

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*

This course introduces students to the "sociological imagination"-a way of viewing events relationships and social phenomena that form the fabric of our lives and much of our history. We will examine the ways in which people are shaped influenced and controlled by their society and vice versa. In addition, students will be encouraged to think about how sociology helps us understand and interpret the nature of social order and disorder.

REQUIRED READING

Book. *On the Fireline: Living and Dying with Wildland Firefighters*, by Matthew Desmond.
Course Reader. Various readings accessed through Moodle (<http://moodle.ox.y.edu/>).

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Assignments	% of grade
Participation	10
Exam 1	20
Exam 2	20
Exam 3	20
Exam 4	30

STATEMENT ON CONTENT

The content of this course may include topics that are difficult for some students to confront or discuss. I cannot always anticipate what those topics are, or who will be affected, but I can do my best to be sensitive and work with students who let me know of their needs. If there is a topic that you are unable to discuss or need to be warned about, please notify me so that we can make arrangements for your work. However – for reasons related to both intellectual growth and the unpredictable nature of classroom discussion – I cannot, nor do I always want to, prevent all students from being exposed to topics or ideas that they find objectionable or offensive.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tues., Aug. 28 – Welcome to class

Readings: • None.

Thurs., Aug. 30 – Self

Readings: • Wade, Us
 • Durkheim, What is a Social Fact?

Tues., Sept. 4 – Culture

Readings: • Wade, Our Ideas (to “culture and socialization”)
 • Zeruvabel, The Social Division of the World

Thurs., Sept. 6 – Culture

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

Tues., Sept. 11 – Socialization

Readings: • Wade, Our Ideas (from “culture and socialization”)
 • Becker, Becoming a Marihuana User

Thurs., Sept. 13 – Identities

Readings: • Wade, Identities
Film in Class: • *The Difference Between Us*

Tues., Sept. 18 – First exam

Readings: • None

Thurs., Sept. 20 – Interactions

Readings: • Wade, Others and Our Interactions
 • Goffman, Introduction to *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

Tues., Sept. 25 – Deviance

Readings: • Wade, Deviance and Defiance (to “deviance, social control, and society”)
 • Foucault, We “Other Victorians” [chapter 1 of *The History of Sexuality*]

Thurs., Sept. 27 – Deviance

Readings: • Wade, Deviance and Defiance (from “deviance, social control, and society”)

Tues., Oct. 2 – Social Institutions

Readings: • Wade, The Structures of Societies
 • Berger & Luckman, Institutionalization [excerpt from *The Social Construction of Reality*]

Thurs., Oct. 4 – Second exam

Readings: • None.

Tues., Oct. 9 – FALL BREAK

Thurs., Oct. 11 – Class Inequality

Readings: • Wade, Property
• Marx, The Communist Manifesto [excerpts]
• Du Bois, Marxism and the Negro Problem

Tues., Oct. 16 – Status Inequality

Readings: • Wade, Prestige
• Bourdieu, The Forms of Capital [excerpts]
Go online and take: • Harvard Implicit Test: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

Thurs., Oct. 18 – Position Inequality

Readings: • Mills, The Power Elite
Pick one: • Kozol, Savage Inequalities
• Davis, Race and Criminalization
• Massey & Denton, American Apartheid
• Gans, The Uses of Poverty

Tues., Oct. 23 – Power and Inequality

In class: • *The Lion King*

Thurs., Oct. 25 – Power and Inequality

In class: • *The Lion King*

Tues., Oct. 30 – Sociology of Halloween

Pick one: • Social Functions of Halloween
• Top 11 Facts about Halloween
Pick one: • A Sampling of the Racism for Sale
• Dia de los Muertos is not Your Halloween
Pick one: • Heteronormativity in Halloween Costumes
• Non-heteronormativity in Halloween Costumes
Pick one: • A Halloween Gender Binary
• What do Sexy Halloween Costumes for Men Look Like?
• Halloween Costumes are Sexualizing our Youngest Trick-or-Treaters
Pick one: • Pregnant Women's Bodies Resist Giving Birth on Halloween
• Halloween as an Alcohol holiday
• Urban Legends: Scary Stories and Halloween

Thurs., Nov. 1 – Third Exam

Readings: • None.

Tues., Nov. 6 – Case study: Fighting wildfires

Readings: • *On the Fireline*: Introduction

Thurs., Nov. 8 – Case study: Fighting wildfires

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

Tues., Nov. 13 – Case study: Fighting wildfires

Readings: • *On the Fireline*: A Joke Between Brothers
 • *On the Fireline*: Real Firefighters Drive Green Engines
 • *On the Fireline*: Learning and Burning

Thurs., Nov. 15 – Case study: Fighting wildfires

Readings: • *On the Fireline*: Taking the ‘Wild’ Out of Wildfire
 • *On the Fireline*: The Beaver Creek Fire
 • *On the Fireline*: The Incompetent Dead

Tues., Nov. 20 – Case study: Fighting wildfires

Readings: • None.

Thurs., Nov. 22 – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Tues., Nov. 27 – The sociological imagination

Readings: • Johnson, Patriarchy, The System
 • Mills, The Sociological Imagination

Thurs., Nov. 29 – The value of sociology

Readings: • Charon, Sociology and Democracy

Tues., Dec. 4 – Review and Goodbye

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation (10%): Participation grades will be a combination of attendance, quiz scores, and active engagement with course material during class sessions.

Exams (90%): Exams will be a combination of multiple choice, identification, short answer, and essay questions.

COURSE POLICIES

- *Office Hours*: I encourage you to make an appointment outside of office hours or come by my office anytime. I am happy to discuss class concepts, 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 willing to make changes to the class according to your preferences. Please share with me any comments, suggestions, and ideas you may have, and help me make this a great class. If you would like to do so anonymously, you can type and print out a note and drop it in my mailbox in Swan.
- *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.
- *Technology*. Existing research shows that taking notes on laptops and using cell phones during class interrupts learning and translates into lower academic performance. Unless laptops are useful for accessibility, I recommend not using them. Laptops may be used only in the back rows of classrooms.
- *The Writing Center*: Located on the Ground Floor of the Academic Commons, the Writing Center offers students from all disciplines two types of support to work on their writing: peer-to-peer, drop-in consultations with knowledgeable Writing Advisers. Information about the Writing Center and a link to the appointment system is on the WC website: <https://www.oxy.edu/writing-center>.
- *Special Accommodations/Learning Differences*: If you require assistance for classes or exams, please let me know as soon as possible. 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.
- *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 classrooms or coursework is difficult for you to accomplish, please come talk to me. 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 make college attendance or class content 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 the unique disadvantages you might face. 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 Inquiries*: All inquiries/disagreements regarding grades will be handled during my office hours or at another mutually agreeable time.
- *Make-up Exams*: Make-up exams will generally not be given without appropriate official documentation excusing the absence. Bring documentation with you to my office when you inquire about a make-up.

- *Assignments:* Papers/assignments must be handed in at the scheduled time and by the assigned mode. 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 to avoid any such problems. 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. If you are not sure about 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: www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/academic-ethics
- *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. In addition, I reserve the right to give in-class quizzes on the readings if necessary (and re-calculate the distribution of graded material in accordance with this change).

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.