

## **The Social World (Fall 2013)**

Professor: Shamus Rahman Khan

LECTURE: MW: 10:10-11:25AM

Office Hours: Monday 1-2PM or by appointment; 617 Knox Hall

Teaching Assistants: TBA

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The purpose of this course is to introduce you to what sociologists study and how they study it. Our aim is to provide an enormously broad introduction to sociology, and even the social sciences more generally. We will read about state formation and breakdown, how neighborhoods influence people, the great migration, boarding schools, prisons, how to smoke marijuana, cockfighting in Bali, the changing nature of American work, social movements, why people like the music they do, intersexed people, American inequality, how obesity is contagious, why we often blame other people but rarely ourselves, and lots of things in between. As we move through these readings we will discuss the major theoretical approaches deployed by sociologists, appealing to Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Foucault, and some lesser-known figures. And we will discuss the methodological tools sociologists use to make sense of the social world.

The emphasis in this class is on more contemporary texts. Readings have been selected using two criteria: (1) are they influential pieces of work; and (2) are they interesting? If you are looking for an in depth introduction to a particular topic, this is not the class for you. If you're happy to learn a little about a whole range of things, you might enjoy this class. There is a lot of reading in this class; you must do the readings to do well in this course. We are sensitive to this and have designed a grading scheme that rewards students for doing the work (effort). If you show up for class, do the reading, and pay attention, you should do very well in this course. Conversely, if you miss class, don't do the reading, and are distracted, you will not do well. Our hope is that course evaluation centered on steady weekly work will both relieve stress and actually help you learn, remember, and use the concepts introduced in this course.

### **Evaluations**

12 Quizzes: 120 Points

12 Papers: 120 Points

Total: 240 points

Almost every week we will have a quiz on the previous week's lectures. Each quiz will have five questions; each quiz will be worth 10 points. QUIZZES CAN ONLY BE TAKEN IN CLASS. Questions will be on the major concepts presented in lecture, not the small nit-picky points. There may be one question from the previous week's readings on each quiz. You can drop one quiz grade.

Almost every week you must turn in a two-to-three page (750 word) response paper to the readings. Each response paper is worth 10 points. Response papers are evaluated simply. When we read them we will ask, "did you do the readings and do you engage with the ideas in the readings?" If you simply want to critically summarize the readings, fine. If you'd prefer to question a central issue, fine. You can relate the readings to one another or treat them as

distinct. However, this is one point we are NOT flexible on: you must engage with all the readings. WE WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY LATE RESPONSE PAPERS. You can drop one response paper.

We use this evaluation scheme for three reasons:

1. We take a skills-based approach to learning. We hope that at the end of the class you will have developed two key skills: (a) how to listen to material, figure out what is important, remember it, and reproduce it; (b) how to read material, identify the core argument, and present it yourself in a clear and concise fashion.
2. It should relieve stress. There are no big exams. No midterms or finals. You just have to chug along, doing regular, steady work. Week-in and week-out you know exactly what you have to do. It's always the same. And if you have a particularly tough week outside of class, you can drop the assignments from that week.
3. You will retain more this way. It's not like cramming for a test and forgetting everything. You will also have a written account of your interpretations of each text. If you take future classes in the social sciences these could prove helpful.

### **Academic Integrity**

You must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your papers; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent. Any breach of this intellectual responsibility cannot be tolerated. In this class we will not make a distinction between "minor" and "major" infractions. Any instance of academic dishonesty will be taken extremely seriously. **Students failing to meet these responsibilities will fail this course** and we will vigorously recommend to the deans that you be asked to leave Columbia.

Also note: this is a large class that has been taught before. In recent years we discovered that students have been handing in papers that were submitted in previous years. We have therefore created an internet archive of the papers handed into this class in past years. If you hand in a similar paper to one submitted in the past, you will fail the course.

### **Required Texts**

There are five required texts. All are available for sale at Book Culture. They are:

*Waiting for Jose*, by Harel Shapira

*Privilege*, by Shamus Khan

*The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson

*The Person and the Situation* by Lee Ross and Richard Nisbett

*Great American City* by Robert J Sampson

We will not read any books until the 5th week of the semester. This will give you plenty of time to assess the class before investing in its texts. Book Culture is located at: 536 West 112th Street (in between Broadway and Amsterdam). You can find the store on-line at: <http://www.bookculture.com>

Reader: For the first five weeks all of our readings will be done out of a reader. The reader is

available on-line at [www.courseworks.columbia.edu](http://www.courseworks.columbia.edu)

If you have difficulty affording the texts for this class, please contact me early in the semester.

## **Correspondence**

**All** general correspondence for this class should be sent to: [thesocialworld2013@gmail.com](mailto:thesocialworld2013@gmail.com). Professor Khan and the TAs will not respond to correspondence sent to their personal email addresses. With 300 students managing email is a challenge; this general account insures that all correspondence is seen by Professor Khan and dealt with in an efficient way.

We will reply to this email address once a day, and once over the weekend. Do not expect an “instant” response to emails; in general, expect a 24 hour turn around time. We will not reply to any emails where the answer is in the syllabus. For questions about the class, grading, assignments, etc. do not email the TAs directly or Professor Khan directly. Professor Khan will check this gmail account once a day; it is how you should contact him. This email address will also be checked by the TAs. If you have a concern about a TA or a personal matter you consider private or confidential (which you only want Professor Khan to read about) you should contact Professor Khan directly: [sk2905@columbia.edu](mailto:sk2905@columbia.edu). If you have a concern about Professor Khan which you feel uncomfortable talking about with him directly you should contact the chair of his department, Professor Yinon Cohen: [yc2444@columbia.edu](mailto:yc2444@columbia.edu).

Email etiquette: Email has developed into a very informal medium. But we would encourage you to treat class emails as you would any formal correspondence – think of this as the way in which you would write your boss. This means doing simple things like capitalizing letters when they should be capitalized, providing a salutation (like, “Dear Shamus”) and signing your full name. We require your name as sometimes your email addresses do not match your names. If you have a “fun” email address (say, [kegstandforever@gmail.com](mailto:kegstandforever@gmail.com)), we would encourage you to save it for your friends. Please provide a subject heading for your email so we can easily classify your question. You are welcome to address Professor Khan in any way you’re most comfortable: “Shamus,” “Dr. Khan,” “Professor Khan.”

## **Social Psychology**

### **Monday September 9:**

Garfinkel, Harold, “Passing and the managed achievement of sex status in an ‘intersexed’ person” pp. 116-185 in *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Willer, Robb et al., “Overdoing Gender: A test of the masculine overcompensation thesis”

### **Wednesday, September 11:**

Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo, 1973, “Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison”, *International Journal of Criminology and Penology*, 1: 69-97.

Howard S. Becker, 1953, “Becoming a Marijuana User”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 59(3):235-242.

Paper #1

## **Sociology of Culture**

**Monday, September 16:**

Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight", *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Steven Levitt and Sudhir Venkatesh, 2000, "An Economic Analysis of a Drug-Selling Gang's Finances," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115(3): 755-789.

Quiz #1

**Wednesday, September 18**

Richard A Peterson and Roger M. Kern, "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore," *American Sociological Review* Vol. 61(5): 900-7 (October 1996).

N.A. Christakis and J.H. Fowler, "The Spread of Obesity in a Large Social Network Over 32 Years," *New England Journal of Medicine* 357(4): 370-379 (July 2007)

Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies", *American Sociological Review*, 51(1986): 273-86.

Paper #2

**Demography****Monday September 23**

"McFalls, Jr., J.A., 1998. "Population: A Lively Introduction." *Population Bulletin* 53: 3-48

Michael Hout and Joshua R. Goldstein, 1994, "How 4.5 Million Irish Immigrants Became 40 Million Irish Americans: Demographic and Subjective Aspects of the Ethnic Composition of White Americans," *American Sociological Review* 59(1):64-82

Quiz #2

Paper #3

**Political Sociology****Wednesday September 25:**

Trotsky, Preface, chapter 8, chapter 11, in *History of the Russian Revolution*

Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics"

Quiz #3

**Monday September 30:**

Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone" *Journal of Democracy* 6.1 (1995) 65-78.

Theda Skocpol, "Unravelling From Above," *The American Prospect* no. 25, 1996: 20-25.

Paper #4

**Social Stratification****Wednesday October 2:**

Jencks, "Does Inequality Matter?", *Deadalus*, Winter 2002, pp. 49-65.

Anthony B Atkinson, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez, "Top Incomes in the Long Run of History," *Journal of Economic Literature* 2011, 49:1, 3-71.

Quiz #4

**Monday October 7:**

Pager. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology*, 108: 937-975.

Budig, Michelle, and Paula England. 2001. "The Wage Penalty for Motherhood." *American Sociological Review*, 66: 204-225.

Paper #5

**Demography: The Great Migration (546 pages; four classes)**

**Wednesday October 9:**

*The Warmth of Other Suns*, pp. 1-180

Quiz #5

**Monday October 14:**

*The Warmth of Other Suns*, pp. 181-301

Paper #6

**Wednesday October 16:**

*The Warmth of Other Suns*, pp. 301-432

Quiz #6

**Monday October 21:**

*The Warmth of Other Suns*, pp. 432-547

Paper #7

**Political Sociology: Migration and Conservative Politics (160 pages; two classes)**

**Wednesday October 23:**

*Waiting for Jose*, pp. 1-71

Quiz #7

**Monday October 28:**

*Waiting for Jose*, pp. 73-161

Paper #8

**Culture: Elite Education (204 pages; three classes)**

**Wednesday October 30:**

*Privilege*, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2

Quiz #8

**Wednesday November 6:**

*Privilege*, Chapters 3 & 4

**Monday November 11:**

*Privilege*, Chapter 5, Conclusion, & Appendix

Paper #9

Quiz #9

**Stratification: Neighborhood Effects (426 pages; four classes)**

**Wednesday November 13:**

*Great American City*, pp. 3-96

**Monday November 18:**

*Great American City*, pp. 97-209

Paper #10

Quiz #10

**Wednesday November 20:**

*Great American City*, pp. 210-308

**Monday November 25:**

*Great American City*, pp. 309-426

Paper #11

Quiz #11 (END OF CLASS)

**Social Psychology: Individuals or Situations? (252 pages; three classes)**

**Monday December 2:**

*The Person and the Situation*, pp. 1-89

**Wednesday December 4:**

*The Person and the Situation*, pp. 90-168

**Monday December 9:**

*The Person and the Situation*, pp. 169-254

Paper #12

Quiz #12