

SOCIAL SCIENCES 101:
*Introduction to Historical Sociology and
the Social Sciences*

College of General Studies

Boston University

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Professors

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

We are embarking upon a study of society that will take us four semesters to complete. Although each semester is a complete unit of study itself, the succeeding semesters build upon the prior ones. Therefore, what we learn in Semester I is important for understanding concepts and materials in Semester II, and the tools, concepts and knowledge learned in the freshman year provide the foundation for the sophomore Social Sciences course.

The first semester's curriculum introduces the tools, methods, and concepts of social science. In order to understand social structure and the relationship of the individual to society, you will be introduced to the concepts of culture, society, personality, socialization and stratification, as well as the principal subsystems of every society: economy, polity, social organization and ideology. A command of this material is necessary for our examination of the human condition.

During the second half of the first semester, we will begin to consider theories of social change. At the end of the first semester and throughout the second semester, these ideas will help us to learn how Europe transformed itself from a traditional agrarian society to a modern industrial society.

Our study this semester addresses certain key questions:

- How is an individual's sense of self influenced by the larger society?
- How do patterns of human behavior influence social organization?
- What connections are there between a society's material needs and its cultural outlooks?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of social change?
- What do we mean by modernization, and how does this process work?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each unit in this course begins with a division lecture given on Wednesday in the Jacob Sleeper Auditorium (JSA), usually followed by a team lecture the following day. You will be expected to read and analyze the unit's reading assignments prior to the subsequent discussion sections. You are required to attend both lectures and discussions; your Social Sciences team professor will assign additional requirements. Your final grade in the course will be determined as follows:

- 15% Division mid-term examination
- 25% Division final examination
- 60% Determined by your team professor, on the basis of two team based exams, assigned paper(s), class participation, and/or other factors

IMPORTANT DATES

Please note the following dates that affect our course during this semester.

- **REQUIRED FILM:** Thursday, Sept. 22: Stanley Milgram, “Obedience” during team lecture hour, in Jacob Sleeper Auditorium.
- **FIRST TEAM EXAMINATION:** Thursday, Sept. 29, during team lecture hour, in JSA
- **MIDTERM EXAMINATION:** Thursday, Oct. 20
- **SECOND TEAM EXAMINATION:** Thursday, Nov. 17 during team lecture hour, in JSA
- **THANKSGIVING RECESS:** Wednesday, Nov. 23 – Sunday Nov. 27
- **REQUIRED FILM:** John Osborne, “Luther” Week of Dec. 7-11, days & times TBA
- **LAST DAY OF INSTRUCTION:** Monday, Dec. 12
- **FINAL EXAMINATIONS:** Dec. 16-21

EXAMINATIONS

* Makeups on mid-term and final examinations will be granted only for 1) documented illness or personal emergency, or 2) a conflict with another formally scheduled university obligation. No later than 24 hours after the scheduled exam, the student must complete a petition (available in Room 517), get it signed by their professor, and submit it to the Division Chairman (Prof. Corrin) for his approval.

* Normally, there are no make-ups for missed team examinations. Your instructor may require the completion of an additional assignment as a makeup, or, in certain circumstances, give the subsequent midterm or final exam grade double weight towards your course grade.

*Please make sure you consult the Final Exam schedule in Room 211 **before** you make any travel plans! (Conflicting plane reservations or other travel arrangements are not an acceptable reason for taking a makeup exam.)

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM

The College of General Studies takes the matter of plagiarism very seriously. For this reason we ask you to read the following excerpt from the college's Academic Conduct Code.

Plagiarism is any attempt by a student to represent the work of another as his or her own. This includes copying the answers of another student on an examination or copying or substantially restating the work of another person or persons in any oral or written work without citing the appropriate source; collaborating with someone else in an academic endeavor without acknowledging his or her contribution; and attempting to copy or imitate the language, ideas, or thoughts of another author and present this work as one's own work.

The faculty of CGS requires that whenever more than three or more words are copied consecutively from another author, quotation marks must be used; students should also note that paraphrase or "indirect quotation" of others' ideas and thoughts must be credited. Students should familiarize themselves with the commonly accepted methods of documentation as taught in Rhetoric or other CGS classes, and as outlined in the handbook used in the rhetoric course. A student who has difficulty in interpreting this policy should err in the direction of caution, and is urged to consult with his or her instructor.

COURSE READINGS

The required reading for SS 101 includes the following books. They are available in the Coursebooks Department of the Boston University/Barnes & Noble Bookstore.

Beah, Ishmael, *A Long Way Gone*
Chestnut, J.L., *Black in Selma*
Deloria, Ella Cara. *Waterlily*
Ehrenreich, Barbara, *Nickel and Dimed*
Machiavelli, Niccolo, *The Prince*
McGrath and Martin, *The Modernization of the Western World* (referred to as "Modernization")
Readings in Social Theory and Modernization (referred to as "Reader")

COURSE OUTLINE

In addition to providing the weekly reading assignments, the following schedule introduces you to the central issues and questions surrounding each week's topic. Keep in mind that this is a cumulative course: each week's work relies upon an understanding of the previous weeks' material.

NOTE: prior to the first day of classes, you should complete Beah, *A Long Way Gone*

Sept. 7 Sociological Perspectives

Reading: Berger, "Man in Society"
 Mills, "The Sociological Imagination"
 Drakulic, "On Bad Teeth"
 Orwell, "The Road to Wigan Pier"
 (all in Reader)

How we know what we know is a matter that most of us take for granted. Sociology provides a particular form of awareness that asks us to look at our familiar surroundings with new eyes. The readings encourage readers to view themselves and their social world differently than they normally might. Their ideas help us to locate ourselves on a "social map" of impersonal forces and "social facts," such as class, race, gender, age, community, history, nationality, and culture. While such societal-level forces seem to be outside our lives as "unique" individuals, they nevertheless strongly influence our individual experiences.

Ishmael Beah's personal memoir demonstrates the extent to which individuals' actions, identities, and even perceptions of reality are influenced by surrounding social forces, while at the same time showing how the human spirit can overcome even the grimmest situations. C. Wright Mills asks us to develop our "sociological imagination," with which we can begin to trace the intricate connections between our personal experiences and the larger social forces that shape the world around us. The essays written by Slavenka Drakulic and George Orwell ask their readers to use fresh perspectives to examine how their societies function.

Consider the relationship between the individual and society as you use these readings to answer such questions as:

- How clearly can you see the connections between the world of the individual and that of the wider social world?
- Can you see your own "personal troubles" as "public issues?"
- How do individuals who are negatively affected by the same social forces turn their personal troubles into public issues?
- How does this help them change their individual and collective destinies?

This first unit will also introduce you to the methodologies of several of the social sciences. These include the fields of sociology, political science, anthropology, psychology, economics, and history. None of these disciplines is merely concerned with the collection of facts. Rather, they use information gathered from observation to identify patterns of social interaction, which can enable more reliable explanations and predictions of human behavior in social situations.

Sept. 14 Socialization

Reading: *Modernization*, Chapter One
Martin/McGrath, "Over and Under the Rainbow: The Power of Socialization" (Reader)
Durkheim, "Anomic Suicide" (Reader)
Simmel, "Metropolis and Mental Life" (Reader)

This unit further examines the relationship between individual human beings and the societies in which they live. Socialization is the process by which individuals absorb culture and thereby become fully functioning members of society. Consequently, the process of socialization is important not only for shaping a person's personality, behavior and values, but also because it transmits a society's traditions, norms and customs from one generation to the next.

Central questions in these studies include:

- How thoroughly are people indoctrinated into the normative system (a society's widely shared expectations and values) that is provided by socialization?
- What connection exists between the degree of social integration and an individual's happiness?
- Are individuals largely "tribal beings," tightly bound by the groups to which they belong, or are we truly "unique" and independent of those who have socialized us?

Sept. 21 Social Psychology

Reading: Milgram, "The Dilemma of Obedience" (Reader)

Zimbardo, "The Mind is a Formidable Jailer" (Reader)
Film: "Obedience" (Thursday, Sept. 22, during team lecture hour, in JSA)

In this unit we focus our attention on social psychology, that is, the ways in which environment affects our behavior and personality. It is an accepted dictum of social science that an individual's "social context" influences that person to think, feel, and act in particular ways. Among the most powerful of such "social facts" are the roles we play in everyday life. Roles entail a set of behavior patterns, obligations, and privileges. The content of a role is determined by the accepted social norms or "rules for action" that define how a role is played.

The experiments dramatized by Zimbardo and Milgram illustrate the power of roles to shape behavior, and even to construct our very sense of reality. On the one hand, roles release and channel our vitality, give consistent meanings to our felt emotions, and allow us and others to act in predictable and stable ways. On the other hand, roles may also constitute a form of alienation, since they can orient our sense of self towards others' expectations, and thereby set us apart from our "true" feelings. The role we are in at the moment may so dominate our behavior that we act in ways that we might otherwise have labeled as bizarre, unthinkable, or even criminal.

Some of the questions this unit raises include:

- How and why does the "definition of the situation" affect one's role?
- How does the role you play influence your personal choices?
- What is the connection between the roles we play and our moral sensibilities?

Sept. 28 Social Stratification

Reading: Corrin, "The Dynamics of Social Stratification" (Reader)
Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed* (as assigned)

Stratification describes the ways in which people are categorized and hierarchically ranked by their membership in a particular caste, class, sex, ethnic, or racial group. Members of different groups, or "social strata," are shaped by a combination of "ascribed statuses," which an individual is born with - - and "achieved statuses," which one earns or attains during his or her lifetime. An individual's location in a given society's stratification system influences the opportunities that will be available to that person, such as goods and services, education, and jobs. Therefore, the factors that create and sustain a social stratification system are crucial to the lives of the individuals within that society.

As described in *Nickel & Dimed*, Barbara Ehrenreich's experiences demonstrate many of the realities of stratification in modern America. She reveals not just the economic forces at work,

but also the critical importance of the socialization process in creating and sustaining stratification.

In this unit you will be exposed to different ways of analyzing the dynamics of stratification. You should be mindful of these questions:

- How do the readings demonstrate the different forces that influence status in American society?
- How do societal values affect the inequalities of America's class system?
- Is structured inequality inevitable in a modern, industrial society?
- How do the ideas of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber relate to the perspectives on stratification offered by Ehrenreich?

Thursday, Sept. 29:

FIRST TEAM EXAM, during team lecture hour, in JSA

Oct. 5 Power and Authority

Reading: Wolfe, "The Power Elite in Retrospect" (Reader)
 The Federalist Papers, No. 10 (Reader)
 Kaplan, "Was Democracy Just a Moment?" (Reader)
 Weber, "On Bureaucracy" (Reader)

Power is a dominant factor in the relations among classes, the sexes, racial and ethnic groups, and even age groups. Max Weber defined power as the ability of a group or individual to realize its will over the will of others, even in the absence of others' consent or despite their opposition.

The most important instrument of power in the modern world is the state. Weber defined the state as the institution that successfully claims a monopoly on the right to use force within a given geographical territory. It also typically involves legitimacy, or the explicit or implicit acceptance by the population that those who exercise power have the right to do so. Weber identified the various ways power is legitimized - through traditional, charismatic, and legal authority - and is thus turned into authority.

This unit examines the distribution of power by primarily focusing on American democracy. In doing so, we will address these questions:

- What is democracy, and what is it supposed to accomplish?
- What sort of society is necessary for democracy to work?
- What is bureaucracy, and what role does it play in modern life?

Oct. 26 Culture I: Anthropology

Reading: Deloria, *Waterlily* Cousineau,
"Religion and Social Activism: The Grassroots Catholic Church in Brazil"

The concept of culture was developed in the late 19th century by scholars who became known as anthropologists. Anthropology has changed a great deal since its inception, but its primary purpose is still to examine the similarities and differences among human societies. The concept of culture is fundamental to that study.

Culture has been defined in many different ways. One definition that we will be using is that culture is learned patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior. Central to all definitions is the fact that culture is not biologically inherited, but rather is passed on from generation to generation through socialization. All human societies possess culture, but the particular form that a culture may take varies from society to society, just as one language may differ from another. While all individuals within a society are unique, nevertheless, each society has shared patterns of belief, thinking, feeling, and acting.

Sometimes the people of one culture mistakenly assume that the patterns of their own culture are "human nature," while those of other cultures appear strange, inferior, or even sub-human. To avoid this ethnocentric tendency we must study the ways of life of other, often remote, cultural groups. In Deloria's *Waterlily*, we will be examining a cultural pattern very different from our own. We can then ask a number of important questions that pull together the themes we have looked at earlier in the course. These questions will help us to appreciate the complexity inherent in defining human nature.

- What is the relation between economic needs and social structure?
- What are the forms and purposes of authority that appear in different cultures?
- What can the rituals of a society reveal about its value system and social organization?
- What is the basic theme or core value (which anthropologists call "ethos") that holds society together and provides cultural unity or integration?

Nov. 2 Culture II: Race and Gender

Reading: Chestnut, *Black in Selma*, Part One
DuBois, "The Souls of Black Folk"
Zimmer, "How Women Reshape the Prison Guard Role" (Reader)

Throughout history, certain ascribed statuses have had enormous influence on individuals' roles and life chances. Two of these - - one's perceived race and gender - - have been nearly universal status factors, resulting in dramatic inequalities of wealth, power, and prestige.

Though we now know that it is a biologically meaningless concept, race retains considerable power as a "social fact." That is, since most societies consider certain physical characteristics to be relevant, race is responsible for powerful social forces that have a great impact on social organization and interaction. The community that J.L. Chestnut grew up in provides a classic example of how, even in a modern industrial society, race can play a dominant and sometimes lethal role in the lives of individuals, while Dubois, an African-American intellectual of the late 19th century, provides a thoughtful insider's perspective on the psychological impact of racial distinctions,

Gender expectations likewise play a powerful role in society, shaping individuals' identity from birth. Men and women internalize cultural concepts of gender as natural and immutable, while institutions such as the family, religion, and the media reinforce gender roles, even in egalitarian societies like the United States. Zimmer explores the impact of gender on social relationships in the context of a prison institution, and raises important questions about strategies of social interaction.

As you read this week's selections, consider the following questions:

- In what ways does a person learn proper behavior for their racial or gender status?
- How do schools influence a child's expectations and ambitions?
- In what ways can government institutions preserve or change social inequalities?
- Are ideas of race and gender an inevitable part of identity in the U.S.?
- Is a racially homogenous society possible or even desirable?
- Is a less gendered society desirable, or should we echo the French "Vive la difference"?
- Do racial and gender differences inevitably lead to inequalities?

Nov. 9 Social Change

Reading: *Modernization*, Chapter Two, "Social Change"
Chestnut, *Black in Selma*, Parts Two and Three
Sharpe, "Steel Axes for Stone Age Australians" (Reader)

Social change is the alteration of patterns of culture, social structure, and social behavior. While the goal of the natural sciences is to observe, explain, and predict changes in nature, social

scientists try to do the same for social change, although their methods are somewhat different. Change is inevitable in all societies, yet it occurs at different rates and in as many different ways as there are different societies.

During this week you will acquire necessary theoretical tools to study the development of Western Civilization. These tools can be divided into three categories:

1. The study of social typologies, including Töennies' concepts of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society), as well as Durkheim's notions of "mechanical" and "organic" solidarity;
2. Some of the major theories of social change, such as those of Marx, Weber, and the functionalist school; and
3. The concept of modernization, that is, the process of economic and social change brought about by the introduction of modern ideas and the industrial mode of production.

We will also study how modern Western civilization has impacted other societies. In reading about the Yir Yoront of Australia, we will see how seemingly minor cultural diffusion dramatically affected an entire society. Chestnut's account of the civil rights movement offers a perspective on how change can be generated from within a society itself, even against serious political, cultural, and economic resistance.

These cases help us to answer the following questions:

- How, why, and at what rate do societies change?
- Why do different societies change in different ways?
- Can we observe certain regularities and patterns to social change?

Nov. 16 The Middle Ages

Reading: *Modernization*, Chapters Three and Four
 Hunt, "The Christian Paternalistic Ethic" (Reader)
 St. Augustine, *The City of God*, excerpt (Reader)
 Pirenne, "Cities and European Civilization" (Reader)
 Herlihy/Cohn, "The New Economic and Demographic System" (Reader)

The Europe of the Middle Ages (roughly 900-1500 A.D.) was what we call a sacred society. By this we mean that the spiritual world and a sense of the divine greatly influenced all ideas and

social institutions in the everyday, or secular world. In the Platonic dualism of the Middle Ages, the sacred was more elevated than the secular, and therefore more important. This is best represented in St. Augustine's *City of God* (410 A.D.), which reflects the fundamental ethos later adopted by medieval society. In his work, Augustine distinguishes between two realms of existence: the sacred (the City of God) and the temporal or secular (the City of Man). The City of God, argued Augustine, is perfection and endures forever, while the City of Man is stained by sin and is doomed to perish.

This dualism influenced every aspect of medieval life. Politically, rulers legitimized their power through the authority bestowed upon them by the Church, and the virtuous ruler lived and ruled by Christian morality. This dualism was expressed culturally and economically in the Christian Paternalistic Ethic, which considered society as a unitary social organism greater than merely the sum of its parts. This ethic obliged inferiors and superiors to serve each other according to the dictates of their God-given stations.

Despite a deep-seated suspicion of innovation, medieval Europe, like all societies, was subject to the forces of social change. As early as the eleventh century, Europeans had been able to increase their material wealth and achieve some measure of economic specialization. This in turn led to the rise of cities and new social classes, in particular, medieval city dwellers, or the bourgeoisie. These crucial developments laid a foundation for the momentous changes that would modernize Europe during the following centuries.

In our analysis of the social structure and dynamics of medieval Europe, we examine the following questions:

- How did the social and economic order reflect the dualistic principle?
- What was the role of the individual in this system?
- What were the institutions of cultural stability and social order, and why were they resistant to change?
- How did different patterns of economic life challenge the medieval social hierarchy and value system? In what ways were traditional forms of authority undermined by the emergence of new sources of authority?

Thursday, Nov. 17: SECOND TEAM EXAM, during team lecture hour, in JSA

Nov. 23-27 THANKSGIVING RECESS

Nov. 30 The Renaissance

Reading: *Modernization*, Chapter Five
Machiavelli, *The Prince*

The major economic changes that began to take place in the later Middle Ages were culturally expressed by what we refer to as the Renaissance (1350-1550). First occurring in the city-states of the Italian peninsula, and later in northern Europe, a new cultural outlook emerged which tried to revive the classical heritage of Greece and Rome and began to change the ethos of passivity and obedience that characterized the Middle Ages. Figures such as the multitalented Leonardo and the statesman Niccòlo Machiavelli pioneered new approaches to solving problems, relying on analysis and reason, motivated by an optimism that they could help improve their societies.

This resurgent secular consciousness, combined with changed political and economic circumstances, created new possibilities for social order, and marked an irrevocable break with pre-modern, medieval European culture.

Some of the questions we will examine during this week include:

- What was Renaissance humanism, and how did it contrast with the medieval ways of knowing?
- In what ways was humanism expressed during the Renaissance - - in art, politics, literature, and religion?
- How and why do Machiavelli's ideas represent a turn towards a "modern" way of thinking?

Dec. 7 The Reformation

Reading: *Modernization*, Chapter Six
Required Film : *Luther*

The Renaissance had begun in the Italian city-states, whose urban, commercial culture had rejected many elements of traditional European feudalism. By the sixteenth century, Renaissance ideas and values were spreading into Northern Europe, where they shaped the direction of the Protestant Reformation.

This century of religious, social and political conflict served as a crucible that accelerated the transformation of European society. The Reformation was a religious reawakening that shattered the cultural unity of Catholic Europe at a time when Europe was experiencing a great demographic and economic recovery from the crises of the late medieval period. Religious change was closely connected to changes in other aspects of society during this tumultuous era, such as the growth of capitalism, secularism, and an emphasis on individualism.

Some of the questions we will examine during the Reformation week include:

- Why did the Catholic Church find Martin Luther's ideas to be such a threat?
- To what degree can you see Luther as a product of the social change that took place during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance?
- In what ways does the Reformation era represent a movement back towards spiritualism? In what ways can you see it as a movement towards secularism?

Monday, Dec. 12: LAST DAY OF CLASSES.

Dec. 16-21: FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

See exam schedule in Room 211 for schedule of CGS final exam dates and times