Soc 485.001 – Seminar in Sociology
COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2015
Class Time: TR 2:00pm – 3:15pm
Rm. SS 312

Instructor: Dr. Willie Edwards, Associate Professor
Office Location: Ferguson Hall, Social Science Bldg., Rm 217
Office Hours: Monday 2:00pm – 5:00pm & TR 1:00pm – 2:00pm
Any other Times, Please Schedule an Appointment
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COURSE INFORMATION

Materials - Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:
Required Readings (given as handouts):
do they know and where are they going?” American Sociological Association – Department of Research and
Development.
Sociology 37:31-47.
socialization in sociology.” Teaching Sociology 27:1-16.
McKinney, Kathleen & Laura Reed. 2007. “Profile of an engaged sociology major.” Teaching Sociology 35:77-84.
Teaching Sociology 33:371-379.
18:20-25.
Persell, Caroline, Kathryn Pfeiffer & Ali Syed. 2007. “What should students understand after taking introduction to
sociology.” Teaching Sociology 35:300-314.
Spalter-Roth, Roberta, Mary Senter, Pamela Stone, & Michael Wood. 2010. “ASA’s bachelor’s and beyond survey:
Spalter-Roth, Roberta & Nicole Vooren. 2008. “What are they doing with a bachelor’s degree in sociology?”
American Sociological Association – Department of Research and Development.

Suggested Readings:
(Students are encouraged to obtain copies of books in the following subject areas – introduction
to sociology, sociological theory, and social research)
Course Description:
This course will be conducted predominately by discussions, group activities, and involve explorations of what one can do with a sociology degree. Through readings, discussions and class participation this class will engage in bringing all that has been learned (or that which students were expected to learn) about sociology together, and to cement a foundation of sociological knowledge possessed by each student. Students will be expected to be engaging and to demonstrate their level of sociological knowledge by using the jargon and displaying a degree of sociological professionalism.

This description of the course represents the desire of the professor. Perhaps Thomas Schmid said it best when he pinned these words: "In an ideal, fully integrated sociological curriculum, a capstone would bring to fruition years of disciplined study and practice, offering every student the opportunities to synthesize prior knowledge, [and] engage in free-flowing sociological discourse" (1993:219).

Course Goals:
This class is structured to be the last class sociology majors will take or is taking. It has been said that a major should have “…a beginning, middle, and an end – each contributing in a different way to the overall aim of the major” (Association of America Colleges, 1990:9). This course exist so that a student’s growth may be assessed in reference to the level of accrued sociological knowledge, ability to perform critical thinking, the skills of writing across the discipline, and the capability of communicating orally using sociological jargon. Throughout this course and because of its design the student will be expected to “…integrate, synthesize, critique, and apply the concepts, theories, and methods articulated in the sociology curriculum” (W. Smith, Teaching Sociology, 1993, 21(3):250).

This course will assist the student in considering or developing a plan of professional employment. A portion of our class time will be spent investigating what one can do with a sociology degree? An introduction of possible levels of employment in the private or public sectors will be reviewed.

In a unique way this course is seen as a capstone, “the end.” “This course endeavors to crystallize students’ knowledge and appreciation of the discipline. [It] provides closure to students’ undergraduate sociology experience, and [it will] assess their understanding of the discipline” (W. Smith, Teaching Sociology, 1993, 21(3):250). This class will be an integrative tool to assist students in framing all they have learned and experienced into what some may call sociology of sociology.

Stated in another manner, this seminar will highlight the historical and early development of the discipline (sociology). It will be an investigation and review of the dominant theoretical
paradigms and their connections to the explanations of today's society (ies) in operations. The overarching aim of this seminar or capstone (as is addressed in many departments) class is to draw all that has been presented in various sociology classes into some semblance of order and to introduce the student to the professional realm in which sociology will be applied. Thomas Schmid (1993:219) has stated this idea in this manner: "... ‘talking and doing sociology’ remain appropriate course guidelines, much of the talk may be about how to talk sociologically, and a typical product of the course may be closer to an awkward sociological assemblage than to an elegant masterpiece. [I]ntegrating students' earlier coursework remains a fundamental mandate, fostering their continuing affiliation with the discipline becomes equally important."

Course Objectives:
The course objectives are constructed based on the course goals, and the techniques employed in the learning outcomes assessment are to assist the student in the formulation of an overall sociological perspective, and to detect how the student anticipate using his/her degree in sociology.

The course objectives relate or connect to several course goals:

1. Students are to possess at least an intermediate (average) amount of sociological knowledge. Thus the student should be familiar with the majority of the sociological concepts that exist in most introductory textbooks.
   a. To measure this objective students will be expected to use the sociological concepts and jargon during class discussions
   b. To measure this objective students will be expected to perform at least in an average manner (70 points or better) on a multiple choice exam to be administered during this course

2. Students should be able to describe the historical social development of sociology; to be familiar enough with the sociological paradigms to the point that they can participate in a class discussion about them; to be able to differentiate between sociology and other social sciences; to be able to present either in written or oral form how (why) he/she knows that sociology is a science.
   a. During the class there will be graded discussions on various sociological concepts and the theoretical paradigms in sociology
   b. There will be in-class writing assignments that will allow students to express their thoughts and demonstrate their skills concerning what sociology is or is not and how it differs from the other social sciences
   c. Students will maintain a journal which will contain an assortment of assignments developed to facilitate the measurement of the students’ knowledge of why sociology is viewed as a science
3. The level of students’ appreciation for the research done by sociologists will be examined; in this process students will be expected to have a working knowledge of the relationship between theoretical and methodological issues confronted by the sociologist; students are expected to be able to formulate a research project from beginning to end
   a. Students will engage in reading several research articles and will be graded on how well they can interpret the findings and how well they can explain the various parts of a research article
   b. Students will be grouped and be responsible for formulating a research project, describing all the parts of the project before the class (this will be a group project thus a group grade), this project must incorporate appropriate theory and method; there will also be an individual grade
   c. Each student will write a research paper and present it to the class, there will be a grade for the research paper and grade for the presentation; this paper must be written using the American Sociological Association (ASA) style of writing

4. Students will become familiar and investigate what professional employment exists for sociology majors
   a. Students will participate in reading assigned research articles pertaining to sociology majors and careers; after reading designated material students will be graded on their level of participation in class discussion pertaining to the assigned readings
   b. Each students will contribute to the development of a list of professional positions or occupations which are occupied by people with a sociology degree

5. Acquaint students with the real world of securing professional employment with a sociology degree
   a. Students will develop/compose a resume which will be graded
   b. Students will review and discuss information about interviewing, writing letters of reference, and dressing for success; assignment and activities will exist to measure how well students handle or determine how well students perform these tasks

Student Learning Outcomes:
Student Learning Outcomes reflect what the student ought to accomplish or be able to perform after completing this course. The student learning outcomes reflect the course goals and course objectives.

1. Students will participate in class discussions where they will be able to demonstrate their level of sociological jargon usage and understanding of the sociological concepts.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate their level of sociological knowledge/information by successfully achieving more than 80% of the possible scoring on an objective and essay type exams.

3. Students will become familiar with possible/available positions of employment for their degree by collecting professional employment announcements for which a person with their degree/major may qualify.

4. Students will develop a professional looking resume, cover letter, and a letter of reference for this course which may also be used outside of this course.

5. Students will demonstrate their level of developing, constructing, and conducting a research project by doing so for this class. This learning outcome will be achieved through a group format which will also introduce and familiarize the students with how to accomplish task while working in a group.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments**

#### Course Requirements & Assignments

1. **Discussion:**
   During this course students will be encouraged to practice their speaking, sharing and demonstrating their gained knowledge of sociology. One way this will be accomplished is through graded discussions. Students will be expected to share comments on all reading assignments discussed in class. This class is scheduled to meet 30 days during the semester, and we will schedule or work to have at least 20 days of discussion on some facet or idea dealing with sociology.
   - Every graded discussion will be worth five (5) points
   - There will be twenty (20) graded discussions
   - It will be possible for a student to make one hundred forty (140) points from participating in graded discussions
   - Absence or missing graded discussions for any reasons cannot be made-up

2. **Writing:**
   Students will engage in a number of writing exercises, this too will permit them to demonstrate their knowledge of sociology and to practice their skills of writing clear ideas and developing content. Writing will be done in many forms and the points or grades achievable will vary as described.
   - Several in-class writing exercises will occur
   - Each writing exercise connected to a discussion will be worth fifteen (15) points
   - There will be four (4) in-class writings connected to four class discussions
   - It will be possible to earn sixty (60) points from in-class writings
   - Missed writing exercise cannot be made up
(3) Testing:
There will be two graded tests which will be composed of multiple choice and essay. These tests will be over the review of sociological material covered from the three books that students are required to secure for the duration of this class.
- The multiple choice test will be composed of one hundred items/questions; the test will be worth 100 points
- The essay test will be composed of at least 5 questions (the number of essay questions may vary); the essay must be written in a Blue Book; this test will be worth 100 points

(4) Group Research Project:
Students will be organized into several groups. Each group will develop a research project (the research project will not be conducted, but it must cover details or portray every aspect of a research project). The description of this assignment will be explained later before its due date.
- This assignment will be worth one hundred (100) points.

(5) Resume, Cover Letter, & Letter of Reference:
Each student will develop a resume, cover letter and letter of reference so that they will have a rather well organized and useable resume upon graduation. Students will obtain some practice in the development of a resume and the other items that usually accompany it. Each student will develop a draft of each of these items to be reviewed by the professor, afterward they will be returned to students for corrections and suggested changes. Students will make changes then turn in this corrected assignment a second time. It is at that point the assignment will be graded.
- This assignment will be worth 50 points as identified here
  - Resume will be worth 30 points
  - Cover Letter will be worth 10 points
  - Letter of Reference will be worth 10 points

(6) Research Paper:
This assignment will allow students to continue demonstrating their ability to construct a senior quality research paper. Students will demonstrate their skills in conceiving a thought and following it through to completion. Each student must use the ASA style of writing and citation. The format for this assignment will be presented by the professor before the assignment is initiated.
- The research paper assignment will be worth 70 points.
(7) **Job/Position Journal:**

It is essential that students become familiar with what types of professional employment they can anticipate obtaining. Students will use this assignment to gather an idea of possible employment venues after graduation.

- Each student will present 2 position announcements on the designated dates identified in the course content schedule
- Each presentation will be worth 10 points
- The description of the needed information to be gained will be given out by the professor before the due date of this assignment.

**Course Possible Points:**

1. Class graded discussion 20 @ 5 pts. each 100pts.
2. In-class writing connected to grade discussion 4 @ 15 pts. each 60pts.
3. Test (200pts)
   - Multiple choice test over introductory sociology, theory, and research methods 100pts.
   - Essay Test (over same information) 100pts.
4. Group Research Project 100pts
5. Resume, Cover Letter, & Letter of Reference (50pts)
   - Resume 30pts.
   - Cover letter 10pts.
   - Letter of reference 10pts.

**Total Possible Points** 600pts.

The following grade scale will be used:

- A = 600 – 570 pts.
- B = 569 – 539 pts.
- C = 538 – 488 pts.
- D = 487 – 437 pts.
- F = 436 and below

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**COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT**

**Interaction with Instructor Statement:**

**Contact of Professor:**

Students wishing to contact the Professor should visit his office during the stated office hours or make an appointment. Students may also contact the Professor using the office telephone number or the email, both are provided on the first page of this class syllabus.
Research Assistance:
For research assistance, students should contact: Ms. Emily Witsell Reference Librarian at James G. Gee Library Room 218; 903-886-5719 emily.witsell@tamuc.edu or http”//www.tamuc.edu/library

Extra Credit Plan:
Extra credit points may be earned by students participating in a number of events offered by the Career Development Office. A special handout will be distributed to students. Students are encouraged to take advantage of some of the offering or services provided by the Career Development Office.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/Policies

Course Specific Procedures:
Class Policy:
Class attendance and participation are expected. Tardiness is reacted to in an unfavorably manner. Students will not be permitted to enter the class after the professor has initiated the focus for that class period.

Telephone and pagers must be placed on vibrate but should not be answered unless you work for some type of emergency agency (medical or law enforcement, etc.) or you know it to be an emergency call.

A scantron answer sheet (blue) and a number two pencil should be brought to class for each exam, unless instructed differently by the professor.

This department has a strong policy and a low tolerance for cheating. Plagiarism is disliked and treated very seriously. Texas A&M University-Commerce does not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. “Academic dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one’s own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing or removal) of resource material.

Sites that address plagiarism and how to avoid it: http://www.plagiarism.org or http://www.unc.educ/depts/wcweb/hanouts/plagiarism.html.

A student may drop a course by logging into their MYLEO account and clicking on the hyperlink labeled ‘Drop a class’ from among the choices found under the MYLEO section of the Web page.

It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the rules or policies relating to withdrawal or “X.” You are encouraged to follow the appropriate procedures of the university as they relate to this matter. I will be as helpful and understanding where possible, but please be aware that this professor does not like to give an incomplete as a grade.
University Specific Procedures:

ADA Statement

Students with Disabilities
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library- Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
Email: Rebecca.Tuerk@tamuc.edu

Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/

Nondiscrimination Notice
Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Student Conduct:

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook).

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<th>COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Course Content Schedule</strong></td>
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<td>September 1, 2015</td>
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<td>September 3, 2015</td>
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<td>September 8, 2015</td>
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September 10, 2015  
Assigned Research Article to be Discussed:

Assigned Research Articles to be Discussed:

September 15, 2015  
Assigned Research Article to be Discussed:

Assigned Research Article to be Discussed:

September 17, 22, 2015  
Introduction to Sociology Book

Sept 24, - October 1, 2015  
Introduction to Sociology Book

October 6, 2015  
Assigned Research Article to be Discussed:
McKinney, Kathleen & Laura Reed. 2007. “Profile of an engaged sociology major.” *Teaching Sociology* 35:77-84.

Assigned Research Article to be Discussed:

October 8, 2015  
^2^Writing & Discussion

October 13, 2015  
Focus on Core courses and information gained

October 15, 20, 22, 2015  
Review theory textbook Discussion

October 27, 2015  
^3^writing on sociological theory
Make presentation about Resume writing, cover letter, letter of reference

October 29, 2015  
Focus on Research Methods textbook Discussion

November 3, 5, 2014  
Continuation of focus on research methods
Comment on Research conducted by Sociologists
  Basic, Applied & Evaluative Research
  Peer Reviewed & Scholarly Publications
November 10, 2015  Draft of Resume due
  Writing, Research Methods

November 12, 2015

November 17, 2015

November 19, 2015  Graded Test over Introductory, Theory, Research Methods areas
  (Objective Test)

November 24, 2015  Comment on the Group Assignment for formulating a Research
  Project  
  Research paper due

November 26, 2015  No class, Thanksgiving Holiday

December 1, 2015  Presentation of Group Research Project

December 3, 2015  Presentation of Group Research Project

December 8, 2015  Graded Test over Introductory, Theory, Research Methods areas
  (Essay Test)

December 10, 2015  Comment on Socialization of the Profession
  Sociological Associations
  Professional Ethics
  Final Copy of Resume, Cover Letter, & Letter of Reference Due
  Address Interviewing & Dressing for Success

December 15, 2015  Return Reviewed Resume, Cover Letter, & Letter of Reference
  Discuss Job/Position Journal, Employment with Sociology degree

December 17, 2015  Student share two potential job/positions found