

Order and Change in Society¹

Fall 2016

SOC 1a

*Department of Sociology
Brandeis University*

Class Time: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 12-12:50pm
Location: Schwartz Hall 112 (i.e. Schwartz Auditorium)

Instructor: Michael Strand
Contact: mstrand@brandeis.edu (best way)
419-819-1402 (alternative)

TA: Jake Pullis
Contact: jpullis@brandeis.edu

Website: Latte (per usual)

Office: 107 Pearlman
Office Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 1:00-2:00 or by
appointment (drop by anytime!)

1. Course description; or, how this is course is sort of like an *invitation to sociology*

The goal of this course is to provide students with a basic introduction to sociology. Per usual with introductory courses, this class will introduce, define, apply, and review core sociological principles, topics, themes, and problems. Ok, that probably sounds boring. This could make you get up out of your seat, right now, and proceed very rapidly through the nearest door, in the process dropping the course and casting off sociology forever. So be it. But here's the good/fun

¹ I (as instructor) reserve the right to change anything listed on this syllabus (and I might do that at some point). Any changes made will be announced in class and on Latte.

part and what makes introductory sociology unique at Brandeis: To introduce (though maybe “invite” is the better word) you to sociology, we will read *great* (IMHO) *sociology books* and use them as very approachable ways of introducing and discussing sociological themes and topics that (I think/hope) you will find interesting regardless of whether you are interested in (or have ever heard of) sociology or not.

Think of this course as a kind of highlight reel for sociology. All the good stuff in one place, cutting out (most of) the boring stuff. There is no textbook, and you won’t be tested on your memorization of sociological facts (as if there were such a thing; well actually there is one thing that is kind of a sociological law and we’ll talk about it). You will instead learn what the discipline is about by *engaging* (i.e. reading, discussing, writing about) *with it* through the work of those who do sociology extremely well (cf. authors below). You will use what you learn to develop and apply your own “sociological imagination” (we’ll explain what this means) in creative ways.

We can’t possibly cover the entirety of sociology in a single semester. It is too big, too diverse, and so (diminishing returns and all that) we won’t even try. What we will do is read books that engage with important topics that fall under the very broad canopies of social *order* (“why does society seem patterned and predictable in certain ways?”) and social *change* (“how does society change?”). These will include identity, social class, race, gender, sexuality, family, inequality, health, violence, poverty, college, culture, social structure and (yes) even *Donald Trump*.

The great thing about this broad range of topics is that the sociology department offers specific courses dedicated to each one of them (and a whole lot more... except Trump of course). If something interests you here, please feel free to take one of those courses later on down the road. This means we will only try to wet your (sociological not food-based) appetite here. This also means that this course will leave many loose ends, lingering thoughts, unobtained conclusions, etc.

That could prove frustrating if what you seek is a comprehensive overview of the discipline of sociology from having taken a single course. If that is your goal, please drop this course cause you will invariably be disappointed. But if, on the other hand, you want to be *invited*² (aha! there it is again!) into the discipline and kind of make it your own, put your own stamp on it (regardless of whether you take another sociology course or not) and read some, like, really well-written,

² As much as I’d like to take credit for this whole “invitation to sociology” thing, I’m actually just riffing off of a classic sociology book with the endearing title *Invitation to Sociology* by Peter Berger. We won’t read but highly recommended if you so dare.

engaging and engrossing (non-fiction) books in the process, then (trust me) this is the course for you.

With (all of) this in mind the **learning goals** for the course are as follows:

1. To develop an elementary grasp of core sociological concepts (like culture and social structure and identity and social groups and social roles).
2. To understand how sociologists explain stuff differently than economists, psychologists and biologists explain stuff (among others... though anthropology is too close to call).
3. To gain a better awareness of vitally important social phenomenon happening in American society today (like inequality, race/gender/sexual discrimination, poverty, violence, among others).
4. To develop and hone argumentative and writing skills (not to mention reading skills... trust me none of this is trivial even in the age of iPhone and it all pays dividends later).
5. To use sociology to “learn how to think” (we’ll get into what that means on August 29).

2. Requirements³

And now for what you’ve all been waiting for. Here is what will be required of you in this class.

(1) Midterm and Final Essay “Exams”

Twice during the semester (on October 6 and December 7) we will distribute essay questions designed to tie together broad sets of ideas from the readings

³ You might ask yourself “Why all this writing? Doesn’t this guy realize that writing is very rapidly being replaced by TwitterSpeak and that we are wasting valuable time honing what will soon be an antiquated skill equivalent to horse/buggy repair?” Let me explain my reasons. Famous study by sociologists Arum and Roska entitled *Academically Adrift* (2011). Findings: college students learn *surprisingly little* during their undergrad careers, regardless of what college they are at. *However*, students do learn stuff in a class (*any* class) when said class requires two things of them: “more than 40 pages of reading per week and more than 20 pages of writing per semester” (pp. 70-71 of study). We’re actually exceeding those numbers a bit in this class. Hence, my hope is that requiring that you do this old-fashioned writing thing will actually help you in ways you might not expect at first.

and class discussions. Approximately one week after you receive each set of questions, you will need to submit written responses not exceeding ten double-spaced pages.

The midterm and final essay “exams” are worth **25% of your final grade each**.

(2) 4 (of 6) Section Papers

The course is divided into 6 sections (as listed below). On the last day of each section (usually a Thursday), I will post a writing prompt to the course website related to what we’ve read and discussed in that section. You will be asked to write a 2-3 page (also double-spaced) response in which you draw from (and cite!) the course readings and in-class discussion to answer the prompt. Your paper will be due the following week by Tuesday at noon.

You will be required to submit 4 of these papers (you can miss two). If you submit less than 4, each missing paper will be counted as a 0.

The average score on your 4 section papers is worth **40% of your final grade**

(3) Participation

This course will be interesting only if you actively participate in it. To help motivate you to do this, I will quantify your level of participation in the following way: Did I normally see this person’s face in class? Did this person sometimes talk in class when the opportunity arose? Did this person submit the homework assignments I periodically assign? Did I have to ask this person more than once to put away smartphone, laptop, or other *illegal* (in this classroom MWTh from 12:00-12:50pm) tech device during class?

If I can answer “yes” to the first three questions, and “no” to the last question, you will get 100% participation grade. If I can’t answer yes to them, or if I can answer yes to the last question, then you will get something lower than a 100% participation grade. Wow, that was more complicated than it needed to be.

Really the idea here is to show that you *care* about what we do in the class. It’s that simple. I realize in a class of this size it can be hard to talk *during* class, so you can “participate” in different ways as well: asking questions and/or suggesting ideas, possible topics of discussion, connections between class topics and current events, etc *outside* of class (before or after class, through email, during office hours). This also shows that you care, which is the point.

Your participation is worth **10% of your final grade.**

Other points to mention about grading

Late/Makeup Work: It is your responsibility to make sure that all assignments are turned in on time. With the exception of previously approved absences, late assignments will never be accepted for full credit. Grades will be marked down one percentage point for each hour the assignment is late. If you know that you cannot make a certain deadline, please contact me beforehand so that we can work together (assuming you have good reason to miss the original deadline) to consider alternative options for completion.

Disputed Grades: Contact me in writing if you feel that you have been incorrectly awarded a particular grade on a class assignment. Include a paragraph describing: (a) how your work fulfills the course objectives outlined in the syllabus; (b) why your work is deserving of a higher grade; (c) what texts and page numbers in the required readings you based your paper's content and argument on; (d) what you think your grade should be. If I think your request has merit, then we can meet in person to further review your assignment and discuss the validity of your current grade. However, this meeting will come only after my reevaluation of the assignment in question.

Extra-Credit: In rare situations there might be opportunities for extra-credit. I must approve each individual request, so you should contact me well before the end of the semester if you think you might need extra-credit.

3. Other Course Policies

1. Code of Academic Conduct

All students are responsible for compliance with the Brandeis Student Rights and Responsibilities circa 2016-17. You can access that here: <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rr/2016-17%20RR%20.pdf>. Academic honesty violations include cheating, forgery, bribery or threats, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating academic dishonesty.

2. Academic Honesty

Let's spend a little time with this since you will be writing so much for this class... All of the work you submit for a grade must be your own. Claiming someone else's work as your own is a violation of academic honesty. Duh. We all know this. Please *do not do it*. The penalties for this (at the university level) are not good. If I suspect academic dishonesty,

you will automatically fail the assignment. If it happens again, you will fail the course. Trust me, these assignments aren't that difficult anyway.

3. Laptop computers, cell phones, tablets and other tech stuff in class

Per *de facto* Department of Sociology policy, use of laptop computers, cell phones and other "tech stuff" is *strictly forbidden* during class meetings, unless they are involved in an in-class assignment. If you have a medical excuse to use one of these devices, please bring the excuse to me so I can verify it. *Otherwise, no student should use a laptop, phone, tablet, or other tech thing in class.* This might sound brutal, harsh, medieval (etc, etc), but please keep in mind this class is only 50 min long, which means there is plenty of time before and after our (brief, short, not long) class meetings to Snapchat, Facebook and/or Netflix.

4. Disability Statement

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in Academic Services (brodgers@brandeis.edu). Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations, and absolutely before the day of an exam or test. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

4. To Do Well in This Course...

Here are a few tips to help you do well in this course:

- You have to have a **tolerant attitude** toward what we will read and talk about. It is all controversial in some way. Sociology tries to bring a "scientific," that is to say, a politically and morally *neutral* approach to topics like racial, gender and sexual discrimination, inequality, violence, and poverty ("just the facts please..."). But the answers it gives and the facts it provides about these topics can often be interpreted as supporting one political point of view instead of another. Given the potentially controversial material we will be reading and discussing, I ask that you to be tolerant of the opinions of others during our class discussions.
- You have to be prepared to **change your mind** and to **listen** to what sociology has to say. Even if you already have strong opinions about any or all of these topics, this course will still be (very) interesting for

you if you are willing to change your mind and/or seek to more effectively defend and understand your own (pre-established) beliefs.

- That said, in order for this to work you need to have some **openness** about arguments that might not conform to what you already believe.
- Finally, you have to dedicate some **perspiration** (sweat, effort, work) to trying to understand what are very complex and difficult issues affecting American (and global) society. The readings, lectures, handouts, statistics, films, songs, other media (etc) are available for you, but it is up to take advantage of them.

More concretely, in order to be successful in this class ... You should, like, *read*. You should *take notes as you read*. You should be prepared to *talk in class and ask questions about what you've read*. And you should be able to *summarize, in writing, the essential gist of what you've read and construct coherent arguments about it*.

Please note here that all of these “keys to success” involve **reading**. The main point I want get across is very easily stated: **if you do the required reading, you will be successful in this class**. You should be prepared to set aside **at least 5-6 hours of work** (that’s reading and writing) for this course every week.

Given that the two essay “exams” are take-home / open-note, an obvious tip for success (at least final grade wise) is that you **show up to class** and **take notes**. This is not to mention that your participation in class is also part of your final grade.

You should also come to class ready to engage with (having read and thought about... at least a little bit) the required material during the in-class discussions and lecture. My educational psychologist friends tell me that this is by far the best way to prep for exams.

5. Course Resources

1. Erving Goffman. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (lots of editions; any one will do)
2. Arlie Hochschild. (2016). *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press. ISBN: 978-1620972250
3. Elijah Anderson. (2000). *Code of Street: Decency, Violence and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: W.W. Norton. ISBN: 0393320782

4. Elisabeth Anderson and Laura Hamilton. (2013). *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. ISBN: 9780674049574
5. CJ Pascoe. (2011). *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN: 0520271483
(maybe??? Pascoe is a Brandeis alumnus btw)

I will also post readings (as PDFs or weblinks) to the course website. Unfortunately a snafu with the bookstore means these books *are not* available there. So please get them (preferably buy them, but ok to rent or borrow... probably not steal) somehow. There will also be copies of these books on reserve at Brandeis Library.

6. Course Website

We will be using the normal Latte website for this course (... unless it doesn't work, which has happened in the past). This is where you will submit assignments, download readings, possible participate in online class discussions.

7. Course Schedule

Latte = reading is available on Latte
PSEL = *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*
SOL = *Strangers in their Own Land*
COS = *Code of the Street*
PFP = *Paying for the Party*
DYF = *Dude, You're a Fag*

Aug 25 – *Course Introduction*

Section 1: Sociology Basics
--

Aug 29 – *The Sociological Imagination and "How to Think"*

Reading:

- Mills, "The Promise" (Latte)
- Miner, "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" (Latte)

In-class speech: Wallace, "This Is Water"

Aug 31 – *How Society Affects Your Life (right down to your bloodstream)*

Reading:

- Partyka, "The Science of Corrosive Inequality" (Latte)

In-class film: "Is Inequality Making us Sick?"

Sept 1 – *Sociology Basics: Social Structure*

Reading:

- Klinenberg, "Race, Place and Vulnerability: Urban Neighborhoods and the Ecology of Support" (Latte)

Sept 5 – no class, Labor Day

Sept 7 – *Sociology Basics: Culture*

Reading:

- Becker, "Becoming a Marijuana User" (Latte)
- Caplow, "Rule Enforcement without Visible Means" (Latte)
- Tavory and Swidler, "Condom Semiotics" (Latte)

Sept 8 – *Mysteries, Puzzles, Enigmas: The Intellectual Core of Sociology*

Reading:

- Bonilla-Silva, "The Strange Enigma of Race in Contemporary America" (Latte)
- Edin and Kefalas, selection from *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage* (Latte)

Section 2: Individuals and Society

Sept 12 – *“All The World’s a Stage...” Performance and Social Roles*

Reading:

- Goffman, *PSEL*, introduction & chap. 1

Sept 14 – *Performing Gender*

Reading:

- Goffman, “Gender Display” (Latte)

In-class film: “Gender Rules”

Sept 15 – *The Art (and Science) of Impression Management*

Reading:

- Goffman, *PSEL*, chap. 6 & conclusion

Sept 19 – *From Social Roles to Social Groups*

Reading:

- Fine, “The Power of Groups” (Latte)

Sept 21 – *From Social Groups to Social Positions*

Reading:

- Marx and Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (Latte)

Sept 22 – *From Social Positions to Social Categories*

Reading:

- Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins” (Latte)

Section 3: **Making Sense of Trump**

Sept 26 – *Strangers in a Familiar Land*

Reading:

- Hochschild, SOL, chap 1

Sept 28 – *The One Sociological Law*

Reading:

- Coser, “The Function of Group Conflict” (Latte)

In-class film: “A Class Divided”

Sept 29 – *Social Structure of Resurgent Conservatism*

Reading:

- Hochschild, SOL, chaps 6, 7 & 8

Oct 3 – No class – Rosh Hashanah

Oct 5 – *“The Mind of the South”*

Reading:

- Hochschild, SOL, chap 14 and *either* chap. 9, 10, 11, 12 or 13

Oct 6 – *The Rise of Trump*

Reading:

- Hochschild, SOL, chaps 15-16

In-class speaker: Arlie Hochschild

Section 4: Race, Poverty and Violence
--

Oct 10 – *Down Germantown Avenue, or Race and Poverty in America*

Reading:

- Anderson, COS, introduction

Oct 12 – No class – Yom Kippur

Oct 13 – *The Two Families*

Reading:

- Anderson, COS, chaps. 1 & 2

In-class film: “Only the Strong Survive”

Oct 17 – No class – Sukkot

Oct 19 – *Moral Consequences of the Code*

Reading:

- Anderson, COS, chaps. 3 & 4

Oct 20 – *Solutions?*

Reading:

- Anderson, COS, conclusion and *either* chap. 5 or 6

Oct 24 – No class – Shmini Atzeret

Oct 25 – (Brandeis Monday) *Social Structure of the Code, I: Jobless Poverty*

Reading:

- Wilson, “Jobless Poverty” (Latte)

Oct 26 – *Social Structure of the Code, II: Residential Segregation*

Reading:

- Massey and Denton, “American Apartheid” (Latte)

Oct 27 – *Criminalizing Poverty*

Reading:

- TBA

Section 5: Social Class, Inequality and College
--

Oct 31 – *The Education Dilemma*

Reading:

- Turner, “Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System” (Latte)
- Lareau, “Unequal Childhoods” (Latte)

Nov 2 – *Navigating College*

Reading:

- Anderson and Hamilton, PFP, introduction

Nov 3 – *Picking Pathways*

Reading:

- Anderson and Hamilton, PFP, chaps 2, 5, 6, & 7 (please read two)

Nov 7 – *Social Structure of College*

Reading:

- TBA

In-class film: "Ivory Tower"

Nov 9 – *Is College Worth It?*

Reading:

- Anderson and Hamilton, PFP, chap. 8

Nov 10 – *What Should College Be?*

Reading:

- Anderson and Hamilton, PFP, chap. 9

<p>Section 6: Gender, Sexuality and High School ... and social movements too</p>
--

Nov 14 – *Biology is not destiny*

Reading:

- TBA

Nov 16 – *Performing/Imposing Identities*

Reading:

- Pascoe, DYF, chap. 1

Nov 17 – No class (Prof Strand out of town)

Nov 21 – No class (Prof Strand out of town)

Nov 23 – No class (Thanksgiving)

Nov 24 – No class (Thanksgiving)

Nov 28 – *Masculinity and Homophobia at River High*

Reading:

- Pascoe, DYF, chap. 2-3

Nov 30 – *“Being a Man”*

Reading:

- Pascoe, DYF, either chap. 4 or chap 5

Dec 1 – *Thinking About Solutions*

Reading:

- Pascoe, DYF, conclusion

Dec 5 – *Disruptive Power, or Creating Social Change*

Reading:

- Piven, “Disruptive Power”

Dec 7 – *Social Movements Matter*

Reading:

- Meyer, “How Social Movements Matter”
- Fetner, “US Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gay People are Better than Ever”