Professor Robert Wonser
Introduction to Sociology Term Project/Paper
Due: Check Syllabus for Due Date
Length: minimum 1,250-1,750 words (5-7 pages)

<u>Final Project</u>

Read every word on this page thoroughly, early and be sure to understand it!

This project is worth a significant portion of your grade. You should start on it early on in the term, look it over the first two weeks. *Do not wait until the last few weeks to begin*. It's the most important aspect as far as I'm concerned because it demonstrates to me your comprehension of the course material and concepts overall (this is what sociology des well). It should also prove to be entertaining as well. Make sure that you have sufficiently covered all concepts well. *I cannot stress that enough; cover the topic thoroughly. 4 ½ pages is NOT five pages. Most well-written papers are over six pages.*

Also, make sure you have included everything asked for in each assignment (as a guideline, this will take <u>at least 5-7 pages (not 4 ¼, not four ½)</u>, but by all means do not be limited by this number). Also, don't fluff up your papers with filler just to get added length; I can always spot this and it doesn't bode well for your grade. There is NO reason you should not be able to complete at least 5 full pages on any of the sociologically rich paper options listed below. If you are having trouble meeting this requirement *you're missing something important*. Remember I want to see you critically engaged in the material; that is, show me you're thinking and you understand the material! So *use your sociological imagination* when you do this assignment. It is not enough to simply parrot back the lecture content in your papers; demonstrate how the concept *applies*.

Choose <u>one</u> of the following for your final paper.

Formatting for ALL assignments (except the blog). Points may be deducted for missing any of the following:

- Include page numbers
- Bold key concepts/terms and USE THEM CORRECTLY
- Use proper grammar, punctuation and spell checking (this is crucial – make it readable!)
- If you use words other than your own, properly CITE them in text and in the works cited page. Use ASA format for this (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/01/)
- Do <u>all</u> parts of the assignment
- Distinguish one section from another with subtitles (underlined)
- Carefully proofread and edit your final papers
- Take this assignment *seriously.*

Assignment 1: Depictions of Society
For this assignment you are to depict sociological concepts through photographs. Each lesson should be depicted pictorially. You are to take five photographs for each lesson. We cover 12 lessons with five pictures each for a grand total of 60 photographs. <u>For each photograph you are to add a caption beneath it describing, using correct sociological terms, what is being depicted, in your own words demonstrate you understand the concept.</u> It is highly recommended that you take the photographs as we cover them in the class so you will have a clear idea of the concept and if you do this correctly, and you will spread out the workload over the semester instead of procrastinating. The best way to accomplish this assignment is to create a blog to host your photos and captions

(www.blogger.com is a good example). All photos *must* be your own and taken for this assignment specifically. The captions *must* include a sociological description of the photograph (all terms used correctly!) that connects your photograph to the corresponding sociological concept. On the day the final project is due you will turn in a piece of paper with your name and the link to your blog on it. You are allowed only TWO non-original photographs. I can Google image search too, don't plagiarize someone else's work!

* Tip: Be sure your blog is **not** set to private. Log out of your account and make sure it is still visible. Check it from another computer. Go the library and use one of their computers to make sure it is visible. In short **make sure I can access it!** If I can't see it I can't grade it! If I cannot access your blog for any reason it is considered late and therefore cannot be accepted resulting in a zero for the assignment.

Remember: five photos depicting any concept from the lesson for each of the following topics:

- What is sociology (ex: sociological imagination)
- Theories and theorists (ex: rationalization)
- Research methods (ex: survey)
- Culture (ex: material, food, fashion)
- Self and social interaction (ex: dramaturgy)
- Life in Groups (ex: various groups, primary, secondary)
- Deviance and conformity (ex: deviant or conforming behavior – be creative!)
- Social Class (ex: house in different neighborhoods, poverty)
- Race and Ethnicity (ex: the effects of race and ethnicity)
- Gender and Sexuality (ex: be creative; gender presentation)
- Life at Home (ex: home life, dating, second shift)
- Popular culture (ex: interpretation of media)

Assignment 2: A Sociological Event
Analyze a major event sociologically. Be sure to include the following questions in your analysis (but do not be limited to just these terms):

- Why did this happen *from a sociological perspective*?
- What social context did it occur in?
- How many are affected annually by the problem?
- Use sociological vocabulary (correctly!) and thoroughly explain your ideas.
- Which sociological theory best explains this event? Does it take multiple theories?
- I am uninterested in anything or any analysis that is NOT sociological. Don't bother.

Remember I want to see you critically engaged in the material; that is, show me you're thinking and you understand the material. A recent example is the shooting of congress member Giffords in Tucson recently. Other examples include 9/11, major elections, crime, poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, Columbine, etc, marriage, diet, tv, any other aspect of American culture that interests you.

One thing to remember, you are to explain this event sociologically in light of a (or multiple) social problems. In doing so you are to explain why the common explanations we hear in the media and by laypersons is inadequate for fully explaining the event.

An extremely brief example of what I'm talking about (DO NOT use this example of school shootings): The Virginia Tech school shooting was mostly framed within a psychological perspective. Much of the arguments we heard were that the man was mentally deranged, sick in the head or under stress.

While certainly pertinent to the discussion they are not the only explanations. Using the sociological imagination we look for the link between the individual and society. Why is it that studies show school shooters are disproportionately male? Why don't females usually commit these types of crimes? How were his cries for attention handled within the institution of the school? The type of society we live in glorifies violence; our history is fraught with violence (e.g. our genocide of Native Americans, etc.). Our culture also glorifies guns and guns as a method of solving disputes. How are men socialized to deal with anger and other emotions? These are examples of using then link between society and the individual to explain human actions.

Assignment 3: Dirty Hands
For this assignment I want you to go out and 'get your hands dirty' so to speak. That is, you are going to go out into a social setting you are unfamiliar with and document what you are seeing. You will be conducting an ethnography and/or a participant observation. For example, go into a church you are unfamiliar with or a club have never been to before and write down your observations. Anywhere where people are that you have not been before. What are the people doing, what are the norms for this specific place? How are the people behaving? Are they in groups, are they alone? If they're in groups what do you notice about the group dynamics (remember Simmel's work; dyads, triads, etc.)? Write about this place as though you know nothing about it… at all. Take detailed notes and include them with your write up. Remember use sociological terms, so what are the norms, the statuses and the roles associated with the statuses, etc. Do not be limited to what I have listed here; all of sociology is at your disposal.

For the second part of this assignment I want you to go into a *familiar* setting and do the exact same thing. Document it as though you have never been there before. This is the more difficult part of the assignment. It is harder to see familiar as something extraordinary but if you actively use your sociological perspective you can see otherwise hidden idiosyncrasies in your familiar world. Write down people's behaviors, rules, etc. The point here is to see the ordinary as extraordinary. The familiar should become unfamiliar.

The final part involves comparing the two settings, what do you notice?
What is similar what is different? Why?
What became apparent that you wouldn't have otherwise noticed?
Pay special attention to the *social structure* (you need to know what this means and understand this to do this part correctly) of each setting. Regardless of where you choose they should be remarkably similar in this regard. Tell me how and why this is so.

* This is the MOST important part of the assignment and should be the longest!

This is an ethnography and/or participant observation. This means you must include your field notes!

Assignment 4: Sociological Autobiography

Write a sociological autobiography. Not just any autobiography but your **sociological** autobiography. That is, tell your life story, where you came from, how you got where you are, etc. using sociology as your guide. *So this should be incredibly full of correctly used sociological terms (not regurgitation of lecture definitions)*. Use your sociological imagination! This is a difficult assignment, if you plan to do it be aware.

→ This should include ALL of the following (points will be deducted for each one left out):
- social class, how has your social class privileged you? How hasn't it?
- gender, how has your gender privileged you? How hasn't it?
- race/ethnicity, how has your race/ethnciity privileged you? How hasn't it?

- religion, how has your religion (or absence of it) privileged you? How hasn't it?
- place of birth, how has your place of birth privileged you? How hasn't it?
- sexual orientation, how has your sexuality privileged you? How hasn't it? This applies to EVERYONE.
- technology
- Anything else sociological you deem relevant to who you are and where you are in life should also be included.
- **How did ALL of the above make you who you are?** That is, how did the **social forces** that exist outside of you the individual influence your **life experiences** and **life chances?**
- **The above are SOCIAL variables, not simply individual variables. I am NOT concerned with individual explanations for these. They should be sociological!**
- This is not an autobiography, it is a **sociological analysis** of a particular person who is situated in a time and place with a culture and history.
- **Be sure to make connections to your life lived so far and project into the future given the insights you've learned through studying sociology.**
- **<u>If you could have written this assignment before taking this class you have NOT done it properly.</u>**
- **Be sure to ask yourself what effect does what you're saying have on your life chances. Relevant statistics are useful here. As much as we would like to think we are unique and immune to the odds, we are heavily influenced by the social forces we are immersed in and it would be foolish to not account for their impact on our lives.**

A caveat: This is first and foremost a *sociological* autobiography.
How do these sociological variables contribute to who you are today?
Every variable listed has had a profound impact on who you are today.
Remember Mill's point about the sociological imagination being a method to understand the individual in terms of their broader social context; history plus biography.
If you turn in something that you could have written without having taken this course then you have not done the assignment correctly and your grade will suffer accordingly! If you read the above and don't understand ask for clarification in class. If this seems too difficult consider a different option.

Assignment 5: Research!
Using the research methods discussed in the course, conduct your own research and submit the findings to me. This should involve all the steps of a research design including: state and define the problem, literature review (the campus library allows access to scholarly journals for this purpose like JSTOR), hypothesis and/or research questions, determine the research design, data collection, analysis of the data and implications and conclusions. Use Lesson 3 – Sociological Research Methods as your guide! You must clearly define what it is you are doing, why, and how. Are you using qualitative methods or quantitative? Why? Is one more appropriate than another? What are the limitations to your approach? If you were to do it differently what would you change and why? Did you get the information you were expecting? Refer to Lesson 3.

- You must clear your research design and what you plan to study with me first so that I can make sure you are on the right track and not spinning your wheels.

Extra Credit:
Using Ethnomethodology, perform a breaching experiment. Pay attention when we go over it the chapter on deviance! Remember, don't do anything illegal! This should be no less than 3 pages. Tell me what ethnomethodology is, why it's useful (that is what does it expose?), what you did, what norm you breached and why is that norm important (that is, what does it do for society?), how did people react and why?