Welcome to CJ 900: Social Problems

Albright College – Reading, PA
Tentative Syllabus

Instructor: Charles M. Brown
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Class Meeting Times and Location: Teel Hall 114: TH 6-10

A Little About Your Instructor
I thought it might be nice to provide a small introduction to myself since we will be spending some time together. A certain amount of mystique is always good, so I won't tell you everything (besides, I'm sure that you wouldn't be interested anyway). For starters, I was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest (Oregon and Washington). I received my Bachelors degree in sociology from Oregon State University, my Masters degree from the University of South Florida, and my Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University. I also spent two years as a visiting assistant professor at Ohio University before accepting a full time tenure track position here at Albright College in the Fall of 2001. My major research interests in sociology include culture, religion, and popular culture. My master's thesis was a formulaic analysis of the lyrics and major themes of Conservative Christian speed/thrash metal music. My dissertation (the book that is written for the Ph.D.) incorporates interviews, participant observation, and secondary literature to analyze the production of contemporary evangelical Christian culture, especially popular culture, and how various tensions within the industry are recognized and mediated. My hobbies include snow skiing, playing softball, listening to music (everything from alternative to classical although I am getting into industrial techno), reading, computers, and playing the guitar (both electric and acoustic).

Course Description
"Sociology, what's that?" I have been asked this question numerous times as an undergraduate sociology major and a Ph.D. student. Most confuse sociology with social work (a field that is actually an offshoot of sociology) or some type of counseling. Although sociologists may participate in these activities, the field is much broader.

Sociology is the study of social life and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. It investigates the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, their information, development, and interactions. Since all human behavior is social, the subject matter of sociology ranges from the intimate family to the hostile mob, from crime to religion, from the divisions of race, gender, and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture, from the sociology of work to the sociology of sport. In fact, few fields have such broad scope and relevance. This is nice because sociologists are largely free to conduct research in any area that interests them. It is a field that synthesizes from all of the other social sciences including psychology, philosophy, anthropology, political science, economics, and history. Furthermore, sociology has
generated other disciplines including social work, criminal justice, and communication studies. All of these were, at one time, part of the field of sociology.

This course is designed to provide an opportunity for the student to develop a general sociological understanding and perspective with which to evaluate, interpret, and understand various social problems such as poverty, racism, criminal behavior, etc. and their effects upon the society in which we live. Possible solutions to social problems will also be explored

Text & Other Readings

Course Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites for the course other than an open mind and a desire to participate in class.

Course Objectives
1. To help students develop a "sociological imagination" and teach them how to apply it in everyday life.
2. To teach students how various social problems affect society and vice versa.
3. To expose students to the sociological terms, concepts, and theories that are helpful in understanding and critiquing society and various social problems.
4. To foster a greater understanding of how and why individuals act the way they do, and how these actions affect society. Conversely, to foster an understanding of how society sometimes shapes the actions of individuals.
5. To foster critical thinking skills.

Course Requirements
Each student is responsible for completing all class assignments, exams, and readings. This means that if you are absent, you should check with me as soon as possible to make sure that you did not miss any assignment changes, etc. Each student is also responsible to attend each class period. The instructor reserves the right to move exams and assignments at his discretion. Missing an exam or assignment because it has been moved IS NOT A VALID EXCUSE! IF YOU MISS AN EXAM OR ASSIGNMENT FOR THIS REASON YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO MAKEUP THE WORK AND YOU WILL FAIL TO RECEIVE ANY POINTS!

Attendance and Participation
Due to the accelerated nature of the degree completion program it is imperative that each student not only attend every class, but also participate in active discussion of course material. It is also expected that students will arrive on time for each class and not leave early. Excessive tardiness will be treated as a class absence. If an emergency arises and a class is missed, it is the responsibility of the student to contact an individual in the class and find out what assignments were missed. Attendance and participation is one component of the student’s final grade.

Quiz
One quiz worth 30 points will be administered. The purpose of the quiz is to expose you to the kinds of questions that will be on future exams and allow you to adjust your study habits early on without jeopardizing a major exam grade. The quiz will cover Chapters 1-2 including lecture.

Term Exams
Each student will take two non-cumulative exams worth 100 points each. The exams will most probably consist of multiple choice questions and an essay question. Due to the nature of the course it is difficult to offer makeup exams therefore late exams will not be given unless the student receives prior permission or an
emergency warrants the situation. Students who miss an exam for these reasons must contact the instructor within 48 hours of the exam in order to schedule a makeup. Make up exams will probably be all essay in format.

*Paper Assignment*

Each student will be responsible for turning in a 4-6 page paper assignment. Papers should be typed using 12 point font and double spaced with 1 inch margins on all sides. Do not put extra spaces between paragraphs. Furthermore, papers should be well written and free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. Poorly written papers will loose up to 15 points (the equivalent of three letter grades). The purpose of the paper is threefold: (1) to help you sharpen your writing skills; (2) to help you sharpen your critical thinking skills; and (3) to help you incorporate the material you have learned in class to analyze a topic of your choice. Choose **ONE** of the projects listed below. Make sure that your name and the title of your paper are listed at the top of the first page of your paper. **Papers are due the last day of class and are worth 50 points.**

**A. Movie Review**

Several movies have dealt with the issues we have talked about in this class. Your assignment is to write a 4-6 page analysis of a social problem depicted in a film from the list below using at least three terms and concepts from class and/or the text (you cannot write about a movie that is not listed below). Students will be expected to include: a brief overview of the film (no more than a page); a brief description of the concepts from lecture/the text that will be used to analyze the social problem(s) depicted in the film (about a page or two); and a description of how the concepts chosen shed light on the chosen film. (This section should take up most of the space in your paper). Make sure that you include an introductory and concluding paragraph in your paper.

- The Program
- Erin Brokovich
- The Godfather
- Philadelphia
- **Hoop Dreams**
- **The Insider**
- **Heat**
- Mosquito Coast

**B. Article Review**

You may choose any article for this assignment, provided that: (1) it comes from a printed magazine, newspaper, or scholarly journal (examples include but are not limited to: *Newsweek, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Sports Illustrated, Journal of Sport Psychology,* and (2) you can find something in the article that is relevant to **at least three of the concepts discussed in class or your textbook**. Your paper should include the following: (1) a **brief** overview of the article (no more than a page); (2) A **brief** description of the concepts from class that you find relevant in order to explain/interpret the article (about a page or two). In other words, briefly define the concepts for me using your own words; (3) A description of how the concepts you have chosen shed light on your chosen article (This section should take up most of the space in your paper). Make sure that you include an introductory and concluding paragraph in your paper.

**Participation**

Attendance and participation is mandatory. Students will be expected to come to class having already read the material and ready to ask questions and discuss the material intelligently. Class participation is worth a total of **20 points** and will be **approximated** beginning the first day of class and allotted as follows:
20 points Minimum of 1 exchange with myself or classmates each class period.
10 points Minimum of 1 exchange with myself or classmates every other class period.
00 points Less than 1 exchange with myself or classmates every other class period.

Extra Credit Assignment
We are living in an age of computers and it is obvious that anyone who wishes to succeed in today's world needs to feel comfortable using them. Because of this, and because I may need to contact you at some point in the semester, I am providing you an opportunity to gain easy points. NOTE: This will be the only extra credit assignment given, so be forewarned! Begging and pleading at the end of the semester will do no good!!! Here's what you need to do: email me using your own email account. In the "subject line" please type your first and last name and be sure to provide the following in the body of the message: (1) the class number (CJ 930); (2) your name; (3) phone number; (4) your major; and (5) email address. You must complete this assignment within the first week of the first day of the class. Late emails will not be credited. This assignment is worth 5 points.

Late Assignments
All written assignments are due on the dates designated. Five additional points will be subtracted for each day that the paper is late. Papers handed in seven days after the original due date will not be accepted.

Methods of Evaluation
Grades will be determined by percentages in the following manner:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Under 60%</td>
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</tbody>
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You can calculate your current grade at any point in the semester by dividing the number of points you have earned by the total amount of points possible and referring to the scale above. Thus, if you achieved a “30” on the quiz and a “80” on the first exam, then you would calculate your current grade as follows: 30 + 80 = 110 divided by 130 (30 possible points for the quiz and 100 for the first exam) = .85 Using the scale above you can see that you are currently earning a “B”.

Student Resources
Some students require special needs from time to time or throughout their college career. Below are some important resources that you should take advantage of if you require assistance. I would encourage anyone who has special needs to drop by and see me (if you feel comfortable doing so) so that I can better understand your situation and work with you more effectively.

Students With Special Needs
Albright does not have a formal, separate program for students with learning or other disabilities. However, the College does attempt to make reasonable accommodations for students with special needs. Students with such needs should contact Student Services at 921-7611.

Academic Learning Center/Writing Center
The Academic Learning Center provides a comprehensive program of academic support services including individual student tutors, study group sessions, instructional interns, and academic progress
sessions. The Writing Center is available to students of all disciplines who need assistance with their written work. The Writing Center is supported by the English department. Interested students are encouraged to call the English department at: 921-7450.

**Some Further Guidelines**

First, if you have any questions, please ask. Chances are if you do not understand something, half the class does not either. I will not think you are stupid because you ask questions. On the contrary, if you knew all about sociology, you would not be here in the first place. Also, your questions tend to liven up the class and make it more interesting for all of us. If for some reason you do not feel like asking the question during class, stop me after class. If you do not have time after class, please make an appointment, we can find another time.

Second, I expect you to exercise proper manners while in class. This means that you should not talk during class to another student while I or another student is addressing the class. This means that you should arrive on time and not leave early. This means that you should not sleep in class, read the newspaper, listen to music, etc. **NOTE: THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO SUBTRACT POINTS FROM ANY STUDENT WHO REFUSES TO EXERCISE PROPER MANNERS IN CLASS. FURTHERMORE, POINTS MAY BE SUBTRACTED IN THE AMOUNT THAT THE INSTRUCTOR SEES FIT. IF MEMBERS OF THE CLASS LEAVE EARLY, THE INSTRUCTOR MAY, AT HIS DISCRETION, BEGIN ADMINISTERING POP QUIZZES TOWARD THE END OF THE CLASS PERIOD.**

Third, I consider your class participation to be very important. Please feel free to ask questions offer suggestions and/or comments, etc. If you disagree with me, fine. Feel free to say so. I only ask that you provide a rational and/or evidence for your position. In other words, don’t simply say, “I disagree with you because I just don’t think you are correct,” give me a reason why you disagree.

Fourth, this course is subject to the official academic honesty policy of Albright College. As such, cheating and plagiarism of any kind is not allowed. Any student who appears to the instructor to be cheating will receive an automatic "F" for the assignment as well as the entire course and s/he will be referred to the Provost for possible expulsion from the program.

Fifth, each and every class is important. My lectures do not always follow the text. I may disagree with the text and may present material not found in the text. Lectures count more than text on exams. Therefore, **YOU SHOULD ATTEND EACH AND EVERY CLASS.**

Finally, I do not grade on a curve. This means you have more to gain by cooperating rather than competing with each other. I would like you to get to know the students in your discussion group really well. You should exchange addresses and telephone numbers with each other and try and form a study group. As a group you can help each other with the class material, particularly in studying for exams. You also can come into my office as a group and we can talk over things that are not clear.
COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Introduction, The Abortion Dilemma/Aging
Reading: Henslin, Chapters 1 & 2

Week 2: Sexual Behavior/Alcohol and Drugs
Reading: Henslin, Chapters 3 & 4

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! QUIZ #1: COVERS CHAPTERS 1 & 2 !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Week 3: Violence/Crime and Criminal Justice
Reading: Henslin, Chapters 5 & 6

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! EXAM #1: COVERS CHAPTERS 1-4 !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Week 4: Economic Problems: Wealth and Poverty
Reading: Henslin, Chapters 7 & 8

Week 5: Final

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! EXAM #2: COVERS CHAPTERS 5-8 !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! FILM ANALYSIS DUE !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Student Information:
Please answer the questions below and write your answers on the 3x5 note card provided by the instructor:

1. Name
2. Age
3. Where are you from?
4. Do you know anyone that has taken this course before? If so, who?
5. What other sociology courses have you taken?
6. Do you work? Where? How many hours per week?
7. E-mail & phone number