

SOC 4900 – Current Issues in Sociology
Spring 2020, CRN: 30023
3 Credit Hours

Professor Michael D. Gillespie, Ph.D.
Blair Hall 3103: M/W/F
1:00p–1:50p

Office: 3139 Blair Hall
Office Hours: M/W/F: 8:00a-9:45a;
M/W: 2:00p-3:00p
By Appointment

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All sociology majors must successfully complete this capstone course. This course is designed to serve as your culmination to the sociology major and allow you to exercise your capacity to integrate all you have learned within the discipline.

The content of the course serves several purposes and will be centered on current issues in today's modern world. The current issues will be highlighted through student career interests and research projects. Moreover, these issues will be developed and analyzed according to each student's *sociological imagination*. As a capstone seminar, together, we will examine these various issues in the present-day United States and abroad, especially with their sociological relevance, and use of social theory, research methods and statistics.

The first portion of the course is an exploration in the **sociology of knowledge**, the *philosophical* part of sociology where we will ask questions such as:

- What are social facts?
- What is objectivity?
- What is truth?
- Why is history important to sociology?
- How do we know what we know?

The remainder of the course applies these questions in two ways: analyzing a book-length contemporary sociological study; and second through individualized student research projects.

As the capstone course, you are expected to begin this course and engage with the material having your own stock of theoretical, methodological, and statistical knowledge and skills: you would not be in this class had you not passed these core courses. Therefore, *this class is not designed to re-teach you this content*, but to draw-out what you have previously learned and apply it in this culminating experience.

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed to provide each student with the opportunity to show mastery of departmental learning objectives related to a current social issue. Students will demonstrate:

1. the sociological imagination's insight on the link between individual experiences/issues and larger social forces,
2. a sociological perspective incorporating multiculturalism, tolerance, and diversity,
3. the ability to think critically from multiple points of view,
4. knowledge and utility of sociological theories and application,
5. knowledge and use of skills necessary for conducting sociological research, and
6. knowledge and demonstration of skills necessary for statistical literacy.

REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS:

Babbie, Earl. 2015. *Observing Ourselves: Essays in Social Research*. 2nd ed. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.

Deluca, Stefanie, Susan Clampet-Lundquist, and Kathryn Edin (2016). *Coming of Age in the Other America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Electronic Course Pack on D2L (see course calendar for readings)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The assignments for this capstone will all be written exercises as well as a major research project. There are no formal exams. An assignment guide for each will be posted on D2L.

300 Total Points

Reflexive Essays (60 Total Points):

Reflexive Essay 1: Issues, Facts and Open Questions (Due January 29, 2020 20 Points)

Reflexive Essay 2: Weber, Marx and Paradigms (Due February 12, 2020 20 Points)

Reflexive Essay 3: A Terrible, Magnificent Imagination (Due February 26, 2020, 20 Points)

Coming of Age Reading Discussion and Essay (40 Total Points): See Separate Schedule

Annotated Bibliography Reports (5 points each, 50 Total Points)

See assignment guide for instructions and due dates

Applied Papers (100 Total Points):

Applied Paper #1 – Theory (25 Points) – Due April 3, 2020¹

Applied Paper #2 – Methods (25 Points) – Due April 17, 2020, 2019

Cumulative Applied Paper #3 – Recommendations (50 Points) – Due May 6, 2020

Research Presentation (20 Total Points)

Final PowerPoint Presentation (20 Points) – Monday April 27, 2020

Attendance and Participation (30 Total Points)

This course is structured and functions like a seminar, therefore your attendance and participation is expected and will be included in your final grade. Attendance will be taken each day and your final grade will include a number of points given based on your presence and participation. The distribution of points will be as follows:

Number of Days Missed / Late	Points
0-5 Days	30
6-9 Days	20
10-15 Days	10
15 or more	0

For details on permissible absences, see the “Class Attendance and Participation Policy” below.

¹ You are required to consult with the EIU Writing Center on your first applied paper prior to submitting your final draft on April 3, 2020.

Based on these requirements, the distribution of points is as follows:

ASSIGNMENT	TOTAL POINTS	PERCENT
Reflexive Essays	60	20%
<i>Coming of Age Discussion/Essay</i>	40	13%
<i>Annotated Bibliography Reports</i>	50	17%
Applied Research Papers	100	33%
Research Presentation	20	7%
Attendance and Participation	30	10%
Total	300	100.00%

Assignment submissions: All assignments are due on the given date, in printed form, **stapled**, and completed **at the beginning of class (1:00p)**. Each assignment **MUST be written in either ASA or APA** style with appropriate in-text citations and reference standards, as well as a properly formatted and should demonstrate appropriate content, writing style, voice, vocabulary, and organization of a college course in sociology at the advanced senior level. You should provide a full reference for all sources used. ASA and APA Style Resources are available on D2L.

Sociology 4900 – Current Issues in Sociology Spring 2020: Annotated Bibliography Report Due Dates

Bibliography Number	Due Date (can turn in early)
1	Monday February 24, 2020
2	Monday March 2, 2020
	Monday March 9, 2020
4	Monday March 23, 2020
5	Friday March 27, 2020
6	Monday March 30, 2020
7	Friday April 3, 2020
8	Monday April 6, 2020
9	Friday April 10, 2020
10	Monday April 13, 2020

Annotated Bibliography Reports must be submitted using the worksheet available on D2L

Sociology 4900 – Current Issues in Sociology
Spring 2020: Weekly Basic Themes and Required Textbook Reading Assignments¹

Week of:	Theme	Reading Assignment *D2L EB = Babbie Deluca = <i>Coming of Age</i>	Assignment(s) Due Date	Other Information
Jan. 13-17	Introduction and Social Facts	*Durkheim EB Ch. 1		
Jan. 20-24	Truth and Objectivity	EB Ch. 2		MLK Day Monday Jan. 20
Jan. 27-31	History and Action	*Weber *Marx	Jan. 29: Reflexive Essay #1	
Feb. 3-7	Paradigms	*Marx EB Ch. 3		
Feb. 10-14	The Sociological Imagination	*Mills	Feb. 12: Reflexive Essay #2	Lincoln's Birthday Feb. 14
Feb. 17-21	Distinctions	EB Ch. 5 EB Ch. 6		Library Presentation Friday Feb 21
Feb. 24-28	Coming of Age Introduction	Deluca: Ch. 1 Deluca: Appx A EB Ch. 7	Feb. 26: Reflexive Essay #3	Library Day Friday Feb 28
March 2-6	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.2		Library Day Friday March 6
March 9-13	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.3		Library Day Friday March 13
March 16-20	SPRING BREAK!!!!			
March 23-27	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.4		Library Day Friday March 27
March 30-April 3	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.5	April 3: Applied Paper #1	Library Day Friday April 3
April 6-10	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.6		Library Day Friday April 10
April 13-17	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.7	April 17: Applied Paper #2	Library Day Friday April 17
April 20-24	Observations and Values	EB Ch. 8. EB Ch. 14		Library Day Friday April 24
April 27-May 1	Presentations	Presentations	Presentations	Presentations
MAY 6	Final Cumulative Applied Paper		Applied Paper #3	12:30p

¹ All dates and readings are tentative and subject to change by the professor.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Course Ground Rules:

Sociology is one of the few subjects that allows us to explore ourselves as part of something bigger, how something beyond our immediate lives impacts who we are, and how who we are impacts other individuals and groups. Sociology is dynamic and exciting. Social problems and issues—how we understand, interpret, and deal with them, are also dynamic and can cause serious, but important, debate. Therefore—**first and foremost**—every participant's views are valid and every voice **must** be respected.

Success in this class will be achieved through your own energy, engagement, inquisitiveness, and **ability to be open-minded**. An environment conducive to open dialogue is the goal. The classroom is a space for learning, not just from lecture but also from your fellow colleagues.

There are three ground-rules under which you and I will be approaching this course:

1. If you always agree with me, then there is only one of us doing the thinking – and that is dangerous!
2. You are expected to be active in creating your own knowledge.
3. RESPECT your peers, yourself, and respect the gravity of the subject matter.

Seminar format:

This course is designed as a seminar centered on lectures, reading & extensive class discussion. You are expected to come to class prepared to participate in the discussion & it is very important that you keep up with your readings. If you come to class unprepared to participate, you will jeopardize your experience and final grade.

Class Attendance and Participation Policy:

Attendance will be taken each class-period. Attendance is part of the grade requirements for this course, because, as a seminar, your contribution to class is vital. Students are expected to attend class and arrive on-time, and be prepared.

Class participation is class engagement. Engagement in this course is exercised through your continued and productive contribution: reading assignments are completed, assignments are finished and submitted on time, and you come to class ready to be engaged. Engagement in the course is both critical to your personal success and the success of the group.

The professor will grant make-up privileges (when make-up is possible) to students for properly verified absences due to illness, emergency, participation in an official University activity, or participation in volunteer emergency work (110 ILCS 122/); and such absences will not militate against students in classes in which attendance is used directly in determining final grades. It is the student's responsibility to initiate plans for make-up work and to complete it promptly. If in the professor's judgment the duration or number of absences renders make-up unfeasible, the professor may contact the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Department Chairperson to determine an appropriate action.

Legitimate excuses are limited to matters of emergency and unpredicted circumstances.

General Classroom Conduct Policy:

In all my classes, I strive to provide a positive and productive learning environment for students. It is important that we all act in a respectful manner toward each other and do not disturb the class.

I ask your cooperation in observing the following rules:

- Arrive on time.
- Do not come and go during the class period. This is disrespectful and disruptive for me and your fellow students. If you must go to the restroom, do so quietly, causing as little disruption as possible.
- Observe the electronics policy at all times (see below).
- Do not carry on side conversations with your neighbors unless you will be prepared to share with the rest of your colleagues.

THE Electronics Policy:

If you bring your cell phone to class, please show respect for me and the other members of the class by either turning it off or setting it so that it does not make any noise. It is unacceptable to make or receive calls, or to text message while in the classroom. You will be asked to leave if you are chronically using a cell phone while in class; this includes text messaging.

Should you be a professional “on call” (i.e. an EMT or police officer) or an individual with particular circumstances where you need to be in contact, please set your phone to vibrate during class, and quietly leave the classroom to return any calls received.

I do not allow use of personal computers, tablets, or smartphones in class. If you do bring such a device to lecture, you will be required to put it away or to leave the classroom. If you must use a computer for academic purposes, you must bring appropriate documentation from the Office of Student Disability Services.

Any instances where personal computers will be allowed in class will be announced ahead of time.

Help with course material:

Office hours are provided for students to seek guidance with course content. Office hours are provided for the sole purpose of helping students and should be utilized as needed. I am more than willing to go the extra mile but only if you are, too.

DISCLAIMER

The course content and this syllabus are subject to change at any time to allow for a flexible and open learning environment.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity:

ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLETE THEIR OWN INDEPENDENT WORK. Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct:

<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>

Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submissions, plagiarism, complicity to such acts, computer misuse, and classroom disruptions. Any breach of academic integrity will result in a failing grade.

You are responsible for your work, the quality of your work, and the validity of your work. Any violation of academic integrity is serious and, if founded, will result in a zero for the assignment. *Ignorance is not an excuse and will not prevent a failing grade.*

Students with disabilities:

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

The Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Booth Library:

Located in the center of campus, Booth Library is the best place to do research, find expert help, or study in a calm, distraction-free environment. In addition to the many print resources, Booth provides access to high quality e-books, journals and scholarship not freely available on the Web. Stop by the Reference Desk or go to <http://library.eiu.edu> to explore library resources. Get expert help with your research by contacting the Booth Library reference librarians. Visit, call 581-6072, or go to <http://booth.eiu.edu/ask> to connect with a librarian.

Writing Center:

I encourage you to use EIU's Writing Center located at 3110 Coleman Hall. This free service provides one-to-one conferences with writing center consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, documenting your papers, and working with sentence-level concerns. The writing center is open to help any student from any major at any stage of his or her writing process, and its system of one-to-one conferences demonstrates value and respect for individual writers, all of whom can benefit from feedback about their works in progress.

SPRING SEMESTER HOURS: To schedule an appointment, you can drop by the center (3110 Coleman Hall) or you can call 581-5929. The writing center is open Monday – Thursday 9:00 am to 3:00 pm & 6:00 pm to 9:00pm, as well as 9:00 am – 1:00pm on Fridays during the Spring semester.