

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Liberal Studies Program

BLHS 101, Section 02
INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Mondays, 6:15 – 10:00 PM
Walsh 394 (Main Campus)

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Office Hours: 4:00—6:00 PM, Midnight Mug Coffee House, Lauinger Library

OVERVIEW AND GOALS OF THE COURSE:

We are members of families, cultural groups, religions, cities, states, and nations. We are students, workers, and citizens. We are members of society and community and often take for granted how we live, work, play, and just rest. This introductory course in the Social Sciences offers the student the opportunity to form a ‘social imagination’ and understand the place of structures and institutions in our lives, personal and group processes, and way we analyze self and society: what they are, how they work, how they change, and our role in directing the institutions and processes that affect us and help us create a just society.

We will read excerpts from the classical sociological works of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Sigmund Freud who provide us the primary concepts used in the key social sciences of economics, sociology, anthropology, political science, and psychology. As well, we will address the issues raised by the key social issues of the 20th and 21st centuries: economic and social inequality, human rights, women’s rights and issues, minority claims related to racism and opportunity, culture, religion, globalization, and social justice.

To cover these issues we will read five books providing contemporary accounts of social issues by authors known as ‘public intellectuals’, i.e., sociology that is highly accessible to the general reading public. Through these books we will identify key concepts and tools used in the social sciences and see how social scientists use these in their research and their writing. At the conclusion of the course the student should be able to understand how the ‘social imagination’ is used to help create a more healthy and just society, as well as be adept at utilizing the concepts and tools that the social sciences offer.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this course a student should be able to:

1. Compare/evaluate social scientific research and the alternatives
2. Explain the limits/weaknesses of research approaches to knowledge
3. Identify various types of social research and describe their strengths/weaknesses
4. Describe the process of scientific inquiry
5. Describe how theory and research complement one another
6. Able to recognize ethical issues in social scientific research
7. Recognize the purpose of a literature review
8. Formulate a testable hypothesis
9. Compare quantitative and qualitative approaches to measurement
10. Execute a short survey
11. Conduct a short content analysis
12. Conduct a simple field research project
13. Propose a research project utilizing different research methods and/or strategies (statistical, ethnographic, socio-historical, demographic, content, etc.)
14. Critique a focus group project
15. Identify the conditions of proving causality

REQUIRED READING

Required books available in Georgetown University Bookstore

TEXT: Charles Lemert, *Social Things: An Introduction to the Sociological Life* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Fourth Edition, 2008).

Brooks, David. *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Duneier, Mitchell. *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability, and Masculinity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*. Revised edition. New York: Metropolitan Books/Holt, 2008.

Wilson, William Julius and Richard P. Taub. *There Goes the Neighborhood: Racial, Ethnic, and Class Tensions in Four Chicago Neighborhoods and Their Meaning for America*. New York: Vintage Books, 2007.

Other readings will either be distributed in class or available through electronic sources.

REQUIRED WORK AND GRADING DISTRIBUTION:

1. One midterm exam and one final exam each covering roughly one-half of the course will contribute equally (40% for each exam) to your final grade.
 2. Class attendance (10%)
 3. Participation (10%)
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4. Regardless of exam and assignment grades, I reserve the right to lower your final grade for excessive absences; see the Undergraduate Bulletin for your obligations. I also reserve the right to adjust final grades upward on the basis of strong class participation.
5. All students are subject to the duties and responsibilities of the Georgetown Honor Code

GRADING SYSTEM:

A	97-100
A-	94-96
B+	91-93
B	87-90
B-	84-86
C+	81-83
C	77-80
C-	74-76
D+	71-73
D	67-70
D-	64-66
F	Below 64

CLASS SCHEDULE:

PART I: Developing a Social Imagination....

“Social life, whether among passing strangers at local stations or throughout the whole complex of society, depends unforgivingly on the ability of members to understand social things competently. This competence is the key ingredient in their ability to enter imaginatively into the social realities all about. That most people can, and do, is itself a miracle of sorts.” (Lemert, 6) This quote from sociologist Charles Lemert sets the tone for our study of the social sciences. In these first four weeks of class we will assess our present social imaginations and begin to open up our “competency” as social scientists.

WEEK 1

First Class: Setting out our agenda and an initial understanding of what is Social Science

WEEK 2

The Social Imagination and the Social Sciences

TEXT: Chapter 1

INTERNET:

Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of the Sociological Method*, (Ed. by Steven Lukes; trans. by W.D. Halls). New York: Free Press, 1982, pp. 50-59.

<http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/DSS/Durkheim/SOCFACT.HTML>

INTERNET:

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Chapter 1

<http://www.lclark.edu/~goldman/socimagination.html>

WEEK 3

So What is Social Science? It's foundations, history, questions, key ideas...

TEXT: Chapters 2 and 3

INTERNET:

Max Weber's concept of Ideal Type:

<http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/dss/Weber/WEBERW3.HTML>

Karl Marx's concept of Class Society:

<http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/DSS/Marx/MARXW2.HTML>

WEEK 4

Social Science as an Intellectual Discipline

TEXT: Chapters 4, 5, and 6

INTERNET:

Max Weber's idea of "Politics as a Vocation":

H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Translated and edited), From Max Weber: *Essays in Sociology*, pp. 77-128, New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.

<http://www.yorku.ca/maas/weber.pdf>

WEEK 5: REVIEW OF MAJOR SOCIAL THEORISTS

General Class Discussion on the Social Imagination— What is my social imagination?

PART II: Who am I? Who are We? Race, Ethnicity and Class... the intersections of Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, and Economics

During the fifth and sixth weeks of the course we will read William Julius Wilson and Richard Taub's book *There Goes the Neighborhood*. The book provides an analytical framework for understanding why we use labels such as race, ethnicity, and class to give us our various identities and why these identities are important to us—particularly in the neighborhoods and enclaves where we live.

WEEK 6

Race, Ethnicity, and Neighborhoods: Through White and Integrated Experiences

Wilson and Taub: Chapters One, Two, Three, Four

WEEK 7

Race, Ethnicity, and Neighborhoods: Through Latino and African American Experiences

Wilson and Taub: Chapters Five, Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine

WEEK 8

Laboratory on the Use of Quantitative and Qualitative Information in the Social Sciences

During this week we will have the opportunity to use internet data bases and work with some primary demographic data regarding the social topics of race, ethnicity, gender, etc. We will take a hands-on approach to doing social science by looking at data and begin to analyze and theorize about the information we look at and manipulate.

WEEK 9: Midterm Review and Discussion

MIDTERM EXAM HANDED OUT

PART III: Who Are WE?

As we continue we will be challenged to use our sociological imagination and competence to critically appraise the books on our syllabus beginning with Mitchell Duneier's ethnography *Slim's Table*.

WEEK 10

**From Self to Member of Community: The Self as a Psychological Category
Determining Identity, Self-esteem, Self-interest, etc.**

Duneier, Mitchell. *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability, and Masculinity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
Parts One and Two

WEEK 11 (3 – 6 Nov):

From Community to the Politics of Community

Duneier, Mitchell. *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability, and Masculinity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
Parts Three and Four

PART IV: The Political Economy, Culture, and the Social Imagination

The next two books we will read pertain to what many sociologists call the Political Economy and Political Culture, which implies that economic forces and culture are politically contingent— meaning that we as social actors have agency in shaping the economy and culture. Barbara Ehrenreich and David Brooks present distinctive points of view in their assessment of American and global economic life and culture. You may not agree with their viewpoints, but you will be challenged to articulate your sociological imagination with both information and theoretical perspective.

Week 12

Why Karl Marx's Ideas on the Economy Are Salient....

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001.
Introduction, One, and Two, pp 1-120

WEEK 13

... And Why Marxist Ideas Are not Sufficient

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001.
Three, Evaluation, and Afterword, pp 121-240

WEEK 14

Is Everyone Really Middle Class?

Brooks, David. *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.
Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 3, pp 9-139

WEEK 15

Are the Educated Doomed to a Social Hell, Purgatory, or Heaven?

Brooks, David. *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.
Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, pp 140-273

LAST CLASS: REVIEW OF COURSE AND FINAL EXAM

FINAL EXAM WILL BE PASSED OUT AND DISCUSSED ON THE LAST CLASS
