Welcome to Sociology. Sociology is the scientific study of society. Sociologists explore how social context shapes people's lives by systematically analyzing social interaction, the dynamics of human groups, the institutions that organize our experiences, and processes of societal change. I designed this course to introduce you to a sociological way of thinking about society, your place in it, and the possibilities for social change. In this course you will be asked to question the taken for granted and to see yourself and your surroundings in a new way. While we are all members of a society, we are often too immersed in that society to see its structure and influence on our lives. To borrow a familiar phrase, the fish is the last to discover the ocean. By the end of the course you will have a better understanding of U.S. society as part of a global system and the role that social forces play in shaping your behavior, attitudes, and values. I hope you will leave the course more curious about the social world than when you started.

One important objective of this course is to help you shift your perception and analysis of things from common sense (which perceives "private troubles") to sociology (which perceives "public issues"). A second important objective is for you to recognize how the sociological imagination can empower you to make change in your own life and the society you live in. To help you develop your ability to critically analyze modern social life, I have organized the course around questioning commonsense or conventional wisdoms.

I begin by introducing you to the sociological imagination, a way of seeing and thinking about human behavior in social context. Next we examine the conventional wisdom that our behavior is a reflection of personal choices and idiosyncratic personality – I call this section You’re Not the Boss of You. Bet that got your riled up...didn’t it? We will examine how social structures and culture constrain and direct our behavior in obvious and non-obvious ways. We will also examine the tension between human agency and social structure. By the end of this part of the course you will be able to describe different types of social structures and the elements of culture, distinguish between person and position in the social structure, explain how the different social control mechanisms constrain social interaction.

The third section first part of the course, Truth Be Told, Your Personal Experience Is Likely Not the Whole Truth, we address the fact that our own experience and common sense are not sufficient to understand our world we live in. In this section you learn about the methods sociologists use to empirically and systematically study the social world and avoid the errors in observation and generalization typical of commonsense knowledge and other ways of knowing. By the end of this part of the course you will be able to differentiate between sociology and other social sciences, understand the types of questions, data, methods of analysis, and theoretical perspectives used by sociologists to describe and explain social life, and explain why common sense and personal experience are not enough to make sense of your life.

In the fourth section we look at the conventional wisdom that there are no limits on what you can do and achieve, that where you wind up in life is a matter of individual effort and ability. This is the The Myth of Meritocracy. We examine the distribution of privileges and power in the U.S. and the global system, and the resulting race, class, and gender inequalities. We will also examine how we develop our goals and aspirations within opportunity structures. By the end of this part of the course you will be able to describe the ways that race, class, and gender stratification influence your life choices, life chances, and everyday experiences, and explain in what senses "freedom of opportunity" is a myth and who benefits from the myth.

We end the course by looking at The Sociological Paradox: Social Structure and Agency. The focus here is how a sociological understanding of the world can empower us to change it. For although social structures are real and have significant impact on our lives, it also true that we are the creators and sustainers of those structures. Hence, we can change what we do not like, once we understand how the system works.

As a sociologist, I study the world I live in with a well practiced sociological imagination. I see my job as teacher-scholar as providing you with the tools and helping you to develop a sociological view of your world. If you are willing to take advantage of the opportunity to think about your world in a new way, I assure you that a sociological perspective will empower you for the rest of your life.
Course Structure

Class sessions will include a combination of lecture, discussion, films, and small group activities. The chapters in the textbook introduce you to the key ideas and concepts. The readings in the Reader and on OAKS are where we do the real work of developing your sociological imagination. Be sure to bring your reserve readings to class on the assigned day so that you can participate in the small group activities.

This class can be a lot of fun if everyone comes to class prepared to discuss the ideas and issues in the readings. It's in your hands. If you don't come to class prepared to constructively participate, you have no one to blame but yourself if you don't understand the material. The only way you can learn is by freely sharing ideas and questions, and carefully listening to others. You will encounter ideas and information that fly in the face of how you understand the world. I cannot "explain" how to understand the society you live in; only by wrestling with these ideas and facts (on your own and in class) will you develop your sociological imagination.

You will continue to develop your sociological imagination outside of class by exploring web sites, answering questions, and participating in activities that engage your sociological imagination. The syllabus, assignments, handouts, and other materials are all available on the course OAKS site.

Reading

There are five sources of required reading for the course:

   Available at University Books of Charleston (King Street) or the College Bookstore (Calhoun Street).
   Referred to as A&T on the schedule.


5. Selected readings on OAKS.

For those of you who would like a structured guide to studying the chapters in the textbook, there is a companion website:
http://www.wadsworth.com/cgi-wadsworth/course_products_wp.pl?fid=M20bI&flag=instructor&isbn_issn=9780495812234
&disciplinenumber=1037&template=AUS

Requirements: Earning Your Grade

- **Examinations -- 60%:**
  There are three examinations. The exams go beyond your ability to memorize definitions and focus on your understanding of concepts/theories and your ability to apply them to new situations and/or issues. Each exam is worth 20% of your final grade.

- **Class Participation/Engagement – 15%:**
  You earn your participation grade by attending class AND actively participating. To the dismay of some students, warming a seat does not count as participation! To participate effectively and constructively, you need to come to each class prepared to talk about the readings. Keep in mind that quality participation does not mean that all comments must be brilliantly insightful; this class is intended to foster critical thinking. Questions and incomplete thoughts about these issues contribute to the process of learning. If I find that you are not keeping up with the readings, I will institute reading quizzes. I think you'll find it easier to just do the reading before coming to class.

  I also base your engagement grade on out-of-class assignments and in-class small group activities. In addition, I will make note of constructive contributions to class discussion and group activities.

  You only receive participation credit if you are present for the entire class session, turn in any preparatory assignment during that class session, and constructively contribute to group activities. You don't receive credit if you miss a small group activity, don't come to class on time, or don't turn in the preparatory assignment during the class session. There is no make-up for class participation/engagement activities.
• **Group Project: Using Social Issues to Analyze Research Methods – 25%**

This project involves selecting a social issue and locating 5 articles that represent different methods of sociologically studying the topic. Each group will prepare a written analysis and also make a presentation in class. I will give you more details in class. Your grade will depend upon my assessment, as well as the assessment of your contribution by members of your group. This is the only way to prevent the free-rider problem. What this means is that if your group project is an A, but your group indicates your contribution was an F, you will not receive an A by riding on the efforts of those who actually do the work.

• **Extra Credit:** There will be 1 opportunity for extra credit – a "doing sociology" assignment worth a possible 3 points (assuming it is done completely and you get full credit) added at the end of the semester. I will give you more information about this in class.

Depending on the schedule of special speakers on campus, I may also offer an additional extra credit point or two added to your exam score for attending a campus speaker.

**Grading:**

My philosophy on grades is this: They are yours to earn, not mine to give. Therefore, decide now what grade you want to receive, and earn it!

\[
\text{A}=90-100\% \quad \text{A-}=89\% \quad \text{B+}=88\% \quad \text{B}=80-87\% \quad \text{B-}=79\% \quad \text{C+}=78\% \quad \text{C}=70-77\% \quad \text{C–}=69\% \quad \text{D}=60-68 \quad \text{F}=<60
\]

In this class, an 'A' is reserved for truly excellent work. If you earn an 'A', you went above and beyond the call of duty with your performance. A 'B' indicates very good work. You did not just do the minimum requirements, but you made an extra effort to show your skills, and your effort showed. A 'C' means you did average work—you did what was asked and you did it satisfactorily, nothing less, nothing more. A 'D' means you need to improve—you did below the minimum requirements. An 'F' is guaranteed if you turn nothing in or rarely come to class.

Your grade is not determined by how much time you put in or how “hard” you feel you worked. I use grading rubrics that assess how well and how completely you accomplished what the assignment asks you to do — in other words, what you actually produce.

You have to work at it to get an 'A' or an 'F' in this. Please come see me during office hours if you have questions about how to read, study, or take notes more efficiently and effectively.

**Class Policies:**

• **Make-up Exam policy**

There is one makeup day, April 26th for anyone who misses an exam AND has an excused absence verified through the office of the Dean of Students. I do not verify your absence and you do not have to bring me your excuse. Rather you should notify me within 24 hours of an exam that you plan to submit a verified absence and then take your note from a physician or health services to the Dean’s office at 67 Glebe for verification. If you have a death in the family, take a note from the funeral home to the Dean’s office. The Dean’s office will send me a notification of whether you have provided a documented absence. **Unverified self-reported absences are not eligible for a make-up exam.** If you are a student-athlete on a CofC team, make sure I have your travel schedule and see me about making arrangements for your absences.

There are no make-ups for in-class activities, homework, the group project, or reading quizzes

• **Follow common rules of respect.**

Turn your cell phone COMPLETELY OFF as soon as you enter the classroom. Do not leave it on vibrate and do not pull it out during class to text message or check messages. Otherwise I get free phone calls for the next 24 hours on your phone! I have friends in faraway places :). If you bring a laptop to take notes, do not distract others by checking your Facebook account, e-mail, or anything else that is not directly part of class. **Those who ignore this will receive one warning and then you will no longer be able to bring the laptop to class.**

Come to class, be on time, and do not sleep, chitchat, or engage in any other kind of disruptive behavior in the classroom. You may think you are anonymous, but I can still see and hear you and your neighbors definitely can too. Also, **you are not invisible -- so don't walk in front of me or over top of your classmates when class is in session (I get really pissed off when that happens).** If for some reason you must leave class early, be sure to sit near the door. Once you get to class, stay there – do not wander off to the bathroom because you will miss important steps in the material.
• Communicate with me.
Talk to me, but do it at the right time. If you are having any problems with the material or have questions about an assignments come see me during office hours or make an appointment to talk. Before class is not a good time. I am busy setting up the technology or writing notes on the board and cannot give you my full attention. If you have something you want me to know about work you are turning in or don’t have with you, please save it to the end of class.

• Cheating is NOT a “good thing.”
It should go without saying, but anyone caught violating the honor code will receive an F on the assignment and have to go before the Honor Board. Folks, it’s just not worth it. Cheating includes using someone else's work. You should be careful not to plagiarize by claiming someone else's words as your own. If you do not know what plagiarism is, see the resource on OAKS. Now you know and cannot plead ignorance. This will be VERY important when you complete your Group Project. I have also posted on OAKS the proper citation and referencing format for sociology. Always ask if you are not sure.

Welcome to Sociology! Have fun learning to be a sociological detective.

Schedule*

I. Welcome to the Sociological Imagination
Peter Berger states that the “first wisdom of sociology is this - things are not what they seem.” In this section we begin developing your sociological imagination by learning to ask questions that lead us beyond common sense understandings.

Jan. 11 Welcome
Jan. 13 What is Sociology?
   A&T: Chapter 1

Jan. 18, 20 The Sociological Imagination versus Conventional Wisdom
   Reader: 1
   Outliers: Introduction; Chapter 1
   Tipping Point: Introduction; Chapter 4
   Golash-Boza: “Bandits Going Wild in Haiti” and Other Post-Quake Myths
   http://www.asanet.org/footnotes/feb10/haiti_0210.html

II. You’re Not the Boss of You!
In this section we explore how social forces—shared cultural and institutional "structures of meaning" guide our (seemingly) individual choices and feelings. We look at mechanisms of social control at both the micro-interactional and macro-structural levels.

Jan 25, 27, Feb. 1 Social Structure: The House We Build and Live In
   A&T: Chapter 5, 6
   Outliers: Chapters 3, 4
   Tipping Point: Chapter 2, pp. 30-58
   Reader: 13, 10

Feb. 3, 8, 10 Culture: The Knowledge That People Share (and Fight About)
   A&T: Chapter 2, 4
   Outliers: Chapters 6, 7, 8
   Tipping Point: Chapter 3
   Reader: 48, 7

Feb. 15 First Exam
III. Truth Be Told, Your Personal Experience Is Likely Not the Whole Truth

In this section you learn about the methods sociologists use to systematically study the social world and avoid the errors in generalization typical of commonsense knowledge and other ways of knowing.

Feb. 17, 22, 24  Doing Sociology
A&T: Chapter 1 theoretical frameworks
A&T: Chapter 3
Reader: 4, 25, 14, 9

March 1, 3, 15  Using Social Issues to Analyze Research Methods
See Group Project Assignment

March 7, 9  Spring Break

IV. The Myth of Meritocracy

According to the ideology of the American Dream, we live in a land of limitless opportunity in which individuals can go as far as their own merit takes them. Americans not only tend to think that is how the system should work, but most also think that is how the system does work. In this section of the course we examine the gap between how people think the system works and how the system actually does work. While merit does indeed affect who ends up with what, the impact of merit on economic outcomes is vastly overestimated and a variety of nonmerit factors suppress, neutralize, or even negate the effects of merit and create structural barriers to individual mobility.

March 17, 22, 24  Social Class and Social Stratification in a Global System
A&T: Chapter 8, 9
Outliers: Chapters 3, 4, 5
Reader: 23, 24, 28
Explore the 4 tabs on the NYT “How Class Works” website

March 29, 31  Race, Gender and Sexuality Do Matter
A&T: Chapters 10, 11, 12
Reader: 65, 18, 32, 38,

April 5  Second Exam

April 7  No Class, Southern Sociological Society Meeting

V. The Sociological Paradox: Social Structure and Agency

Sociologists analyze large-scale social forces, such as family, economy, education, politics and religion, for their place in organizing social life. For us to have any real say in our lives, we need to understand how these institutions work. In addition, social institutions provide a useful prism for thinking about how to change the world we live in.

April 12, 14  Politics and the Economy
A&T: Chapter 15
Reader: 56, 57, 58, 22

April 19  Education
A&T: Chapter 14
Outliers, Chapters 8, 9, and Epilogue

April 21  Social Change
A&T: Chapter 16
Reader: 68, 69
Gladwell: Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted. October 4, 2010 New Yorker
Tipping Point: Conclusion

Final Exam  April 30th, 9-11 am