

SOC 254 Social Psychology
Spring 2021 Online Course Syllabus
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Office: Virtual through Zoom/Carpenter 112
Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays 6:05-7:00 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces students to the concepts and theories within the paradigm of sociological social psychology, which is a distinct field of study from psychological social psychology. Following the ideas of George Herbert Mead, sociological social psychology focuses on the social aspects and the social structural contexts of the development of individuals' minds, selves, consciousness, and identities. Sociology focuses on how all of these attributes of the individual are actually social rather than individual constructions. In an individualistic society such as ours, it may be challenging to understand that how and what we think and believe and how we act are not really created solely within the individual. Studying these elements within and between individuals is the realm of sociological social psychology

This course will consist of four distinct parts. The first part of the course will focus on the fundamental ideas as well as the early theoretical developments of sociological social psychology. The second part of the course will explore the ideas from contemporary sociological social psychologists including W. E. B. DuBois, Erving Goffman, and feminist sociologists who focus on consciousness and symbolic interactionism. The third part of the course will explore the social psychology of inequality and how the social location in which people live affects their views of themselves and the social world, many of their beliefs and morals, and their actions. The fourth part of the course will focus on the implications of sociological social psychology on the concepts of social justice and what it means to be human and humane.

Feminist scholars such as bell hooks influence how I teach this course and all of my courses. I use a dialectical method which requires us to learn about each other. I will use the course readings to help you develop your knowledge of sociology and your understanding of yourself within the social fabric that constitutes the context of your life. Within this framework, I, as your instructor, am not the purveyor of all knowledge; we teach each other. First, you must provide a discussion of your interests and consider how the different ideas that we consider within this course relate to your life. You and I can then engage in a dialogue to explore the social world through these sociological concepts.

REQUIRED READINGS:

All required readings will be posted in the Canvas shell.

COURSE GOALS:

1. Students will enhance their writing skills.
2. Students will acquire an in-depth understanding of the distinct field of study of sociological social psychology.
3. Students will develop an in-depth understanding of the ways that meaning is created through individuals' interactions with each other and within the larger social structure.
4. Students will develop an in-depth understanding of labeling theory, differential association theory, and symbolic interactionism.
5. Students will develop an in-depth understanding of the impact of different social meanings such as labels and stigma upon people's life-chances, opportunities, and potential.
6. Students will learn to examine how one's own life, beliefs, and actions are impacted by the context of the larger society and within a system of social stratification.
7. Students will consider how the sociological perspective can help us to define and understand the concept of social justice and what it means to act in a humane manner.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

1. Students will help guide class discussions by submitting short essays and/or bullet point questions and/or comments about the ideas that they find of interest from the readings and how those ideas relate to their lives.
2. Students will integrate the terms and perspectives of sociological social psychology theories by engaging in class discussions.
3. Students will analyze the diverse range of sociological social psychology theories and how key concepts within the field interrelate with one another through writing short essay exam answers.
4. Students will identify how their lives are affected by the interactions, structures, and institutions within a socially stratified society by writing a reflective essay that incorporates the concepts that they learned throughout the semester in the course to their own lives.
5. Students will consider and analyze how social justice can be conceptualized and how we can move towards a more socially just society through writing short essay exam answers.

This course meets the "S" Social Sciences Learning Outcome

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

--Discussion Board Posts

--(5) reading notes and/or discussion of interesting concepts and/or questions about the assigned readings of the week

--(1) graded assignment (application project)

--Midterm exam

--Comprehensive final exam

Discussion Board posts will consist of civil contributions to the class discussions by responding to provided prompts. Some of these prompts will ask students to consider specific topics from the readings and how they relate to contemporary issues in society.

Considering the current political climate, the “civility” grade portion of the discussion board discussions may be the most important grade in the class. There will be many discussions in class about controversial topics where people hold a wide variety of perspectives and opinions. In order to fully and openly discuss these issues, it is extremely important that we maintain an environment of civility in the discussion boards at all times. Civil discourse means no personal attacks. Basic respect for each other and all of the ideas presented are a must. And, as sociologists, we want to know what people think and why they think what they think.

I do encourage varying discussions. I respect everyone’s opinion and expect my students to do so as well. Just make your point, and don’t try to “win” an argument. The only way a true democracy can exist is if the members of the society have the opportunity to engage in civil discourse. The academic classroom provides an excellent opportunity for us to create such an environment. Much of your class participation grade will be based upon the level of civility maintained in the discussion boards at both the individual and collective levels. If you need to “vent” on an issue where you feel the need to express your feelings more than you were able in the discussion board, you are welcome, and encouraged, to do so in a zoom meeting and/or in writing between just you and I.

The reading notes and/or interesting concepts portion of your grade will consist of either a one page summary of the weekly readings and/or (preferably) a discussion of the concepts that you find interesting in the readings (including a discussion of why you find these concepts interesting by relating them to your own life and/or things that you have learned in other classes). Bullet points of the ideas are fine as well. You will need to submit 5 such summaries and/or discussions throughout the semester (one summary per week maximum). The points that you earn in this section are cumulative, and you are welcome to submit more than 5 assignments in order to earn extra credit for the course.

The assignment (application project) will each require a 3 to 4 page (minimum) double spaced 12 point font essay answer. I will provide a guiding question and/or theme for the assignment.

The midterm and final exams will be open book and open notes.

Important notes concerning Deadlines:

Should a student become unable to meet a course deadline, the student is expected to contact me prior to the deadline to schedule another deadline and discuss the plan of action moving forward in the class for the rest of the semester. I will not accept late work unless such arrangements are made prior to the due date.

There will be a deduction of one letter grade for each week that an assignment is late unless there is a documented illness and/or valid excuse. There will be a deduction of one letter grade for each day late that the midterm exam is late unless there is a documented illness and/or valid excuse.

GRADING:

A 93-100
A- 90-92
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79
C 73-76
C- 70 -72
D+ 67-69
D 63-66
D- 60-62
F 0-59

The final grade for the course will be computed using the following formula:

Discussion Board Posts	20%
Reading notes/questions	20%
Application Project:	20%
Midterm Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	20%

INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY AND CONTACTS:

Students are responsible for making the initial contact with me via email during the first week of the semester and confirm that they are indeed in the course and have read the syllabus. At this time, any questions regarding the syllabus and course expectations can be clarified. *Students may reach me through my email address at any time.*

Accessibility Services:

Any student with documented accessibility needs who feels that they may need academic accommodations while taking this course, should first contact Dr. Carey Usher, Associate Provost (cusher@marybaldwin.edu, 540-887-7064) or Accessibility@marybaldwin.edu.

The Academic Resource Center: The ARC is your one-stop-shop for writing, math, and all other subject and studentship tutoring. Residential students can meet with tutors virtually or face-to-face in the Center for Student Success, on the first floor of Grafton Library. Online and remote students can work virtually with tutors on papers, assignments, and test-taking strategies. Appointments are scheduled through TutorTrac (tutortrac.marybaldwin.edu). For more information, contact Dr. Carey Usher, Associate Provost (cusher@marybaldwin.edu, 540-887-7064) or ARC@marybaldwin.edu.

Honor Code Policy:

The MBU Honor Code Policy concerning cheating and plagiarism will be strictly followed.

Mary Baldwin students pledge to uphold the Honor Code. They pledge to refrain from cheating on assignments, papers and tests, to refrain from plagiarism, and always to be honest in their dealings with faculty, staff and other students. To maintain the integrity of the system, students, faculty and staff who witness Honor Code infractions are expected to report them.

Should I become aware of an Honor Code offense in this course, I will encourage the student(s) to self-report by e-mailing the Honor Council chairwoman or by filing an incident report at <https://publicdocs.maxient.com/incidentreport.php?MaryBaldwinCollege>. If the student(s) does not self-report within 24 hours, I will submit the report myself.

If the Honor Code offense is related to a course assignment, the assignment will not receive an official grade until the Honor Council investigation (and, if necessary, hearing) is complete. I will not assess a grade penalty for an Honor Code infraction unless a student is found responsible by (or admits responsibility to) the Honor Council. Any assignment will receive an automatic "0" (zero) and an "F" will be recorded for the course grade should a student be found plagiarizing. This type of offense demonstrates a disregard for the very foundations of academic thought and the learning process itself

POLICY ON "EXTENSIONS" (ET's):

Should you find that you cannot complete all of the work for the course, you may take an ET (extended time) for the course ***ONLY IF you have a documented illness and/or have completed at least half of the work in the class by the deadline for all semester coursework (April 19th) to be eligible for an ET.***

COURSE OUTLINE (tentative):

Week One: January 11th: Introduction to sociological social psychology: First Reading

Week Two: January 18th: The fundamentals of Sociological Social Psychology:

Schwalbe Chapter 6 (Submission of first reading notes due)

Week Three: January 25th: Classical Sociological Theory: George Herbert Mead

Week Four: February 1st: Symbolic Interactionism: Mead (continued), Herbert Blumer

Week Five: February 8th: Erving Goffman—stigma, spoiled identity

Week Six: February 15th: Howard Becker: Labeling Theory and Edwin Sutherland:

Differential Association Theory (midterm exam due)

Week Seven: February 22nd: feminists: Arlie Hochschild, Dorothy Smith, and Patricia

Hill Collins

Week Eight: March 1st: feminists continued: Sandra Bartky--shame

Week Nine: March 8th: The Social Psychology of Inequality: Schwalbe, et al.

Week Ten: March 15th: Double consciousness: W. E. B. DuBois

Week Eleven: March 22nd: Social justice implications: Mead and the Chicago School,

Schwalbe (Assignment—Application Project due)

Week Twelve: March 29th: Social Justice Implications: bell hooks

Week Thirteen: April 5th: Social Justice Implications and recap of course

Final exams: April 12th-April 19th (final exam due: April 19th)