
Course overview and objectives

ersonal horizons. Yet, sociologists also challenge or even contradict our personal perceptions and beliefs– even those that we hold as absolute truth. Like all sciences, the social science of Sociology can challenge “common sense” – the reality that we individually and collectively know.

In this course, we will especially focus on the question “How do you know what you know?” We will also consider the logic and method of sociological research, the main features of the modern world and the inequalities within it, how inequalities disadvantage large segments of the population, how our world is a “social construction,” with multiple and shifting experiences of reality based on our collective understandings, as well as the choices we make and how those choices can and do change the world.

By the end of this course, you should be able to consider what sociologists know, how they know it, and what it means to “think sociologically” – applying a broader analysis to the social world. You will also gain greater experience with critical thinking and writing skills, as well as analyzing sociological concepts through everyday life experiences

Required readings

Macionis, John J. and Benokraitis, Nijole V. (2010) Seeing Ourselves: Classic, Contemporary, and Cross-Cultural Readings in Sociology, Eighth Edition

Reading and lecture schedule

Part I: How do you know what you know?

WEEK ONE: The Yin and Yang of Sociology
(August 31 – September 4)

- “Sex in America: How Many Partners Do We Have?” by Robert T. Michael, John H Gagnon, Edward O. Laumann, and Gina Kolata (Seeing Ourselves pp. 183-189)

Extra credit – Reading and Lecture notes. Instructions are on the discussion board. Due Friday, September 4th at 11 pm (2 points).

WEEK TWO: Socialization
(September 9– 11)

No class – Monday, September 7th.

- “Chapter 1: The Myth of Common Sense” (Everything is Obvious , pp. 3-29)
Definition of common sense, cultural and historical variations in common sense, commonsense physics.*
- “Symbol: The Basic Element of Culture” by Leslie A. White (8, pp. 33-37)
- “How Y’all, Youse and You Guys Talk”

WEEK SIX: Social solidarity
(October 5 – 9)

- “Getting a Job in Harlem: Experiences of African American, Puerto Rican, and

WEEK ELEVEN: EXAM TWO and Choices
(November 9 – 13)

EXAM TWO review on Monday, November 9th.

EXAM TWO in the WSU testing center on Wednesday

