SOCI 3310.001
Sociology Through Film
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi
Spring 2017
TR 9:30 – 10:45
Bay Hall 201

Instructor: Dr. Michael Ramirez
Office: 344 Bay Hall
Office hours: Tues 11:00 – 11:45 & 2:00 – 3:00
Wed 9:00 – 10:30
Thurs 11:00 – 11:45 & 2:00 – 3:00
Phone: 361-825-2388
E-mail: Michael.Ramirez@tamucc.edu

Course Description:
This course is designed to supplement concepts, issues, and theories presented in introductory sociology courses through the viewing and analyzing of contemporary American films. In particular, we will examine the sociological understandings of adolescence, gender, race, social class, and romantic relationships, as well as culture, deviance, crime, segregation, and aging in contemporary American films.

Student Learning Outcomes:
After successful completion of this course, you will be able to:
♦ define, understand, and explain advanced concepts in sociology
♦ differentiate among competing theoretical perspectives in sociology
♦ examine and analyze culture using sociological theories and concepts
♦ use the cultural artifact of film to illustrate, compare, and critique sociological theories

Required Text:
Required readings will be posted on BlackBoard.

Course Policies
Attendance Policy:
Regular attendance is essential to doing well in this course. I will be checking attendance regularly. It is your responsibility to make certain you have signed the attendance sheet. If you are not in class at the point that the sheet is passed around, you will be marked absent for that day.

If you need to arrive late or leave early because of an appointment or such, please talk to me before class and make your arrival/departure as quietly as possible. This is as much, if not more, for your classmates as it is for me. Many
students find it very distracting to keep focused on lecture when others are coming and going at odd times.

Attention Policy:
If you choose to come to class, I expect you to be mentally as well as physically present. I do not allow laptops in class, so leave them at home. I also do not allow for other distractions in class. Sending/reading text messages, putting your head down on the desk, and reading newspapers or other texts during class is unacceptable. If you need to get work done for another class or have other non-class issues that are more pressing, then just skip this class. We all have to make choices about where to put our energy on any given day.

Classroom Ground Rules:
In this class, we will discuss both abstract theoretical ideas and concrete, practical information about different social groups and social behaviors. I hope that these materials will challenge you intellectually and personally. Because this class may touch on controversial social issues, I propose the following ground rules, which I would like you all to agree to and assume while in this classroom.

1. Acknowledge that all of us have learned misinformation about our own social group and about members of other groups, whether we belong to a majority or minority group.

2. Agree not to blame ourselves or others for the misinformation we have learned in the past, but accept responsibility for not repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.

3. Be respectful. Class discussion time is a critical point of showing respect and intellectual growth. We need to make our discussions “safe” for everyone. We all need to make this happen together. Listen carefully to comments. Do not interrupt. Use words (nonverbal and guttural sounds are not acceptable forms of communication). Frame your responses in civil terms (verbal attacks are not acceptable). If you want to take issue with someone else’s response, first summarize what you heard them say. Then discuss why the “idea” (not the person) is problematic.

4. You speak for yourself. You own your opinion and you get to keep it. The voices that we speak with are often indicative of larger narratives that have been a part of our particular social experience. We do not speak for all members of a group to which we belong. I strive to present research that is methodologically and theoretically sound. Your opinion may not be supported by research that I present in class. That dissonance may make you uncomfortable or even angry. Note those emotions. They are important.
**Grading Procedures:**

*Exams:*
We will have two exams throughout this course. Each exam is worth 25% of your final grade. Each exam will focus only on those materials read or studied since the last exam, although we will be building concepts and theoretical understandings that will be drawn upon throughout the course. It is only in this sense that they will be cumulative. Exams will be a combination of multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions.

*Response Papers:*
To encourage you to prepare for class discussion, I am requiring you to write short (3-5 page) response papers after viewing each film in class. In these papers, you should primarily draw specific links from the film to the issues discussed and read in class. I will provide a detailed grading rubric specifying required content, minimum page length, etc. in class. The 5 papers on the in-class films will count for 7% each. I will only accept late work in cases of extreme circumstances (such as auto wrecks, hospitalization, and family emergencies).

*Discussion:*
Active and regular participation is essential to this course. The final 15% of your final grade will depend on your class participation. I expect you to be present and prepared to discuss each day’s topics. You must do all reading prior to class and come prepared to discuss them. Getting a satisfactory grade for this requires more than simply attending class. You must actively contribute to our discussions. Participation does not mean that you must agree with everything we read. In fact, I hope you read all texts with a critical eye and share your evaluations with the class.

I will keep track of your contributions to class discussions, noting the quality of your comments more so than the quantity of them. In general, earning excellent discussion grades requires active, thoughtful, and insightful engagement with course material in which you demonstrate you have done assigned readings and are genuinely making an effort to understand material from readings and lecture. Refer to the rubric distributed on the first day of class for this portion of your grade.

To calculate your grade:

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Formula</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>__ X .25 = ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Paper 1</td>
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<td>Response Paper 2</td>
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<td>Response Paper 3</td>
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<td>Response Paper 5</td>
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<td>Discussion</td>
<td>__ X .15 = ____</td>
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Final Grade = sum of these totals

Final Letter Grades:
A = 90.00% to 100.00%
B = 80.00% to 89.99%
C = 70.00% to 79.99%
D = 60.00% to 69.99%
F = below 60.00%

Academic Dishonesty:
It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the University’s codes on academic dishonesty. In general, any form of academic dishonesty (including but not limited to cheating and plagiarism) will not be tolerated. Such instances will be reported to the Department Chair, as well as to Student Affairs. Sanctions can include: receiving a zero on the assignment/exam, receiving an F for the final course grade, and/or recommendation for dismissal from the University. For more information, refer to: http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/JAffairs/index.htm.

Disabilities Accommodations:
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 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 call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Academic Advising:
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Grade Appeals Process:
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures (available at http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C2.01_student_grade_appeal_procedure.pdf).

For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

**Course Readings:**
Materials should be read BEFORE coming to class.

**Jan 19**
Introduction to the Course
Culture, film, and society

**Sociological Theories of Media Influence**

**Jan 24 – 26**
Read:
Sutherland & Felty’s (2010) “Introduction” (pp. 1 – 13) in *Cinematic Sociology.*


Introductory Paper Due

**Coming of Age: Social Class, Gender, and Discovering Identity**

**Jan 31**
Read:


Feb 7 – 9  In-class film viewing

Feb 14  Paper Due
Discussion Day

Family and the Dissolution of Relationships

Feb 16  Read:

Dowd’s (2010) “Understanding Social Mobility Through the Movies” (pp. 36 – 46) in Sutherland & Felty’s Cinematic Sociology.

Walzer & Oles’ (2010 [2003]) “Accounting for Divorce: Gender and Uncoupling Narratives” (pp. 525 – 539) in Ferguson’s Shifting the Center: Understanding Contemporary Families.

Feb 21 – 23  In-class film viewing

Feb 28  Paper Due
Discussion Day

Mar 2  Exam 1

Gender, Feminism, and Film

Mar 7  Read:

Sutherland’s (2013) “Constructing Empowered Women: Cinematic Images of Power and Powerful Women” (pp. 149 – 161) in Sutherland & Felty’s *Cinematic Sociology*.

Mar 9  Halberstam’s “An Introduction to Female Masculinity” (pp. 1 – 29) in *Female Masculinity*.

Podeschi’s (2013) “From Earth to Cosmos: Environmental Sociology and Images of the Future in Science Fiction Film” (pp. 397 – 411) in Sutherland & Felty’s *Cinematic Sociology*.

Mar 13 – 17  *Spring Break*

Mar 21 - 23  In-class film viewing

Mar 28  Paper Due
Discussion Day

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**The Collisions of Work and Family**

*Mar 30*  Read:


Apr 6 – 11  In-class film viewing

Apr 13  Paper Due
Discussion Day

Aging and the Later Years: The Social Construction of Growing Older

Apr 18  Read:


Apr 25  In-class film viewing

Apr 27  Paper Due
Discussion Day

May 2  Wrap-Up and Conclusions

May X  Final Exam
SOCI 3310 INFORMATION SHEET

Name: ________________________________

Name by which you wish to be called: ______________________

Email address: _________________________

Major & Year in School: ________________________________

What other sociology (or media) courses have you taken?

Favorite movies:

Is there any topic in particular that you’re most interested in? Why?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

COURSE CONTRACT

In order to remain in this class, you must read the syllabus, complete this form, and return it to the instructor.

Statement of Understanding Course Requirements

I have read the syllabus for SOCI 3310, and I understand the course requirements including the policies on grading, coursework, classroom rules, participation, attendance, absences, make-up exams, and academic dishonesty.

Name: ________________________________ (print)

Signature: _____________________________