

**SOCIOLOGY 100: GENERAL SOCIOLOGY**  
**Fall 2020**  
**Baldwin Online & Adult Program: Online Class**  
**Mary Baldwin University**

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Sociology is the study of society – the web of relationships shaping much of our lives. Sociologists study how we gain personal identities, form groups, live by rules of interaction, define boundaries with each other and create complex organizations, institutions, societies and “global networks”.

Sociology is also a “way of life” for those who learn its lessons well, including both career sociologists and those students of sociology who pursue other careers. Sociologists dedicate themselves to developing their ability to see the world through the eyes of their fellows. Sociologists must nurture their curiosity about human interaction in order to become more and more aware of the most “taken-for-granted” aspects of social life.

Finally, sociology is a science dedicated to systematically describing and explaining the cultural and social reality into which we are born, which makes our lives possible, and which endures long after we are gone.

The goal of an introductory course in sociology is for students to gain a better understanding of the discipline as a subject matter, as a methodology, as a body of ideas about reality, and as a useful perspective for understanding their world and living their life. This *sociological perspective* enables a student to see themselves as part of a vast network of expectations that they have a part in creating and maintaining. This changing system of interaction enables us to form enduring relationships with each other, even as we are constrained by the system’s rules. Our most important possession – our social identity – is continually re-created through constant negotiation with others.

Over the course of the semester we will consider the many ways by which we together construct our lives. We will do this by focusing on all levels of social interaction, from simple friendships and acquaintanceships to complex cultures and societies to international relations.

- **Required text:** *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* (10<sup>th</sup> edition) by James M. Henslin. 2012. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. ISBN 9780205898473

**Grading Scheme:**

There will be three examinations during the term, a paper, and a comprehensive final exam. The grading formula is as follows:

Test 1	15%	due Sept. 21	Test 2	20%	due Oct. 19
Test 3	20%	due Nov. 9	Paper	15%	due Nov. 21
Final Exam	20%	due Dec. 6	Discussion Board	10%	Weekly

**Class Structure**

The goal for the first part of the course is to explore the nature of sociology as a discipline, the impact of culture on our lives and the process whereby we develop social selves. You will begin to learn the language, theories and methods of those who have traveled this journey before you as we read the first three chapters of the text.

In the second part of the course we will examine the interplay of social structure and social interaction in constraining and enabling us. We will learn about the impact of group affiliations on our sense of self and

the necessity of learning to negotiate large-scale organizations in our everyday life. The readings on deviance and social control provide further evidence of the need for, and nature of, constraint and freedom in every social system. We will conclude this section by studying the first social institution most of us experience, the family.

We will then move on to consider the distribution of power and wealth and their effects in the world around us. We will examine gender, class, and race and ethnicity as bases for the unequal distribution of resources. Studying global stratification will increase our understanding of the opportunities and constraints that govern our nation's place in the world.

In the final portion of the course we will look at education and religion and perhaps hear news stories about them from a more sociological perspective. We conclude our journey with an examination of social change, the impact of technology on society and of society on the environment.

Use the study guides on Canvas to make notes on the main concepts and ideas as you read. This will enable you to better understand the material, be aware of areas where you need assistance, and also be able to efficiently study for exams. As you read, focus on the concepts presented and think of them in terms of your own ideas, values and experiences. Whenever you are reading, *read critically*. Ask yourself if you agree with the ideas and theories presented, and *especially ask yourself why you do or do not find an author's ideas compelling*. Share your ideas on the Discussion Board on Canvas.

### **Research Paper**

During the semester students will choose and research a social issue from the text and organize their ideas into a 1,500 words minimum (excluding references) **library research paper**. This paper must be based on at least **three sociology books or articles**. *Sources used in the paper should be properly cited; please refer to the method used in the text as your guide.* This means that you must include an abbreviated citation, *where appropriate, IN THE TEXT*, and the full citation in a concluding reference section. You will be graded for basic English, including your sources and referencing, although sociological content will be the primary factor in grading.

### **Class Participation**

We will use the **Discussions** on Canvas to create a learning community. Students should make a minimum of two relevant, substantive contributions to **each** of the discussion forums. Postings will take the form of at least one personal response to the readings and one thoughtful reply to another student's post which furthers the discussion.

### **Getting started**

First obtain the text and explore the Canvas site. Let me know if you have any questions about either. Your next task is to read the chapters for the first exam while starting to think about a paper topic. Click on "The Sociological Perspective" to access the study questions, and answer them in writing – I always find that writing things down highlights areas of confusion! When you find questions that you wish to discuss, go straight to the discussion board and post your insights and questions. I look forward to working, and learning, with you throughout the semester.

### **Contact with instructor**

E-mail is the preferred and most dependable means of contacting the instructor and should be used whenever possible. Please check your MBU e-mail and Canvas announcements regularly.