

SOC 3309: W01 American Society Spring 2020

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Introduction

Welcome! I am excited about this course, and hope you learn a lot and even have some fun!

In this course, we will examine several key concepts in sociology from the lens of American Society. This is an upper division sociology course. American Society is an exciting and complex system of humans and the institutions we create.



Institutions in sociology are diverse. They are the human-made mechanisms that dictate social, political and economic life for us as citizens. Institutions can be obvious like government, law, schools, prisons, military. But they are also cultural like film, media, art and music. And they are more obtuse like mannerisms, language, and the social roles we all perform (depending on the setting and audience). Institutions reassert our values as a society, and they can challenge those same values. This is our goal: we are going to look at how power operates in American Society, through groups and individuals, how power can be expressed in authority and social change. We will introduce the concept of hegemony from the Italian thinker, Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony is the power of a dominant group in society—and that power can be expressed in media, politics, military, law, economy and most importantly is formulated through ideas, or ideologies.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Acquisition of a sociological perspective on human society: individuals, groups, power, social change, authority, culture, sub-culture and identity.
- Development of a sociological imagination and critical analysis of data, theory and texts.
- Ability to analyze and understand basic sociological theory and then apply to original student research.

- Understand the idea of hegemony and counter-hegemony as roots of critical social theory.
- Develop an original research paper using a theoretical frame work, media content analysis and original writing.
- Analyze meta queries: What is society? What is social power? And importantly, if social life is constructed, what is our responsibility in changing injustices in society?

The Americans with Disabilities Act

Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for accessibility services. Students seeking accessibility services must contact Counseling and Accessibility Services, Ferguson Hall, Room 112. The mailing address is P.O. Box C-171, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832, Telephone Number 432-837-8203.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated at any level. Any assignment, exam or paper with plagiarized content will result in an immediate zero and conversation with professor about withdrawal from course.

Texts

No textbook is required to purchase. Instead, all readings have been made into PDFs and are available on the course Blackboard site. We will be reading a diversity of sources (detailed below). All readings are in module folders for that week and required to pass that week's assessment. Some of the texts will also be films and television shows, and I encourage you to use your access. If you have trouble, just contact me for help accessing materials. *This is an upper division college course, which means your reading is your scholarship—I want to see how you analyze the texts!*

Projects, Assessment and Exams

In this course, I am grading you on full completion of each module's assignments on time (*missing components and last-minute emails with no goods is NOT a wise move*).

This is a critical sociology course, which means I am grading you all on your ability to take in diverse information in several mediums:

- lecture power point (ppt),
- readings,
- multi-media clips and films,
- your critical writing responses to questions and your original essays,
- two exams with writing emphasis, and
- an original research paper using the sociological imagination to analyze and American television program (story or episode arc) of at least 8 pages, with citation page in APA format.

Each module's assignments take a minimum of 8-10 hours, with extra time for writing and researching your original paper. **Assignments are due uploaded to the Blackboard site by the Friday deadline at 5pm CST. Directions for download and uploading to Blackboard follow.**

Downloading and Uploading Assignments to Blackboard. If you have never uploaded assignments to Blackboard, here is a helpful site:

<https://wiki.umbc.edu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=23658615>

Downloading Assignments: In the Module folder for that week (on the "Content page) you will see the Assignments. You download the document, do the work and upload back on to Blackboard. Below is a screenshot from Module folder to see how and where to download the assignment file:

Week 1: Introduction to Geography & Human-Environmental Processes *Everything you need is in here!

- Lecture PPT with Audio Slides
- Reading 1: Economic Impacts of Colonialism
- Reading 2: Industrial Revolution Climate Change Early
- Week One Questions** Download the assignment file by clicking on this grey icon

Attached Files: WRC2019Week1Questions.docx (19.146 KB)

1. Download this document.
2. Complete all the questions by reading the syllabus, going through the Lecture PPT and audio, the multimedia and the two readings in the Module folder.
3. Upload the assignment once you have completed all sections to Blackboard by Aug 30 Friday 5pm CST.

Uploading Assignments: After you have worked on your assignment and saved it to your computer, simply click the Assignment title and "browse your computer" for the file. Upload.

1. Download this document.
 2. Complete all the questions by reading the syllabus, going through the Lecture PPT and audio, the multimedia and the two readings in the Module folder.
 3. Upload the assignment once you have completed all sections to Blackboard by Aug 30 Friday 5pm CST.
- WRG2019Week1Questions.docx

By submitting this paper, you agree: (1) that you are submitting your paper to be used and stored as part of the SafeAssign™ services in accordance with the Blackboard Privacy Policy; (2) that your institution may use your paper in accordance with your institution's policies; and (3) that your use of SafeAssign will be without recourse against Blackboard Inc. and its affiliates.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

Text Submission Write Submission

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After working on your assignment and it is saved to your computer, you can simply "browse" and upload it back to Blackboard.

Advice: Use **Chrome** as your browser for download, uploading and taking exams. And do not wait until the last minute. Computers and technical issues exist, give yourself enough time to deal with problems.

Grading

1. Module Readings and Written Assignments (100 points each, 500 total)

There are five modules over the semester, and you have two weeks to complete each module.

2. Exams (100 points each, 200 total) After two modules, you will have one week for an exam on Blackboard, no extensions.

3. Final Paper (100 points total) And after the final module, you will have one week to complete your final paper.



Complete, well-done work for each module is required to pass this course. Each module is worth 100 points, each exam is worth 100 points, and the final research paper is worth another 100 points. I deduct points for: missing components, copy and paste answers, no critical analysis, and lack of engagement with materials. **Late is a serious matter and will require a professor-to-student conversation.** The materials are diverse and show not only a spectrum of sociology; but are also examples of college

level scholarship and major contributors to the debates in this field. **Any plagiarism in any form will result in an immediate zero for the assignment or exam, and a conversation with professor on withdrawing from the course or further disciplinary action.**

We are examining primary and secondary sources, and popular and academic writers.

1) **Primary sources** provide direct first-hand evidence about a person, event, etc. They can be historical or current, and can be letters, declarations, speeches, manifestos, data, maps, interviews, surveys, audio or video recordings, experiments, etc. In this course, you will read some speeches and interviews from diverse political and social leaders like Stokely Carmichael, Russell Means and Dolores Huerta—these are primary sources.

2) **Secondary sources** interpret, explain, describe, evaluate, summarize, etc. the primary source. Any article you read analyzing one of those leaders' speeches or a social experiment would be an example of a secondary source. Pieces that are opinions or analyses can be both high-brow, academic and popular culture: all are secondary sources.

A) **Popular sociology** articles are those that contain social science information but are written for the general public. You don't have to be a college sociology student or professor to deal with the language. We take the complex theory and translate it out of the disciplinary specific language for everyone to read. Examples are *Scientific American*, *Psychology Today*, *The Guardian*, *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The New Yorker*, *Rolling Stone*, *Texas Monthly* etc.



B) **Academic sociology** will be the most complex readings: they will have a theoretical framework, data and analysis and are written with sociology language at a college reading level. They are the model for YOUR final paper. These articles are reviewed by other scholars in the field before publication and published without compensation, like the journals *Social Problems*, *Sociology Compass*, and *Media Culture and Society*. This category also includes major works in critical social theory, including Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. These works contain theoretical or abstract ideas about society, power and institutions.

You analyze those abstract ideas as you read and can apply to your own analysis of society and in your final paper.

For example, Arendt uses the Nazi policy of extermination against anyone different as an example of how evil can be institutionalized and committed by civil servants and neighbors. You can use that same theory of “the banality of evil” as you analyze a television show like *Pretty Little Liars* and how teenage girls commit evil acts against each other on an everyday, “ordinary” level as bullies leading to ostracization, institutionalization, and even suicide. Cruelty becomes an act of power from groups against individuals who are “different”, in order to express their domination.

C) **Pop culture** will be the easiest readings. I have included some well-written entries from popular culture sites, especially on current events like film releases and the Royal Wedding 2018.

It's your job to intellectually engage each source I have selected—you will be inspired by some readings, and you won't like others. But that's not my objective, professors aren't chefs trying to please your palate 😊 We are here to make you think and work out your brain like a coach. Stretch your mental pre-conceptions, biases and comfortability and you will compete this course, ready for action!

Point System

Module 1: 100 points

Module 2: 100 points

Exam 1: 100 points

Module 3: 100 points

Module 4: 100 points

Exam 2: 100 points

Module 5: 100 points

Final Paper: 100 points

Final Grade Tally

750-800 points: A

700-749 points: B

650-699 points: C

600-649 points: D

Below: Failing Grade

Exams

There will be two exams: Exam 1 will be posted after completion of Modules 1 and 2, and Exam 2 after Module 3 and 4. The exams will be essay based and should show a deep understanding of theory and specific cases.

Research Paper

In addition to the critical writing analysis questions for each module, you will be writing an original research paper on hegemonic values in American television. Through the course, you will learn about hegemony as a concept, resistance against hegemonic values and changing ideas or ideologies in society. Your data source to analyze these ideas will be an American television show of at least a five-episode story arc. A story arc means a narrative that continues in some way through at least five episodes (the “big game”, a romance, a mystery, a health crisis, a contest—any kind of dramatic conflict or situation and resolution).

We will work on this paper through an iterative process. That basically means in stages, so you can write organized and deep, and with help from me along the way. For each module, you will have a component due for the paper (see schedule below) and then the final paper by the last day of class.

The television show is your data source and you can pick any show that deals with an aspect of American society and gives you material to construct an analysis of hegemony. The show can reject or resist hegemony; the show can reassert mainstream power ideas; or the show can change actual American society by existing (this happens a lot in the U.S., popular imagery on television can reinforce stereotypes or demolish them, pop culture can make certain conversations more acceptable or show how an idea or language becomes outdated). For example, *Ellen* and *Will & Grace* in the 1990s helped Americans talk about LGBTQ issues, desires, families and policy issues.



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SEE YOUR CLASSIFIED DIRECTORY FOR THE NAME OF YOUR NEAREST MOTOROLA DEALER... (Advertisement text is small and partially illegible)

All the essays should use the terms: hegemony, society and power. From there you can use different ideas from each module and your show to expand your paper.

For example, you could write an essay on the code-switching of the American teenager and his/her language patterns within their social group (this is something you will learn more about in Module 1).

Conceptually, you could discuss the hegemony of teenage life—what are the mainstream ideals of beauty, being cool and/or athletic, popular, teen sub-cultures (emo, punk, hunting, jocks, Young Life, mean girls, etc.).

You could write on how those ideals develop and are reasserted in teen consumption (clothing, cell phones, cars, recreation, media, music, films, etc.). Then you could discuss how teens talk differently around their parents, teachers, best friends, crushes, bullies, etc. And you can talk about the difference between oral teen speak and texting languages, including uses of emoji, sexting, cyber-bullying, selfies and photos (the visual presentation of "self" versus the reality). Finally, you would link how the language reveals code-switching by teens to appear beautiful, cool, popular or connected to their friends. You could also do this paper by analyzing a teen television show or movie like *Gossip Girl*, *Riverdale*, *Pretty Little Liars*, *Mean Girls*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Vampire Diaries*, *Drumline*, etc.

I specifically want you to do at least 5 episodes of a single television show and not a movie. As you will be reading, television becomes part of the everyday fabric of American life and is popular culture that is consumed in the intimate space of home life. Think about how much media enters our everyday and television became synonymous with American home geography. In Module 1, you will be choosing your show and can be in email conversation with me before the deadline for that week on ideas.

At the end of every lecture PPT, I will explain what you need to do for your research paper that week. That component is due with your critical reading questions for the week by the deadline. I have created a Word document with each week's questions and paper assignment for you to complete and then upload for assessment.

Your paper is a minimum of 8 pages, NOT including the works cited page with at least 6 sources (3 academic articles, 1 data source of the show with episode titles and air dates, and 2 theoretical on hegemony and society).

Original research paper timeline:

Module 1: Choose television show and write how this show challenges (counters) and/or asserts (reproduces) hegemonic ideas in American Society

Module 2: Review 5 episodes and take notes as your data collection

Module 3: Draft a theoretical framework

Module 4: Outline your paper with thesis, theory, data, analysis and conclusion

Module 5: Final paper with at least 6 sources: 3 academic articles, 1 data source of show, and 2 on hegemony

Citations

Your research paper must include all sources, including your television show episodes in APA format. In the module schedule below, I have already put your sources in APA format. But here is also an online guide for APA in every possible source (websites, blogs, interviews, articles, books, etc.). It is important when you make an argument or analysis to share your sources.

APA Formatting and Style Guide. Purdue Online Writing Lab:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/07/>

Other Assignments

Readings and Multi-Media

Every week you will have a diversity of sociological material to read, in addition to the lecture PPT. The readings are in that week's module folder. On the Lecture PPT, you will also have links to multi-media and films for viewing and analyzing.

Critical Analysis Questions

Every week, you will answer several critical analysis questions on the readings and upload to Blackboard for grading and review. Each question should be answered in 3-5 thoughtful sentences which reveal your understanding of the reading and the other materials. This is an opportunity to share with me your insights, which I am thrilled to read! This is also the main way to prove to me you have read and worked through the materials.

Communication

When you are working through the readings, film and media clips, writing and research

paper assignments, **always feel free to email the instructor for clarification**. Although we are not meeting in the real world, we are sharing a virtual space and I am here for you! Don't wait until after something is due to ask questions for clarification. Email me as soon as you are confused or overwhelmed.

Module Schedule

MODULE 1: SOCIETY AND HEGEMONY

READINGS

1. Antonio Gramsci and the idea of 'hegemony'. Nutshell Biographies #2, Center for Learning Through Community Service, University of Michigan. Retrieved from <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~hfox/gramsci.html>
2. Lull, J. (1995) "Hegemony" Media, Communications and Culture: A Global Approach. Columbia University Press.
3. Leon, R. "Gramsci and Hegemony." Understanding power for social change. Retrieved from Sussex University <http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/gramsci-and-hegemony/>
4. Thoreau, H.D. (1849). *Civil Disobedience*. Retrieved from: University of Virginia <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper2/thoreau/civil.html>
5. Gitlin, T. (1979). Prime Time Ideology: The Hegemonic Process in Television Entertainment. *Social Problems*, 26(3), 251-266.

ASSIGNMENTS (Word Doc is in module folder, upload completed doc by deadline)

1. Critical Writing Questions
2. Research Paper Component 1

**DEADLINE FOR MODULE 1 ASSIGNMENTS: January 24 Friday, 5pm CST
Uploaded to Blackboard**

MODULE 2: GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

READINGS

1. Adalian, J. (2016). How Nickelodeon Got America Hooked on Cable. *Vulture*. October 24. Retrieved from: <http://www.vulture.com/2016/10/nickelodeon-got-america-hooked-on-cable.html>
2. Arendt, H. (1961) Eichmann in Jerusalem. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1963/02/16/eichmann-in-jerusalem-i>
3. Hoffner, C. and M. Buchanan. (2005). Young Adults' Wishful Identification with Television Characters: The Role of Perceived Similarity and Character Attributes. *Media Psychology*, 7, 325-351.

4. Milgram, S. (1973) *The Perils of Obedience*. Harpers. Retrieved from: <https://www.nmmi.edu/academics/leadership/documents/Milgram-Obedience2.pdf>
5. Morley, D. (1986) *Television in the family. Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*. 7-28. London: Routledge Retrieved from: https://monoskop.org/images/9/97/Morley_David_Family_Television_Cultural_Power_and_Domestic_Leisure_1988.pdf
6. RealityTV: A Sociological Perspective View, SOC302 Group Project. Retrieved from: <https://sociologyjrs2012.wordpress.com> *This is a one page website from another sociology class that analyzed a few reality television shows from a few main sociological perspectives and theories: conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, social control, functionalism. This group project is well written, concise and will help inspire your paper organization and how to invoke the sociological imagination in your writing.

TELEVISION:

"Underdogs", Drunk History, 2018

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Critical Writing Questions
2. Research Paper Component 2

DEADLINE FOR MODULE 2 ASSIGNMENTS: February 7 Friday, 5pm CST
Uploaded to Blackboard

Exam 1: Completed by Friday February 14 5pm CST

MODULE 3: POWER AND AUTHORITY

READINGS

1. Freeman, J.E. (2011). Another Side of C. Wright Mills: The Theory of Mass Society. *Logos: A Journal of Modern Society and Culture*. Retrieved from: <https://sociologyjrs2012.wordpress.com>
2. Hind, D. (2011). Mass media, or public media? *Al-Jazeera*. October 20.
3. Mills, C.W. (1958). The Structure of Power in American Society. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 9(1). 29-41.
4. Edwards, S. (2018). "Dead Girls and Our 'Sweet, Quiet' Boys." *Jezebel*.
5. Strauss, N. (October 6, 2016) "Why we are living in an age of fear" *Rolling Stone* Retrieved from: <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/why-were-living-in-the-age-of-fear-w443554>

Film:

Kumare, Vikram Gandhi, 2011

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Critical Writing Questions with Film Analysis
2. Research Paper Component 3

**DEADLINE FOR MODULE 3 ASSIGNMENTS: Friday February 28 5pm, CST
Uploaded to Blackboard**

MODULE 4: POWER AND SOCIAL CHANGE

READINGS

Primary Sources from Anti-Hegemonic Leaders

1. Huerta, D. (2003) Two Speeches. UXL Hispanic American Reference Library.
Retrieved from:
<http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/suic/PrimarySourcesDetailsPage/DocumentToolsPortletWindow?jsid=a0e14f2137865354964c84a1fd9d60e0&action=2&catId=&documentId=GALE%7CEJ2130500012&userGroupName=full19951&zid=5cf86d3caa99fcae3e1fbae383e7db8>
 2. Chavez, C. (1984) Address to the Commonwealth Club of California by Cesar Chavez, President of the United Farm Workers, AFL-CIO. San Francisco, CA. Retrieved from:
http://www.chavezfoundation.org/_cms.php?mode=view&b_code=00100800000000&b_no=16&page=1&field=&key=&n=7
 3. Lorde, A.(2009). Selections from *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from:
<https://mwasicollectif.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/audre-lorde-i-am-your-sister-collected-and-unpublished-writings.pdf>
 4. Carmichael, S.(1966) Black Power. Speech at the University of California, Berkley. Retrieved from; <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/carmichael-black-power-speech-text/>
 5. Means, R.(1980) For America to Live, Europe Must Die. Speech. July 1980. Retrieved from <https://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/tag/russell-means/>
- Secondary Sources
1. Johnson, T. (2018). "Black Panther is a gorgeous, ground-breaking celebration of black culture." *Vox*, February 23.
<https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/2/23/17028826/black-panther-wakanda-culture-marvel>
 2. Gottlieb, J. (2018). "Black Panther is already a hit, but it won't change the way Hollywood treats minorities and women." *Quartz*, February 12.

<https://quartzzy.qz.com/1202764/black-panther-is-already-a-hit-but-it-wont-change-the-way-hollywood-treats-minorities-and-women/>

3. Newman-Bremang, K. (2018). "A Black Royal Wedding." May 21. *LaineyGossip*.
<https://www.laineygossip.com/this-black-royal-wedding-was-very-complicated-for-me-as-a-black-woman/49955>
4. Davies, C.(2018). "'It really was a black service': world reaction to royal wedding."
Guardian, May 20. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/may/20/it-really-was-a-black-service-world-reaction-to-royal-wedding>
5. Mistry, R.(1999). Can Gramsci's theory of hegemony help us to understand the representation of ethnic minorities in western television and cinema? Essay. Retrieved from <http://www.theory.org.uk/ctr-rol6.htm>

Film:

"American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs" 2014

*If you have trouble accessing this documentary, email the instructor. We have a class account and I will give the information that week.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Critical Writing Questions
2. Research Paper Component 4

**DEADLINE FOR MODULE 4 ASSIGNMENTS: Friday March 20 5pm CST
Uploaded to Blackboard**

Exam 2: Completed by Friday March 27 5pm CST

MODULE 5: CULTURE, SUB-CULTURES, AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

READINGS

1. Avila-Saavedra, G. (2009). Nothing queer about queer television: televised construction of gay masculinities. *Media Culture Society* 31(5), 5-21.
2. Brasted, M. (2004). Through the Looking Glass: Class and Reality in Television. *Electronic Journal of Sociology*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.sociology.org/content/2004/tier2/brasted.html>
3. Platts, T. (2013). Locating Zombies in the Sociology of Popular Culture. *Sociology Compass*: 7, 547-560.
4. Grindstaff, L. and J. Turow. (2006). Video Cultures: Television Sociology in the "New TV" Age. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 32, 103-125
5. Martinez, J. (2015). 'Game of Thrones' and the Changing Curriculum in Modern Universities. *Newsweek*. August 23. Retrieved from: <http://www.newsweek.com/game-thrones-college-class-364628>

ASSIGNMENT

1. Critical Writing Questions

**DEADLINE FOR MODULE 5 ASSIGNMENTS: Friday April 10 5pm CST
Uploaded to Blackboard**

**Final Paper: Completed and Uploaded to Blackboard by Friday April 24
5pm CST**