Description
In this course, you will enhance your critical thinking skills in ways that will challenge you to think through social phenomena and question the world around you. We will explore sociology as a social science by focusing on the key methodological and conceptual tools that sociologists use and by looking closely at recent books and articles written by sociologists. We will explore questions about how and why society is organized as it is, how our lives are shaped by broader social forces (that we often do not see), and how aspects of our lives and biographies structure our experiences.

Course materials are designed to show you how sociologists approach the world and to give you the opportunity to develop what C. Wright Mills calls the “sociological imagination.” This is a key concept that we will continuously return to throughout the semester. Together, we will discuss and read about social worlds and the organization of social life. Topics include: social structure, agency, inequality, and intersectionality. These topics will be discussed by looking at culture, gender, race, class, and social movements in the U.S. context.

Because this is an online course, we will discuss the readings and interact with one another virtually. This will require active participation and thoughtful consideration of your peers’ contributions, and your participation will be graded just as it would be in a physical classroom. Online courses require each student to self-motivate, which can be difficult but is a great skill to cultivate. Please contact me if you are struggling to motivate at any point in the semester - I am happy to help you address the problem.

Each week, I will post brief video and/or written lectures that will address and clarify the arguments and sociological concepts presented in the course readings. From time to time, I will post videos, podcasts, photographs, and/or other types of media that relate to themes from that week’s readings. I will also respond to your posts, mediate conversations in the forums when necessary, and make myself available by email to clarify your questions.

In addition to the lectures, readings, and other course material, you will complete (approximately) three short writing assignments each week. These assignments include weekly discussion forum posts and responses to your peers, weekly entries into your private Wiki (a feature on LATTE that we’ll use like a diary), and weekly engagement with the current events
forum (see descriptions of these assignments, below). While the course materials, discussion questions, and conversations will vary each week, your assignments will not. This was an intentional decision on my part, made in an effort to establish a clear routine each week.

At the end of the semester, you will submit a final paper in which you will write a “sociological autobiography.” In it, you will describe the intersection between your personal biography and broader social patterns using your “sociological imagination.” Your goals for this essay are to demonstrate sociological understanding, describe and connect course readings and concepts, and practice your academic writing. More information on this assignment is available, below.

**Learning Goals**

By the end of the course you will be able to:

1. Define the “sociological imagination” and describe how sociologists use it to conceive of questions and issues;
2. Articulate how your own experiences in the world – including your successes and failures – have been shaped by your social context in a 5-7-page autobiographical paper;
3. Define social structure and analyze how structural forces shape people’s daily experiences and opportunities in patterned ways;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of core sociological concepts and research methods through forum posts and other assignments;
5. Analyze and interpret data regarding social inequalities based on gender, race, class, and sexuality in the contemporary US;
6. Nurture norms of careful listening, open discourse, and civic respect.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Participation:** Participation in online discussions is essential to making this class a success, just as it is in a physical classroom. You are expected to take ownership of the online space by posting in the discussion forum, responding to your classmates’ posts, and turning in assignments on time. Share your knowledge with others and actively “listen” and communicate with your peers as they share their knowledge. See below (in “Assignments”) for more information on the expectations of your original forum posts and responses.

**Netiquette:** Together, we will create guidelines and expectations for discussion and interaction online. Because we will be discussing social issues that affect each of us in different ways, we’ll want to be mindful of the ways in which we speak to each other.

Because you will be asked to connect your personal biography to the course material throughout the semester, it is important that you are mindful of your own limits. If you know that you will be triggered by certain discussions or have past trauma that has not yet been addressed, please do not push yourself beyond your emotional limits for the sake of this class. Additionally, please do not share anything in your private Wiki or final paper that you would not be comfortable with me reading. I will not do anything with the information that you do provide, unless you indicate that you may inflict harm on yourself or others. Again,
know your limits and trust your gut.

**Email communication:** It’s the summer, which means many of you (myself included!) will be traveling, working, and/or taking advantage of the lazy days of the break. However, I still expect you to respond to my emails (when necessary) and reach out with questions. We will all be held to a standard of **responding to one another in 48 hours or less.** This means that you may not get a response right away, but you can count on a response within 48 hours (barring extenuating circumstances).

**Extensions:** Given the abbreviated nature of summer school, there will be no extensions on assignments unless you experience extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances are considered to be emergencies or significant issues only.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Discussion Forum/Participation (40pts):** Participation in the discussion forum is essential to your success, and the success of the class as a whole, which is why it makes up so much of your final grade. These discussions will allow you the opportunity to show that you understand the material – or, if you don’t understand something, talk about that too – and that you can think critically about the readings. These posts are not graded on accuracy as much as they are graded on effort.

Tasks:

- **Original post (1):** Following the discussion questions that I will provide, create one original discussion post. These posts should answer all of the discussion questions and reference the readings. Each original post should be 300-500 words. Note: If someone responds to your post, be sure to answer any questions raised or acknowledge the response in some way. Remember, this is a discussion and should be treated as a back-and-forth.
  - **Due:** No later than Fridays by 11:59pm
- **Response posts (2):** Respond to (at least) two of your peers’ original posts. These Responses should be substantive, meaning that they should be thoughtful additions to, or constructive critiques of, the original poster’s analysis in 100-300 words. Note: Check back to see if the original poster or other classmates have responded to you and keep the conversation going or acknowledge it in some way.
  - **Due:** No later than Sundays by 11:59pm (or sooner)

**Current Events Forum (20pts overall):** Because we will be connecting the course materials to personal and social experiences in the “real world,” you will be asked to keep an eye on the news to draw a connection between our course and current events (by current events, I mean events that have been reported on recently, from present-day to 3 months ago).

Tasks:
● Sign up: At the beginning of the semester, I will send the class a sign-up sheet. You will pick two separate weeks in which you will find a news article, video, or audio clip that relates to the course materials from the weeks you have chosen.
  ○ Ex: If you sign up for Week 5: Race/Ethnicity in the US, then you would find a current event that has something to do with race (which may be implicit or explicit) to discuss in relation to the course materials.
● Original posts (7pts each): When each of your chosen weeks arrive, you will post the article/video/audio in the Current Events Forum. Be sure to a) provide a working link to the item and b) a brief description of the event for the class and an analysis of story’s connection to the readings in 200-400 words.
  ○ Due: Saturdays by 11:59pm (or sooner)
● Responses (3pts each): You will also be required to respond to two of your fellow classmates’ posts on weeks that you are not an original poster (e.g. if you posted a story for week four, your responses to other stories posted in week four will not count toward your three-response requirement). These responses should be substantive and 150-350 words.
  ○ Due: Sundays by 11:59pm

Weekly Wiki Journal (15pts): I have created a semi-private Wiki journal for each of you on LATTE. I say that these journals are semi-private because I will read them each week. The intention of these weekly journal entries is to prepare you for your sociological autobiography, which will be your final paper for the course (see below). I will provide general discussion questions that you may use to help guide your journal entry, but you are welcome to deviate from them if need be (Tip: These entries may provide helpful content for your final paper. Use them wisely). Like the forum posts, effort is key. I’d rather see you genuinely trying 100% of the time over being correct 100% of the time.

Tasks:

● Reflect on your own biography and how it has been influenced by each week’s topic.
● In each journal entry, incorporate at least one reading. You may use these entries to expand on conversations that were had in the discussion forums from the week or to bring up an entirely new point.
● Length: Approximately 500 words
  ○ Due: Sundays by 11:59pm

FINAL PAPER: Sociological Autobiography (25pts)

Prompt: For this writing assignment, you will write an autobiographical essay describing the intersection between your biography and society using your “sociological imagination.” Your goals for this essay are to demonstrate sociological understanding, learn more about course concepts and about yourself, and practice academic writing – I want to emphasize here that you will utilize academic writing, this will not be simply a reflection piece, I expect it to be academic
in nature. You should use sociological concepts and theories from the course readings throughout your paper.

The key to showing a sociological understanding is to connect your personal experiences, behaviors, and attitudes to larger social structures. For example, think about your cultural background, socialization, race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender or sexual orientation. How have any (or all) of these factors or the intersection of these factors given you advantages or disadvantages throughout life, or influenced the direction your life has gone?

As a personal reflection, the essay should be based on your own personal experiences and observations. As an academic paper, it must correctly apply vocabulary and sociological concepts from the course readings to analyze your experiences and observations. In the essay, you must also clearly distinguish opinions from facts and evidence. Providing examples is useful, but do not argue that one personal experience “proves” that a concept or theory is true or not true. Pay attention to the language and style of writing used in our course readings, such as “my observations/data/analysis support the idea/do not support the idea that xyz...”

Requirements (Grading Rubric TBA):

- **DUE: August 9th, 5pm via LATTE.**
- Cite 3-5 course readings (parenthetically and in your reference page).
- Identify 3-5 concepts from the readings and relate them to your autobiography.
- 5-7 pages, double-spaced.
- Paper formatting requirements:
  - APA citation style with parenthetical (in-text) citations and a reference page
  - Times New Roman, size 12 font
  - Double-spaced with 1” margins
  - Put your last name and page number in the upper right hand corner of each page

**Academic Integrity**

You are expected to uphold standards of academic integrity. While the social exchange of ideas is, in fact, encouraged in and beyond the classroom, the assignments turned in under your name must be original and produced independent of others. When using words or ideas of others (this includes academic writers, anything found on the Internet, your classmates, your parents, etc.), you must acknowledge your source by using proper references (see Paper Formatting Parameters above) and quotation marks to delineate any direct use of others’ words or ideas.

Please refer to Section 4, “Maintenance of Academic Integrity,” of the Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities booklet. Violations of University policies on academic integrity may result in failure in the course or on the assignment and could end in suspension from the University. You are encouraged to speak with me for clarification on this policy and/or if you have any questions about course assignment instructions.
Accommodations

Statement from Brandeis:

“Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you.

In order to provide [assignment] accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.”

Statement from me:

I will do my best to make this course as accessible as possible for all students. However, it would be helpful to know what “accessible” means to you so that I can be sure to accommodate your particular needs. Most of the course will already be universally accessible, but there may, for example, be a reading or two from an old or out-of-print text that does not have “OCR Text-Recognition,” which is necessary for screen readers.

I am not interested in forcing anyone to “out” themselves about their disability if they are not comfortable doing so, but I encourage each of you to empower yourselves by asking for what you need (or asking for help when you know that you have a problem but are not sure how to address it). Additionally, you may need accommodations that fall outside of the qualifications for an official “accommodations letter” from the university. Official or unofficial, I am happy to help you figure out the best way to meet your learning needs.
WEEK 0: ONLINE CLASS ORIENTATION

Because this course has fewer weeks than regular semesters, we will need to dive in right away. With this in mind, please watch and complete the following items (ideally before week one begins or as soon as possible).

Watch
Video: About this course: What we’ll discuss and learning goals (mins)
Video: Tour of the LATTE page (mins)

Complete
Video Introductions
Current events sign-up (“About this course” video for details)

WEEK 1: WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

Topic(s): Introduction to the course, sociological perspectives, and the sociological imagination.

Read

Chapter 2: “The Nature of Sociological Explanation” p. 9-29

Watch
Lecture: Social Theory (mins)
Lecture: Methods (mins)
Video: “Sociologists on Sociology”

Review
Week 1 PowerPoint

Complete
Discussion Forum
Wiki Journal

WEEK 2: SOCIOLOGICAL METHODS

Topic(s): Theory of methods, qualitative methods, statistics, the ethics of studying human subjects.
Read
Durkheim *Rules of Sociological Method* (TBD - ch 2, 5, 6, or Proof addendum)
   Ch 1: “How Does it Feel to be Black and Poor?”
   Ch 1: “A Moral Astigmatism” (p. 1-15)

Watch
Lecture: Methods (mins)
Lecture: Ethics and the Institutional Review Board (mins)

Review
Week 2 PowerPoint

Complete
Discussion Forum
Wiki Journal
Current Events Forum (original post or response)

WEEK 3: CULTURE AND SOCIALIZATION

Read
Henslin, James E. “Eating Your Friends is the Hardest: The Survivors of the F-227”
Hansen, Karen - Introduction [cultural logics]
Gimlin, S. *Making the Body Beautiful: The Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery*
   Ch 3: “The Racial Nose” (p. 85-115)

Watch
Video: “Why Rappers Love Grey Poupon”
Lecture: Cultural Sociology/Sociology of Culture (mins)

Complete
Discussion Forum
Wiki Journal
Current Events Post or Response

WEEK 4: STRUCTURE, AGENCY, AND INEQUALITY

Read

Watch
Lecture: Structure and Agency (mins)
Lecture: Inequality

Review
Week 4 PowerPoint

Complete
Discussion Forum
Wiki Journal
Current Events Post or Response

WEEK 5: RACE/ETHNICITY IN THE US

Read
Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack
Shapiro, T. Chapter from The Hidden Cost of Being African American
Alexander, M. Chapter from The New Jim Crow

Watch
Film: Race, the Power of an Illusion: The Difference Between Us [or] Race, the Power of an Illusion: The House We Live In [or] 13th (Netflix)
Lecture: Race/Ethnicity in the US (mins)

Review
Week 5 PowerPoint

Complete
Discussion Forum
Wiki Journal
Current Events Post or Response
WEEK 6: GENDER/SEXUALITY

Read

Watch
Lecture: Gender (mins)
Lecture: Sexuality (mins)

Review
Week 6 PowerPoint

Complete
Discussion Forum
Wiki Journal
Current Events Post or Response

WEEK 7: CLASS

Olin Wright and Rogers. 2015. “Class” in American Society: How it Really Works
Lareau: Invisible Inequality
Krupka, Zoe. 2015 “No it’s Not You: Why ‘Wellness’ Isn’t the Answer to Overwork”
Rank, Mark, “As American As Apple Pie: Poverty and Welfare.” **

Watch
People Like Us: Social Class in America (vimeo)
Universal Basic Income - youtube video
Lecture: Class (mins)

WEEK 8: INTERSECTIONALITY

Read
Crenshaw, Kimberle. Mapping the Margins (excerpt)
Collins, Patricia Hill. “Race, Class, Gender”
Shapiro, Tom. Chapter from The Hidden Cost of Being African American (excerpt) OR Shapiro, Tom, “Race, Homeownership, and Wealth.” **
Watch
Kimberle Crenshaw TedTalk: “The Urgency of Intersectionality”
Lecture: Intersectionality (mins)

Review
Week 8 PowerPoint

Complete
Discussion Forum
Wiki Journal
Current Events Post or Response

WEEK 9: SOCIAL CHANGE/SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Read
Lorde, Audre. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”
Croteau and Hoynes. “The Power of Social Movements”
Meyer: How Social Movements Matter
#Ferguson Everywhere
Annual Review Sociology. 36:269-286.
Tufekci, Z. Twitter and Tear Gas. Chapter 3: “Leading the Leaderless”

Watch
Lecture: Social Movements Theory (mins)
Lecture: Contemporary Movements and Communication Technology (mins)

Review
Week 9 PowerPoint

Complete
Discussion Forum
Wiki Journal
Current Events Post or Response

WEEK 10: WRAP UP AND REVIEW

Watch
Lecture: Overview

Complete
Sociological Autobiography (Due via LATTE on August 9th, no later than 5pm)