

Sociology 3: Critical Thinking About Society

Fall 2014

California State University, Fresno
College of Social Sciences, Department of Sociology
SA153, TuTh 11:00AM – 12:15PM
3.0 Units, Schedule #70525, Section 10

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Office Hours: MW 10:30AM-12:00PM and by appointment

Prerequisites: grade of C or better in SOC 1 for sociological majors and minors.

GE and Sociology Major/Minor Requirement: This course satisfies both the GE Area A3 requirement and the requirement for the sociology major and minor.

Catalog Description: Theory and practice in basic skills of critical thinking and sociological analysis.

Course Description:

How do we sort through the endless sources of data on the Internet? How do we make sense of the competing claims of pundits crowding the airwaves? Our role not just as sociologists, but also as everyday citizens and consumers of information, demands that we find ways to develop the ability to evaluate statements that begin with “The evidence shows...” – but how? And with what? This course aims to help us develop our ability to evaluate these competing statements, to encourage a healthy skepticism towards such claims, and to nurture our ability to think critically about society and social problems.

This course offers an introduction to critical thinking about society. We will explore how to evaluate arguments, weigh evidence, and learn about a variety of research methods in the sociologist’s toolkit. You will be introduced to elements of logical reasoning through an analysis of sociological concepts and social problems, including the relationship between the individual and society, social inequalities, and social institutions. In this course, you will develop both your critical reading and writing skills – skills that will assist you in a variety of career paths.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes: At the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and critically analyze sociological arguments;
2. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of sociological texts using basic principles of logical reasoning;
3. Distinguish between academic and non-academic sources of evidence;
4. Learn how to properly cite sources;

5. Define various types of plagiarism;
6. Distinguish between inductive and deductive approaches to sociological reasoning;
7. Identify elements of a causal argument;
8. Recognize and define the structure of arguments;
9. Weigh and evaluate competing claims/evidence in sociological texts.

Teaching Format: This course meets twice per week and will consist of lectures, videos, group discussions, in-class exercises and reading quizzes.

Blackboard (BB) – This class will utilize Blackboard, which means that all students must regularly access their Blackboard account for important course related materials and information. BB will be used to post grades, provide announcements, and provide copies of the course syllabus, supplemental readings, assignments, grading rubrics, and other additional materials.

Required Texts and Readings: There are two required textbooks for this course. Additional readings will be posted on the Blackboard course website (indicated by a “BB” on course schedule).

1. Browne, M. Neil, and Stuart Keeley. 2014. *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*. Boston, MA: Pearson. 11th edition. ISBN-10: 0-321-90795-7
2. Hartmann, Douglas, and Christopher Uggen, eds. 2012. *The Contexts Reader*. New York, NY: Norton. 2nd edition. ISBN: 978-0-393-91232-6 . (Abbreviated as CTX on course outline)

Grading & Grade Distribution: You will be graded on your understanding of the course materials presented in the readings and in lecture. This will be determined by two midterms and a final examination, two written assignments, and several in-class reading quizzes. Exams will cover key terms and concepts, and ask you to demonstrate your comprehension of the material covered in lecture and in the readings through multiple choice, short-answer and short essay questions.

I will calculate your grade in this class as follows and assign letter grades based on the standard University scale (100 – 90 = A; 89 – 80 = B; 79 – 70 = C; 69 – 60 = D; and 59 or below = F):

10 %: Attendance & Participation	50 points
5 %: Reading Quizzes/Reflections	25 points
15 %: First Midterm Exam	75 points
15 %: First Written Assignment	75 points
15 %: Second Midterm Exam	75 points
20 %: Second Written Assignment	100 points
20 %: Final Exam	100 points
Total:	500 points

There are no extra credit assignments for this course. I will adhere to the University's policy about incompletes.

I want students to be aware of the grade symbols. Many people devalue the symbols and distort their meaning. The grade descriptions from the General Catalog are presented below with the differences from an A, B, C, & D noted in CAPS.

A — EXCELLENT. Performance of the student has demonstrated the HIGHEST level of competence, showing sustained superiority in meeting all stated course objectives/responsibilities & exhibiting a VERY HIGH degree of intellectual initiative.

B — VERY GOOD. Performance of the student has demonstrated a HIGH level of competence, showing sustained superiority in meeting all stated course objectives and responsibilities and exhibiting a HIGH degree of intellectual initiative.

C — SATISFACTORY. Performance of the student has demonstrated a SATISFACTORY level of competence, showing AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING of course objectives, responsibilities, AND COMPREHENSION OF COURSE CONTENT.

D — UNSATISFACTORY. Performance of the student has BEEN UNSATISFACTORY, showing INADEQUACY IN MEETING BASIC course objectives, responsibilities, AND COMPREHENSION OF COURSE CONTENT.

F — FAILURE. Fails to meet course objectives. Work at this level does not meet requirements for credit toward a degree.

WU — FAILURE — UNAUTHORIZED WITHDRAWAL. Did not complete the course requirements and did not properly withdraw from the course. Completed assignments or course activities or both were insufficient to make normal evaluation of academic performance possible.

E-mail Policy: I will make every effort to respond to your e-mails as soon as possible. During the week (Monday – Friday) you can expect a response from me within 4 - 24 hours. If you e-mail me Friday evening or over the weekend, you can expect a response on Monday.

Course Requirements:

Attendance

Attendance is required for this course – and I expect you to attend lecture. Material in lecture will extend beyond the readings, and will also help you prepare for the written assignments. You are responsible for all material covered in lecture, as well as all announcements made in class and through the course Blackboard website. Consistent lecture attendance greatly enhances your chances of earning a good grade in this course. You can miss three class periods for any reason without penalty, but excessive (four or more) absences will negatively impact your grade. You will lose a full letter grade from your attendance grade for the fourth and each subsequent unexcused absence. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class period, so please be on

time to avoid being counted as absent. You are still responsible for any material we covered in class if you are absent. I will excuse absences for serious and compelling reasons for which you can provide documentation, such as illness or a death in the family.

Required Readings & Reading Quizzes/Reflections:

It is a requirement of this course that you carefully read each assigned reading *before* class on the day for which I have assigned it. Completing the reading assignments will help you learn more from lectures and discussions, as I have carefully chosen each reading to complement lecture topics. Please read them carefully.

Over the course of the semester, we will have 8 brief reading quizzes/reflections. I will count the highest 5 reading quizzes towards your final grade. These quizzes will count for 5% of your overall grade. Each quiz/reflection will be graded on a 5.0 point scale, for a maximum of 25 points. In the event you are not able to take the quiz, there will be no make-up quiz provided.

Written Assignments (Detailed instructions will be provided well in advance of the deadlines)

First Written Assignment (600 words): Film Response Paper

In 600 words (minimum 575; maximum 625 words), critically analyze the film *Inequality for All* using the principles of logical reasoning we discussed in class. What is the main sociological issue addressed by this film? What kind of evidence does the film use?

Second Written Assignment (1000 words): Critically Analyzing Sociological Arguments

In 1000 words (minimum 975; maximum 1025 words), you will select one article from the *Contexts Reader* that we did NOT read in class. You will apply the principles of logical reasoning and critical thinking we have discussed in class in analyzing this reading.

Exams

There will be three in-class exams for this course—two midterms and a final—consisting of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions pertaining to main topics from lectures, course readings, films, and class discussions. The first two exams will cover the material in weeks 1-6 (midterm 1) and weeks 6-11 (midterm 2), respectively. The final exam will cover the entire course, with an emphasis on material in the final section of the course.

Course Schedule & Outline:

<u><i>Date</i></u>	<u><i>Topic</i></u>	<u><i>Readings & Assignments Due</i></u>
Thursday, August 21 st	Course Introduction and Overview	Course Syllabus (BB)
Tuesday, August 26 th	Critical Thinking and Sociology	Ruane & Cerulo, "Introduction" (BB)
Thursday, August 28 th	Asking the Right Questions	Browne & Keeley, chs. 1 & 2
Tuesday, September 2 nd	Issues and Conclusions	Browne & Keeley, ch. 3
Thursday, September 4 th	Issues and Conclusions	Ruane & Cerulo: "You've come a long way, baby" (BB)
Tuesday, September 9 th	Reasons and Arguments	Browne & Keeley, ch. 4
Thursday, September 11 th	Deductive and Inductive Styles of Argumentation	CTX: Robin Simon. "The joys of parenthood, reconsidered"
Tuesday, September 16 th	Evaluation Assumptions	Browne & Keeley, ch. 6
Thursday, September 18 th	Logical Fallacies	Browne & Keeley, ch. 7
Tuesday, September 23 rd	What Counts as Evidence?	Browne & Keeley, ch. 8
Thursday, September 25 th	How Do I Evaluate Evidence?	Browne & Keeley, ch. 9
Tuesday, September 30 th	First Midterm Exam	None - Review Material
Thursday, October 2 nd	In-class film: "Inequality for All" Class Discussion of First Written Assignment	Course Handouts (BB)
Tuesday, October 7 th	The Writing Process	Browne & Keeley, ch. 5
Thursday, October 9 th	Causality	Browne & Keeley, ch. 10
Tuesday, October 14 th	Using and Citing Valid Sources & Academic Integrity	Course Handouts (BB)
Thursday, October 16 th	Finding Sources of Evidence	Browne & Keeley, ch. 12 FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE
Tuesday, October 21 st	Sociological Evidence: Quantitative Approaches	Browne & Keeley, ch. 11; Ruane & Cerulo, "Numbers Don't Lie"
Thursday, October 23 rd	Sociological Evidence: Qualitative Approaches	CTX: Robert Weiss, "In their own words."

Tuesday, October 28 th	Self and Society	CTX: Bonnie Erickson, “Social Networks: The Value of Variety”
Thursday, October 30 th	Social Inequality	CTX: Scanlan et al., “The Scarcity Fallacy”
Tuesday, November 4 th	Marriage and Families	CTX: Hull et al. “ The changing landscape of love and marriage.”
Thursday, November 6 th	Second Midterm Exam	Review course material
Tuesday, November 11 th	NO CLASS Veterans Day	None
Thursday, November 13 th	Education	CTX: Downey and Gibbs, “How Schools Really Matter.”
Tuesday, November 18 th	Racial and Ethnic Inequalities	CTX: Edward Telles, “Mexican Americans and Immigrant Incorporation.”
Thursday, November 20 th	Gender Inequalities	CTX: Armstrong et al. “Is Hooking Up Bad for Young Women?”
Tuesday, November 25 th	Second in-class film	Course Handouts (BB)
Thursday, November 27 th	NO CLASS Thanksgiving	None
Tuesday, December 2 nd	Religion & Religious Stereotypes	CTX: Jen’nan Ghazal Read, “Muslims in America.” SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE
Thursday, December 4 th	Genetics & Society	CTX: Shanahan et al., “Beyond Mendel’s Ghost.”
Tuesday, December 9 th	Global and Local Connections; Course Review	CTX: Ching Kwan Lee, “Rights Activism in China.”
Tuesday, December 16 th 11:00am – 1:00pm	FINAL EXAM	None

Modifications to the Syllabus:

The syllabus outlined above is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. I will announce any changes to the syllabus in class and via Blackboard.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Refer to the University Catalog or Schedule of Courses for more information.

Students with Disabilities:

“Upon identifying themselves to the instructor and the university, students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for learning and evaluation. For more information, contact Services to Students with Disabilities in the Henry Madden Library, Room 1202 (278-2811).”

Honor Code:

“Members of the CSU Fresno academic community adhere to principles of academic integrity and mutual respect while engaged in university work and related activities. You should:

- a) understand or seek clarification about expectations for academic integrity in this course (including no cheating, plagiarism and inappropriate collaboration)
- b) neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on examinations or other course work that is used by the instructor as the basis of grading.
- c) take responsibility to monitor academic dishonesty in any form and to report it to the instructor or other appropriate official for action.”

Cheating and Plagiarism:

"Cheating is the actual or attempted practice of fraudulent or deceptive acts for the purpose of improving one's grade or obtaining course credit; such acts also include assisting another student to do so. Typically, such acts occur in relation to examinations. However, it is the intent of this definition that the term 'cheating' not be limited to examination situations only, but that it include any and all actions by a student that are intended to gain an unearned academic advantage by fraudulent or deceptive means. Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating which consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished works of others by misrepresenting the material (i.e., their intellectual property) so used as one's own work." Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from a 0 or F on a particular assignment, through an F for the course, to expulsion from the university. For more information on the University's policy regarding cheating and plagiarism, refer to the Class Schedule (Legal Notices on Cheating and Plagiarism) or the University Catalog (Policies and Regulations).

Computers:

"At California State University, Fresno, computers and communications links to remote resources are recognized as being integral to the education and research experience. Every student is required to have his/her own computer or have other personal access to a workstation (including a modem and a printer) with all the recommended software. The minimum and recommended standards for the workstations and software, which may vary by academic major, are updated periodically and are available from [Information Technology Services](http://www.fresnostate.edu/adminserv/technology/) (<http://www.fresnostate.edu/adminserv/technology/>) or the University Bookstore. In the

curriculum and class assignments, students are presumed to have 24-hour access to a computer workstation and the necessary communication links to the University's information resources."

Disruptive Classroom Behavior:

"The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. ... Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which are supportive of the learning process, creating an environment in which students and faculty may learn to reason with clarity and compassion, to share of themselves without losing their identities, and to develop and understanding of the community in which they live . . . Student conduct which disrupts the learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class."

Copyright Policy:

"Copyright laws and fair use policies protect the rights of those who have produced the material. The copy in this course has been provided for private study, scholarship, or research. Other uses may require permission from the copyright holder. The user of this work is responsible for adhering to copyright law of the U.S. (Title 17, U.S. Code). To help you familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the University encourages you to visit its [Copyright Web Page](http://libguides.csufresno.edu/copyright) (<http://libguides.csufresno.edu/copyright>).

Technology Innovations for Learning & Teaching (TILT) course web sites contain material protected by copyrights held by the instructor, other individuals or institutions. Such material is used for educational purposes in accord with copyright law and/or with permission given by the owners of the original material. You may download one copy of the materials on any single computer for non-commercial, personal, or educational purposes only, provided that you (1) do not modify it, (2) use it only for the duration of this course, and (3) include both this notice and any copyright notice originally included with the material. Beyond this use, no material from the course web site may be copied, reproduced, re-published, uploaded, posted, transmitted, or distributed in any way without the permission of the original copyright holder. The instructor assumes no responsibility for individuals who improperly use copyrighted material placed on the web site."

SupportNet at the Learning Center:

Our campus has developed SupportNet to connect students with specific campus resources promoting academic success. I have agreed to participate in this program and may refer you to it if I believe you need the services provided by SupportNet to succeed in this course.

SupportNet is a resource here at Fresno State that is available directly to you, and to the faculty with whom you work. It is located downstairs in Collections Level of Madden Library. SupportNet provides a "network of success" for students who are struggling academically or personally. If you are interested in SupportNet, you do not have to be referred by a faculty

member. But if a faculty member feels additional resources that cannot be provided in the classroom may help you, he or she may refer you to SupportNet. The faculty member will notify you of the referral and SupportNet will follow-up with you by phone or e-mail.

Please note: 1) The referral to SupportNet and the content of your conversations with SupportNet advisors are confidential. SupportNet will notify the faculty member if you utilize their resources. But the content of your conversation is strictly confidential. 2) A referral to SupportNet will not be on your permanent record. It is simply a tool to be used by the faculty and students to supplement the classroom environment. Remember, SupportNet is there for you to assist you in performing at your best. When you meet with an advisor, he or she will evaluate your individual needs so that you can tailor a success plan for this course, and your college career in general.

SupportNet can provide:

- Counseling about your academics & Assessments of your unique learning style
- Assistance in studying, time management, and expectations for yourself
- Referrals to personal counseling resources, financial aid, resource centers on campus, & even ties to the student rec center!

For further information on SupportNet and the services they provide, see:
<http://www.fresnostate.edu/studentaffairs/supportnet/>.