Debating Difference in Twenty-first Century America
SOAN 100
M / W, 9:50-11:00, F, 9:40-10:40
Weitz 231

Professor: Daniel Williams
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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:30-4:00, and by appointment
Office: Leighton 234

Writing Assistant:

Course Description

For decades, sociologists have studied race, gender, and class as clearly-bounded social categories. This paradigm emphasized multiculturalism and focused on the experiences of subordinated groups—racial minorities, women, and the working and lower class. More recently, social, political, and economic changes such as increasing immigration, globalization, the “war on terror,” and marriage equality, have questioned who belongs to these categories, and where within them, as well as the implications and meaning of inclusion and diversity. In this Argument & Inquiry seminar, we will examine recent scholarship which considers these questions through the concept of “difference” in the Twenty-first century United States.

Course Objectives

- Learn how to think like a sociologist and develop your sociological imagination.
- Learn about race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality and other identities as social constructions, as well as how scholars differ in explaining the what and how of social construction.
- Learn about the diversity of approaches and ways that sociologists “do sociology,” using particular research methods; and learn to compare and think critically about such methods.
- Learn to think comparatively and historically about sociological phenomena and social identities.
- Reflect on your own identities and life experiences and how they are themselves sociological “data,” and how they confirm and/or challenge sociological scholarship.

As an Argument and Inquiry seminar (https://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/aiseminars/), this course shares the objectives of all A&I seminars:

*Argument and Inquiry (A&I) seminars are designed to provide students with an introduction to college-level work, as well as an understanding of the meaning and value of a liberal arts education. Like all Carleton courses, A&I courses develop habits of*
critical and creative thinking, encourage intellectual independence, and foster a community of learning within the classroom. In addition, all A&I courses have certain other essential elements:

• they clarify how scholars ask questions and how they find and evaluate evidence in addressing those questions,
• are discussion-based,
• are writing-rich (see Writing Rich guidelines), and
• include attendance at—and some discussion of—the A&I convo, which addresses the nature of liberal arts education.

This course is also a Writing Rich Course, and involves several specific course objectives, including the your written work being reviewed and given feedback.

Course Texts


One additional book to be purchased after group presentations are assigned (see Course Assignments below.).


Academic Policies and other Logistics

Academic Honesty

As stated in Carleton’s academic procedures and regulations: “It is assumed that a student is the author of all course work (quizzes, problem sets, online contributions, tests, papers, lab work, etc.) that he/she submits, whether for a grade or not, and that the work has not been submitted for credit in another class without the instructor’s permission. Images, ideas, data, audio clips, or phrases borrowed from others should be fully identified by standard procedures for making such acknowledgment. All permitted collaboration with others must still be acknowledged. Academic Honesty in the Writing of Essays and Other Papers is one source for information on proper citation.”

Any act of academic dishonesty will be referred for appropriate action to the Academic Standing Committee (ASC) via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. Further details can be found here: [http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dos/asc/academic_regs/?policy_id=21359](http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dos/asc/academic_regs/?policy_id=21359).
Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students who require an accommodation due to the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. The office of Disability Services for Students will also help coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Please visit this URL to learn more: https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/wellness/disability_services/

Writing

For this Writing Rich course, there are several resources at your disposal for improving on your writing and your writing for this course.

We will have a Writing Assistant for this course (___________), who will be able to help you with anything from organizing your ideas to editing your rough drafts. She will visit class, use our course Moodle, and email you with available appointment times.

Another writing resource to take advantage of is the Write Place, which has locations on the second floor of Scoville and in room 329 at the Libe. Like the course Writing Assistant, student writing consultants at the Write Place can work with you at any point in the writing process. Walk-ins are welcome at Scoville, but students with appointments will have priority. To make an appointment for yourself, you can use the online scheduler. Appointments are not required for sessions in the Libe.

If English is your second language and you think you would benefit from working with a writing consultant on a regular basis, contact Renata Fitzpatrick (rfitzpatri@carleton.edu), the coordinator of Carleton’s Second-Language Writing Program. In addition to emailing her, you can call her at x5998 or stop by her office in Scoville 201. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.

Time Management, Study Skills, and Test-Prep Strategies

Greta Simons (gsimons@carleton.edu), Carleton’s Academic Skills Coach, can work with you to improve your time management and academic skills. Her goals are to heighten your awareness of your strengths and skills and to offer new ways of approaching academic work to make you more efficient and effective. Greta can meet with you during her drop-in hours, which are listed on the Academic Skills Coaching site, but you can also email her to schedule a meeting outside of those hours.

Public Speaking and Class Presentations

The Speakeasy, in room 314 at the Library, is designed to help you with class presentations, comps talks, and other speech-related activities. Both groups and individuals are welcome to visit.
Email Etiquette

Professors on campus sometimes complain that students frequently address them improperly in email messages. I would like to give you some tips. Unless you know the professor well, do not assume you can use their first name. When writing an email make sure you start with Dear Professor “last name” or Dear Dr. “last name.” Even if your course instructor does not have a doctorate, or you are not sure if they do, it is best to address them formally at first (that is use Dr. or Professor). When addressing female professors, avoid addressing your emails as Dear Mrs., Ms., or Miss “last name.” It is also helpful to use a professor’s correct name and correct spelling of her name when you contact her.

Course Assignments

All written work must include your name, this course number, assignment type and number, and be page numbered and stapled if necessary.

Class Participation and Preparedness. (5%) This course requires your active participation and preparation. Therefore, it is critical that you read all assigned readings prior to class, and are prepared to discuss them. It also requires that you attend each class and arrive to class on time. Two instances of tardiness will be the equivalent of one absence. Two or more unexcused absences will significantly affect your participation grade.

Moodle Posts. (7.5%) 3 @ 2.5 each
Length: 1-2 pages single-spaced
Due Dates: Any readings starting Week 2 or later. Posted to Moodle by 7 pm the evening before class. One must be posted before the midterm.
You will be required to write three reflection papers to two or all readings from any particular class meeting. Each reflection paper should be posted on Moodle by 7 pm the evening prior to the class reading it is written for.

You should do the following in your paper:
• Briefly summarize the topic of each reading.
• Analyze the what and how of difference construction the article addresses.
• Synthesize Discuss how the articles are similar, how they differ, and whether they agree or disagree with each other explicitly or implicitly.
• Pose a discussion question based on the topic, findings, or argument that the article presents.
**Difference Journals. (7.5%) 3 @ 2.5 each**

**Length:** 1-2 pages single-spaced

**Due Dates:** October 1, October 20, November 10.

Three times during the term, you will turn in a journal discussing an example of how one or more categories of difference is/are constructed.

- Your examples may be drawn from media, current events, or popular culture; as well as your own life and/or experience past or present.
- For each journal you should connect your observations to at least one reading from class.
- Each of you will present one of your journal entries in class.

**Essay Exams. (40%) 2 @ 20% 6-8 pages**

There will be two take-home essay exams, the first due on **Saturday, October 18th**, and the second due on the last day of class, **Wednesday, November 19th**. More details to follow.

**Group Book Report and Class Presentation.** (12-14 pages, 20%)

This assignment is intended to give you an opportunity to work in a group, practice giving oral presentations, and more deeply understand how sociologists write about the research they conduct.

The assignment includes both an in-class presentation, due on various dates (see Schedule below), a group paper, due at the end of the term, and an evaluation of another group’s presentation.

a) **In-class presentation and b) group paper.** Working in teams of three, you will report on a book from which an excerpt will be assigned to the whole class. You will report on the entire book for the presentation and for the final paper.

Your presentation and paper will include a Brief Introduction, Theory and Definition of Terms, Research Methods, Findings and Data, and Critique and Review.

c) Again working in teams of three, you will be assigned anonymously to evaluate the group presenting, in a written format to be given back to the group the week after the presentation.

More details on this assignment can be found on the document to be posted on Moodle the first week of class.

**Individual Research Paper.** 8-10 pages (20%)

Each of you will write a research paper on a topic of your interest and choice, in consultation with me. Papers are expected to be **8-10 pages** in length and use sources outside of course readings. Papers will have several due dates – all Mondays:
**October 6**th. Paper Topic due  
**October 27**th. Annotated Bibliography due  
**November 3**rd. Rough draft due  
**November 24**th. Final Paper due

Other expectations and details to follow.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Grade value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moodle Posts (3)</td>
<td>Your choice; one before midterm</td>
<td>2.5% each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal #1</td>
<td>October 1 (W)</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Topic</td>
<td>October 6 (M)</td>
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<td>Midterm Essay / Essay #1</td>
<td>October 18 (Saturday)</td>
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<td>Journal #2</td>
<td>October 22 (W)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Rough Draft</td>
<td>November 3 (M)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal #3</td>
<td>November 7 (F)</td>
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<td>Group Paper</td>
<td>November 17 (M)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay #2</td>
<td>November 19 (W)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>November 24 (M)</td>
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**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

**Week 1**  
**Thinking Like a Sociologist**

9/15 Introductions and welcome to the course

9/17  

9/19  
- Ore, “Constructing Differences,”
- Reading 33: “The Prime Time Plight of the Arab American after 9/11”

*Prepare for Class:*  
*Project Implicit, Harvard University*  
[https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html)
Week 2  Studying Difference through Categories

9/22  Race and Ethnicity
- Reading 1: “Racial Formations”
- [M] Dalton, “Failing to See,”
- [M] Lee and Bean, “Beyond Black and White: Remaking Race in America,”

Film:  Mickey Mouse Monopoly

9/24  Gender and Sexuality
- Reading 9: “The Social Construction of Gender”
- Reading 13: “Naming All the Parts”

Optional:
- Reading 10: “The Five Sexes Revisited”

9/26  Class
- Reading 31: “The Digital Reproduction of Inequality,”
- [M] Chambliss, “The Saints and the Roughnecks,”

Week 3  Race: Inequalities

9/29
- [R] Conley, “Sociology: Methods,”

Library Visit

10/1
- [R] DiTomaso, “The Non-American Dilemma,”
- Reading 24: “Jobless Ghettos,”
- [M] Shih, “Yeah, I could hire this one, but I know it’s going to be a Problem,”

Journal #1 Due

10/3
Week 4  Race: Identities

10/6
- [R] Sapirstein and Penner, “Racial Fluidity and Inequality in the United States”

Paper Topic Due

10/8
- [M] Zhou, “Are Asians Becoming White?”
- Reading 46: “The Story of My Body”

10/10
PRESENTATIONS 1:
- The Changs Next to the Diazes Or The Racial Middle

Week 5  Religion, Nationality, and New Racializations

10/13
- [M] Ajrouch, “Gender, race, and symbolic boundaries: Arab American adolescents,”
- [R] Cole, “Top Ten Differences between White Terrorists and Others,”

Film: On Orientalism

10/15
- PRESENTATIONS 2:
  Immigration Nation: Raids, Detentions, and Deportations in Post 9/11 America

10/17

Film: Tough Guise / Codes of Gender

SATURDAY, 10/18, ESSAY #1 DUE

Week 6  Gender and Sexuality: Inequalities

10/20  Midterm Break – Enj oy!

10/22
- [R] “The Glass Escalator”
- Reading 26: “Racializing the Glass Escalator: Reconsidering Men’s Experiences with Women’s Work”

Journal #2 Due
10/24
- Reading 28: Welfare Reform, Family Hardship, and Women of Color
- Reading TBA

Week 7  Gender and Sexuality: Identities

10/27

**Annotated Bibliography Due**

- [R] Espiritu, “Asian American women and Racialized Femininities”
- [M] Han, “The Darker Shades of Queer,”
- [R] “Transgender and Poor”

10/29
- [R] Polikoff, “Beyond (Straight and Gay) Marriage,”

10/31
- “Dude you’re a fag”

**PRESENTATIONS 3:**

*Dude You’re A Fag*

Week 8  Class: Inequalities

11/3

**Paper Rough Draft Due**

- Reading 27: Stressing out the Poor: Psychological Stress and the Income-Achievement Gap
- Reading 50: “Nickel and Dimed”

11/5

- Reading 34: “Metaphors Matter: Disaster Myths and Hurricane Katrina,”

11/7

**Journal #3 Due**

- Unequal Childhoods
Week 9  Class: Identities

11/10

- *Unequal Childhoods*
  PRESENTATIONS 4: *Unequal Childhoods: Class and Family Life*

11/12

- *Women without Class*

11/14

- *Women without Class*
  PRESENTATIONS 5: *Women Without Class*

Week 10  Presentations and Wrap Up

11/17  
Paper Presentations
  **Group Papers Due**

11/19  
Last day of class: *Bagels, Feedback, Reflections*
Paper Presentations
  **ESSAY #2 DUE**

Monday, November 24  **FINAL PAPER DUE**