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Florida International University
Department of Global Sociocultural Studies
SYG 2000 U06 - Introduction to Sociology – Fall 2016
A Global Learning Foundations Course

SYLLABUS

Professor: Alfredo García
Class time: Wednesdays, 5-7:40PM
Class location: Charles E. Perry (PC) 331
Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Description

Welcome! This course is an introduction to the main topics in sociological inquiry and to the sociological method of analysis. We will explore these topics with an eye towards understanding how they relate to current issues in public policy and social life both in the United States and across the globe. The goal of the course is to develop the tools necessary to understand individual experiences in the context of wider social structures. We will develop our “sociological imagination” early in the course and use this insight to analyze the different topics that we discuss. In the end, the task is to learn how to think sociologically about issues and trends in society today.

This is a Global Learning Foundations course that counts towards your Global Learning graduation requirement. A significant portion of our class time each week will be dedicated to considering our topics in a global context. How, for instance, do the trends and shifts that we discuss in one nation influences trends and shifts in other nations? How are social or cultural items taken up and reappropriated in different countries? The goal is to use our sociological imagination to increase our global awareness, to develop a global perspective, and to identify avenues for global engagement.

Required Texts

Giddens, Anthony, Mitchell Duneier, Richard P. Applebaum, and Deborah Carr. 2014. *Introduction to Sociology*, 9th Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

- Rent (\$11.49-\$19.77), Buy used (\$45.40), or Buy new (\$49.75) on Amazon
- Available at the Green Library Reserves Desk for 2-hour loans – Call Number: HM585.G53 2014
- You do NOT have to buy the book since it is available on reserve at the library

All other readings will be available through Blackboard.

Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- articulate current sociocultural trends in the U.S. and other countries.
- develop sociological questions and visualize which methods are most adequate to pursue hypotheses.

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- explain social phenomena using a “sociological imagination” that situates the individual in larger social structural contexts.

Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- view individual experiences within wider structural contexts.
- explain the interrelatedness between different social institutions.
- link sociological inquiry with other forms of empirical knowledge and pursuits.

Global Learning Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- explain how globally diverse values, beliefs, and behaviors are influenced by social forces.
- examine social processes from diverse perspectives (e.g. conflict, functionalist, and symbolic interactionist approaches).
- propose solutions to a global problem taking into account multiple perspectives.

Grading

Instead of grading on a percentage basis, this course will be graded based on a contractual understanding and pass/fail criteria. You will do all of the work that you wish to do in order to get the grade that you would like. Grades are assigned on a complete/incomplete basis, so there is no partial credit. In order to receive a passing grade for each assignment, you must turn in work that is of B quality or better. The number of quality submissions that you submit will determine which grade you will get

All requirements for each grade tier must be complete in order to receive that grade. For example, if you complete all of the assignments needed for an A grade but miss 3 classes, you will receive a B for the course. If you do not receive the minimum requirements for a D in this course, you will receive an F.

Grading Criteria					
	Absences	Exams	Responses	Instagram	Letter
For an A:	No more than 1 absence	75% or higher on midterm and final (cumulative)	8 Learning supplements	5 Instagram posts	Develop and send letter to political representative
For a B:	No more than 2 absences	75% or higher on midterm and final (cumulative)	7 Learning supplements	4 Instagram posts	
For a C:	No more than 3 absences	75% or higher on midterm and final (cumulative)	6 Learning supplements		
For a D:	No more than 4 absences	75% or higher on midterm and final (cumulative)			

In order to account for issues that may arise during the semester, each student will be given 2 tokens that they can use to replace certain assignments. Each token can replace:

- 1 absence
- 1 learning supplement
- 1 Instagram picture
- 10% bonus points on an exam

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There are no make-up exams and/or assignments, there is no grading curve, and there is no extra credit. Late materials will not be accepted.

The assignments for this course are designed around my four goals for the course:

1. For you to learn the basic terms and ideas of sociology.
2. For you to apply your new knowledge to real-world issues.
3. For you to expand your sociological imagination to the world around you.
4. For you to use all of this to act for causes that you are passionate about.

Learn

Midterm and Final Exams: The exams will be comprised of a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and essay questions designed to assess the materials discussed in class up to that point. The midterm will be an open-book exam taken at home, and you will have 3 hours to finish the exam and return your answers to me. The final exam will be taken in class. More information will be provided closer to exam time. Deadlines: The open-book, take-home midterm exam is due by Sunday, October 16, 11:59PM. The final exam will be a closed-book, in-house exam on Friday, Dec 9, 7:15-9:15PM.

Apply

Learning Supplements: How does our knowledge relate to the real world? Each week will have a series of learning assignments that you can choose to reflect on and write about. These tasks will have you consider articles from current events, listen to podcasts, look up basic facts, and will require you to synthesize the information learned in class so that you can apply it to real-world issues. I will ask students to present from their supplements during the next week's class. Each supplement is meant to be cumulative. Deadline: Every response essay is due on the Sunday night after class at 11:59PM.

Expand

Instagram Posts: What about sociology in your everyday life? Using your new view of the world, this assignment requires that you document aspects of sociology from your own life through Instagram. Five (5) photos throughout the semester are required for this assignment. More information will be given separately. Deadlines: At least two (2) Instagram posts must be posted before the midterm exam. The final three (3) posts are due by Sunday, November 27, 11:59PM.

Act

Letter to Political Representative: We will be learning about a lot of social problems in this course. Your task for this assignment is to pick one or two topics that you are passionate about and draft a professional letter addressed to your senator and house representative. More information will be given separately. Deadline: Letters are due by Sunday, December 4, 11:59PM.

Student Code of Standards

As a member of the University community, I expect that all students will follow the student code of standards as put forth by the university:

- Respect the tradition of academic inquiry, the University's rules of conduct, and its mission.
- Respect the opinions and differences of all members of the FIU community.
- Practice civility and demonstrate conduct that reflects the values of the institution.
- Respect the rights and property of the University and its members.
- Be diligent and honest in your personal and academic endeavors.

We will be discussing difficult and controversial topics in this course. As a result, it is imperative that all students uphold all of the elements of this code of standards. I reserve the right to dismiss any student that is in violation of these points.

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oVote

I will be polling students at various points in the semester using a new phone app called oVote. These surveys are meant to contribute to our discussion and should not be treated as quizzes. They do, however, form part of your participation grade and will be an essential component to the class. For every two surveys that you fail to answer, you will be marked as absent for one class.

Participation and Attendance Policy

Attendance and participation is a sizeable portion of your grade. You are expected to have read all of the week's materials prior to coming to class and must arrive prepared to discuss all of the readings and give your own input on the topics. Class time will be a mix of lecture, activities, and discussion, so be prepared to talk about the materials that have been assigned for class. We meet only once a week, so make sure to dedicate time throughout the week to do the readings. DO NOT leave it for the night before class; you will *hate* yourself.

By taking this class, you are making a commitment to attend lectures, arrive on time, and leave only when class is fully finished.

Technology is now ubiquitous and is an integral part of social interaction today. The dings, vibrations, and boinks of cell phones, tablets, and computers, however, are highly distracting for class discussions and lectures. As a result, you must turn off and put away your cell phone and computers upon entering the classroom. Laptops will not be allowed during class. Make sure to bring plenty of paper and writing utensils for class notes and activities.

It is my legal right to prohibit any kind of recording of this class, and I exercise that right. Therefore, recording devices of any kind, audio or video, are prohibited in this class. Violating this policy is illegal, and violators will be sanctioned.

Active Learning Strategies

This course will engage students through controversial/ethical discussion topics, case studies, class discussions, out-of-class assignments, and group work. The course is heavy on the reading in the front end so as to provide basic tools for our discussions later in the course. As a result of the active learning methods that will be employed during class time, it is *imperative* that you read all materials before attending class. Although I will be lecturing every week for some portion of the time, I will not be covering every detail of the readings. The task is for you to come to class prepared to learn *beyond* the textbook.

Email Policy

I am very prompt with responding to emails, but it is important that we all maintain a level of respect for each other regarding expectations for replies and emails. I refuse to answer any emails between 9PM-10AM each day. Please keep this in mind as you study for your exams and write your assignments. Most students leave questions until the last minute: do not let this happen to you.

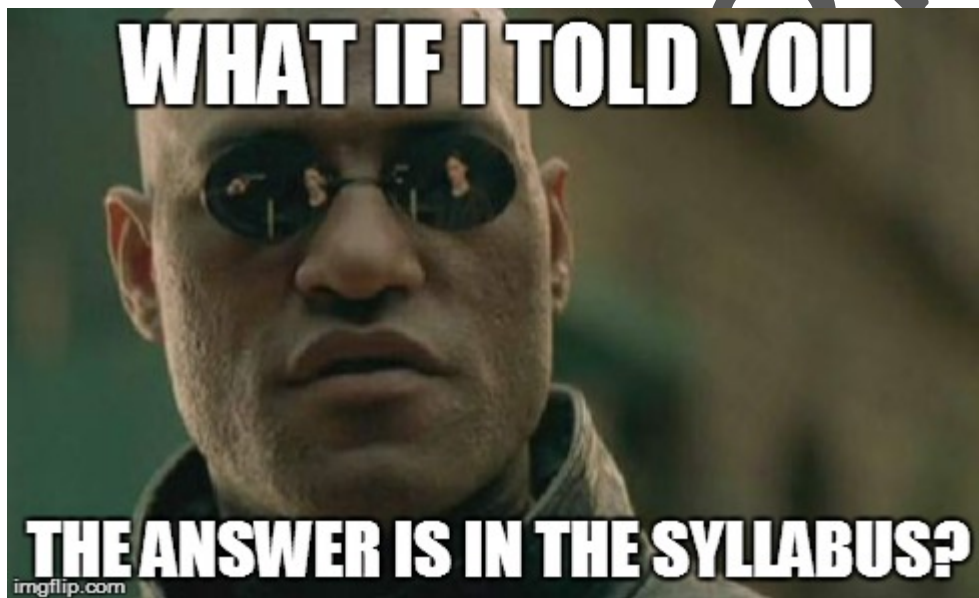
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Center for Academic Success

The Center for Academic Success is available on both campuses to support you. They provide personalized attention tailored to your needs in a user-friendly environment that includes online support. You can get help writing a paper, reading more efficiently and increasing textbook comprehension, or even creating an individualized learning plan. The center is located in the Green Library 120 at MMC and in AC1 160 at BBC. Find them online at <http://undergrad.fiu.edu/cas/learning-center/>.

Disability Clause

Students with disabilities, as defined by law, have the right to receive needed accommodation if their disabilities make it difficult to perform academic tasks in the usual way or in the allotted time frame. In order to receive accommodation, however, students must register with the Disability Resource Center in GC 190 at MMC and WUC 131 at BBC. It is your responsibility to let me know if you have a disability within the first two weeks of class.



One Last Plea

On behalf of every professor you will ever have: please, please, PLEASE make sure that you double check the syllabus before sending me questions about assignments. I retain the right to ignore any and all questions that can be answered by checking the syllabus.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Aug 24 – Introduction to Course

No readings assigned for this class.

Class activity: What do trees have to do with poverty?

MANDATORY: Visit the “How to Recognize Plagiarism” page from the Indiana University Bloomington’s School of Education and take the certification test: <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/sitemap.html>

- You must email me your certificate of completion by Sunday, August 28, 11:59PM.

Week 2: Aug 31 – Basics to Sociology

“You can tell a person is smart by their answers. You can tell a person is wise by their questions.”
Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006), Author, Winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature.

What does it mean to view the world sociologically? How is this sociological lens different from any other type of inquiry?

We will begin the course with an analysis of the field of sociology and how sociologists go about studying the world around them. C. Wright Mills’ opening chapter to his book, *The Sociological Imagination*, is a beautifully-written piece that is a go-to source understanding how to look at the world sociologically. We will be referencing this chapter time and again throughout the course, so make sure to read it thoroughly. The goal of this week is to begin developing our own sociological eye for viewing our environment so that we can learn to *ask good questions*.

Sociology, Chapter 1, “What is Sociology” (Pp. 1-28)

Sociology, Chapter 2, “Asking and Answering Sociological Questions” (Pp. 29-48)

[On Blackboard] Mills, C. Wright. 1959. “The Promise.” Pp. 3-24 in *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Learning Supplement: The Blind Men and the Elephant. Due by Sunday, September 4, 11:59PM.

Week 3: Sept 7 – Culture and Globalization

“Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months.”
Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), Author, Playwright, Novelist, Essayist, Poet.

What is “culture,” and how does it influence the shaping of society? Especially in a globalizing world in which information and trends get passed on nearly instantly through the internet, how is it that culture gets transmitted and reappropriated in different contexts?

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This week, we explore the concept of culture and combine it with the study of globalization. Beyond the discussion of defining what culture *is*, we will examine what culture *does*. How, for instance, does culture contribute to economic inequality? How do people “use” culture in their day to day lives? Our task is to add a sociological understanding of culture to our intellectual toolkit as we move forward in the course. In the process, we take a look at the movement of cultures across different social contexts.

Sociology, Chapter 3, “Culture and Society” (Pp. 51-82)

Sociology, Chapter 20, “Globalization in a Changing World” (Pp. 635-667)

Learning Supplement: Why Diamond Rings are a Scam. Due by Sunday, September 11, 11:59PM.

Week 4: Sept 14 – NO CLASS

No classes on this day. Enjoy the day off!

Week 5: Sept 21 – Human Interaction and Technological Change

“The first AOL Instant Message was sent by Ted Leonsis to his wife on Jan. 6, 1993. It read, ‘Don’t be scared...it is me. Love you and miss you.’ His wife replied, ‘Wow...this is so cool!’”
Yahoo! Finance, April 23, 2013¹

What comprises social interaction? And how are these interactions changing in a digital age?

A significant amount of sociological activities involve interactions between individuals. At work, at school, at home: as social animals, we are constantly encountering people throughout our days. Part of sociological inquiry, then, addresses these kinds of interactions at the ground level in everyday life. This week, we will focus on those interactions and will extend our inquiry to understanding how these interactions have changed with the ubiquity of technology. Does an emoticon smiley mean the same thing as a real smile? Has the internet fundamentally changed the way that we interact one-on-one?

Sociology, Chapter 5, “Social Interaction and Everyday Life in the Age of the Internet” (Pp. 107-132)

Listen to podcast episode from *Invisibilia* (February 12, 2015): “Our Computers, Ourselves” (available on our Blackboard site and at <http://www.npr.org/podcasts/510307/invisibilia>)

Class activity: How do you express tone through text?

Learning Supplement: How has technology changed human interaction in mating and dating? Due by Sunday, September 25, 11:59PM.

¹ <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/the-first-ever-email--the-first-tweet--and-12-other-famous-internet-firsts-181209886.html>

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Week 6: Sept 28 – Crime and Punishment – Guest Lecture, Dr. Valerie George, FIU

"I am going to be face to face with Jesus now....I love you all very much. I will see you all when you get there....I will wait for you."

Last words before execution by lethal injection, Texas, by Karla Faye Tucker Brown, d. February 3, 1998

[Spoken to the executioner] "I love you."

Last words before execution by lethal injection, New York, by Sean Flannagan, d. June 23, 1989²

How is crime a normal part of societies? And how do our responses to crime lead to unintended consequences?

The United States has the unfortunate distinction of being the nation with the largest percentage of incarcerated individuals. The vast majority of these prisoners are, moreover, African American males. Today, approximately one in three black males will have spent time in a jail or prison, thus leading to a dramatic inequality in the incarceration system. This week, we will focus on issues related to crime and punishment in the United States so that it can serve as a comparison case for other nations.

Sociology, Chapter 7, "Conformity, Deviance, and Crime" (Pp. 161-190)

[On Blackboard] Kelling, George L., and James Q. Wilson. 1982. "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety." *The Atlantic*.

Learning Supplement: The New Jim Crow. Due by Sunday, October 2, 11:59PM.

Week 7: Oct 5 – Coming Together

"What characterizes a member of a minority group is that he is forced to see himself as both exceptional and insignificant, marvelous and awful, good and evil."

Norman Mailer (1923-2007), American novelist, journalist, essayist, playwright, film-maker, actor

What is the power of groups and group formation? And how do the connections we make influence our own life chances?

One of the most difficult concepts to piece apart in sociology is the extent to which our own life is influenced by those that surround us. Who our friends are, who grew up in our neighborhoods, who we meet in school: the people that we connect with can influence the types of jobs we get, the types of views we hold, and even how tolerant we might be. This week we will discuss the nature of networks and how other people influence who we are and how we act. In the process, we will consider where our own individual actions (agency) meet the influences of the social context we are embedded in (structure).

Sociology, Chapter 6, "Groups, Networks, and Organizations" (Pp. 133-160)

[On Blackboard] Goodall, Jane. 1999. "Precursors to War." Pp. 125-136 in *Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey*. New York: Warner Books.

² <http://www.corsinet.com/braincandy/dying2.html>

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Learning Supplement: Learning to love your enemy. Due by Sunday, October 9, 11:59PM.

Week 8: Oct 12 – Inequality

“As long as poverty, injustice, and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest.”
Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), anti-apartheid revolutionary, politician, philanthropist, Winner of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize

Is economic inequality an inevitable part of social life? What areas of social life should be considered when thinking about alleviating inequality?

This week, we will analyze the current state of economic inequality in the United States and how historical social shifts have led to our current reality. We will bring into discussion our previous knowledge on culture, groups, and crime/punishment for understanding how these different areas interconnect. After considering the U.S. context, we will then discuss the question of global inequality and larger world systems. How do global patterns shape inequalities across countries, for instance? And how do policies influence the perpetuation of those inequalities?

Sociology, Chapter 8, “Stratification, Class, and Inequality” (Pp. 191-228)

No Learning Supplement this week. Study hard for your midterm! Make sure you have submitted 2 Instagram posts by the midterm deadline.

Sun, Oct 16 – Midterm Due, 11:59PM

Week 9: Oct 19 – Gender

“A man does what he can; a woman does what a man cannot.”
From Inés of My Soul, by Isabel Allende (b. 1942), Chilean-American writer

How is gender a socially-constructed item? In what way does one’s gender influence one’s social and economic life chances?

Gender is just male or female, right? Well, it turns out that things might be more intricate than that. We will discuss the complications of gender this week and will articulate the ways in which gender is a socially-constructed phenomenon. We will focus in particular on the way that gender shapes a person’s life chances. We all know, for instance, the statistics that say that women make less, on average, than men in a variety of occupations. But what are the elements that comprise this disparity? Why would a person’s gender influence their paycheck if we assume all other things as being equal?

Sociology, Chapter 10, “Gender Inequality” (Pp. 255-290)

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[On Blackboard] Ridgeway, Cecilia. 2011. "A Primary Frame for Organizing Social Relations." Pp. 32-55 in *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

"What are Gender Barriers Made Of?" *Freakonomics* Podcast. Narrated by Stephen Dubner, Produced by Kim Gittleson. (36:29 min) Available at <http://freakonomics.com/podcast/gender-barriers/>

Class activity: Why do bathrooms matter so much?

Learning Supplement: Pink or Blue? Due by Sunday, October 23, 11:59PM

Week 10: Oct 26 – Money and Work

"I am a greater believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it."
Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), American Founding Father and Third U.S. President

How do people interact with (and within) markets? What are some of the ways in which labor today is different from just 50 or 60 years ago?

Work is a significant part of social life. Many of us spend most of our days working in wage labor or in other economic activities. The advent of technology and the increase in globalization, however, have radically transformed markets across the world. What comprises "work" today is dramatically different than it was decades ago, and the possible futures of labor are vast. The plethora of apps, services like Uber, and the knowledge economy have all been key elements of this new world of labor. We will link our discussion this week with our previous discussions on culture, inequality, gender, and networks.

Sociology, Chapter 14, "Work and Economic Life" (Pp. 395-434)

Sociology, Chapter 9, "Global Inequality" (Pp. 229-245)

Class activity: What do different images of work tell us about social context?

Learning Supplement: Work Today: Employee or Independent Contractor? Due by Sunday, October 30, 11:59PM.

Week 11: Nov 2 – Family

"I sustain myself with the love of family."
Maya Angelou (1928-2014), American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist.

What is a "modern family"? How are changes in the family structure a *cause* in other social changes? In what ways are changes in the family structure an *effect* of social changes?

The hit TV show, *Modern Family*, has been incredibly influential in popularizing the very concept of a "modern" family. Whereas the idea of "family" was mainly isolated to heterosexual couples with children, today there are several iterations of the family structure: divorced, lesbian, dual-income,

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interracial, and others. This week we consider how intimate relationships—both within and without the family context—have changed over time and how these changes are manifest in different global contexts.

Sociology, Chapter 15, “Families and Intimate Relationships” (Pp. 435-470)

Sociology, Chapter 4, “Socialization and the Life Cycle” (Pp. 83-106)

Learning Supplement: What does it mean to live in an “Accordion Family”? Due by Sunday, November 6, 11:59PM.

Week 12: Nov 9 – Education

“If you want to get laid, go to college. If you want an education, go to the library.”
Frank Zappa (1940-1993), American musician, songwriter, composer, actor, and filmmaker

There is a “power” to knowledge, but what is this “power” that we speak of? What does it mean to talk about “human capital”?

Data from a variety of sources continually demonstrate that levels of education directly correlate to higher levels of life outcomes. From health to wages, family life to community life, many aspects of societies increase in positive directions with levels of education. But what one learns in educational settings goes beyond the content that is provided in textbooks, lectures, and homework assignments. This week, we will explore the social consequences of educational attainment and some of the current controversies associated with racial differences in educational outcomes. We will consider, in particular, issues related to race, ethnicity, and inequality, and how these factors contribute to the educational achievement gap.

Sociology, Chapter 16, “Education” (Pp. 471-500)

Sociology, Chapter 11, “Ethnicity and Race” (Pp. 291-320)

Learning Supplement: Good kids, bad schools. Due by Sunday, November 13, 11:59PM.

Week 13: Nov 16 – Public Health – Guest Lecture, Dr. Cristina Fernandez, Harvard University

“At 50, everyone has the face s/he deserves.”
George Orwell (1903-1950), English novelist, essayist, journalist, and critic

How do societal factors influence our own health and well-being? And how are these factors changing with increasing elderly populations?

From second-hand smoke to the SARS virus, we have all heard of topics in the news related to public health issues and how other people’s actions can affect our own health and well-being. Even with increases in technology and lowering mortality rates, there are several widespread public health issues that countries worldwide must contend with. Should vaccines, for instance, be mandatory for all citizens? How can biological agents become weapons of mass destruction? This week, we consider

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questions related to public health and aging and will consider how social structures influence our individual health.

Sociology, Chapter 12, "Aging" (Pp. 321-352)

Sociology, Chapter 18, "The Sociology of the Body: Health, Illness, and Sexuality" (Pp. 547-588)

Learning Supplement: The Ebola outbreak and global public health. Due by Sunday, November 20, 11:59PM.

Week 14: Nov 23 – NO CLASS

Enjoy your Thanksgiving weekend with your friends and family!

Week 15: Nov 30 – Wrapping Up, Review Session, and Final Words

"Forgive, O Lord, my little jokes on Thee / and I'll forgive The great big one on me."
Robert Frost (1874-1963), American poet, Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

How does religious faith shape other aspects of social life? And what do the current trends of religious life in the United States indicate about possible future sociocultural shifts?

Religion is one of the most important and longstanding institutions in social life worldwide. As we have seen with recent global trends, moreover, religion is one of the motivating factors for conflicts, collaborations, and peace-making strategies. It is vastly important, therefore, to understand how religious belief, belonging, and behaviors influence social life. We begin our discussion with the U.S. and then branch out to discuss other nations. Along with being an outlier in incarceration rates, the United States is also an outlier among other nations in terms of levels of religious participation and identity. But recent data have demonstrated that more and more people are identifying with no religion. What may lie behind these trends, and how does this tie in with shifts in religiosity elsewhere in the globe?

Sociology, Chapter 17, "Religion in Modern Society" (Pp. 501-544)

No Learning Supplement for this week.

Final Exam – Friday, Dec 9, 7:15-9:15PM