

SYG 1000/2000, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

COURSE INSTRUCTION OVERVIEW

This course must be taught in compliance with all Florida state's statutes. Refer to the SYG 1000/2000, Introduction to Sociology framework for further details on course expectations and design.

This course is designed to introduce an overview of important concepts and sociological frameworks that provide students with foundational information across different areas of sociological topics and expertise. The purpose of sociology is to help students consider the role that society and the world around them plays in shaping people's lives and their life outcomes at each stage of life. The course materials consist of nine course units. Sociological concepts, perspectives and theoretical frameworks are introduced to help students learn different ways that sociologists study and evaluate various topics.

The purpose of this instructor's manual is to help instructors prepare to teach this course. For each unit, a high-level overview of the suggested material to be covered is provided along with optional activities designed to help support students as they navigate the course materials. Instructors are encouraged to use the activities as provided, select one course activity, or modify the course activities as they see fit to achieve their own teaching objectives, course design, and student population. As instructors create course assessments, ensure that the course effectively achieves the learning objectives. In this course, students should be able to: a) learn to apply multiple sociological perspectives or frameworks; b) identify the methodological tools that are needed to evaluate different sociological research questions; and c) show that they understand dynamics between individual agency and social influences. Assessment materials should demonstrate evidence of completion of these learning objectives.

COMPLIANCE WITH FLORIDA STATUTES

Students should be provided with opportunities to explore different ways of thinking and frameworks by which to interpret the materials without an instructor imposing a particular ideology or viewpoint. Instructors should also pay special attention to topics exploring systematic inequality. Broad statements implying that current systems maintain an *intent* to cause harm violate state statutes. Instead, facts showing group differences should be presented based on evidence supported by research results, and patterns of findings can be provided to students. Similarly, instructors should pay special attention to discussions regarding the role of social explanations in the absence of acknowledging other factors that may be shaping outcomes. For instance, simply stating that gender is a social construction violates Florida statutes. Rather, instructors should acknowledge that gender is not only a social construct when teaching about gender differences. Although instructors cannot present speculative course material, students should have opportunities to engage with the material in ways that allow them to speculate about what kind of research may be needed to better understand causes, mechanisms, and solutions to important social issues.

At the heart of sociological science is understanding differences across groups and the factors that shape those differences. Students will have opportunities to leverage sociological tools to consider important topics and the various ways that social forces influence individual outcomes. It is important that students learn about the limitations of sociological perspectives by helping them consider other factors that also play a role in a particular outcome or problem. For example, the following three foundational sociological content areas should be addressed from an objective position without imposing opinions or describing causal forces that are not based in scientific evidence:

1. HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT ACCESS TO PERSONAL FREEDOM AND ASSOCIATIONS WITH HUMAN BEHAVIORS, RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND OUTCOMES

This course includes information about how different groups have lived and interacted over time, and the role of public policies/laws in shaping human behaviors and distributing resources. In describing these kinds of issues, instructors should be clear about presenting this information using facts about these situations. For example, historical U.S. policies, constitutional amendments, and Supreme Court rulings defined who was and was not afforded certain rights in the U.S. during different phases of history, and who had access to specific resources during different phases of history. These proceedings created a legal framework for influencing access to resources based on race, color, national origin, or sex such as: freedom to educational opportunities (i.e., legal frameworks about who could attend certain schools/types of schools), freedom to buy homes/land in

specific geographic areas, freedom to participate in democratic activities (e.g., vote), freedom to access certain employment opportunities, freedom to conduct business, and freedom to use and move freely in public places. In this class, students may learn about legal frameworks in place in the past and how they influenced previous generations. Students will also learn about how these legal frameworks changed, and the different freedoms that are available to Americans today. Students will study scientific facts, including the demographic characteristics of individuals who lived during previous generations when specific freedoms were restricted, and changes in these characteristics in association with removal of restrictions on freedoms over time.

2. THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIORS AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

This class will also include information about how individuals interact with different social environments and how individuals are influenced by *perceptions* or *observations* of behaviors and beliefs of group members as common and acceptable. In introducing this information, instructors should be careful to ensure that students are introduced to a wide variety of related research, study designs, and topics. Instructors are encouraged to introduce research studies that show how these dynamics work in everyday environments. As an example, a recent study evaluated risky driving behaviors in a representative sample of young car drivers in Germany and the driving risk behaviors (i.e., texting, drinking and driving, and speeding) of their peers. Findings showed that young drivers had a statistically higher number of risky behaviors when they *perceived* others to engage in risky driving behaviors, and particularly if the *actual* behaviors of their peers were higher. Or, as the researchers summarized their results: “pro-risk social environments enhance the likelihood of individuals’ risk taking” (Baumann, Czerwinski, & Klimmt, 2019). In introducing this kind of research, instructors are encouraged to describe the results as concluded by the authors without arguing that a particular behavior is correct or “right.”

3. THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL TRAITS AND PATTERNS IN BEHAVIORS AND OUTCOMES

Finally, this course includes information about differences in the experiences individuals from some groups face relative to those in another group. Sociology primarily describes subjective experiences and institutional or agentic aspects of human behaviors. However, although sociologists acknowledge that some individual traits have biological relevance and social relevance, it is important to acknowledge the role of biological factors versus the role of social factors. For instance, biological sex chromosomes determine the sexual and reproductive organs an individual is born with, but how females and males behave is influenced by the socially defined relevance of these traits. Studies that evaluate differences in how men and women engage in their social worlds is called “gender analyses.” For example, some research in sociology focuses on the how women and men enter different jobs such that certain jobs are occupied primarily by women (i.e., female-dominant) some are occupied primarily by men (i.e., male-dominant) and some have roughly the same number of workers who are female and male (i.e., non-gender-segregated). This research does not evaluate the role of biology in these associations; it focuses on the social factors that differentiate females and males as they select certain occupational pathways. Similarly, although the color of one’s skin color is associated with gene expression in a similar way as eye color or hair color, race is not a genetic trait. Students will be introduced to the ways in which race is defined by societies differently and the ways in which race serves as a socially defined trait. For instance, not all countries differentiate specific racial groups. In population census research, countries identify individual traits that are relevant to socially defined characteristics in that country – some only ask about birth nationality, some ask people to identify their ancestral lineage, while others allow individuals to self-define their race, or do not differentiate people based on a racial category. Helping students understand how sociologists evaluate individual traits differently from other disciplines is an important aspect of teaching students how to engage with sociological frameworks and scientific findings.

COURSE DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES

This instructor’s manual is designed to be paired with a revised open-source sociology textbook that complies with Florida State Statutes. This textbook is designed to support a one semester long course with foundational information for students to learn the conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and applied aspects of sociological sciences.

UNIT I: UNDERSTANDING SOCIOLOGY: A SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF SOCIETY

This unit introduces students to sociology as a discipline dedicated to the empirical study of human societies. Students will explore the origins of sociology, how it fits within the broader spectrum of the social sciences, and the methods that set it apart as a field grounded in systematic observation and analysis. The course emphasizes both theoretical understanding and practical application, including insights into professional pathways for sociology graduates.

Key Topics include:

- The definition of sociology as a scientific, empirical discipline and how sociological evidence draws from systematic research using the scientific method
- The contributions that sociology makes to understanding science and its limitations
- An introduction to sociological theories that are testable, disprovable explanations of relationships between variables,
- The difference between theories and broader “frameworks” or “perspectives” that help organize ideas but are not themselves testable
- Three primary frameworks used by sociologists to guide research: functionalism, conflict perspectives, symbolic interactionism
- The role of theories as tools for summarizing patterns in research findings, and how to apply each perspective to simple, concrete examples
- An overview of careers and applied pathways in sociology, allowing students to explore how core concepts (social structure, institutions, social interaction) influence real-world jobs or policy questions

Reading:

Preface: Introduction to Sociological Sciences

Chapter 1: Understanding Sociology

Optional Class Activities:

CHAPTER 1

Group presentation:

Working in small groups (3-4), have students discuss the types of occupations that they each would be interested in pursuing. For each occupation identified, ask students to describe how learning about how society functions may be useful to increasing their ability to be successful in their job. They will be asked to identify specific skills or abilities that they think will be most valued and the sociological theories and concepts that will help them navigate different occupational environments. Each group will have a single presenter report to the class, summarizing the key areas identified by members of their group.

Online Discussion board assignment:

Students complete a discussion board post online in which they will address the following question: “Identify a sociological concept from this unit that has helped you better understand something you have observed in your family or community. Explain how sociological science might allow you to identify the factors that shaped that social phenomena.”

UNIT II: SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND METHODS OF INQUIRY

This unit equips students with foundational knowledge of sociological research practices. Emphasis is placed on the formulation, testing, and refinement of hypotheses using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Students are introduced to the scientific method as it applies to the social world, with careful attention to ethical standards, data accuracy, and reproducibility.

Key Topics include:

- An exploration of the scientific method as applied to studying sociology
- Understanding testable hypotheses in sociology, and how to choose an appropriate design, gather data, and evaluate statistical associations, understanding the strengths and limitations of the study design
- How to articulate hypotheses based on theoretical frameworks and their role in informing the expected relationship between measurable variables
- The differences between descriptive, exploratory, and theory-driven studies
- The differences between qualitative and quantitative tools, including concrete examples (a survey item, an interview prompt, a coded text excerpt, etc.)
- The role of ethics and bias in sociological research using examples that illustrate informed consent, confidentiality, accurate reporting, and common sources of measurement or sampling bias,
- Strategies for interpreting research findings

Reading:

Chapter 2: Sociological Research and Methods of Inquiry

Optional Class Activities:**CHAPTER 2*****In-Class Discussion:***

In class, have students work together to identify sociological topics that they would like to study. Help the students work together to identify two questions and then have them walk through different strategies for addressing the questions. Have the students think about different forms of data (e.g., qualitative and quantitative) and different ways to collect data (e.g., interviews, surveys) and what the strengths and limitations are for each type.

Group Assignment (out of class):

Place students in groups of 3 or 4 to design a study to address one of the following three research questions:

- How does sleep during high school associate with academic performance?
- How does participation in formal athletics programs during childhood influence work salary at age 40?
- How do sibling relationships influence fertility decision-making?

Have students answer one of the three questions and work as a group to address the following:

1. What type of data will you collect to address your question?
2. How many people will you evaluate, and what are the demographic characteristics of your study sample?
3. How will you convince people to participate in your study, and how will you ensure that your data are unbiased?
4. What questions will you need to ask to test your question?
5. What are possible outcomes that you might predict and how will you test them?
6. How will you determine if your findings are causal or correlational?

Once students have provided answers to the questions, have them present their answers to the rest of the class. For each group, the instructor will provide additional insights regarding potential problems with causal direction, appropriate sampling and including possible ways to evaluate an “intervention” versus “control” group, and what is needed to ensure that results are representative of a particular population/group. The class will be asked to help them consider what the strengths and weaknesses might be for different strategies for addressing their study questions. Following the class presentation, groups will reconvene to finalize their group project. Each group will turn in a single paper on behalf of the group that clearly describes the study question, the proposed strategies for addressing the question (i.e., responses to all 5 questions), and a brief proposal laying out a clear description of their procedure for collecting data and evaluating it, and the limitations of their study design.

UNIT III: CULTURE AND SOCIETY

This unit explores the concept of culture as a shared set of practices, values, symbols, and norms that guide behavior within social groups. Students analyze how culture is formed, transmitted, and modified across different social contexts and time periods, and how the organization of society influences social learning and opportunities.

Key Topics include:

- Understanding the various components of culture such as shared practices, symbols, and norms
- Everyday examples of activities that demonstrate ways in which culture influences our lives
- Evaluating how different cultural expectations play a role in shaping behaviors
- Understanding factors that shape cultural variation, continuity, and change, including how innovations, laws, and contact between groups shape practices over time
- Aspects of societies and the ways sociologists differentiate societies from one another
- Historical perspectives that shape how sociologists study the components of society and ways of categorizing them
- Ways that sociologists evaluate the effects of agency versus structure

Reading:

Chapter 3: Culture & Society

Optional Class Activities:**CHAPTER 3*****Essay Assignment:***

This assignment is designed to help students understand the role of societal forces in shaping the decisions they make in their own lives. For the first paragraph, ask students to describe what is “appropriate” behavior at a grocery store in the United States. Have them walk through each step from transportation, food selection, interactions with staff and other customers, transporting food to home. In the second paragraph, ask them to describe examples of inappropriate behaviors for shopping at a grocery store, and what makes those behaviors inappropriate. For the last paragraph, have students describe which societal factors influence how and what they buy at grocery stores, and what changes in the way society is designed could influence the ways in which they eat in everyday life.

Group Assignment (in class):

This activity is designed to help students understand differences in the historical sociological perspectives around defining society shape the kinds of research questions that researchers ask. Have students get into small groups for discussion. Have each group choose a particular theorists’ orientation from the book – Durkheim, Marx, or Weber. Based on that orientation, have the students describe what their selected theorist would describe as a “good” society and what they would describe as a “bad” society, and what information they would need to make such assessments.

UNIT IV: SOCIALIZATION ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

In this unit, students examine how individuals acquire societal norms, beliefs, and behaviors through interaction with various socializing agents. This unit focuses on the stages of development and the influence of family, education, peers, media, and other social forces that shape human behavior.

Key Topics include:

- Theoretical approaches that are used to understand self-development drawn from psychology and sociology
- Ways that social environments influence how individuals grow and develop over time
- What it means to be socialized and the ways in which socialization occurs through exposure to different groups
- How people experience the effects of resocialization over time and in the context of different experiences at different phases of the life course

Reading:

Chapter 4: Socialization

Optional Class Activities:**CHAPTER 4*****In-Class Discussion:***

In pairs or small groups, reflect on how everyday social interactions—from family routines to school rules—shape personal identity and behavior over time. Share one example from your own life where a specific social environment (like a club, neighborhood, or holiday tradition) influenced your habits or values, then discuss as a class: How do these interactions prepare us to fit into larger group expectations without anyone explicitly 'teaching' the rules?

Online Discussion board assignment:

This assignment involves having students reflect on an important social experience. Have students write a 200-word discussion board post with the following prompt: "Describe a non-academic social setting (e.g., a sports team, family gathering, or online community) that noticeably changed your habits, skills, or outlook during childhood or adolescence. Focus on concrete interactions like peer feedback or group routines." Then ask students to respond to two classmates based on the following prompt: "What common patterns emerge in how these environments 'train' us for adult roles, and why might different groups emphasize certain behaviors over others?"

UNIT V: AGING AND HEALTH ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

This unit addresses the factors that influence health and wellbeing as people move through the life course. Students will learn about different life stages and behaviors and the behaviors and resources that modify health trajectories over time. Students will also learn about the influence of healthcare and medicine in treating people at different phases of life.

Key Topics include:

- How sociologists study aging, including life course processes, demographic changes, the differences between chronological age, birth cohort, and the effects of historical time in shaping aging processes
- Aspects of aging and old age that shape individual development over time and in late life
- Challenges that face people as they age and problems older adults are more susceptible to relative to other age groups
- Understanding the ways in which health is defined and healthcare is organized in different societies
- Factors that influence patterned variations in health outcomes and life expectancy
- Differences in health across different demographic groups in the United States, and factors that contribute to those variations
- The theoretical orientations that sociologists use to understand aging processes, healthcare systems, and health outcomes

Reading:

Chapter 5: Healthy Aging

Chapter 6: Health, Healthcare, and Medicine

Optional Class Activities:**CHAPTER 5*****In-Class Discussion:***

As a class, have students describe what it means to be "old" today and have them discuss if they think it being old now is different than it was when their parents were young. In a space that all students can see (e.g., a dry erase board), create a list of characteristics that determine that someone is old. In another column, have them indicate what chronological age they believe makes someone officially "old." In a third column, have them think about their own future and have them provide the chronological age that they think they will survive, and what factors will determine how long they will live.

Then, show them this video: AARP [What is Old?](#)

After watching the video, ask students if they have changed their minds about the answers that they previously provided. Ask them to consider why some older people may be very healthy into their 90s and why others are very sick by 60 – prompting them to consider individual behaviors and societal factors that come into play. Guide the discussion to cover the consequences and missed opportunities that may come from self-imposed ageism and the consequences of treating others who are old as having particular qualities or abilities because of their chronological age.

Essay Assignment:

Have students write an essay about population aging. Specifically, in the first paragraph, have the students describe what the future demographic characteristics will be for the United States regarding the distribution of people by chronological age. In the

second paragraph, have them lay out their most significant concern regarding population aging. In the third paragraph, have them describe a unique opportunity that could greatly benefit society because of population aging.

CHAPTER 6

Group Assignment (in class):

Have students form groups of four, and role play as different professionals in the health field in United States. Each will choose one of the following four jobs: a) a **public health scientist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** whose job is to identify policies that will effectively reduce disability rates for everyone in the population over the next decade, b) the **Director of the National Institutes of Health** whose job it is to determine the scientific priorities for funding health-related research studies in the United States, paid for by U.S Taxpayers, c) the **CEO of a major for-profit health insurance company** whose job it is to ensure that they make a profit for their companies, and d) the **Governor of a U.S. State** that is facing a major crisis – a rapidly growing number of people over 65 who need care from others but cannot afford it and a growing number of middle-aged adults who are too disabled to work – and is seeking re-election.

Once the students choose who will play each role (and if there are only three in a group, have them choose three of the four) – have them write down (on a single paper) a description of the kind of healthcare design that is best for them to address their charge. Next, have them discuss how each of the different healthcare designs might conflict with one another's goals. Then, wearing the hat for each respective role, have them explore if there is a system that might address all of their goals, and if so, what kind of compromises might be needed for any of the different groups? Once they have completed these tasks, have each group provide their responses to the questions and what they concluded. The instructor should help the students identify key themes.

Online Discussion board assignment and In-Class Discussion:

This assignment involves providing a prompt in an online discussion board format. Each student will be asked to address the following question in about 200-300 words: "You are a single 45-year-old manager at a small technology sales company raising a 10- and 12-year-old in a two-bedroom apartment. You live 5 miles away from your mother (a widow) who is in her 70s and has started having memory issues. You are an only child, and you recently discovered that your mom drove to the grocery store and got lost on the way home when a police officer called you to come get her when you were about to walk into an important meeting. Your mother lives on a fixed income that just barely covers food and housing, but it's become clear that she needs help if she wants to keep living in her house. She is adamant that she doesn't want to leave her home and gets angry when you talk about how she should stop driving. You call the local aging agency only to find out that there aren't any services covered by government programs or your mother's Medicare plan for home care, and your only option is to pay out of pocket \$100 a day for someone to come and sit with your mother, and that there is a three month wait list until someone is available. What do you decide to do?" Have students provide their own response, but once they have submitted responses, ask them to read the other student responses in preparation for an in-class discussion.

During the next class, have the students share how the assignment made them think about the current healthcare system and what they need to do to prepare for the future. Have them share issues that they identified, and any ideas brought up by others in the class that helped them. Have them talk about how the situation for their own future might change in the context of different healthcare system designs.

UNIT VI: SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND NETWORKS

This unit focuses on specific frameworks through which societies are organized. It highlights the dual role of agency and structure in shaping social systems, as well as the informal networks that influence behaviors and opportunities.

Key Topics include:

- The definitions of social roles and institutional functions, and how these concepts are relevant in everyday life in the roles, rules, and structures we navigate
- Different types of organizational structures that influence everyday life

- How social structures facilitate patterned relationships and expectations that both enable and constrain individual choices, including examples about how people exercise agency within structural contexts (organizational rules, network connections, etc.).
- Key concepts used in network analysis (ties, nodes, strong/weak ties) and the differences between formal and informal networks
- How networks influence information flow, opportunities, and behavior

Reading:

Chapter 7: Groups and Organizations

Optional Class Activities:**CHAPTER 7*****In-Class Discussion:***

In small groups, analyze a familiar organization from your life—like a sports team, workplace, or volunteer club—focusing on its formal rules (e.g., schedules, roles) and informal dynamics (who leads decisions). Discuss: How do these structures help the group achieve goals efficiently, and what happens when members challenge the status quo through everyday interactions?

Group Assignment (in class):

This assignment is designed to help students understand the association between leadership styles and organizational goals. In assigned groups, have students research and define transformational, transactional, and servant leadership styles, and each style's characteristics and goals. Then, have the students describe how each style may influence an organizational culture—such as communication, motivation, and collaboration—as well as the overall performance of the organization. Have students draw on personal or observed experiences in workplaces or groups, providing specific examples of encounters with these leadership styles, and their experiences of the ways in which these different approaches have influenced team dynamics and successes.

Next, have the students consider a specific scenario: They are on the hiring committee to select the next CEO of their non-profit. The non-profit has a mission of developing new AI tools to improve educational outcomes in college students. The hiring committee needs to collectively come up with an ideal leadership style that they believe will be most effective for their company. Have students write a job ad laying out these characteristics and the way these leadership characteristics are relevant in the context of the organization. Each group will then trade their job ad with another group and review the other group's description to consider how they developed their ideas. After reviewing the other job ad, have the groups meet together and talk about what they learned from the other team and what they might need to rethink.

Online Discussion board assignment:

This assignment is designed to help students consider how their own lives are influenced by their efforts to following social rules and norms. In a 200-300 word discussion board post, have students address the following prompt: "Reflecting on your own experiences or observed examples, provide an example of how group behaviors, norms, and leadership styles influenced the successes or failures of a group project that you've been involved with? How were group dynamics involved in the success or failure of the project outcome?"

UNIT VII: DEVIANCE, SOCIAL NORMS, AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Students explore how societies define and respond to deviant behavior. This unit presents deviance as a socially constructed concept, shaped by cultural norms and institutional responses.

Key Topics include:

- Definitions for deviance and conformity
- Strategies used to maintain social control and social order and how this is associated with deviance
- Theoretical perspectives associated with different definitions of deviance

- Patterns in deviant behavior across groups
- Introduction to identification, classification, and rule-making processes

Reading:*Chapter 8: Deviance and Crime***Optional Class Activities:****CHAPTER 8*****Group Assignment (in class):***

This assignment is designed to help students identify the ways in which deviance and control shape their own lives every day. Assign students to small groups and have them consider environments like their school, neighborhood, or an online community environment where they regularly observe people breaking unwritten rules (e.g., cutting in line or ignoring group norms). Write down examples of these deviant behaviors. Then have them consider what happens to people who engage in these behaviors – what are the consequences they face from others. After the groups have written down at least four examples, have them share with the class a few examples from each group. Then, ask the students to consider how people observe these examples of deviance in ways that facilitates conformity or change in different behaviors of others? Ask them if people continue to be deviant, or do they respond and adjust and in what ways?

Online Discussion board assignment:

This assignment is designed to help students reflect on their own deviant behaviors. Have students write a 200-word response to the following prompt: “Describe a minor rule-breaking act you've committed in a group setting (e.g., skipping practice or bending social expectations with a group of friends). Describe who noticed when you engaged in the deviant behavior and how you determined that you were socially deviant? Describe the consequence that happened, from something formal (e.g., being suspended from school) to something more subtle, like not being invited to an event. How did this situation shape your subsequent interactions or behaviors if at all? Did you learn something useful or only experience a negative outcome?” Have students write their own response and then have them identify at least one other individual in the class with whom their post describes a situation that they can relate. Have each student provide an encouraging response to that person about their shared experience.

UNIT VIII: SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

This unit focuses on the institutions that shape our everyday lives. Students learn about private and public institutions that shape social life, including family, work, religion, education, and government. Each institution is studied in terms of its structure, roles, and functions.

Key Topics include:

- Comparative institutional forms and practices
- Institutional continuity and adaptation over time
- The way that marriage and family shapes our expectations of the kinds of social networks we have in our everyday lives, and the organization of our personal relationships
- Different kinds of family types and theoretical perspectives shaping our understanding of family formations
- Family-related problems
- The role of work and economy in shaping our everyday lives
- Differences in economic outcomes in association with the organization of work institutions

- The role of religion as an organizational force
- The design and functions of educational systems and structures
- Different types of government systems and approaches and the way they influence different social groups

Reading:

Chapter 9: Private Institutions: Family and Work

Chapter 10: Public Institutions: Religion, Education, and Government

Optional Class Activities:**CHAPTER 9*****In-Class Discussion:***

This activity is designed to help students consider the challenges of everyday adult life and the various roles and responsibilities that are required. Have students brainstorm a typical day for someone juggling a job and home responsibilities (e.g., meals, errands, downtime)—mapping out the schedule on paper or a whiteboard, noting fixed commitments vs. flexible ones. Pose the following question to the class: *“What practical strategies help coordinate these demands, and how do group expectations (like coworkers or relatives) influence daily trade-offs?”*

Online Discussion board assignment and In-Class Discussion:

This assignment is designed to help students articulate the ways in which they learned about their own family experiences. Have students complete a 200-word discussion board post describing what it was like in their family growing up to prepare dinner on a weeknight. Have the students reflect on who took responsibility for this task, how it interacted with other roles or responsibilities (e.g., paid work), and how these family rules shaped their own ideas about family and work as they have prepared for their own adulthood and family formation. Have students read the responses of other students in the class without responding. In the next in-person class, have students discuss what they observed in terms of similarities and differences in managing routines across different households.

CHAPTER 10***Group Assignment (in class):***

This activity has students consider the growth of tax-credit or voucher programs that provide financial assistance for families who want to send their children to private, and often religious, primary or secondary schools. Instructors will provide a brief overview of state-supported private school tax-credit and voucher programs. Instructors are encouraged to identify current information about legislation authorizing such initiatives and overall participation –see www.future-ed.org, a non-partisan organization that performs research and documents policies related to education in the United States. Instructors can provide charts showing state adoption patterns, enrollment growth, and funding levels. In small groups, have students work together to identify potential benefits and drawbacks of the different programs. Each group will create two lists for each school design type, each with their associated benefits and drawbacks.

Next, have students read quietly, a study from a non-partisan research organization that evaluated differences in outcomes across private schools compared to public schools - <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/effects-statewide-private-school-choice-college-enrollment-and-graduation>. Have students consider the results from the orientation of the different methodological issues that need to be considered such as selection bias, differences in family background, variability in resources, and the types of performance metrics used to evaluate schools in the public and private sectors. In a group discussion, have students discuss what they learned and what they would like to see in future research on the subject.

Finally, the instructor will lead a full-class discussion about broader sociological themes that students discussed. Instructors will ask students to consider the state’s role in shaping institutions, the cultural significance of schooling, and the interplay between public policy and societal values. Note, Florida’s Department of Education has useful online resources about tax-credit and voucher scholarships to private schools, including an extensive directory of private schools in the state and fact sheets related to these programs. Links below are to examples of social scientists’ efforts to empirically assess the benefits of choice-related school reforms.

Group Assignment (in class):

This group activity invites students to engage with the question of whether the comparatively low levels of voter turnout in the U.S. is problematic, and what role the government should play in addressing demographic gaps in turnout. Begin by defining voter turnout and by noting that turnout varies by country and, within the U.S., by region, age, race, and education. Next, ask students to briefly discuss in their groups two questions:

(1) Is low voter turnout a problem for a democracy? Why or why not?

(2) Should the government be responsible for increasing turnout or reducing turnout gaps between demographic groups?

Then review up-to-date trend data on voter turnout in the US, overall and broken down by different demographic groups.

Discuss how the variations in voter turnout across place and time are due to a wide range of factors at multiple levels that affect both the numerator and denominator of the voter turnout formula (e.g., various websites provide recent data on voter turnout by state and by group, such as: <https://usafacts.org/articles/how-many-americans-vote-and-how-do-voting-rates-vary-state/>). Ask students to consider what factors may influence differences in voter participation that have been shown by sociological research findings (e.g., the structure of the U.S. electoral system, voter registration requirements, felony criminal convictions, and voter disengagement and apathy).

In groups, have students take a position about whether they support or do not support the claim that low voter turnout is a problem for democracy. Depending on the group's decision, have them identify information that they are using to support their claim (e.g., the 2013 Shelby County v. Holder Supreme Court decision). Finally, have the students make a recommendation based on their position about potential policy changes in support of their position (e.g., compulsory voting, proportional representation, concurrent elections, election official professionalization) and/or what specific research is needed to better understand the issue.

UNIT IX: PROCESSES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

In this concluding unit, students examine how societies evolve over time through demographic shifts, technological innovation, cultural transformation, and collective action. The unit introduces several historical theories and frameworks and explores their application to real-world contexts.

Key Topics include:

- Urbanization, globalization, and technological development
- The emergence of urban city centers and their association with economic and social structures
- Population trends and trajectories
- Environmental factors that shape society
- Overview of collective behavior
- Historical theories and frameworks: Modernization, World Systems, Dependency Theory

Reading:

Chapter 11: Population and Urbanization

Chapter 12: Social Change and Collective Behaviors

Optional Class Activities:**CHAPTER 11****Group Assignment (in class):**

This class activity is intended to help students consider the relationship between the population structure and policy needs of a society. Bring attention to the information in the text provided about the population pyramid for the U.S. Remind students about the components that influence the shape -- population counts in age categories by sex. Then, assign students different (non-US) country population pyramids to consider. Placing students in groups of 3-4, provide a handout to each group with a population pyramid. Ask the students to discuss what kind of country they are looking at. Is it likely to be a richer or poorer country? A more economically developed or less? Is the sex ratio equal in this country? Do families seem to be big or small in this country? Do people live long or short lives compared to the US? What policies might this society need, given its population structure? Each group will then present their population pyramid to the class and their observations. After each presentation, the instructor will

reveal which country they were studying.

Instructors can select country-level pyramids from The Census Bureau website which has tools for explaining population pyramids and accessing recent country-specific population pyramids at the following sites.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/international-programs/data/tools/international-data-base.html>

https://data.census.gov/app/population_pyramids#outro

Group Assignment (in class):

This small group activity considers the metaphor of the “tragedy of the commons” and applies it to sea level rise in Florida. The activity should begin with a review of the definition of tragedy of the commons, followed by a discussion of whether it is a helpful metaphor for talking about risks related to sea level rise in Florida. Provide students recent projections of sea level rise (e.g., <https://climatecenter.fsu.edu/topics/sea-level-rise> or <https://coast.noaa.gov/slr/>) and talk about the way scientists factor in uncertainty into their projections and the challenges of undertaking a cost-benefit analysis. Have the students come up with two proposals for mitigating the human risks of sea level rise, one that emphasizes the role of planners and the state in helping residents of flood-prone areas stay in place, and another that uses government incentives to facilitate relocation of the residents out of flood-prone areas. In their small groups, ask students to write down the pros and cons of each. Once completed, have each group present an overview of their group discussion to the class.

CHAPTER 12

Online Discussion board assignment:

This assignment is designed to help students consider the role of social movements in shaping social changes. Have students select a social movement (or contrast two distinct social movements) that have been prominent in the 21st century (e.g., Anti-Vax, Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, Global Climate, Gun Rights, MAGA, Marriage Equality, Me Too, Occupy) and conduct a frame analysis of the movement(s), identifying diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames used by the movement(s). Have students describe the role that social media played in movement awareness and movement activities, with examples on TikTok, Instagram, X, and/or Facebook. Ask students to describe how the movements’ purpose and actions are covered by different types of mainstream and alternative news media, selecting news sources of varying political leanings as listed at websites like Ad Fontes Media or Allsides. Discuss how the achievements and public perceptions of social movements are shaped by different media.

<https://app.adfontesmedia.com/>

<https://www.allsides.com/media-bias/media-bias-chart>

In-Class Discussion and Group Activity (in-class):

This activity asks students to reflect on macro-level sources of social change, to envision how one source of social might shape the future, and to consider different strategies for dealing with future uncertainty and risk, with an emphasis on social connections (social capital). First, provide a lecture on the concept of social capital and describe the different types of social capital that social scientists have identified and how these have been shown to matter in crises (e.g., examples from Daniel Aldrich’s 2012 book *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*).

Next, facilitate an in-class discussion by asking the students to describe broad social forces currently transforming society (e.g., technology, migration, climate change, geopolitical conflict, population aging, shifts in globalization). Then have students break into groups and select one of the broad macro forces. Each group will then speculate on how their macro force could plausibly reshape everyday life 20 years in the future. Have students identify: a) an optimistic projection, b) a moderate projection, and c) a pessimistic projection. The projections should link social change to the kinds of uncertainty and opportunity that might result—job opportunities, changes in health or lifespan, changes to governments or public services, changes to societal inequality. Have students consider what daily life will look like in the future, the resources that might be needed to mitigate future risk or uncertainty, and how these might correspond to different social science disciplines (e.g., wealth building, political power, social connections, investments in infrastructure, leadership training).

REFERENCES

The textbook developed in support of these course materials were drawn from the following open-source textbook that was modified:

Conerly, T.R., Holmes, K., & Tamang, A.L. (2021). Introduction to sociology, 3rd Edition. OpenStax.
<http://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/>