroom. It is also important to *engage* with the reading, particularly by examining the world around you and testing the concepts I offer by applying them to specific lives, especially your own. I will ask you to do this regularly in class so as to make these sociological concepts as relevant to you as possible. The burden here is on you, since I don't live your life and can only guess as to how the concepts apply (which I will do and may need to be corrected).

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## REQUIRED READING

- Readings for this course can be assessed through Moodle (<http://moodle.oxy.edu/>).
- Matthew Desmond. *On The Fireline*. Available at the Occidental College Bookstore.

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## GRADE BREAKDOWN

Assignments	Points	Percent of Grade
Attendance and Participation:	50	25
Submission to SocImages:	5	2.5
Weirding the Normal Paper:	20	10
Exams:		
First Exam:	5	2.5
Second Exam:	15	7.5
Third Exam:	25	12.5
Fourth Exam:	35	17.5
Final Exam:	45	22.5

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## LETTER GRADES

Letter grades in this class have the following meaning:

- A *Outstanding performance.* You have demonstrated very thorough knowledge and understanding of all the material, truly superior critical thinking, and expressed insightful and original thoughts clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been among the best in the class.
- B *Good performance.* You have demonstrated solid knowledge and understanding of the material and good critical thinking. You have also shown the ability to express your ideas clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been of good quality.
- C *Satisfactory performance.* You have demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of the major concepts taught in the class and some critical thinking. You have completed all or most of the required assignments and they have routinely been free of significant problems.
- D *Deficient performance.* You have only acquired a limited understanding of the class material. You have failed to complete all the required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.
- F *Failure.* You have failed to learn a sufficient proportion of the basic concepts and ideas taught in the class. You have failed to complete many required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.

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## TWO NOTES ON SMARTS

**Myth: “A” students are smarter than other students.**

Fact: College is a unique institution with its own rules and skills. You will not simply get an A because you are smart. Being smart *at college* means learning a specific skill set. Since you are competing with students who are also smart, getting an A in a course is a combination of effort, prior knowledge, and experience. If you are a freshman, you may find that you must work harder to get the same grade as a senior who has much more experience at excelling in college classrooms and, thus, knows better how to do it. Be patient with yourself. Don't put pressure on yourself to get straight As from the get go. Acknowledge that there will be a learning curve and give yourself some time to climb it and look forward to when you will be the one with knowledge and experience.

**Myth: We are born with a certain level of intelligence that remains static throughout our lives.**

Fact: The mind is like the body. If you use it, it becomes stronger. If it is strong in one area, it may be weak in another. You can improve your critical thinking, your reasoning skills, your ability to absorb new information, and more. But it isn't necessarily fun. Like working out your body, working out your mind can be uncomfortable, even painful. You're not really challenging and improving your mind until it hurts a little. So you may find that learning in this class (and others) is kind of like suffering. It's okay. It doesn't mean that you're not smart, it means that you're getting even smarter.

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

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### Wednesday, Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> – Introduction to the Course

Readings: • None

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### Monday, Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> – No Class

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### Wednesday, Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> – An Introduction to Sociology

Readings: • Caplow, *Rule Enforcement Without Visible Means*  
• Henslin, *Eating Your Friends is the Hardest*

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### Monday, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> – An Introduction to Sociology (cont.)

Readings: • None

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**REMINDER: ♦ WEIRDING THE NORMAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS.**

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### Part One: Culture

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### Wednesday, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> – Exam and Begin Gender

Readings: • Lorber, *Night to His Day*  
• Coventry, *Making the Cut*

**REMINDER: ♦ FIRST EXAM (5 MINUTES, 5 POINTS)**

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### Monday, Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> – Gender (cont.)

Readings: • Moore, *Sperm, That Loveable Character*  
• Kimmel, *Masculinity as Homophobia*  
• Patton, *Your New Baby*

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### Wednesday, Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup> – Gender & Sexual Orientation

Readings: • Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*

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### Monday, Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> – Race & Ethnicity

Readings: • Buck, *Constructing Race, Creating White Privilege*  
• Wright, *One Drop of Blood*  
Film in Class: • *The Difference Between Us*

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### Wednesday, Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> – No Class

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### Monday, Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> – Race & Ethnicity (cont.)

Readings: • Staples, *Just Walk On By*  
• Waters, *Optional Ethnicities*  
• Eng, *The Yellow Fever Pages*

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### Wednesday, Oct. 6<sup>th</sup> – Class, Status, and Wealth

Readings: • Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital* [excerpts]  
Film in Class: • *Class in America*

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**Monday, Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> – Class, Status, and Wealth (cont.)**

- Readings:
- Coles, *The Children of Affluence*
  - Mantsios, *Class in America*
  - Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*

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**Wednesday, Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> – Exam and Begin Media**

- Readings:
- None

**REMINDER:**      ♦ **SECOND EXAM (15 MINUTES, 15 POINTS)**

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**Monday, Oct. 18<sup>th</sup> – No Class**

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**Wednesday, Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> – Media (cont.)**

- Readings:
- Kilbourne, *Can an Engine Pump the Valves of Your Heart?*
  - Messner & Montez de Oca, *The Male Consumer as Loser*

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**Monday, Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> – Media (cont.)**

- Film in Class:
- *The Lion King*

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**Wednesday, Oct. 27<sup>th</sup> – The Discursive Opportunity Structure**

- Readings:
- Foucault, *We ‘Other Victorians’*

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**Part Two: Structure**

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**Monday, Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> – Exam and Begin Structure**

- Readings:
- None

**REMINDER:**      ♦ **THIRD EXAM (25 MINUTES, 25 POINTS)**

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**Wednesday, Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> – Institutionalization**

- Readings:
- Massey & Denton, *American Apartheid*

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**Monday, Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> – Institutionalization (cont.)**

- Readings:
- Reiman, *And the Poor Get Prison*

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**Wednesday, Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> – Institutionalization (cont.)**

- Readings:
- Gans, *The Uses of Poverty*
  - Ferree, *The Gay Wedding Backlash*

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**Monday, Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> – Exam**

- Readings:
- None

**REMINDER:**      ♦ **FOURTH EXAM (35 MINUTES, 35 POINTS)**

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**Part Three: The Sociological Imagination**

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**Wednesday, Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> – Case Study: Wildfires**

- Readings:
- *On the Fireline: Introduction*
  - *On the Fireline: Country Masculinity*
  - *On the Fireline: The Sanctuary of the Forest*

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**Monday, Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> – No Class**

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**Wednesday, Nov. 24<sup>th</sup> – Case Study: Wildfires (cont.)**

- Readings:
- *On the Fireline: A Joke Between Brothers*
  - *On the Fireline: Real Firefighters Drive Green Engines*
  - *On the Fireline: Learning and Burning*
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**Monday, Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> – Case Study: Wildfires (cont.)**

- Readings:
- *On the Fireline: Taking the ‘Wild’ Out of Wildfire*
  - *On the Fireline: The Beaver Creek Fire*
  - *On the Fireline: The Incompetent Dead*
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**Wednesday, Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> – Case Study: Wildfires (cont.)**

- Readings:
- *On the Fireline: Conclusion*
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**Monday, Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> – Individual Autonomy and the Sociological Imagination**

- Readings:
- Johnson, *Patriarchy, The System*
  - Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*
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**Wednesday, Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> – Individual Autonomy and the Sociological Imagination (cont.)**

- Readings:
- Charon, *Sociology and Democracy*
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**TBA – Final Exam**

**REMINDER:           ♦ FINAL EXAM (45 MINUTES, 45 POINTS)**

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## ASSIGNMENTS

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### Attendance and Participation (50 points)

1. At some point during each class I will ask you to write an answer to a question I pose about the reading for that day. This serves as a daily quiz, a measure of your participation (whether you are preparing for class), and your attendance. Each quiz is worth one point.
2. I understand that some people feel more comfortable talking in class than others. If you are very shy and do not feel comfortable participating, this allows you to earn a complete participation grade even if you never speak in class.
3. Absences can be excused if they are for a legitimate reason (e.g. documented illness, official university business, etc.). You may be assigned additional work.
4. *At any point during the semester, if I feel that people are not completing the readings before class, I will add an additional assignment to this course: written responses to the readings due each class day.* This is a significant burden that I do not desire to impose upon you. However, this class is impossible without your reading. Thus, if I cannot trust you to do the reading, I will institute this additional assignment.
5. *Attention Athletes:* The attendance and participation policy applies to athletes. I understand that there may be an occasional conflict between class and your games or practices. You, however, need to realize that any athletic activity that causes you to miss class more than 2 or 3 times is bound to have a negative effect on your academic performance. If you expect such conflicts, speak with me ASAP so that we may decide whether it makes sense for you to take this class.

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## Submission to SocImages (5 points)

This assignment encourages you to think sociologically outside the classroom. Between the first and the last day of class, submit an idea for a post to my blog Sociological Images ([www.thesocietypages.org/socimages](http://www.thesocietypages.org/socimages)). The blog features short analyses of ads, photographs, short videos, or graphs. Keep an eye out for something that would be useful to analyze sociologically and submit the image to [socimages@thesocietypages.org](mailto:socimages@thesocietypages.org) with a suggestion for analysis. Cc me ([lwade@oxy.edu](mailto:lwade@oxy.edu)) on the email with the subject line “submission to SocImages from Soc 101.”

We receive about a dozen new ideas a day, so your submission may or may not be used, but you will get (pass/no pass) credit for the submission either way. And... if your analysis is interesting and well-written enough that we are inspired to quote you in the post, you will be famous! And also get 2.5 extra credit points.

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## Weirding the Normal (20 points)

Your preparation for this assignment includes reading and discussing Caplow’s article, *Rule Enforcement Without Visible Means*.

Caplow has two goals: (1) to describe the cultural norms governing Christmas and (2) to explain why there is such high conformity to these norms. Your task is to mimic Caplow’s article with a different activity. Choose a simple, mundane activity that you participate in on a rather frequent basis that includes at least two people. Such activities might include waiting in line at the ATM, ordering food at a restaurant, asking someone on a date, or buying something at a convenience store. Your task is to “weird” it. That is, (1) make visible all the social rules that guide the activity that are normally taken-for-granted and (2) speculate as to how following the rules is enforced.

Guiding Questions:

1. What exactly occurs during this activity? Describe it in as much detail as possible.
2. What is the geography of this activity? That is, is the space organized in a particular way? Is there important furniture or fixtures that indicate that the activity occurs in that place? How are people arranged in relation to each other?
3. Do people have different roles? How do you know which role you’re playing? How does each person play their role “right”?
4. What is unacceptable during this activity?
5. What might happen if you played your role differently? You might want to try this out. For example, you might face the back instead of the front in the elevator and see how people react.
6. What socially constructed objects contribute to this interaction? What shared understandings allow the interaction to occur?
7. What do you think are the social control mechanisms? What are the costs to doing it “wrong”? Are these significant costs? Why or why not?
8. Does the necessity for conformity vary according to who you are? Could some people get away with breaking the rules and not others? Who? Why?

This paper should not exceed three pages. See “General Paper Guidelines and Tips” for more information.

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## Exams (125 points total)

1. Instead of two large exams (a midterm and a final), there are five small exams scheduled throughout the semester. The exams add up to 125 points. The first exam is low stakes (5 points) and each exam is higher stakes: the second is worth 15 points, the third 25 points, the fourth 35 points, and the fifth exam (taken during the final exam slot) is highest stakes (45 points). However, as you can see, no exam is as high stakes as a midterm or final would be under a two-exam system.
2. I have designed the exams this way in order to allow you to learn and adapt to my testing style over the course of the semester (hopefully decreasing text anxiety and allowing students to have a bad day without hurting their grade very much). Further, since the exams are composed of one or more essay questions that address key concepts we have been discussing, each exam will serve as a moment where we pause to reflect on and highlight the important concepts used in the course. After each exam we will discuss it in the hopes of making sure that everyone understands the concepts as thoroughly as possible. This will keep us all on the same intellectual trajectory and prepare us nicely for the next portion of the class.
3. The exams will be taken in class. You will be provided with paper on which to write. No notes are allowed.
4. *I will give you the exam question(s) before the exam itself (by email).* This way you will have some time to think about and prepare an answer.
5. There will be no review session. Attending class, taking responsibility for understanding the material, taking copious notes, and studying them thoroughly will be important for earning a high score on the exams.
6. There will be no early or late exams. Pre-purchased plane tickets or other travel plans are not grounds for rescheduling the exam. Please check on any such conflicts immediately and drop the class if necessary.
7. If you are a student with a learning disability, please come to me early and we will make all the necessary arrangements.

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## COURSE POLICIES

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- *Office Hours:* While my office hours are only three hours a week, I encourage you to make an appointment outside of office hours or come by my office to see if I'm available. I am happy to discuss class, college more generally, musings about majors, future planning, or graduate school.
- *Feedback:* I love getting feedback on my teaching and how the class is going. I value your input and I am often willing to make changes to the class according to your preferences. Please share with me any comments, suggestions, and ideas you may have. If you would like to do so anonymously, you can type and print out a note and drop it in my mailbox in South Swan D room D1.
- *Class Demeanor:* As a student at Occidental and as a member of this class you must hold yourself and your peers to the highest standards of civil engagement and discourse. Chatting with your neighbor is frowned upon when I am lecturing, and it is absolutely impermissible when other students are trying to participate. While we may find ourselves disagreeing, we must do so with respect, a commitment to hearing what others have to say, and a willingness to think and rethink our own positions. Personal insults have no place in the college classroom.
- *Special Accommodations/Learning Differences:* If you require some special assistance for classes/exams, please let me know as soon as possible. Responsibility for alerting me to the disability and making the proper arrangements is yours, but I will do whatever I can to help. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes a learning disability, I encourage you to contact the friendly folks over at the Center for Academic Excellence (-2849).
- *Accessibility:* I want my course to be as accessible to as many different people as possible. If there is any reason why the standard approach to college coursework is difficult for you to accomplish, please

come talk to me about it. This includes those of you with a learning or physical disability (as discussed above), those of you who have other emotional or psychological challenges, those of you who have had past experiences that are anxiety-producing, those of you whose parents did not go to college (and can't help you understand the system as well as other parents might), those of you who are too shy to actively participate, those of you who have more responsibility than the typical college student (such as dependent parents, children, or an especially heavy workload outside of school), and other situations I can't anticipate. The earlier you come to see me, the more I can do to try to work with you to alleviate any unique disadvantages. I prefer that you come in the first two weeks but, if you do not and you decide you would like to, please do not hesitate to come to me at any time.

- *Grading Inquires:* All inquires/disagreements regarding grades will be handled during my office hours or at another mutually agreeable time. Under no circumstance will grades be discussed immediately before, during, or after class.
- *Make-up Exams:* Make-up exams will generally not be given without appropriate official documentation excusing the absence. Please do not make me ask for it, simply bring the documentation with you to my office.
- *Late Policy:* A hard copy of all papers/assignments must be handed in at the scheduled time (I do not accept papers by email). Late assignments are docked ½ grade per day. Computer and printing problems are not a good excuse for missing a deadline. Make sure to print your papers early enough to be able to address any problems before class. Keep a paper and electronic copy of everything you hand in until you receive your course grade.
- *Academic Integrity:* Academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, will be taken very seriously. Read the Plagiarism Primer included in this syllabus. It is your responsibility to understand how to avoid plagiarism. If after reading Occidental's materials and the Plagiarism Primer, you are still unsure as to what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please see me as soon as possible. A description of Occidental's academic ethics policies is available in the Student Handbook and on the following webpage: <http://departments.oxy.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/academic.policies/>. I have and I will report all suspicions of plagiarism and cheating, even mild cases, to the judicial examiner.
- *Flexibility:* This syllabus only provides an approximate schedule for the course. I will discuss changes to the syllabus in class. It is your responsibility to keep up-to-date on class events and requirements.

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## GENERAL PAPER GUIDELINES AND TIPS

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1. Preparing your papers:
  - a. Your paper should not exceed the stated page limit (see tips on concision).
  - b. Use 12-point, double-spaced font, Times New Roman, with 1-inch to 1.25-inch margins.
  - c. Print double-sided if you want to save paper. I encourage it.
  - d. Please don't use any fancy binders or folders (they don't help your grade but they do make your papers more difficult for me to manage).
2. Expectations and grading:
  - a. In these papers you are expected to take concepts raised in the readings and apply them to analyze some sort of empirical material in the way that sociologists would. Thus you are looking at and for evidence of particular social processes in the material of everyday life.
  - b. To maximize your chance of getting a high grade, concentrate on writing an analysis that is sociological. Consider what is distinct about a sociological perspective on the case at hand. Be sure that you provide an *analytic description* of what you are studying: focus on drawing an overall conclusion about the case you are looking at; choose details that relate to the points you making (rather than trying to say everything about it); and organize your presentation so that the relationship between the details and your overall point is clear.

- c. Do not be concerned with being “right.” These papers are an exercise in applying sociological concepts. Feel free to speculate, posit, consider, even boldly guess about what is going on. Absolutely nothing rides on whether you are right in your analysis... not your grade, not your relationships with the people you care about, not the future of the human race, not world peace, nothing! So don’t worry! Just experiment with the ideas. I am not expecting you to be right, I am concerned with your understanding of the ideas, your open-mindedness in applying them, and the depth of your analysis.
  - d. Remember: Don’t confuse your own subjective interpretation with sociological ones and don’t make value statements in substitution for critical thinking. If you are an ardent individualist and think that everyone’s lives are impacted only by their personal decisions, you still have to write a sociological paper that considers the impact of the social world on individuals in order to demonstrate that you understand the class material. Writing such a paper may be frustrating if you don’t believe it, but it isn’t going to hurt you. My concern is that you understand the material and you must demonstrate that you do. In contrast, whether you believe it is not central to this course and you can write a disclaimer on the paper if that makes you feel better.
2. Since these are short papers, concision is key. The best papers will pack a lot of interesting material into the allotted page limit. I recommend writing a paper that is ½ to 1 page too long and then shortening it by cutting out the redundant material and wordiness. Here are some ideas.
- a. Does my introduction or conclusion have some "fluff" in it? Please do not waste time on flowery and optimistic or damning and pessimistic conclusions. I’m more interested in your analysis than in your value-statements or predictions about the future. Is everything in those two paragraphs really important to the content of my paper? If not, cut it and don’t worry about it sounding smooth. This is satisfying to write but doesn’t help your grade, so be stingy and save the space you have for the analysis itself.
  - b. In your introduction include only the main conclusion of your paper and a description of how you’re going to come to that conclusion; that is, say what you are going to say and how you’re going to say it. In your conclusion include only a summary of your paper; that is, say only what you have said and how you said it. Often, a person can delete their entire conclusion and still find that their paper “ends” comfortably enough. Try it.
  - c. When citing your sources, use only the last name, year of publication, and page number if needed (for example, Brown 1999: 2). Do not write in the title or full name, this wastes your precious space.
  - d. Edit several times. Reading your paper over (especially out loud) will allow you to cut out redundancies and find shorter ways to say the same thing. Having a friend read it is also very helpful.
  - e. Make sure you never say the same thing twice. Often in papers I find that I repeat myself. Read is closely and make sure. Never say “In other words...” or “That is.” Don’t use synonyms in a row when you could just use one well-chosen word.
  - f. Try to think of some ways that you can cut down on the length of each sentence. Can I make this sentence less wordy?
  - g. See if any of your paragraphs can be cut by just a few words in such a way as to save a whole line (if the last line of your paragraph is short, it might be productive to work on that paragraph).
  - h. Definitely complain a lot. Just kidding. Concision in writing is an extremely frustrating skill to develop, but incredibly valuable to have. I feel your pain. I struggle with it still... which is why I think it’s so important to encourage you to work on it.
3. Grading will consider the extent to which you conform to the assignment, your understanding of the concepts, and the sophistication of your analysis. *An “A” paper is not a good paper, it is a great paper.* If you want to improve your grade:
- a. Don’t underestimate how hard you might have to think. Think hard about your case before you start to write and be willing to learn something in the process of writing your paper. Sometimes, when ideas are complicated, your mind is too unstructured a place to

make sense of things and paper is much more concrete. Thus writing *is* thinking and you think through writing.

- b. Be willing to expand what you already know. Don't assume you already know everything about the case. Ask yourself, what can this case teach me?
- c. Ask yourself, is it really so simple? Can this be made more complex/sophisticated? Is there more going on here?
- d. Stay up on class material and review it with your case in mind.
- e. Write a minimum of three drafts.
- f. Go to the writing center (<http://departments.oxy.edu/cae>) and get help with your papers whether you're a good writer or not. Everyone can get better. Make your appointments early.
- g. Come see me! I'm nice.

## PLAGIARISM PRIMER<sup>1</sup>

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Plagiarism is a form of cheating that constitutes the academic equivalent of theft. A student who plagiarizes a paper is no different from one who looks at a fellow student's answer during an exam or who copies homework answers from a classmate.

### Exactly What IS Plagiarism?

The definition below is taken from *Avoiding Plagiarism—A Guide for Students* on the University of Oregon website:

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes or parenthetical citations that lead to complete references at the end of the paper...On written assignments, verbatim statements from other sources must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented block quotes [such as this one], and full credit must be given via citation. Failure to follow these guidelines constitutes plagiarism (University of Oregon 2006).

Even if all sources in the paper are properly quoted, paraphrased, cited and referenced, the following actions still constitute plagiarism:

- Copying an entire paper or sections of a paper from internet sites providing pre-written assignments, either for purchase or for free
- Copying sections from internet sources and inserting them into an assignment, unless the source is clearly cited (see the example above)
- Borrowing or stealing a paper written by someone else for a current or previous course
- Hiring someone else to complete an assignment and then putting your name on it
- Submitting an assignment completed by someone else, for any reason
- Completing an assignment for someone else for that person to turn in as his or her own

### Types of Plagiarism

In *The Art of Public Speaking* Stephen E. Lucas (2004) identifies three distinct types of plagiarism:

- Global plagiarism: stealing an entire paper word-for-word from another source and passes it off as his or her own. Lucas calls this “the most blatant—and unforgivable—kind of plagiarism” and refers to it as “grossly unethical” (p. 43).
- Patchwork plagiarism: copying sections of a paper word-for-word from several sources and then fitting them together into a whole paper. Lucas describes this as “essentially a cut-and-paste job of ideas and words that are not your own” (p. 45). This is cheating.
- Incremental plagiarism: failing to give credit for specific parts or “increments” of the paper that were borrowed from other sources. A fair amount of plagiarism among college students falls into this category. You will save yourself a lot of trouble if you remember that any time you quote or paraphrase a source, you are obliged to credit the original source.

### Does That Mean I Should Include a Citation for Every Single Fact in My Paper?

No, it doesn't. Citation is not required for information that is considered common knowledge. Common knowledge has been defined as “facts, dates, events, information, and concepts that belong generally to an educated public. No individual owns the facts about history, physics, social behavior, geography, current events, popular culture, and so on” (Hairston and Ruszkiewicz 1993: 614).

Regarding common knowledge, an article titled *Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It* on Indiana University's website provides two examples. Here's the first:

John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.

This information is considered general knowledge; it is not necessary to document this fact. However, facts not generally known and ideas or opinions that interpret facts must always be cited. Here's the second example:

According to the American Family Leave Coalition's new book, *Family Issues and Congress*, President Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation (p. 6).

This idea that Bush's "relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation" is **not** a fact. It is an opinion, and the source of this opinion must be cited (Indiana University 2006).

### How Can I Avoid Plagiarism?

Students tend to run into problems with plagiarism when they fail to quote sources properly. When you use someone else's words, you quote that person. Any use of someone else's exact words must be placed inside quotation marks or indented in a block quote (see examples above). The source of the quote must be clearly documented with a citation in the text (including page number of the quote in the original) and a full reference of the source in either a footnote or a references page at the end of the paper. *Failure to cite a direct quote, both in the text and in a reference page (or footnote) is plagiarism.*

Let's look at an example of correct documentation. Here is an original source:

Buddhadasa's conception of human beings as active controllers of their own material and spiritual progress is most clearly presented in his view of work as integrating both social and spiritual activity. —Peter Jackson, *Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World*, p. 200.

Here is how a student properly cited this source when used in a paper:

Jackson (1988) wrote, "Buddhadasa's conception of human beings as active controllers of their own material and spiritual progress is most clearly presented in his view of work as integrating both social and spiritual activity" (p. 200).

To avoid plagiarism when quoting a source, you must do four things:

- Accurately quote the original author's words (that is, be sure you have not changed any words or left out words without using ellipses—the three periods that indicate missing text)
- Enclose the quotation within quotation marks or indent the quotation into a block quote
- Follow each quotation with a citation of the page number, like this: (p. 200)
- Provide a full reference of all citations either in a footnote or a references page at the end of the paper

Students also often encounter problems when they fail to paraphrase sources properly. Whenever you use someone else's ideas but put them into your own words you are paraphrasing that source. Although the words are yours, the ideas come from another source—that is, you did not think of them on your own—and that source must be documented with an in-text citation in parentheses and a reference in the bibliography at the end of the paper. *Failure to do so is plagiarism.*

Let's look at an example of correct paraphrasing and citation. The following is the original source:

If the existence of a signing ape was unsettling for linguists, it was also startling news for animal behaviorists. —Flora Davis, *Eloquent Animals: A Study in Animal Communication*, p. 26.

Here is how a student correctly paraphrased and cited the original:

According to Flora Davis (1988), linguists and animal behaviorists were unprepared for the news that an ape could communicate with its trainers through sign language (p. 26).

To avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing you must do three things:

- Create a distinct sentence structure that is appreciably different from the original work (paraphrasing does **not** mean merely changing a couple of words from the original text)
- Check the paraphrasing carefully against the original text, making sure the same words or phrases have not been used inadvertently
- Acknowledge the source through correct in-text citation and a reference in the bibliography

### **Examples: Is It Plagiarism?**

Here is a passage from a master's thesis by Diane Rousseau:

Tobacco use is a costly destructive behaviour in our society, responsible for social, economic and personal costs. Thus, many non-profit groups and government agencies world-wide have turned to social marketing to try to reduce the incidence of smoking. Social marketing has been viewed as a force for change and is defined as "the application of the logic of marketing to societal goals" (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971, p. 3). Governments have actively tried to reduce cigarette consumption by banning cigarette advertising, by providing legislation to control smoking and by issuing public service advertisements. –Rousseau, Diane. 1996. *Effectiveness of Fear Appeals in Anti-Smoking Advertisements*. Unpublished master's thesis. Concordia University, Montreal.

Compare that passage to the paragraph below, submitted by a student as part of a research paper:

Tobacco use is a costly destructive behavior in our society, responsible for social, economic and personal costs. This is the reason many non-profit groups (such as the "Truth" campaign) have turned to social marketing to try to reduce smoking. Governments have tried to reduce cigarette consumption by banning cigarette ads, banning smoking in public buildings, and by issuing public service announcements.

Is this plagiarism? Absolutely. Other than making a few superficial changes (such as changing the spelling of "behaviour" to the American spelling and substituting "announcements" for "advertisements" in the last sentence) and adding a small aside about the "Truth" campaign, the student copied Rousseau's exact words without giving her credit. This is one of the most egregious forms of plagiarism: theft of someone else's words and ideas without making it clear whose they are.

Some students mistakenly think they can use a source's exact words without quotation marks as long as they provide some type of credit at the beginning or end of the paragraph. Suppose, for example, the plagiarist above had written the following:

Rousseau (1996) said tobacco use is a costly destructive behavior in our society, responsible for social, economic and personal costs.

Is that plagiarism? Yes. Although the student gave proper credit to the source at the beginning of the passage, the exact words of the source were not enclosed in quotation marks. *This is plagiarism.*

What if the student included a citation in parentheses at the end of the passage, like this:

Governments have tried to reduce cigarette consumption by banning cigarette ads, banning smoking in public buildings, and by issuing public service advertisements (Rousseau 1996).

Is that plagiarism? Yes, it is. Again, though credit is given to the author, the exact words are still not enclosed in quotation marks. *This is plagiarism.*

### Providing References

Purdue University (2006) cautions students to cite a source whenever they do any of the following:

- Use quotation marks around another person's exact words, whether spoken or written
- Use another person's words as the basis for their own words (paraphrasing)
- Build their ideas around another person's ideas, opinions, or theories
- Refer to facts, statistics, graphs, or information not considered common knowledge

### Plagiarism and the Internet

Indiana University (2006) recognizes that the internet has made plagiarism easier for students who would rather take the easy way out or who don't know any better. The IU website acknowledges that the web "has become a more popular source of information for student papers, and many questions have arisen about how to avoid plagiarizing these sources."<sup>2</sup>

The rule is simple: If you would cite material taken from a book, journal, or other source, you must cite the same material when it is taken from an internet source.

Selecting vast sections of text from one or more websites, pasting them into a document, and then slapping a title and your name on the top is beyond a doubt plagiarism—and the worst kind, global plagiarism. It is also extremely easy for professors to catch. Don't take the risk.

### What Will Happen to Me If I Plagiarize and Get Caught?

All suspected cases of plagiarism are reported to the Committee on Academic Standing and Student Conduct. At this stage, the Judicial Examiner takes over investigation of the charge. If the student is found guilty, the student will receive a mandatory penalty. There is no discretion (i.e. leniency for special circumstances) on the part of the professor, the Judicial Examiner, or the committee. These can be found here: <http://departments.oxy.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/academic.policies/sanctions.html>.

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<sup>1</sup> Modified from "A Primer on Plagiarism" (unpublished manuscript) by Paul Husselbee, Department of Communications at Southern Utah University, with permission of the author.

### Additional References

Auburn University. 2005. *Department of Communication and Journalism Graduate Policies*. Retrieved September 28, 2006, from [http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/~brinssl/graduate\\_policies\\_2005-2006.pdf](http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/~brinssl/graduate_policies_2005-2006.pdf)

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<sup>2</sup> For most websites no page number is available. Be sure to cite the webpage author in-text and in the reference page. If you have downloaded a PDF or other file that provides clear page numbers for the text, you must cite them.

## Syllabus Acknowledgement Contract

### For: Introduction to Sociology with Lisa D. Wade, PhD

- I have read and understand the requirements for completion of this course.
- I know the test and assignment dates specified in the syllabus and understand that a documented medical emergency or prior consent of the instructor are the only reasons I may be allowed to make up for a missed test.
  - I know that this course includes a final exam during the final exam period. I understand that the fact that a final exam schedule has not been posted as of the beginning of this course in no way excuses any travel plans that conflict with my presence at the final exam on the to-be-scheduled date.
- I have read and understand the course policies.
  - I promise not to engage in academic misconduct of any sort.
  - I have read and understand the Plagiarism Primer.
- I know that I should contact the instructor for all course-related concerns.

Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_