SOCIOLOGY BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY:
USING YOUR MAJOR IN THE WORLD
Major Project Seminar/Fall 2017 / Soc. 4966W / Section 01/ Tues-Thurs 2:30-3:45pm, Blegen Hall 120

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Course Overview: This course is designed to: a) provide you with an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned as a sociology major; b) use that knowledge to write a senior research project based on community service learning; and c) think about how the knowledge, skills, and insights of the sociological enterprise can be used and applied outside of the University. The main goal of the course is to guide you through the process of writing your senior thesis paper, a graduation requirement for all Sociology majors. Course materials encourage you to reflect on the role of sociological knowledge in the contemporary world and to connect your sociological knowledge to a community-based senior research project. Classes will include a combination of lectures, active learning exercises, videos, guest speakers, and small group discussions of the required readings.

Readings: The required course readings were selected to help to guide your research, stimulate your sociological imagination, and provide concepts and theories that will help you analyze data from your community service learning sites; they will also be useful for participating in the world around you after college. The required readings are available in in a course package that can be purchased at Paradigm Course Resources, East Bank, 720 Washington Avenue SE. Be sure to complete the required readings prior to the class for which they are assigned and bring the Course Reader with you to class since you will need them for our small group discussions and in-class writing assignments. To get a good grade for this class, you will need to do the required readings on time, come to class prepared to discuss them, and be able to connect the concepts, theories, and findings discussed in the readings to your experiences and interactions at a local community organization. You are required to make use of relevant course readings in your research paper and are encouraged to utilize relevant readings from prior sociology courses to inform your research and construct the bibliography for your research paper.
Course Requirements: In addition to regular attendance and active participation, the primary requirement of this course is for students to complete the senior research project. This involves a series of small writing assignments throughout the semester, culminating in a 14 page (12 font and double-spaced) research paper submitted as first and final drafts. Students have a choice of two options for completing this requirement, both of which are service learning-based.

(1) Service Learning Fieldwork Research
This option will involve writing a sociological report and analysis based on community service learning with a local organization of your choice. This paper will be based on a minimum of thirty hours of community service work completed during the course of the semester. Your final page paper should focus on how sociological insights and concepts help you to better understand the interactions you observed among participants in this community organization. It should connect what you have learned in your sociology classes and from this course to what you have observed at your service learning site, making use of your sociological imagination to place the organization and its participants in the context of larger social structures of opportunities and constraints, and to connect your observations to relevant insights in the readings included on your paper’s bibliography.

(2) Service Learning Action Project Research
This project will also require a minimum of thirty hours of community service work, but it will involve working on a project of direct relevance or immediate concern to a local agency or community group. The project might involve a variety of possible tasks such as creating program materials or conducting a small research study for the organization; as the exact nature of the project and the final paper will vary, you need to work it out with both the organization and the instructors. Your final paper should be putting sociological ideas and knowledge into practice, i.e., documenting/analyzing specific concerns of your organization, for their use and benefit. Examples include: analyzing a neighborhood’s housing shortage over time (and its causes and effects), analyzing differentiated access to basic amenities such as health care services or affordable day care facilities, or distribution of air pollution across neighborhoods, or differentiated access to public transport and its uneven community effects.

In both options, the following same assignments are required:

a) Your weekly participation and written responses to in-class assignments.

b) Your field note journal, accompanied by a 3-4 page reflection paper, due on Thurs, October 19th. This will include fieldwork observations (i.e. your “raw data”) along with reflections that connect them to relevant sociological concepts, theories, and findings, thus situating your case study in a broader context.

c) A research project proposal and bibliography, due on Thurs, November 9th, will identify a central research question and connect it to issues covered in course readings and in
scholarly books or articles you choose to include in your paper’s bibliography (a list of 7-10 scholarly readings that inform your research project). First drafts of your paper are due in class on Thurs., November 30th. Your final 14 page paper, due no later than 3pm on Monday December 18th, to my office (1070 SSB) or the Sociology Dept office (909 Social Sciences Bldg), should focus on how sociological insights and concepts help you to better understand the interactions you observed among participants in this community organization, or the social (and ecological) conditions in the community which you are studying. It should connect what you have learned in your sociology classes and from this course to what you have observed at your service learning site, making use of your sociological imagination to place the organization, its participants, and issues they are working on within the context of larger social structures of opportunities and constraints. The final draft of your fieldwork-based or action project will be accompanied by a one-page note that explains what changes you have made in response to our comments on your first draft.

**Grades:** Your grade will depend in part on your ability to connect observations at your community service learning site to the readings and material covered in class. Hence it is necessary to keep up with the required readings, regularly attend classes in which they will be discussed and applied, and use various handouts distributed in class. Failure to do so will negatively affect your grade. In order to receive a final grade of A or A-, you must satisfactorily complete all of the in-class writing assignments and be an active and engaged participant in class discussions. Your in-class writing assignments and class participation will constitute **15% of your final grade.** Your **field note journals** and an accompanying **reflection paper,** plus your **research proposal and one page bibliography,** combine to constitute **30% of your final grade.** The **first and final drafts** of your final research paper will be graded separately, with the first draft constituting **20% of your final grade and the final draft reflecting 35% of your grade.**

Incompletes will be given only in rare circumstances and only if you can provide prior written documentation. In the absence of a documented illness or family emergency, late assignments and failure to complete the full thirty hours of community service learning will negatively affect your grade.

**Field Note Journals and Reflection Papers**
Each time you visit your community service learning site, you should take lots of field notes as soon afterward as you can. These should be recorded in a field note journal, which should include a mix of observations, descriptions, diagrams/drawings, and analysis. The notes should consist of descriptions of events and interactions you have seen, fragments of conversations you have overheard, and ideas for analysis. Your reflection paper will develop themes and ideas based on what you have written in your journal and discussed in class. Each week, we will provide handouts designed to help guide journal entries, but feel free to be creative in also
connecting your experiences to course readings, class discussions, and knowledge from prior courses. The reflection paper should make analytic points, using concepts, theories, and insights from the readings, and providing evidence to support the analysis. The reflection paper is where you comment on the sociological significance of what you experienced and observed, and tell us what is interesting and important, from a sociological perspective, about your field observations.

**Course Websites:** The course syllabus as well as service learning materials, handouts, and relevant website links are available at the class website. You can log in to the website directly at http://www.moodle.umn.edu or at the classes tab in your “myU” portal. The website for the Center for Community-Engaged Learning (CCEL) is www.servicelearning.umn.edu

**You must select your learning site by Tuesday, September 19th** by filling out a referral form and participant agreement. Log in to http:www.servicelearning.umn.edu and complete the Referral Request by clicking on the course name on your home page.

**Community Service Learning:** You must keep track of your hours on the CCEL website and have the hours approved by your supervisor by the time you turn in your final paper. The service learning coordinator for our class is Monica Siems (siems005@umn.edu; 612-624-6574). Misrepresenting hours completed at a community site or spent working on an action project constitutes academic dishonesty. If you are going to miss a scheduled time at your CSL site, be sure to notify the staff member you report to as far in advance as possible. **Please be aware of privacy issues and always practice ethical research.** You may acquire information about individuals that is covered by ethical guidelines about confidentiality, so speak to your community supervisor about how confidentiality obligations apply to you. You should not take pictures at your service learning site without following the policy the organization has in place, which often involves securing written permission. During class discussions, be careful about revealing any information that could be used to personally identify any individual you work with in your service learning. Be especially attentive about the information you disclose about your service learning experience when you are presenting for a public audience. Please note that criminal background checks are required for some service-learning placements, especially those that involve working with vulnerable populations, and this can take time.

**Technology:** Unless you have documented special needs that require the use of a computer in the classroom, I do not allow computer (or IPAD/phone) usage during class time, other than my own. I realize that many students like to take notes on their laptops, but the availability of chat functions, e-mail, and the web have compromised this possibility. **All electronic products with a screen of any size, including cell phones and any other devices, should be turned off during class at all times.** If there is an emergency and you need to use your phone, please leave the room rather than disrupt our class.

**Student Writing Support:** Since the ability to clearly express your thoughts in writing is a key skill that you need to continue to develop, poor spelling and grammar will negatively affect your grade. Student Writing Support provides free writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students at all stages of the writing process. In face-to-face and online collaborative
consultations, SWS helps students develop productive writing habits and revision strategies. Some consultants at the writing lab specialize in working with non-native speakers while others have experience concerning writing in specific disciplines, such as Sociology. The SWS main location is 15 Nicolson Hall, 215 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. e-mail: writing@umn.edu; appointments: 612-625-1893; information: 612-626-7579. Check out excellent SWS web-based quick help resources at: http://www.writing.umn.edu/sws/quick_help/index.htm

For your paper’s bibliography and in-text citations, use ASA format: http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_ASA_Style.pdf

**Academic Dishonesty:** The University defines academic dishonesty as “plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission.” Since this is a writing intensive course, it is important that you understand what plagiarism means as well as what activities constitute academic dishonesty. If you have any questions, we will be happy to answer them in class or during our office hours. Be sure to talk to us if you are not clear about this issue. See the College of Liberal Arts policies attached at the end of this syllabus for more information. For this course, a student engaged in scholastic dishonesty will be assigned a penalty up to an F grade for the course and the incident will be formally reported to the U. of M. Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

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**Course Schedule and Required Readings**

**Week 1  Introduction and Community Service Learning**

Tuesday, September 5: Course Overview and Objectives
   - Handout #1: Getting to Know You
   - Handout #2: Student Survey
Create discussion groups

**Required Reading:** Read the websites of community organizations that interest you.

**Purchase Course Reader** from Paradigm Course Resources, East Bank, 720 Washington Avenue SE.

**Unit 1: Sociological Knowledge, Public Sociology, and Community Service Learning**

Thursday, September 7: Community Service Learning Panel Discussion
Week 2  Sociological Knowledge and the field

Tues., Sept. 12: What is Sociology? The Big Questions
Discussion of Required Readings

Handout #3: What is Sociology? – Four Questions

Required Readings:


Thurs., Sept. 14: Field Sites and Fieldwork

Discuss Handouts and projects
Handout #4: Fieldwork Journals
Handout #5: Human Subjects Guidelines for Senior Projects in Sociology

Week 3  Public Sociology

Tues., September 19: Sociology for Whom? Sociology for What?
   YouTube Video: Michael Burawoy, “For Public Sociology, Part 3”. (10m58s)
   Handout #6: Biography, Society, and Success: Seeing Social Structures

You must select a community service learning organization to study by today and register online

Required Reading:

Thurs., September 21: Politics, Culture and Barriers to Public Sociology
Discussion of Required Readings
Required Reading:

Week 4 Community Service Learning and Community Based Research

Tues., September 26: Ethics and Morality in Social Science Research
YouTube Video: Dave Meslin, “The Antidote to Apathy.” Ted Talk (7m5s)

Required Reading:

Thurs., September 28: The Potential Benefits & Pitfalls of Community Service Learning
Discussion: Trust and Community-Based Research

Handout #7: Initial Impressions of Your Community Service Learning Organization
Be sure to bring your fieldwork journals to class today.

Required Reading:

Unit II. Designing and Implementing an Ethnographic Research Project

Week 5 Moving From Topics to Research Questions

Tues., October 3: What is a Good Research Question?

Required Reading:

Thurs., October 5: Discussion: Developing a Qualitative Research Project
Handout #8: Identifying a Topic and Research Question

Required Reading:

Week 6 Doing Ethnography: Observing Behavior, Taking Field Notes, & Conducting Interviews

Tues., October 10: Field Work Observations of Language, Power, and Gender
Video, Amy Cuddy “Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are,” Ted Talks
www.ted.com; 20m55s;
Handout #9: Observing Language and Body Language Behaviors at Your Community Service Learning Site

Required Readings:

Thurs., October 12: Small Group Discussion: Jottings, Field Notes, and Interviews
Handout #10: Reflecting on Your Service Learning Experience
Handout #11: Field Notes and Reflection Paper Grading Guidelines
Handout #12: Small Group Discussion Guidelines and Responsibilities

Week 7 Ethnography and the Study of Local Cultures

Tues., October 17: Video: “Method: Sidewalk and Ethnography” (50 minutes)

Required Readings:


Thurs., October 19: Small Group Discussion: Meaning Systems and Funding Sources in Non-Profit Organizations
FIELDNOTES AND REFLECTION PAPER DUE today

Required Reading:


Week 8  *Using Concepts and Theories to Interpret and Analyze Data*

Tues., October 24: Concepts in Social Research

Handout #13: From Observation to Analysis
Handout #14: Mid-Semester Course Evaluation

Important: Before coming to class, read the Sandstrom/Martin/Fine article and select and define two concepts that you will use to analyze your data.

Required Reading:

Thurs., October 26: Small Group Discussion: Roles and the Coordination of Social Behavior

Handout #15: Studying Roles and Analyzing Social Interactions

Week 9  *Using the Relevant Literature and Situating Yourself in the Research Process*

Tues., October 31: The Role of the Literature in Developing a Research Project

Required Reading:

Literature review article, tba

Thurs., November 2:  Small Group Discussion: Emotions and Understanding in Social Research
Handout #16: Situating Yourself in the Research Process
Handout #17: Service Learning Research Proposal/Bibliography Grading Guidelines
Handout #18: Service Learning Action Project: Proposal Grading Guidelines

Required Reading:

Unit III. Ethnographic Studies of Inequality: Race, Class, and Gender

Week 10 Racial Inequality

Tues., November 7 What is Racism in America
YouTube Video: Eric Deggans, Tedx Talk, “How to Talk about Race”
(9m46s)
Handout #19: Racial Stereotypes and Discrimination

Required Readings:


Thurs., November 9 Small Group Discussions of Required Readings on Race and of Your Community Service Learning Project Proposals

RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE IN CLASS

Week 11 Class Inequality and Poverty

Tues., November 14 Social Class, Life Chances, Life Experiences, and Inequality
YouTube Videos: “Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class.” Part 2: 13m27s; “A Nation of Tribes: How Social Class Divides Us- People Like Us” Episode #1 (9m27s)
**Required Reading:**

Thurs., November 16  Small Group Discussion: Classism and Class Cultures

Handout #20: Social Class and Structural Forces

**Required Reading:**

**Week 12  Gender Inequality and Discrimination**

Tues., November 21  Small Group Discussion: Observing Gender Inequality
   Tedx Video: Mikki Hebl. “Modern Discrimination: Subtle but Significant.” 18m 37s.

Handout #21: Gendered Bodies and Marked Women
Handout #22: Grading Guidelines for Research Papers
Handout #23: Grading Guidelines for Action Projects

**Required Readings:**


**Thursday: Thanksgiving, eat and sleep! No class**

**Week 13  Writing Your Research Paper**

Tues., November 28: Advice for Writing Your Papers

Handout #24: Making Your Arguments Convincing

Thurs., November 30: Small Group Discussion of First Drafts
No Required Reading: Work on your first draft.

**First drafts due in class**

**Week 14: Revising Your Research Paper**

Tues., December 5: **No Class**
Use this time to put in more hours at your community service learning organization. Be sure to complete your 30 hours by this week.

Thurs., December 7: Return of First Drafts and Advice for Revising Your Research Paper

Handout #25: Writing a Revision Memo for Your Final Draft

**Week 15: Reflecting on Your Fieldwork Experience and Final Paper**

Tues., December 12: Discussion of Field Experiences and Research Papers

Last Class; Discuss/work on final papers.

Final papers due in my office, 1070 Social Sciences Building (or in the Sociology Dept -- hand over/get stamped by office worker -- 909 Social Sciences Building) By 3pm, Monday, Dec18th.