This course is broadly focused on processes of order and change, with an emphasis on how individual-level choice both shapes and is shaped by institutional and societal-level dynamics. While Sociology is a wide-ranging field, we will not be concerned with briefly introducing all of its distinct substantive areas, but instead with understanding particular key generalizable processes. Our central motivation will be to uncover how systems of power operate to produce sustained inequalities, as well as how individuals and groups confront, and sometimes alter, such institutionalized systems. To this end, we begin by examining how complex social structures emerge from simple patterns of interaction. With this background, we will then examine a variety of issues and institutions, touching on race, class, gender, community organizations, schools, informal gathering spaces, and social movements. We reserve the right to retain a fluid class schedule within our usual MWTh 1-1:50 time slots, but many weeks will combine large lectures and discussion on Mondays and Wednesdays with smaller section meetings or “lab” activities on Thursdays. Readings often will serve to supplement and apply what we do during class rather than cover the same ground. A central goal of the semester is not only to have you understand specific concepts and processes from readings and class discussions, but also to introduce new perspectives that enable you to develop fresh insights from the books, films, music, and interactions that surround you everyday.

This semester’s course is also affiliated with a two-credit Experiential Learning practicum: the Immigrant Support Services Practicum (ISSP). This optional opportunity is designed to provide students with hands-on experience through community work and collaboration with a local organization that is addressing needs of immigrants in Waltham. In addition to working with this organization for 2-4 hours a week, participants will meet weekly with the instructor (Marcy McPehee) and peer assistants and will complete both written and oral assignments. The practicum will meet Wed from 11-noon starting Wed Sept 14. You will hear more about this opportunity during our first few class sessions.
**Office Hours**
David has scheduled office hours on Monday from 11:30 to 12:30 and Wednesday from 2:00 to 3:00. If these times are not convenient for you, we can make other arrangements – email is generally a good way to contact any of us, and our email addresses are listed at the top of this page. We encourage each of you to come to office hours to discuss problems with the class or any other issues that interest or concern you. Each of us will generally be available for quick questions immediately after class, and you can also leave messages in any of our mailboxes on the second floor of Pearlman Hall. Additionally, if you need to contact David at other times, his phone numbers are listed above.

**Readings**
The materials in this course will likely be more varied than what you have encountered in most other Brandeis classes. The logic here is that a wide range of essays, stories, films, songs and other audio recordings, newspaper and magazine articles, and web pages – including those that you might usually read, view, or listen to on your own – can serve as a jumping-off point for developing general sociological insights. Many of these sources will be available online; those posted on our course Latte page are referred to as ‘L’ readings below. Additionally, the following books are required for this course:

- *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, by Erving Goffman
- *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, by Malcolm Gladwell
- *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School*, by Shamus Rahman Khan
- *Doormen*, by Peter Bearman

Copies of each of the books will be on reserve in Goldfarb Library. *Please note that reading assignments should be done by the date listed on the syllabus* – we will generally discuss them during that class period.

**Assignments and Grading**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>3 response papers (10% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term take-home project/essays</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final essays</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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**Response papers**
At three points during the semester, we will assign a brief (no more than 3 page) thought paper intended to provide an opportunity for you to respond to a book-length reading and its connection to class discussions. We will distribute a detailed set of guidelines for these thought assignments in class, but basically each response should briefly summarize key concepts from readings and class, and then focus on: 1) how effectively you feel these concepts explain particular real-world phenomena, and 2) any ideas you have about extending these concepts to better explain aspects of social life.
Mid-term and Final Essays
Twice during the semester (in mid-October, and at the final class session on December 12th), we will distribute essay questions designed to tie together broad sets of ideas from readings and class discussion. Approximately one week after you receive each set of questions, you will need to hand in written responses not exceeding a total of ten double-spaced pages.

Participation
Much of the benefit of this class will come through class discussion. It is therefore very important for each of you to keep up with the reading and come to class prepared to discuss issues you found interesting or want clarified. We understand that in-class participation is sometimes difficult in a large class, and we therefore view the 'participation' component of your grade very broadly -- meaning that participation can include contributing during class, as well as asking questions and/or suggesting ideas, possible topics of discussion, connections between class topics and current events, etc. outside of class (i.e. before or after class, in office hours, or over email). Once a week, you will meet in smaller discussion sections or work in groups on “lab” problems, which do provide a fuller opportunity to contribute your thoughts, questions, and critiques. Participation is especially important here – your instructor will take attendance, and you are expected to attend each session (please make arrangements ahead of time with both David and your section instructor if you cannot make a section meeting).

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately. If you have questions about documenting a disability, please contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in the Academic Services office (x63466; brodgers@brandeis.edu).

Course Outline

Weeks 1-3 (1-15 September; no class 9/5):
- Introductory business
- Building a macrostructure I: Social exchange & social roles
  - reading: Erving Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

Weeks 4-5 (19-28 September; no class 9/29):
- Building a macrostructure II: Balance theory
  - reading: Tom Wolfe, “The Mermaid Blushed” (L)
- Roles and power: the emergence of status distinctions
  - readings: Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *A Tale of ‘O’* (L)
  - Phillip Zimbardo, “Power turns good soldiers into ‘bad apples’” (L)
  - film: *Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Study*
Weeks 6-8 (3-19 October; 10/13 class replaced by 10/10 “Brandeis Thursday” session, no class 10/20):

- Understanding macro-outcomes: Networks, thresholds, and diffusion
  - reading: Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*
  - Nicholas A. Christakis & James H.Fowler, *Connected* (L)
  - Mario Luis Small, *Unanticipated Gains* (L)

**First response paper due 10/5**

**Sociology department event with Shamus Khan, 10/6**

Week 9 (24-27 October):

- Social capital and its discontents: civic engagement and the maintenance of democracy

**Midterm take-home essays due 10/24**

Weeks 10-11 (31 October - 10 November):

- Inequality from above: privilege and status
  - reading: Shamus Rahman Khan, *Privilege*

**Second response paper due 11/2**

Week 12-13 (14-21 November; no class 11/23-24):

- Inequality from below: material resources, social support, and collective efficacy

Weeks 14-15 (28 November - 8 December):

- Observing social life analytically
  - reading: Peter Bearman: *Doormen*

**Third response paper due 11/30**

**Presentations by immigrant support services participants, 12/1**

Week 17 (12 December):

- Course wrap-up

**Final essays due (tba)**