

SOC 4900 – Current Issues in Sociology
Fall 2020, CRN: 96693
3 Credit Hours

Professor Michael D. Gillespie, Ph.D.
Online & Everywhere!

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[Soc 4900 F'20 Teams Page](#)

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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 begin 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 sociology courses. Therefore, *this class aims draw-out what you have previously learned and apply it in this culminating experience.*

COURSE 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.

The Online Classroom Experience:

I am aware that students access, engage, and interact with online course materials and activities with different levels of comfort and technological capabilities. I also understand that the best mode of delivery for this course is in a traditional face-to-face format. Neither you nor I chose these circumstances, and I am committed to ensuring that you are able to perform to your potential this semester. If your ability to engage with this course is due to barriers created by inadequate access to, or condition of, proper technology, please contact me as soon as possible. It is my aim to ensure that there are no undue barriers or burdens to your success.

Students: As an online class, I encourage my students to take an active role. Your attitude can help determine your success in this online experience. I challenge you to be open-minded, self-motivated, accepting of critical thinking, willing to work collaboratively, and trusting of the online experience. Good written communication skills and a minimum level of technological experience with Microsoft Office and D2L are expected; access to a device equipped with a web camera and microphone is also preferred. Finally, I strongly encourage you to commit the time necessary (six to eight hours per week) to stay current with the course content.

Professor: I assume the responsibilities to appropriately design the content and facilitate the pace of the course. Online instruction is not "face-to-face gone digital, audio or video." Interaction between students, between myself and my students, and between the students and the learning materials is my focus. Online, my role is not as a "distributor of information" rather my energy is as the agent whereby the discovery of learning is facilitated in a student-centered environment. I commit to be your guide through the course as you actively participate in the discovery, synthesis, and contributions to the learning material.

TEXTS and 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 are written essays and a personalized research project. There are no formal exams. An assignment guide for each will be posted on D2L.

550 Total Points

Reflexive Essays (90 Total Points):

- Reflexive Essay 1: Issues, Facts and Open Questions (Due September 11, 30 Points)
- Reflexive Essay 2: Weber, Marx and Paradigms (Due September 25, 30 Points)
- Reflexive Essay 3: A Terrible, Magnificent Imagination (Due October 9, 30 Points)

Coming of Age Sociological Imagination Matrix (70 Total Points)

See assignment guide for instructions and due dates

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

See assignment guide for instructions and due dates

Applied Papers (175 Total Points):

- Applied Paper #1 – Theory (25 Points) – Due November 6¹
- Applied Paper #2 – Methods (50 Points) – Due November 20
- Cumulative Applied Paper #3 – Synthesis (100 Points) – Due December 16

Participation (160 Total Points)

28 percent of your final grade in the course will come from your consistent, thoughtful, and informed responses to, and generation of, discussion posts. To determine how many points you will be rewarded, I will assess the amount and quality of discussion posts that you make in reply to my prompts and the responses of your peers.

Each module will include a discussion thread to explore and interrogate the content of that module. I expect you to respond and incorporate:

- key terms and ideas from course materials
- materials from previously completed sociology courses
- a viewpoint based on your own lived experience

I understand that it is difficult to sustain the same level of dialog as happens organically in a face-to-face class, but my aim is to create prompts that allow you to deliberate and respond thoughtfully to one another.

➤ **One-on-One Conferences**

I am requesting that each student virtually meet with me every week. Because this course is asynchronous without virtual, real time course meetings, I am asking that each student touch-base with my on a weekly basis. The purpose of these conferences is to create a space where you can get one-on-one time to ask questions, receive feedback on your work, and clarify concepts from the course material.

Meetings will take place through our Microsoft Teams course page where I will be conducting my office hours. If my office hours are not scheduled at a time that fits in your schedule, please let me know so we can set-up a schedule at an appropriate time. I am also open to holding these meetings over the phone as well. I will make it as easy for you as possible.

¹ You are required to consult with the EIU Writing Center on your first applied paper prior to submitting your final draft on November 6, 2020.

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

ASSIGNMENT	TOTAL POINTS	PERCENT
Reflexive Essays	90	16%
<i>Coming of Age Matrix</i>	70	12%
<i>Annotated Bibliography Reports</i>	75	13%
Applied Research Papers	180	31%
Participation	160	28%
Total	575	100.00%

Assignment submissions: *All assignments are due on the given date via Dropbox. Each assignment should follow either ASA or APA style with appropriate in-text citations and reference standards. Resources for these styles are available on D2L as well as through the Booth Library webpage.*

Writing Standards: *Good writing is essential to the point that it communicates your voice. This is not a writing course, but a course with a tremendous amount of writing. I am interested in your ideas, not your punctuation. I provide guidelines for page format and length, font size, and other best practices as parameters in which I look forward to reading your prose.*

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

Bibliography Number	Due Date (can turn in early)
1	Friday October 2
2	Friday October 9
3	Friday October 16
4	Monday October 19
5	Friday October 23
6	Monday October 26
7	Friday October 30
8	Monday November 2
9	Monday November 9
10	Friday November 13
11	Monday November 16
12	Friday November 20
13	Monday November 30
14	Friday December 4
15	Monday December 7

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

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

Week of:	Unit	Theme	Reading Assignment *D2L EB = Babbie Deluca = <i>Coming of Age</i>	Assignment(s) Due Date	Other Information
Aug. 24 – Aug. 28	1	Introduction and Social Facts	*Durkheim		
Aug. 31 – Sept. 4	2	Open Questions, Truth, and Objectivity	EB Ch. 1 EB Ch. 2		
Sept. 7 – Sept. 11	3	History and Action	*Weber *Marx	Sept. 11: Reflexive Essay #1	LABOR DAY, Monday Sept. 7
Sept. 14 – Sept. 18	4	Paradigms	*Marx EB Ch. 3		
Sept. 21 – Sept. 25	5	The Sociological Imagination	*Mills	Sept. 25: Reflexive Essay #2	
Sept. 28 – Oct. 2	6	Distinctions	EB Ch. 5 EB Ch. 6 EB Ch. 7		
Oct. 5 – Oct. 9	7.1	Coming of Age Introduction	Deluca: Preface Deluca: Ch. 1	Oct. 9: Reflexive Essay #3	
Oct. 12 – Oct. 16	7.2	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.2		Fall Break Friday October 16
Oct. 19 – Oct. 23	7.3	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.3		
Oct. 26 – Oct. 30	7.4	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.4		
Nov. 2 – Nov. 6	7.5	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.5	Nov. 6: Applied Paper #1	
Nov. 9 – Nov. 13	7.6	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.6		
Nov. 16 – Nov. 20	7.7	<i>Coming of Age</i>	Deluca: Ch.7	Nov. 20: Applied Paper #2	
Nov. 23 – Nov. 27		Thanksgiving	Break	Thanksgiving	Break
Nov. 30 – Dec. 4.	8	Observations and Values	EB Ch. 8 EB Ch. 14		
Dec. 7 – Dec. 11	9	Revisiting Mills	*Mills		
Dec. 14 – Dec.18		Final Cumulative Applied Paper	Due Dec. 16	Applied Paper #3	10a

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

I recommend the use of the Brightspace Pulse [app](#) for your mobile devices to stay up-to-date with your online materials and courses.

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 prepare to participate in the online discussion & it is very important that you keep up with your readings. If you are unprepared or fail to participate, you will jeopardize your educational experience and impact your final grade.

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 mindfully participate in discussion and activities. Engagement in the course is both critical to your personal success and the success of the group.

Tokens:

Life happens. It is a fact of life, really! Therefore I grant each student **5 tokens** that can be redeemed when, well, life happens. Perhaps you will need them, perhaps not. But if you need an extra day for a paper, you miss a discussion, or you forgot to do a bibliography, use a token. You still have to complete the work, but if life happens, let me know ahead of the due date and turn in a token. That's it.

If life REALLY happens, the student code of conduct has assurances for you and the proper protocol to make sure you can complete the course:

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.

General Communication and Conduct Policy - Netiquette Expectations

Eastern Illinois University (EIU) is committed to open, frank, and insightful dialogue in all of its courses. Diversity has many manifestations, including diversity of thought, opinion, and values. I encourage all learners to be respectful of that diversity and to refrain from inappropriate commentary. Should such inappropriate comments occur, I will intervene as I monitor the dialogue in the courses. I will request that inappropriate content be removed from the Course room and will recommend university disciplinary action. Learners as well as faculty should be guided by common sense and basic etiquette. The following are good guidelines to follow:

- Never post, transmit, promote, or distribute content that is known to be illegal.
- Never post harassing, threatening, or embarrassing comments. If you disagree with someone, respond to the subject, not the person. Conflicts of ideas are encouraged, while conflicts of feelings are discouraged.
- Never post content that is harmful, abusive; racially or culturally insensitive, or religiously offensive, vulgar; sexually explicit, or otherwise potentially ignorant.

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.

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.

I routinely check the course for postings and emails Monday – Friday between 8a and 12pm and occasionally on the weekend. I will respond within 24 hours unless your message is sent over the weekend, then allow up to 48 hours for a reply. *In the case of an emergency only, you can text me at 734-717-0901.*

Technical Support Help for Students:

Contact: EIU User Services Phone: 217-581-4357 Email: support@eiu.edu

D2L Brightspace Support (provided by D2L)

Phone: 1-877-325-7778 (toll free) Email: Click [here](#) to submit an issue via email.

Note: D2L provides support for USING D2L Brightspace only. For login and other issues, contact EIU User Services listed above.

D2L Brightspace [Tutorials for Students](#)

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

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 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 (<http://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.

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. Visit <https://www.eiu.edu/writing/> for more information and hours of operation.

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. 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, could result in a failing grade on the assignment – and if serious enough – in the course.