LOOK PAST THE FAÇADE!

Triad B Learning Community

Fall 2011

Large Lecture Professor: Dr. Isabel Araiza
Ph.D. in Sociology

Lead Composition Instructor: Andrea Montalvo
MA in English

Lead Seminar Instructor: Amanda Marquez
MA in History

Learning Community Description:
Today, more than 75% of graduating seniors enroll in an institution of higher education the fall semester following their spring graduation. These high enrollment rates do not necessarily translate into high persistence rates. In fact, retention has captured the preoccupations of researchers, policy makers, and administrators in higher education. A study examining retention levels from 1983-2010 indicated that 2010 retention rates from freshman to sophomore years were at an all-time low (ACT 2011). Thirty percent of freshman did not return to higher education for their sophomore year. When one looks at graduation rates, specifically for those attending a four-year public university, the data are just as bleak. In 2010, only 39.6% of students attending a four-year university completed their undergraduate education within five years (ACT 2011). That means that 60.4% did not; that’s nearly 2 out of 3 freshman who enrolled in a four-year university in 1995.

Initially, when universities were first trying to tackle the retention and persistence problems, they focused on learning what student characteristics were clearly associated with successful completion of higher education. Not surprisingly, students who were enrolled in college preparatory courses and students with parents with bachelor’s degrees were the most likely to succeed. But, not everyone is that fortunate. So, universities asked themselves what they could do to improve student retention and completion, without compromising expectations. A 2009 national survey of universities and community colleges examined the initiatives institutions of higher education introduced to their campus. It turns out the Freshman seminar courses had one of the highest impacts on student retention (ACT 2010) much like the one in which you are enrolled for this learning community.

Our freshman seminar course is linked to a Human Societies course and a Freshman Composition course. Our freshman composition course offers you a unique opportunity to process that which you are exposed in large lecture. The material to which you are exposed in large lecture will also serve as a source for writing assignments in your composition course. In short, your enrollment in these three courses will be a truly integrative experience where content and assignments will allow you to engage with two disciplines simultaneously. What’s more, your seminar instructors will play critical roles in helping you process material and become accustomed to the new learning environment at our institution of higher education. Like any other experience, what you take from this experience depends in large part the effort you are willing to invest. But, you have a team of educators that are committed to providing you the best opportunities for you to learn how to read, think, and write at the university level.
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Learning Community Objectives:

By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of sociological concepts.
- Demonstrate understanding of how culture, social class, race/ethnicity, and gender influence life chances.
- Demonstrate understanding of how the structures present in the family system, the media, and the education system influence life chances.
- Correctly employ those sociological concepts and information to analyze personal experiences and observations.
- Use writing to communicate his/her understanding of sociological concepts and information.
- Use writing to communicate his/her analysis of personal experiences and observations.
T/Th 9:30-10:45am
Bay Hall 103

Professor: Isabel Araiza, Ph.D.
Office: Bay Hall 347
Office Hours: T: 8:15-9:15am & 9:30-10:30pm
               W: 8:15-10:15am
               Th: 8:15-9:15am
               or by appointment
Office Number: 361.825.3936
Email: Isabel.Araiza@tamucc.edu
Blackboard: https://iol.tamucc.edu

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION:
Course Description:
For most students, this course is their first formal introduction to sociology. Sociology is a systematic, scientifically influenced examination of the human social world. Sociology investigates virtually every aspect of human social life; it critically examines how impersonal social forces and phenomena influence various aspects of our existence: what our social institutions look like, how they operate, the choices we make in our everyday lives, the options from which we have to choose, how and why we arrive at our understanding of the world around us, why we hold the values we possess, etc.

Sociologists employ multiple theories to examine our social world. The different theories available focus their attention on different aspects of our social life and can offer dramatically different, sometimes conflicting, explanations about social phenomena. This course is designed to introduce you to basic sociological concepts, theories, methods, and research findings. We will be using these tools to analyze various aspects of contemporary society, focusing on the United States (though, you should note: These tools can be used to analyze any social groups from nuclear families to businesses, to countries, to transnational organizations, as well as subgroups that exist within and across each form of human social organization).

Learning Objectives:
• To describe the basic concepts, methods, and theories used in sociology
• To understand the relationship between technology and social change
• To recognize the reciprocal relations between individuals and society

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Text:
Section Exams:
There are a total of three exams. Exam I (worth 10% of your grade) covers the introduction, methods, culture and socialization. Exam II (worth 15% of your grade) covers social class, race and ethnicity, and sex and gender. Exam III (worth 20% of your grade) covers family, education, and media. The final exam day is reserved for those who need to make up a missed exam. You will have the opportunity to decide the format of the test you will take. Each exam will include 25 multiple choice items (worth 100 points) and two essay questions (each worth 100 points). You can either: A) complete the multiple choice section of the exam and write one essay or B) answer both essay questions and ignore the multiple choice section.

You will be held responsible for all material presented in class and included in the chapters. Moreover, you are still responsible for material that is in the text but not covered in class.

Assignments:
There are a total of ten assignments (worth 15% of your total grade). The two lowest grades will be dropped. Due dates are posted on the class calendar and are due within the FIRST ten minutes of class. ELECTRONIC COPIES OF PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED! ABSOLUTELY NO late work will be accepted.

The assignments will be based upon performing, listening, viewing/observing, or reading assignments relevant to a particular section of the textbook. For some assignments, you’ll have two or three options from which to choose. All assignments will be posted on Blackboard. You’ll have to write a summary of the option you chose. Then, you will have to discuss your observations in relation to concepts presented in your reader. A high quality summary can earn you up to half of the available credit for this assignment. And, a high quality discussion on the connections between the activity and the content from the text can earn you the other half. Simply discussing key terms or simple factoids from the text will earn you no more than 10% of all possible points. The amount of points you earn will be a function of A) the quality of your summary of the option you selected, B) the quality of the explanation as to how the event connects with the relevant sections of your reader and C) your quality of writing.

These are formal papers. You will be required to cite from the reader and discuss the links between the text and the assignment using proper grammar and citation protocols. If you are unsure about how to do so, you can visit the writing center (located in the Glasscock building) for assistance.

The format requirements are as follows: Each paper must be two to four pages in length; 12 pitch font; Times New Roman; 1” margins; and double spaced. Failure to comply with these formatting requirements WILL compromise the points you earn for this assignment.

More information and expectations associated with the assignments will be posted on Blackboard and announced during class meetings.
Quizzes
Quizzes (worth 10% of your grade) will be unannounced throughout the entirety of the semester. You must demonstrate evidence of reading and being prepared for class lecture.

Portfolios
You are required to submit two portfolios to your composition and seminar instructors. The grade you earn for those portfolios (each worth 5% of your grade) will be calculated into your large lecture grade. The grade assigned by your composition instructor and the grade assigned by your seminar instructor will be averaged—each weighted equally.

Seminar
This portion of your grade (worth 10%) will be calculated into your final grade at the end of the semester. The learning community leaders worked throughout the semester to ensure that what you do in each of your classes influences your experience in the other classes. The final grade you earn in seminar will be what is used to calculate this portion of your grade. Be engaged in seminar. Do your assigned work.

Bonus
This portion of your grade (worth 3%) is a built in curve. These points will be awarded on attendance check days. These days will be unannounced throughout the semester, except for the two days that are indicated in your class calendar. While we do not take attendance every day, we DO EXPECT you to attend class and be attentive.

Grade Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tool</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam I</td>
<td>Sept 20th</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam II</td>
<td>October 20th</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam III</td>
<td>December 1st</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments 1-10</td>
<td>See Calendar 1st ten min of class</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>Daily-Unannounced</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios I</td>
<td>September 30th</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio II</td>
<td>December 6th</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar</td>
<td>Final Grade</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>Unannounced</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Grade</td>
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<td>103%*</td>
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</tbody>
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*Yes, your grade has a 3% curve built into it.

Final Grade Scale:

89.5+ pts = A   79.5-89.4 = B   69.5-79.4 = C   59.5-69.4 = D   <59.5 = F
COURSE POLICIES:

Exams:
Students need to bring a pencil or a pen to the exam. Once the exam is distributed, you will be permitted to leave the classroom ONLY AFTER you have completed your exam. Those arriving after the first exam is submitted WILL NOT be permitted to take the exam. The cover page and the essay portion of the exam will be returned one week after the administration of the exam. The multiple-choice portion of the exam will not be returned. If you would like to review the multiple-choice portion, you can come by during my office hours to do so. Exams not picked up on the day they are distributed will be left in the bin outside my office door. If you have questions regarding the grade of your exam, you can come to my office to discuss those with me. Be aware that I reserve the right to modify your grade UP or DOWN, after reviewing your exam.

Missed Exams:
Every effort should be made to be present for ALL scheduled exams. The dates of the exams are posted on the calendar. Students will be permitted to make up ONE exam; however, be aware that make up exams tend to be MUCH MORE challenging than the scheduled exams and the format of the exam will be disclosed only upon the administration of the exam. Make up exams will be administered on the day of the final.

Absences:
Attendance is expected but will not be taken regularly. You are an adult, responsible for your own time and your own actions. Material will be presented and discussed in class, and that material often appears on exams. It is in your interest to attend. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that regular attendance is positively correlated with grades.

Grading:
I reserve the right to curve or NOT curve grades. If there is a particular grade that you NEED or WANT, work for it. Essays will be graded using a letter grade system: A++ indicates you’ve received full credit (aka: 100). A+ = 98, A = 95, A- = 92, A-/B+ = 90, B+ = 88, B = 85, etc. Extremely poor write ups which do not demonstrate any real mastery of the content will be assigned an F (50), and F- (25), or a zero, depending on the dearth of comments for which credit may be allocated.

Contacting the Professor:
Should you need to contact me, the best way to do so is via email. I check that multiple times, daily. When you do contact me, treat your email as a formal document. Use proper grammar and punctuation.

Electronic Devices:
LAP TOPS are not permitted in my class; however, electronic recording devices are. Should you wish to record the lectures/discussions, you are more than welcome to do so. All cell phones, ipods, mp3 players, and the like should be turned off prior to class beginning.

Cheating Policy:
Any form of cheating will not be tolerated. Should you be caught cheating, your name will be submitted to the Department Chair, as well as to the Vice President of Student Affairs. If you are caught cheating, you will get a zero on the exam/assignment and will not be allowed to retake the exam/assignment or resubmit the reaction paper. Please see the Student Code of Conduct for the disciplinary procedures pertaining to academic dishonesty.
ACADEMIC ADVISING
The College of Arts and Humanities requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located at Driftwood 203E and can be reached at 825.3466.

STUDENTS with DISABILITIES
The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services Office at 825.5816 or visit the office in Driftwood 101.

Grade Appeal Process
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

EMAIL
You have your very own Islander e-mail account. I will be using this account should any correspondence be necessary. All university notifications will be using your Islander account to contact you. To access your Islander email, first go to S.A.I.L. for your new student ID number. Next, go to http://newuser.tamucc.edu for your new email account. For more information call 825.5618.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>8/23</td>
<td>Intro and Survey</td>
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<td>8/30</td>
<td>“The Promise”</td>
<td>9/1</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>“Rule Enforcement without Visible Means”</td>
<td>9/8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>“Growing Up is Harder to Do”</td>
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<td>“Colorblind Racism”</td>
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<td>“Dogs as Gender Play”</td>
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<td>11/1</td>
<td>“The Student World”</td>
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<td>11/22</td>
<td>First Year Celebration</td>
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<td>11/29</td>
<td>Guest Lecture</td>
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<td>PRESENTATIONS</td>
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Look Past the Façade  
Syllabus and Calendar may be subject to revision