SOCIOLOGY 485-001
Sociological Imaginations
Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. J. F. Conway
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Winter 2018
Mondays
2:30 to 5:15 pm
CL 232

1. NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE COURSE

Course description: This senior seminar is the capstone class for sociology majors and is to be taken in the final year of the program. Students reflect upon and analyze the major theoretical issues in sociology.

The seminar has three discussion streams, one led by the instructor, another led jointly by individual students and the instructor dealing with the environmental/climate crisis of the 21st century, and a third led by individual students on their term paper topics.

The instructor's stream focuses on a discussion of the assigned texts around the themes outlined below.

The joint discussion stream focuses on a collective reading and discussion of Naomi Klein’s This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate. This involves an effort to show how the various sociological imaginations provided by the discipline point to a deeper understanding of the sources and implications of the accelerating global environmental crisis.

The individual student stream focuses on key issues in sociology raised by students. Each student leads such a discussion on a key issue that emerged for her/him during her/his sociological studies. Students are expected to prepare an essay on this topic.
2. **TEXTS**

*Note on Texts:* Students are not required to purchase the texts since there is at least one copy of each on reserve in the library.


Excerpts from Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792); Karl Marx’s *Capital, Volume I* (1867); Emile Durkheim’s *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1897); and Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). Copies of these texts are on reserve in the library.

3. **ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE**

The seminar will meet on **Mondays** from 2:30 to 5:15 pm. Regular attendance is expected.

4. **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Evaluation and grading will be based on the fulfillment of the following requirements:

a) Mid-term examination, February 12 --- 15%
b) Seminar presentation/participation---- 10%
c) Attendance -------------------------- 10%
c) Essay ------------------------------- 25%
c) Final examination------------------- 40%
5. **DISCUSSION TOPIC AREAS**

a) **Founding figures: the sociological imaginations of Wollstonecraft, Marx, Durkheim and Weber.**

Readings:

Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792):
- Chap. I, The Rights and Involved Duties of Mankind Considered (pp. 11-19)
- Chap. II, The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed (pp. 19-38)
- Chap. III, The Same Subject Continued (pp. 38-52)
- Chap. XIII, Some Instances of the Folly Which the Ignorance of Women Generates; with Concluding Reflections on the Moral Improvement That a Revolution in Female Manners Might Naturally Be Expected to Produce (pp. 178-94)

Karl Marx’s *Capital, Volume I* (1867):
- Chapter XXVI, The Secret of Primitive Accumulation (pp. 713-16)
- Chapter XXVII, Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land (pp. 717-33)
- Chapter XXVIII, Bloody Legislation against the Expropriated… (pp. 734-41)
- Chapter XXIX, Genesis of the Capitalist Farmer (pp. 742-44)
- Chapter XXX, Reaction of the Agricultural Revolution on Industry (pp. 745-49)
- Chapter XXXI, Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist (pp. 750-60)
- Chapter XXXII, Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation (pp. 761-64)
- Chapter XXXIII, The Modern Theory of Colonization (pp. 765-774)

Emile Durkheim’s *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1897)
- Preface (pp. 35-9)
- Introduction (pp. 41-53)
- Book Three: General Nature of Suicide as a Social Phenomenon
  - Chapter 1, The Social Element of Suicide (pp. 297-325)
  - Chapter 2, Relations of Suicide with other Social Phenomena (pp. 326-60)
  - Chapter 3, Practical Consequences (pp. 361-9)

Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905)
- Author’s Introduction (pp. 13-31)
- Chapter V, Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism (pp. 155-83)
b) **Mills’ *The Sociological Imagination***


c) **Mills – social science and the method of science**

Does social science – specifically sociology – justify the hopes for it expressed by Mills? What would he say about the state of the discipline today?

d) **Oreskes and Conway’s *Merchants of Doubt***

Do the authors’ Conclusion and Epilogue provide us with any remedies for dealing with the prostitution of science and scientists by big business and government? How can we prevent the corruption of science by money and power? Is it even possible?

e) **Cairns’ *The Myth of the Age of Entitlement***

Are Millennials the most privileged and entitled generation in our history, as the widely shared myth alleges?

f) **Klein’s *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate***

Can the capitalist political economy effectively deal with the environmental crisis and slow down or stop climate change?
**Expectations:**

During the March meetings, each student will lead a discussion on a key issue that emerged for her or him during the study of sociology, imaginatively applying a version of the concept, “the sociological imagination.” This, along with participation in the joint discussion steam, will contribute to the mark out of 10 assigned for discussion and participation. In addition, each student will write a 15 to 20 page paper on this issue. **Deadline: 26 March 2018**

**Regular attendance is expected.** Ten marks will be assigned for attendance. Over the semester we will have 13 sessions. One mark will be deducted for each session missed to a maximum of 10