Sociology: Because Things are NOT Always as They Seem! (Fall 2011)

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2034 JFSB

Time: T, Th 1:35p – 2:50p
Location: B037 JSFB
Office Hours: Th 9:00a – 11:00a and Appointment
A Short Analogy.

In my household we have four very basic “general rules” which guide our behavior and interactions with others. One of these general rules (#3 to be exact) is: “ALWAYS CHOOSE FEAST OVER FAMINE.” A simple dictum (to borrow from Lemony Snicket, a word which here means a formal authoritative pronouncement of a principle). Indeed, from scriptural texts we are instructed to “feast upon the words of Christ;” “feast upon his love;” “feast upon this fruit;” “feast upon that which perisheth not;” etc. Now, running a rather standard search for terms like “nibble upon,” “sample randomly,” “timidly look into,” “noncommittedly explore,” strangely, I uncovered no references! “Nibble upon the words of Christ,” ”Randomly Sample his love,” “Timidly and noncommittedly get that fruit that perisheth not,” etc. Sort of loses something, doesn’t it? So, back to our analogy, you can have the all-you-can-eat intellectual buffet, or the puny piece of the no-thought, no-effort academic Melba toast—Yum! I, for one, am always amazed how often in higher education students choose the Melba toast over the buffet! Most of you are freshmen, you should decide now what your academic culinary regimen will be—toast or buffet. I am prepared to give you an intellectual buffet. Your tuition is the admission fee. You just need to bring your big appetite! Therefore, if you are simply looking for an academic snack on Melba toast, you are in the wrong food line and you should definitely try a different one. If this is the case (and you must ask yourself if it is!) get out of this line now! Take a different course. Switch lines immediately for this one is for the all-you-can-eat buffet!

In a climatic ending to a novel I have not yet written (and will most likely never write), the lead character, (let’s call her Tess of the Dobermans), tells a disheartened youth, (her sister’s brother’s sister named Tess, whose brother is a General Authority) “Things are not always as they seem.” The story ends, I sell a bajillion copies of the novel and the world comes to the basic understanding that, Yes, indeed, things are not always as they seem. This course, however, will be exactly (almost) as it seems. We will explore how the social world—which, oh by-the-way, is the world you and I both live in—can be understood through an entirely different perspective than that which you are used to. By presenting this different perspective, it will compel you to think about it and its implications. In the words of Yoda, (or at least in his phraseology) “Converts I ask not for.” Frankly, I don’t care if, at the end of this semester, you find this perspective useful or not.

The average person adapts himself to society; the abnormal person refuses to do so. Therefore, all social change is dependent on abnormal people.”

George Bernard Shaw
What I intend to do is make you think about your world by presenting you an alternative—sociology. Even if you reject the alternative, you will have to think about your current weltanschauung (which is a spiffy German word for worldview or personal frame of reference) differently. You will have to justify it in light of new information. I will challenge you and your weltanschauung and I will expect you to do the same to each other and to me. No kidding. I take the role of Professor (someone who professes) seriously. It is difficult to profess something that means little to you. Neutrality is darn (a good Mormon expletive) hard to profess. I will not play the role of the dispassionate observer/scientist. I will profess some very specific views and I will not try to mask them. I expect you to do the same. However, because you are paying for the class and I get paid to teach it, I still get to set the agenda and the ground rules. Congratulations! You have just been exposed to your first sociological lesson—POWER. Something we will spend considerable time discussing.

The beginning of the course will focus on the rise of sociological thought and the historical context that framed it. The course will emphasize sociology as a unique way of viewing and interpreting the world around us. You will be exposed to major theorists, theories, concepts and ideas which will help you form the beginnings of a "Sociological Imagination." The main emphasis of this course will not be the memorization of terms, dates, and names to be regurgitated on a series of multiple choice tests. Emphasis will be placed on the understanding and internalization of key concepts that will allow you to view common everyday events and situations in a new way—through a Sociological Imagination. Using this "Sociological Imagination," the course will then focus on applying the particular theories and concepts you have learned to an examination and understanding of contemporary problems, institutions, and events in American society in particular as well as the world in general.

Over the course of the semester you will read six books, one article and some New York Times articles. The books are available at the Bookstore.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**READINGS**

*Articles and BOOKS:* We will start with a short article by Hugh Nibley entitled: “Zeal without Knowledge.” You are about to step into some issues where you may have some strong opinions and others that you know nothing about. Nibley warns us that “Zeal without Knowledge” is intellectually and spiritually damaging; he encourages us as students to take that role seriously and challenge ourselves to learn, to go beyond what we currently “know.” We will then turn to a great book which metaphorically presents the moral issues of sociology. It is called *The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip* by George Saunders. Unfortunately, the book is temporarily out of print so you will be reading a photocopy of it. This story will give you a good grounding in how sociologists view the world. Both “Zeal Without Knowledge” and *The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip* will be available in a packet sold at the bookstore as well as on Blackboard, under Course Documents. Next, we will begin to lay the foundation for the course and the origins of contemporary sociology by reading *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West* by David Herlihy and Samuel K. Cohen, Jr. This discussion will help you recognize the dramatic changes that occurred in Europe after the Great Plague of the 1300s. Continuing to build a historical foundation through which to understand sociology, where it came from, and how sociologists view the world, you will read the classic work of Charles Dickens written in the 1850s, *Hard Times.* The book wonderfully illuminates the shifts occurring in
western culture and social structure in the 1800s that gave rise to the new categories of understanding, of which sociology was one. The fourth book you will read is Malcolm Gladwell’s *Outliers: the Story of Success*. This book establishes that even the most successful “individuals” are to a great extent products of their social environment. The fifth book takes us into a discussion of social inequality in contemporary society: *Falling Behind: How Rising Inequality Harms the Middle Class* by Robert H. Frank. Finally, we will end with a discussion of the economic order, social change and contemporary western society. Zygmunt Bauman’s book *Consuming Life* will frame our discussion. Bauman discusses how we have become a society of mass consumers whose existence, identity, and social interaction is predicated on what we consume, rather than on higher-order morals.

*The required text book for the class is actually FREE! It can be found online at [http://freebooks.uvu.edu](http://freebooks.uvu.edu).*

**Reading Critiques:** You will be required to write a 1 PAGE double spaced (it must not exceed this length or points will be docked) critique for the Nibley article and each of the 6 (non-Text) books and two New York Times articles of your choosing (one on inequality and one on globalization). The papers must be in 12pt, Times New Roman font, have 1 inch margins all the way around, and use ASA – American Sociological Association–style. I have put an ASA Style Guide on Blackboard under Course Documents. You may also use this link to find a quick guide online: [http://www.uwp.edu/departments/library/guides/asa.htm](http://www.uwp.edu/departments/library/guides/asa.htm) Use both resources to learn proper ASA formatting. Examples of well-done critiques can be found on Blackboard, so please access them.

Each paper will consist of four parts:

1) **Your name** in the upper left corner followed by the complete ASA formatted citation (these are to be single spaced). See example:

   Your Name

2) You must **identify the primary thesis** (thesis statement) of the reading – what is the main issue/concept the author wants you to walk away with (answers like “a splitting headache” will not be acceptable here). This should be short and simple. See example:

   Development agents are comprised of both approaches and methods, each contributing to the overall success of the agency. Unfortunately, these approaches and methods often conflict in an effort to protect the agency and its success, causing “role strain” and enhancing problems.
3) A discussion of the author’s logical argumentation and findings. Briefly illustrate the reasoning employed by the author that leads to the thesis. Try to refine your presentation to include only the most relevant information. This should only constitute about a 4th of your entire critique. See example:

As agencies look for funding, and more importantly success, they must take into account the wishes of potential sponsors while minimizing risks of straying from the status quo. In doing this, they sometimes face dissonance, because the methods proposed don’t necessarily line up with the initial ideals. Agencies are faced with a choice to either use these methods or risk losing sponsorship and approval, but ultimately no method is a substitute for contextual, perceptive thinking.

4) Your application of the piece – apply the concepts from the reading to a different situation beyond the book itself. Show me that you understand the concepts, whether you agree with them or not. I want you think about HOW this information can be applied. These must be scholarly critiques that take me through the logic of your evaluation and go BEYOND the information provided by the author in his/her book. This is a good opportunity to tie it in with other ideas, readings, experiences, etc. that you have stored in your heads up to this point in your life. Bottom line, I want to see if you can intellectually apply the concepts. See example:

In working at the X X Foundation, I have noticed that the children must stay home from school often to play with the guests who are donating a significant amount of money to the foundation. Although one of the main ideals of the foundation is to educate these children and give them as many opportunities as possible, the children are missing a substantial amount of school because they are being taken on outings with guests. The founders X and X are worried that if the children are always at school, the guests will not enjoy their time visiting the foundation, and will be less inclined to visit and donate money in the future. They face a difficult decision to either stick with their original ideal to promote education, or change in order to protect themselves financially as an agency. Though their original approach is obviously important, is has become a lower priority because of the fear of losing funding. In the end, the approaches and methods have
conflicted, and though there are no immediate harmful effects, I predict that in time the children will fall behind in their schoolwork as a result.

1) **A word about the critiques:** *Your job is not to critique style* - - it is to critique (address) logic and argument. You need to show that you understand the author’s logic and arguments. Showing you understand an argument DOES NOT MEAN that you necessarily agree with it. You must separate these things in your head. Please do not just tell me that you disagree, show me that you understand. If the logic is consistent, the author MUST land in a certain predetermined place because the logic of his/her argument, if consistently applied, has no choice but to take him/her there. Logically, you cannot employ a “cafeteria plan” approach where you pick off a little piece here and a little piece there and say you don’t agree, etc. The problem with that is, if the author is consistent (and hint - - I have not assigned you any readings where the author is not), those little pieces are absolutely necessary. When you pick them off piece-by-piece, you are demonstrating that you did not understand the argument. You may critique inconsistency in the author’s logic if it is there (again, in my opinion, I have not assigned any that are inconsistent), but that’s pretty much it. Showing you understand is NOT de facto stating you agree. Finally, tell me about the author’s LOGIC and his/her arguments. Tell me how he/she is formulating his/her claims – logically. Do not give me a book report, do not tell me ABOUT what he/she does, tell me the structure of his/her claims – his/her arguments and the logic that undergird them. Don’t be generic, give me specifics.

**GRADING:** You will be graded on the consistency of your logic, your ability to argue your point, and on the mechanics of language, spelling and grammar.

**DUE TIMES:** These critiques must be handed in at the beginning of class. You may also email it as a MS Word attachment file to sociology111brown@gmail.com at least one hour before class on the day it is due if you cannot make it to class that day. Emailing critiques can be risky. Excuses such as “I sent it to the wrong e-mail” or “There was a problem with the server,” or even “But my cyber dog ate my critique!” will not be accepted. The TAs will not accept any email related excuses—if it is not in their inbox before 12:35pm the day that it is due the critique will be counted as late.

*If you do not arrive at class in time for your paper to be collected at the beginning, or, if you wish to turn your paper in late, you may do so until 5:00pm on the day that it is due by dropping it off at the TAs’ office in 172/173 SWKT or by e-mailing it. However, there will be an automatic deduction of 3 points from a potential 10-point paper. I will not accept any papers after 5:00pm on the day they are due. These dates are listed below in this syllabus.*

**THE READINGS**


8) 2 New York Times articles of your choice on inequality and globalization.*

*You will need to register for New York Times on line. It is FREE. Go to: [http://www.nytimes.com/](http://www.nytimes.com/) and provide the appropriate information. You will get a daily email with links to headlines. Read through the articles through the semester and pick two on which you would like to write a critique. (Please don’t wait until last minute in the semester to do this). Bring ideas to class from articles you read so we can discuss them and alert others to their presence.

**Reading Critiques = 80 points (+ 20) = 100 total**

Each of the reading critiques for the six books and two NYT articles will be worth 10 points. You will also be required to hand in a critique for the Nibley article—it will not count toward your grade but must be handed in, in order to qualify for the additional points described below. If you hand in all eight critiques plus the critique for the Nibley article and receive at least a score of 0 or better (60% or better) on them (independent of the Nibley critique), you will receive another 20 points. These ARE NOT extra credit points, they will be counted into the total possible points for the class whether you earn them or not.

**EXAMS**

There will be three “multiple choice essay” exams. Now, every educator knows that an essay exam is the best way to evaluate how well one understands the concepts being discussed. However, every educator who actually wants a life (an idea which I highly espouse) also knows that when you have over 40 students, that to give essay exams is tantamount to the very ignorance you are supposedly trying to eliminate, creating a nice oxymoron. Consequently, over the years, I have devised (a word which here means, I have figured out a way to still have a life) a way to give an essay exam in a multiple choice format—I write the essays and you choose which one(s) best addresses the scenarios I will present to you. If you understand the concepts, you will do fine on the exams. We will prepare you before the first exam on what to expect. For example, I will use some of the examples from newspaper articles to formulate the essays and questions. **All three exams will be in the Testing Center**: see the schedule on the last page for the approximate start dates of the exams. Again, the dates offered for the exams are approximate and are subject to change. Exam dates will be announced in class.

The first two Midterm exams will be worth 100 points each. Both exams will have 50 questions worth 2 points each. Fifty questions on the Final exam will cover the new material after the second Midterm. There will also be 50 additional questions taken from the previous two Midterm exams. The
Final will be worth 200 points. You will have the opportunity to look over the correct answers from the previous exam WITH the TAs during office hours.

**Exams = 400 points**

**Makeup exams**: There will be no makeup exams offered; extra credit is available but with specific limitations and procedures – see below for details.

**GRADES**

**Total Points for Class = 500 points**

Grades will be figured on criterion grading – meet the criteria, get that grade. For the combined three exams and 8 critiques, there will be 500 total points possible for the course.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
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<th>GRADE</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 – 100%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>74 – 76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 93%</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89%</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 – 69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84 – 86%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>64 – 66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 83%</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79%</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>&lt; 59%</td>
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**Extra Credit**

I strongly believe that credit is credit and thus “Extra” credit is an oxymoron. However, I will provide an opportunity for you to sign up for extra credit but the burden will be on you if you choose to pursue it. If I am going to provide you with the opportunity for extra credit, to balance Justice and Mercy, I must also provide you with the opportunity for extra punishment if you fail to keep your commitment to do it.

**So, here is the deal:** **Mercy** -- You must read an additional book from a list I have provided on Blackboard and write a one page critique on that book in the same format as the assigned critiques above. The critique will be worth 10 points. Two extra books will be worth 20 points etc. You are free to sign up for as many extra books as you would like and I consider reasonable. These critiques will be due by December 8th, the last day of class.

**Justice** -- If you fail to read the book and write the critique, or if you get a 7 or less (70%) on the critique, I will dock you 20 points. If you sign up for two books you will lose 40 points etc. You must commit to doing the extra book by September 12th, the Add/Drop day. In other words, if you want to do extra credit, I will provide the opportunity (the Mercy) but you will have to carry all of the responsibility for it, not me (the Justice). If you sign up for it, you must do it or lose the 20 points. If you don’t sign up for it, you will not have an opportunity to do so after the drop date. I will grade the Extra Credit
work. Please email me (not the TAs) at Ralph_Brown@byu.edu by 5:00pm September 12th with the name of the book(s) you are committing to read for extra credit.

**And now for some other issues:** You are all adults. McDonalds may use “free” toys in their Happy Meals to dupe kids into convincing their parents to buy McFood. I however, will assume that you have enough intelligence to know that the most important thing you will learn in your education is that if you actually approach it as that – your education – you won’t need a “free” toy to induce you to learn and study hard. I will give you no free toys like credit for attendance which frankly strikes me as about the most asinine, counter-productive approach I can think of. I will frequently make important announcements about tests etc. in class that I will not necessarily put on Blackboard—you are responsible for being there to get the information. I and the TAs will not carry on personal one-on-one email and other consultations with students who were not in class to get the information. Three other things: 1) I am anal-retentive when it comes to being here on time. I will be here on time and I expect you to be as well. 2) Don’t cheat. Cheating will be dealt with mercilessly. Read up on plagiarism, what the University’s policy is on it, what are the definitions of it; and what are your liabilities if you commit plagiarism: [http://saas.byu.edu/catalog/2010-2011ucat/GeneralInfo/AcademicHonesty.php#Plagiarism](http://saas.byu.edu/catalog/2010-2011ucat/GeneralInfo/AcademicHonesty.php#Plagiarism)

![Image of Martin Luther King Jr. quote]

I will immediately report ALL suspected cases of plagiarism to the Honor Code Office and the student will receive a zero for that assignment but will still have to redo the assignment. If they fail to redo the assignment, they will get an E for the course. In other words, I will have no tolerance for plagiarism.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successfully completing this course, a student will be able to think about his/her world more sociologically as demonstrated by his/her ability to apply different sociological perspectives when evaluating social situations and issues and understanding the different assumptions various perspectives imply as to causes and effects.

Upon successfully completing this course, a student will be able to identify major historical factors that have contributed to the rise of the sociological perspective in the western world and how that sociological perspective is related to, but also independent of, other perspectives concerning human and social behavior such as psychology and economics.
Upon successfully completing this course, a student will be able to employ logical thought processes to formulate an argument. Successfully completing book critiques and tests will require a student to demonstrate understanding of and consistent application of logical argumentation.

Reading Schedule

Note: The reading schedule below is a guide only and should be treated as such. If we spend more or less time on any one section or chapter/topic, that's OK. I will reserve the right to be flexible in order to get the desired point across.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Critique Due Dates</th>
<th>McIntyre chapters that correspond to the topics being discussed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/4 – 10/13</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Hard Times 10/13</td>
<td>(McIntyre Chapter 4, 7) UVU Chapter 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>around 10/13</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/18 – 10/27</td>
<td>Groups/ Society/ Social Structure</td>
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<td>(McIntyre Chapters 8, 9) UVU Chapters 7,13,14,15,19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1 – 11/10</td>
<td>Socialization &amp; Human Nature</td>
<td>Outliers 11/1</td>
<td>(McIntyre Chapter 10) UVU Chapter 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/15 – 11/17</td>
<td>Sociological Methods and the Scientific Method</td>
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<td>(McIntyre Chapters 5, 6) UVU Chapter 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>around 11/1</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/22 – 12/1</td>
<td>Social Class/ Inequality/ Social Stratification</td>
<td>Falling Behind 11/22 NYT #1 Inequality 12/1 NYT #2 Globalization 12/1</td>
<td>(McIntyre Chapters 12 - 14) UVU Chapters 9,10,11,12</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/06 – 12/08</td>
<td>Globalization/ Economic Order/ Social Change</td>
<td>Consuming Life 12/8 Extra Credit 12/8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>In Testing Center (To be scheduled)</td>
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