Introduction to Sociology
SOCY 1101, Fall 2024
Tuesdays & Thursdays
11am – 12:15pm
3613 James Hall

Professor Naomi Braine
3103 James Hall
Office hours 1-2pm Thursday
nbraine@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the discipline of Sociology. At its most basic, sociology is the study of society and social life: how societies are organized, the social institutions, cultures, and norms that structure our social worlds and daily lives, and often interact with in a taken for granted fashion. Sociology encourages us to re-think "common sense," and to see the familiar through new eyes as something strange and different. Together we will explore the social structures that provide the context for our lives, and critically examine the social institutions and systems of power that shape our worlds. In the process, we will develop what has been called "sociological imagination" or, more recently, "sociological curiosity," a way of asking questions about the world around us that can lead to new insights and understands.

Societies are very complex, and so, unsurprisingly, sociology is a very broad discipline. It is not possible to cover all aspects of sociology in one course. We will focus on a few specific elements of sociology that provide a basis for understanding the discipline and enable you to think critically about the world around them: 1) sociological imagination and asking questions, 2) power and structural inequality, and 3) selected social institutions. Within each area of focus, we will explore key sociological perspectives and analysis, apply these perspectives to our lives and worlds, and develop the ability to think critically about power and the institutions that shape our lives.

Course learning outcomes:

In this class, you will learn to

1) Examine social life beyond your own experience, recognize social and cultural patterns and processes, and ask new questions about the contexts that shape daily life: i.e. develop a "sociology imagination"
2) Understand basic sociological concepts and theories, and apply them to real world lived experiences
3) Strengthen critical thinking and analytical skills through reading, writing, and integrating concepts from the course materials into analyses of your own life and surrounding world

Assignments:

15 pts	Attendance and participation
15 pts	Weekly annotations (credit/no credit)
5 pts	Photo illustration of concept (1 week; no credit/1/2 credit/full credit)
	No credit if don't do it on your week
	½ credit if post photo with no explanation, or misunderstand concept
	Full credit if post photo and explanation that correctly links to concept
10 pts	3 in-class quizzes (short essay questions, 5 pts each, drop lowest grade)
25 pts	Sociological autobiography
30 pts	Photovoice final project (illustrate 5 concepts, NOT including weekly photo)

Attendance and participation (15 points total)

Students are expected to attend all classes, to arrive on time, and be actively engaged throughout the class period. Students can miss 2 class periods without a documented excuse, but missed class periods beyond that will result in loss of attendance credit unless a doctor's note or other appropriate documentation is provided. If you are ill, please get a note from a medical provider. If you know you will need to miss a class period, the let the professor know in advance. I understand that life is unpredictable at time, and timely communication is central to managing how life's ups and downs affect your engagement with the class.

Weekly annotations (15 points total)

Students are required to post questions and comments on the readings every week using the Annotate function in Hypothesis. We will review the use of this function in class, and students can get tech support as needed. Annotations are credit/no credit: if you post a question or comment on the reading, then you receive credit, and if you don't post then you will not receive credit. These weekly comments/questions will be used to shape class on Tuesdays, so they cannot be made up later. Students must post their comment/question BEFORE the class begins on Tuesday in order to receive credit.

Photo illustration of concept (5 points)

Every Thursday, starting 9/14, a few students will each post a photo to illustrate a concept from the reading along with a paragraph explaining what the photo is about, what concept the photo illustrates and how it illustrates that concept. On 9/7, Students will choose what week they will be responsible for the photo illustration. The photo plus paragraph of description will be posted on a weekly blog (called a "forum") and will be used to shape discussion in class on the day it is due; it must be posted BEFORE class on Thursday to receive credit. Photo illustrations are graded in the following way:

full credit (photo + paragraph posted on time, demonstrating correct understanding of concept)
½ credit (photo + paragraph posted on time, but problems with understanding of concept)
No credit (photo + paragraph NOT posted on time)

In-class quizzes (10 points)

There will be 3 short, in-class quizzes during the semester. Each quiz will consist of 1 or 2 short-answer questions and will be worth 5 points. At the end of the semester, the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Students who receive 5 points on all 3 quizzes will receive 10 points for the quizzes plus 2 extra credit points for excellent understanding of material.

Sociological autobiography (5-6 pages, 25 points)

A central aspect of Sociological Curiosity is learning to think about the intersection of our personal lives with societal histories and systems, and the relationship between personal troubles and social issues. The sociological autobiography requires you to turn a critical eye on your own personal life and experiences, things many of us take for granted, and look at them through a sociological lens. To do this, you will need to step back from your ordinary world and day to day life to place those in larger contexts and "make the familiar strange."

A more detailed description of the assignment will be handed out in class and posted on the website, which will offer a basic framework for the essay and questions to help you get started. Students are required to hand in a draft, receive feedback, and then revise to create the final autobiography that will be graded. The sociological autobiography will function as a midterm exam for the class.

Photovoice final project (30 points, 5 photos and 7-9 pages)

The final project is an expanded version of the weekly photo assignment: students will use 5 photos to illustrate 5 different sociological concepts, and write 3-4 paragraphs about each photo with a definition of the concept and an analysis of how the photo illustrates the concept. The photos and concepts MUST BE DIFFERENT from the ones you used for your weekly photo assignment, and both the definition of concept and analysis will be more in-depth than the weekly assignment, reflecting your greater knowledge and understanding achieved by the end of the semester. A more detailed assignment will be handed out in class.

The final project will develop in 3 stages: 1) students are REQUIRED to hand in a DRAFT of the project on 11/21, before Thanksgiving; 2) in the last week of class, students will do a presentation of their photos and analysis to the class; and 3) the final version will be due during exam week, on the day assigned for the final exam for the class. There is no final exam, and the final project will function as a substitute for an exam.

Class schedule

Intro to Sociology and Brooklyn College

8/29 (Thurs) Orientation to class and semester
Review website, syllabus and assignments, and expectations for the semester

9/3 (Tues) Can Sociology help us understand Brooklyn College?
Read: https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/pages/1-1-what-is-sociology
In class: What is Sociology? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnCJU6PaCio
Small groups: What do you remember about your first impression of Brooklyn College
How did that change over the summer orientation program?
How does it seem different now that semester has started?

9/5 Sociology of the college experience
Read and post comments (on 1 of the readings, not both)
https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2020/07/is-college-for-jobs-or-expanding-the-mind-why-not-both.html
https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2017/12/followfirstgenerationacademics.html
Sign up for weekly photo illustration

What is Sociology?

9/10 Thinking about self and society
Read: Allan *Johnson The Forest and the Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise*
Temple University Press, 2008, pgs 13 - 25 (pdf)
Post questions/comments

9/12 Exploration of self and society
1st photo illustrations posted

9/17 Sociological Imagination and Sociological curiosity
Read: 1) C. Wright Mills *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford Univ Press, chapter 1 (pdf)
2) J. Jacobs "Sociological Curiosity: Updating C. wright Mills"
Contexts, vol 20(3) (pdf)

9/19 Personal problems and social troubles
2nd photo illustration
In class: social construction of reality https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3W-PDIlUsE
Introduce sociological autobiography assignment

Culture, Norms, Individual and Society

9/24 Culture and norms
Read: Dalton Conley *You May Ask Yourself* WW Norton 4th edition pgs 113-127 (pdf)
In class: "Culture shock" https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/pages/3-1-what-is-culture

9/26 culture, norms, and socialization
3rd photo illustration
Discuss sociological autobiography

10/1 Individuals, society, and social interaction
Read: Dalton Conley *You May Ask Yourself* WW Norton 4th edition pg 132-145 (pdf)

10/3 No Class, College Closed

10/8 social interaction and shared realities
4th photo illustration
DUE: draft of sociological autobiography

10/10 Social interactions and shared realities in times of pandemic
K Gutierrez "Chinatown Through a Pandemic: A Phoenix Rising"
E.L. Lopez "'Zoom School' and the Digital Divide in Immigrant Communities During COVID-19"
Both from J. Entin, J. Theoharis, and A Aja (eds) *Until We Are Seen: Public College Students Expose the Inequalities of the COVID-19 Pandemic*. U Penn Press 2024

Power and inequality, intersectionality

10/15 No Class, conversion day (classes follow Monday schedule)

10/17 Power and social institutions: linked concepts
Read: https://helpfulprofessor.com/social-institutions-in-sociology/
In class: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_Eutci7ack
In class: https://www.sociologyguide.com/basic-concepts/Social-Institutions.php

10/22 Gender
Read: Lorber, J. (1994). "'Night to his day': The social construction of gender." *Paradoxes of gender*, *1*, 1-8. (pdf)
In class: Gender fluidity and colonialism https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-53573764

10/24 intersectional perspectives on gender
5th photo illustration
In class: "What is intersectionality" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-xZKHhdMEc
Drafts of autobiography returned

10/29 Race
1) watch Race: The Power of an Illusion, part 3: the House We Live In
https://www.kanopy.com/en/brooklyn/video/66397
2) Read: Goldberg et al "Youth Views on Race" *Contexts*, vol 21(1) (pdf)

10/31 intersectional perspectives on race
6th photo illustration
In class: Kimberly Crenshaw TED https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o
DUE: Sociological autobiography

11/5 Immigration
Read: https://contexts.org/articles/the-economics-of-migration/

11/7 Intersectional perspectives on immigration
In class: https://contexts.org/blog/navigating-the-path-to-legal-status-part-one/
https://contexts.org/blog/navigating-the-path-to-legal-status-part-two/
7th photo illustration

Weeks 9 -13: Social institutions (power, structural inequality)

11/12 Education
Read: Jean Anyon "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work"
Journal of Education vol 162(1). (pdf)

11/14 Education as lived experience
In class: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5fx616qn
8th photo illustration

11/19 Policing/Criminal Justice
https://jacobin.com/2017/10/police-reform-prisons-racism-vitale

11/21 Policing in NYC
9th photo illustration

11/26 Family as a social institution
Read: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/15365042231192494
Draft of final project due

11/28 THANKSGIVING

Week 14: Social Change

12/3 Social movements and social change
Read: Dalton Conley *You May Ask Yourself* WW Norton 4th edition pgs 697 – 713 (pdf)

12/5 Climate activism
10th photo illustration
Drafts returned

12/10 Social movements, CUNY, and the origins of the SEEK Program
Movie: The 5 Demands

12/12 presentations of final projects
12/14 presentations of final projects

Final projects due during exam week on date assigned for the final exam