

**Sociology 105H**  
**Introduction to Contemporary Social Problems (Honors)**  
Spring 2009, Section 0101  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00-12:15pm  
Woods Hall, Room 1130

Instructor: Emily Mann  
Office: 3110 Art-Sociology Building  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 1:30-3:00pm, and by appointment  
Email: emann@socy.umd.edu (write SOCY 105 in subject heading)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This course will introduce you to the sociological study of social problems through the lens of social inequality. Throughout the course, we will read and discuss detailed sociological studies that examine race, class, gender, and sexuality as interdependent systems of power and social inequality and consider how these are connected to social problems. The goal of this course is to learn how to think sociologically about and understand how social inequalities shape social problems. This approach is intended to reveal the *social* rather than *individual* roots of social problems. You will be challenged to go beyond your own closely held beliefs to look at social inequalities through the perspective of sociology. In the process, you will be challenged to improve your critical reading and writing skills and to see writing as a process that involves continuous revision. The methods of instruction will be lectures, readings, writing exercises, in-class exercises, discussions, and films.

### **READINGS**

The course does not utilize a textbook, but will focus on several recent sociology texts, as well as a few additional articles. I will make the other articles available to you on Blackboard.

- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2006. Racism without Racists: Colorblind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition New York: Rowman & Littlefield. (ISBN: 978-0-7425-4686-8) **Make sure you buy the second edition!**
- Bettie, Julie. 2003. Women without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity. Berkeley: University of California Press. (ISBN: 978-0520235427)
- Pascoe, C.J. 2007. Dude You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School. Berkeley: University of California Press. (ISBN: 978-0813543352)
- Fields, Jessica. 2008. Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. (ISBN: 9780813543352)

### **RULES OF THE GAME**

1. Be respectful
2. Be responsible
3. Class starts and ends on time
4. Turn off cellphones, iPods, pagers, etc.
5. No laptops unless medically required.

### Attendance

Since class participation is an important part of your final grade, ***you can't miss classes and expect to do well in this course.*** Your class participation grade includes attendance. If you have to miss a class for a legitimate reason (i.e., holiday, religious observance, illness, family emergency, etc.), please let me know ahead of time if at all possible and submit written documentation about the nature of the absence.

### Academic Integrity Expectations

Students and the instructor in this course are both responsible for upholding academic integrity and are expected to adhere to the University Honor Code. Violations such as cheating, plagiarism, forged documents, forged signatures, submission of the same documents to different courses are all serious violations and will be reported to the Student Honor Council and the Office of Judicial Programs. For more information on such violations, reporting procedures, and attached penalties, students are strongly encouraged to review the relevant sections in the "Schedule of Classes."

### Student Honor Pledge

Maryland has an Honor Pledge, approved by the University Senate and the Student Government Association. The Pledge statement should be handwritten and signed on the front of all papers, projects, or other assignments submitted for evaluation in the course. Please see the Schedule of Classes for details. The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads: "*I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.*"

### Succeeding in the Class

You will be expected to actively participate in an effort to ensure your own and your colleagues' understanding of the ideas presented in class. We need your commitment to demonstrate a willingness to contribute ideas, to listen to others, and to be a constructive force in the learning process. For every hour that we spend in class, I recommend you set aside two hours for careful reading of the texts, preparation for each class session, and reviewing your notes. I recommend that you do the reading as soon as you can ***before the day it is assigned***, and then skim it once more before class. You will also find class discussions much more meaningful if you spend some time before class constructing and tentatively answering two or three questions about the reading, even on the days you do not submit a reading essay. Finally, if you find an article in a current newspaper or magazine that is relevant to this course, please bring it to class.

### Students With Disabilities

If you have a documented physical or learning disability, necessary accommodations will be made. A written request should be made one week prior to each exam for which accommodation is appropriate. University of Maryland documentation of disability needs to be obtained from Disability Support Services (301--314-7682).

### Campus Writing Resources

This is writing intensive course. The Writing Center (0125 Taliaferro Hall, 301-405-3875) is an excellent and free resource for students who are completing any undergraduate writing assignment. I also encourage you to contact me directly for additional help with your class writing assignments. I am more than willing to read and respond to a draft if you send it to me in advance.

### Blackboard

This course makes extensive use of Blackboard (<http://courses.umd.edu>) for access to course materials (except the books) and the submission and grading of your class assignments, courses. If you have any trouble with Blackboard, please contact me via email.

### Online Course Evaluations

*CourseEvalUM* will be open for students to complete their evaluations for Spring 2009 courses between Tuesday, April 28 through Wednesday, May 13, 2009. Students can go directly to the website ([www.courseevalum.umd.edu](http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu)) to complete their evaluations, beginning April 28. You will be sent reminders about these dates via your official University e-mail account.

### Contacting Me

For simple questions, the easiest way to reach me is by email at [emann@socy.umd.edu](mailto:emann@socy.umd.edu). **When emailing me, please write SOCY 105 in the subject heading.** You can also catch me before and after class. For more difficult questions or to discuss class material, related matters, and other issues of import, please come see me during office hours. My office hours are on Thursdays from 1:30 to 3:00pm. If you can't make these hours, please let me know and we can arrange another time. When you visit during office hours, come prepared with some fairly specific questions.

### Classroom Environment

In this class, we will openly discuss controversial topics. Some of the issues we will address may challenge or transcend your comfort zone, values, beliefs, and personal tastes. Such material may offend some students or make them feel uncomfortable. While we will consider all course material sociologically and maturely, some students may have difficulty with course content. If you think your discomfort might impede your engagement with class content, please come see me—this class may not be appropriate for you.

Please keep in mind that the student body is diverse and refrain from making assumptions about who is or is not around you. We all have opinions, and it is okay to *respectfully disagree* with other people's *comments*. It is also okay to engage in passionate discussion. It is not okay to engage in actions that are hostile, derogatory, and/or disrespectful. Students who express threatening or offensive remarks will be asked to leave and possibly referred for disciplinary action.

Also, please monitor the amount of talking you do during class discussion. I discourage discussion dominators and encourage participation from quieter students. If you have something to say, raise your hand and let's discuss. Chatting with your neighbor is distracting and may negatively affect your participation grade.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

This course uses a student directed format where we learn from and teach each other.<sup>1</sup> You will be evaluated, in part, on your contributions to making the class successful for yourself and others. Based on this approach, your final grade will consist of the following elements:

<b>A. Class Participation</b>	20 percent	100 points	
<b>B. Reading Essays</b>	20 percent	100 points	Twenty essays @ 5 pts each
<b>C. Midterm Exam</b>	20 percent	100 points	One exam @ 100 pts
<b>D. Group Presentation</b>	20 percent	100 points	One presentation @ 100 pts
<b>E. Final Exam</b>	20 percent	100 points	One exam @ 100 pts.

### Grading Scale

A+	485-500	C	370-384
A	470-484	C-	350-369
A-	450-469	D+	335-349
B+	435-449	D	320-334
B	420-434	D-	300-319
B-	400-419	F	299 or less
C+	385-399		

#### **A. Class Participation** (20 percent of your final grade)

In this course, participation means more than just showing up to class. You are required to attend all classes, arrive on-time and leave when class concludes, and most importantly, read all material before you show up and engage with all of the class materials in a thorough and thoughtful manner. Your attendance and participation will be evaluated on the basis of your attendance and your engagement. Your level of class engagement will be determined in large part based upon your active and constructive participation in class discussions in the classroom. Students are also encouraged to make use of the discussion board on Blackboard. You are *strongly encouraged* to read *The New York Times* online (or any paper of your choice) and to discuss relevant articles in class. PLEASE NOTE: Class participation accounts for one-fifth of your grade, and mere attendance will not guarantee you full credit for this part.

#### **B. Reading Essays** (20 percent of your final grade; twenty essays @ 5 points each)

Over the course of the semester, you are to complete twenty 1-2 page reading essays that each provides a brief analysis of your course readings. The purpose of the reading essays is to encourage you to read and reflect critically on your course readings in preparation for class. Each essay must be written about and submitted on the day of the assigned readings (i.e., if you submit an essay for Feb. 3, the essay must address the reading assigned for Feb. 3). You may not submit an essay about a previously covered reading. Further, you may not submit more than one essay per class session, so plan accordingly. **See the reading essay template on page 9 for instructions on how to complete this assignment.**

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<sup>1</sup> I have adapted Patricia Hill Collins' student directed format as an organizing element of this course.

**Reading Essays are due by 11:00am the day of the assigned reading.** You are to submit one copy of your completed essay to Blackboard, and bring one copy of your essay to class with you on the day for which your readings are indicated. Late Reading Essays will only be accepted only in the event of a University approved absence accompanied by formal documentation. See the grading criteria at the end of the syllabus for more information on how to construct high quality essays.

***C. Midterm*** (20 percent of your final grade; one exam @ 100 pts)

We will have an take home midterm that covers all of the readings and lectures in the first half of the class. The midterm will be distributed 10 days in advance of its due date and consist of several short answer questions and one essay question.

***D. Group Presentation*** (20 percent of your final grade; one presentation @ 100 pts)

You will form in groups of five to give a 20-minute group presentation that consists of your collective synthesis of the ideas that most engaged you during the course. The purpose of these presentations is for you to meet outside of class, share your ideas with your groups, and develop a way of explaining the common and divergent themes that emerged over the course of the class. How you present your ideas is up to you. However, like your essays, your initiations should have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Interesting, creative, and exciting presentations are welcome.

***E. Final Exam*** (20 percent of your final grade, one exam @ 100 pts)

We will have a take home final exam that will consist of two essay questions. Essays will be due by May 16 at 5:00pm via Blackboard. The exam will be distributed 10 days in advance of its due date.

**No "extra credit" work is given in this course. I do not grant extensions except in what I consider very extreme circumstances, i.e. medical or family emergencies with documentation.**

**COURSE CALENDAR** (subject to adjustments by the instructor as needed)

Assigned readings should be completed by the date of the lecture under which they are listed. Articles assigned in the first couple weeks of the semester are available on Blackboard under "Course Documents" and should be printed out. Always bring the assigned reading to class.

**1. January 27. Introduction to the Course**

**2. January 29. Doing Sociology**

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise," pp. 3-24 in *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

**3. February 3. The Sociological Study of Social Problems**

Leon-Guerrero, Anna. 2005. "Sociology and the Study of Social Problems." Pp. 1-3, 6-14 in *Social Problems: Community, Policy, and Social Action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**4. February 5. Social Inequalities: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality**

Anderson, Margaret and Patricia Hill Collins. 2007. "Systems of Power and Inequality." Pp. 61-89 in, *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Edited by Margaret Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins. Thomson Wadsworth.

**5. February 10.**

Racism Without Racists, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-24)

**6. February 12.**

Racism Without Racists, Chapter 2 (pp. 25-52)

**7. February 17.**

Racism Without Racists, Chapter 3 (pp. 53-74)

**8. February 19.**

Racism Without Racists, Chapter 4 (pp. 75-102)

**9. February 24.**

Racism Without Racists, Chapter 5 (pp.103-130)

**10. February 26.**

Racism Without Racists, Chapter 6 (pp. 131-150)

**11. March 3.**

Racism Without Racists, Chapter 7 (pp. 151-176)

\*\*Midterm exam distributed\*\*

**12. March 5.**

Racism Without Racists, Chapter 8 (pp. 177-206)

**13. March 10.**

Racism Without Racists, Conclusion, Queries, and Postscript (pp. 207-241)

**14. March 12. No class**

\*\*Midterm Exam Due by 12:30pm via Blackboard\*\*

**\*\*Spring Break: March 16-20\*\***

**15. March 24.**

Women without Class, Chapter 1 ( pp.1-31)

Recommended but not required: Women without Class, Chapter 2 (pp. 32-56)

**16. March 26.**

Women without Class, Chapter 3 (pp. 57-94)

**17. March 31.**

Women without Class, Chapter 4 (pp. 95-138)

**18. April 2.**

Women without Class, Chapter 5 (pp. 139-166)

**19. April 7.**

Women without Class, Chapter 6 and Conclusion (pp. 167-206)

**20. April 9.**

No reading.

**21. April 14.**

Dude You're a Fag, Chapter 1 AND 2 (pp. 1-51)

**22. April 16.**

Dude You're a Fag, Chapter 3 (pp. 52-83)

**23. April 21.**

Dude You're a Fag, Chapter 4 AND Chapter 6 (pp. 84-114 and pp. 156-174)

**24. April 23.**

Risky Lessons, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-36)

**25. April 28.**

Risky Lessons, Chapter 2 (pp. 37-66)

**26. April 30.**

Risky Lessons, Chapter 3 (pp. 67-97)

**27. May 5.**

Risky Lessons, Chapter 4 (pp. 98-136)

**28. May 7. Group Presentations**

Risky Lessons, Chapter 5 AND Chapter 6 (pp. 137-173)

\*\*Final exam distributed\*\*

**29. May 12. Group Presentations and Course Wrap Up**

No reading

**\*\*\*Final Exam due Saturday, May 16 at 5:00pm on Blackboard\*\*\***



## Reading Essay Grading Criteria<sup>2</sup>

I have high expectations for your written essays. Your reading, midterm and final exam essays will be graded according to their content, structure, use of language, and formatting. I will use the following elements as a guide to evaluate your written essays.

### *Content*

- Presenting a main point and using detailed information to support your argument(s).
- Demonstration of your understanding of relevant concepts.
- Incorporation of course reading.
- Incorporation of original ideas and insights.
- Developing a discussion that incorporates interesting details from multiple sources (personal experience, readings, and/or outside primary or secondary sources).
- Demonstrating critical thinking by moving in thought beyond merely summarizing, defining, or reporting to analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, drawing conclusions, or gaining insight.
- Engaging the reader through topic choice, original approach, and thorough development.

### *Structure*

- Creating a coherent structure with an effective introduction/body/conclusion.
- Providing a clear introduction that identifies the topic/main point that establishes your intent in the paper.
- Using transitions where necessary within paragraphs and to introduce new ideas.
- Concluding in a way that draws your main points together in a thoughtful manner.

### *Language Use and Expression*

- Using accurate and mature vocabulary to make the writing clear and appropriate for conveying your main points.
- Using clear, direct, complete, varied sentence structure (e.g., free of fragment or run-on sentences).
- Maintaining consistent verb tense and pronoun reference.
- Avoiding slang, colloquialisms, clichés, and excessive jargon.
- Applying correct mechanical skills (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc.)

### *Standard Formatting*

- Typed and double-spaced
- Paper is proofread and corrected for typos and other errors.
- Double-spaced and with page numbers
- 12-point and easy-to-read font
- 1-inch margins on the left, right, top, and bottom.

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<sup>2</sup> These essay grading criteria were adapted from Tracy E. Ore, Sociology 1601, Principles of Sociology, Saint Cloud State University (Sikora, James P. and Njeri Mbugua (eds). 2007. Introductory Sociology Resource Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington: American Sociological Association.

- Each essay needs a title, your name, the date, course information (Sociology 105H), and name of the assignment.

*Based on this set of criteria,*

*A “5 point” or “A” essay...*

- Addresses the topic of the assignment fully and explores each aspect thoughtfully.
- Has a clear and substantial thesis.
- Shows substantial depth, fullness and complexity of thought.
- Expresses ideas clearly and commands the reader’s attention.
- Demonstrates clear, unified, and coherent organization.
- Is fully developed and detailed with ideas supported by persuasive reasons and well chosen examples or references to class material.
- Has a superior style (interesting sentence patterns, smooth transitions between ideas, excellent use of vocabulary).
- Has few, if any, minor errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics.

*A “4 point” or “B” essay...*

- Addresses and explores each aspect of the assignment in a satisfactory way.
- Has a clear thesis explored adequately in the essay.
- Shows clarity of thought, but may treat the topic simplistically or repetitively.
- Clearly communicates ideas.
- Is adequately organized.
- Is developed with sufficient examples, reasoning, or references for most of the ideas.
- Has an adequate style (some variety in sentence patterns, transitions between most ideas, vocabulary accurate for the most part).
- Has some errors in grammar, usage or mechanics.

*A “3 point” or “C” essay:*

- Inaccurately responds to or neglects part of the assignment.
- Has a simplistic thesis that may show limited knowledge of the issues involved in the assignment.
- Demonstrates a lack of focus or confused, stereotyped, or simplistic thinking.
- May not always communicate ideas clearly.
- Is ineffectively organized.
- May not provide adequate or appropriate details or references to support generalizations, or may provide details without generalizations.
- Has stylistic weaknesses (little variety in sentence patterns, few transitions, imprecise vocabulary).
- Has occasional major errors in grammar, usage or mechanics or frequent minor errors.

*A “2 point” or “D” essay:*

- Indicates confusion about the assignment or neglects important aspects of the assignment.

- Has an unclear or confusing thesis which shows little understanding of the assignment or which demonstrates a misinterpretation of the assignment.
- Demonstrates confused thinking.
- Often fails to communicate ideas clearly.
- Has very weak organization.
- Has very little development of ideas; uses very few examples or references to support points.
- Has an ineffective style (monotonous or fragmented sentence structure, no transitions, simplistic or inaccurate vocabulary).
- Has many repeated errors in grammar, usage or mechanics.

*A “1 or 0 point” or “F” essay:*

- An indication of an inability to comprehend or to respond meaningfully to the assignment.
- No thesis or has an incomprehensible thesis.
- Deliberately off-topic.
- An inability to communicate ideas clearly.
- Incoherent organization.
- Incomplete or inappropriate development of ideas.
- Incoherent style (difficulties with sentence structure, pattern of vocabulary errors).
- Pervasive pattern of errors in grammar, usage and mechanics.

If you have any questions regarding my grading process, please feel free to see me.