

## Soc. 110G, section 3, Fall 2013 First Year Seminar: Insiders/Outsiders

UMass Boston, Sociology Dept.  
Fall 2013

Class Hrs.: Tu/Th. 11:00-12:15 am, Tu 12:30-1:20 pm  
Class Location: Wheatley Bldg, 1st fl., Room 42

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

**Objectives of First Year Seminars:** This course is a First Year Seminar (FYS). First Year Seminars welcome new students (with **fewer than 30 transfer credits**) to UMass Boston with small-sized courses are designed to prepare students for a successful college experience. Students may choose from a variety of FYS courses, reflecting a wide range of topics and disciplines. A major goal of First Year Seminars is to practice the following habits of mind essential to university level educational success: **1) Careful reading; 2) Clear writing; 3) Critical thinking; 4) Information literacy and technology; 5) Working in teams; 6) Oral presentation; and 7) Academic self-assessment.**

All First Year Seminars meet 4 hours per week and carry 4 credits. A peer mentor, a staff academic advisor, a librarian (and sometimes a career services specialist) are ordinarily assigned to each seminar. Among other things, the mentor can help you with computer accounts, e-mail, and with library research. The advisor will visit the class once or twice during the semester, and can be contacted for help with choosing courses and major, with financial aid, and any problems with university life in general. A Career Services Specialist will also be introduced in this class to students to answer any questions they may have about their career goals and planning.

UMass Boston is a wonderfully diverse community. We hope that you will take advantage of the opportunity to learn about the rich array of opinions and experiences that will inevitably be present in this class.

**If you entered UMB with 30 or more transferable credits, you should not be enrolled in this course. If you entered UMB with fewer than 30 credits but have more than 30 credits now, you still need a First Year Seminar (a G100 or 100G-level course, like this one) if you have not yet taken one. Note: If you have taken another G100- or 100G-level course in any department at UMB, you cannot receive credit for this one. Please note also that courses taken at UMass Boston before matriculating do not count as transfer credits. Thus, for example, if you took 36 UMass Boston credits as a special student and then applied for admission, you still need to take a First Year Seminar.**

**Student Referral Program:** If it appears to the instructor that you might not pass this First Year Seminar, and if the instructor cannot figure out how to support your success in the course, the instructor might inform the director of the Student Referral Program (CC-1100; 287-5500). The staff in this program will attempt to help you address the difficulties that are interfering with your success in the class. If you do not want your instructor to let the Student Referral Program know that you are having difficulty, please let your instructor know.

**Accommodations:** Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offers guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. If applicable, students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center for Disability Services, CC 2-2100, (617-287-7430). If this applies to you, you must present these recommendations to each professor within a reasonable period, preferably by the end of the Add/Drop period.

**Student Conduct:** Students are required to adhere to university policies on academic honesty and student conduct. The current Code of Student Conduct, including information about academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism, is available online at: <http://www.umb.edu/academics/undergraduate/office/students/CodeofStudentConduct.html>.

**Assessment of FYS Courses:** In addition to a Student Self Assessment form to be completed at the end of each First Year Seminar, an assessment committee will look at randomly chosen student writing from First Year Seminars. Please save all your writing in this course so that if you are randomly chosen you will have your work available. The purpose

of this is to improve the program and to improve particular courses, as necessary. You may remove your name from your papers if you choose to submit them anonymously. Your professor will let you know later in the semester whether your portfolio has been selected.

### COURSE CONTENT:

*Living in a multicultural society, we cross into each other's worlds all the time. We live in each other's pockets, occupy each other's territories, live in close proximity and in intimacy with each other at home, in school, at work. We are mutually complicitous—us and them, white and colored, straight and queer, Christian and Jew, self and Other, oppressor and oppressed. We all of us find ourselves in the position of being simultaneously insider/outsider. The Spanish word 'nosotras' means 'us.' In theorizing insider/outsider I write the word with a slash between nos (us) and otras (others). Today the division between the majority of 'us' and 'them' is still intact. This country does not want to acknowledge its walls or limits, the places some people are stopped or stop themselves, the lines they aren't allowed to cross. ... [But] the future belongs to those who cultivate cultural sensitivities to differences and who use these abilities to forge a hybrid consciousness that transcends the 'us' vs. 'them' mentality and will carry us into a nosotras position bridging the extremes of our cultural realities.*  
—Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, in AnaLouise Keating 2006

Using a variety of readings augmented by selected films, in this course we will explore how sociology can help us understand how our society works itself out in our everyday lives, and how we can become better persons and help create better societies, thereby pursuing *what a liberal arts education promises to do: to help individuals freely develop their creative powers and seek the same for others in the world*. Student assignments will consist of engaged attendance and participation in discussions, shared reports and presentations, and a term paper cultivating students' critical sociological imaginations by exploring the link between their personal troubles and ever globalizing public issues.

We humans are essentially creative beings. A good society would be organized in such a way as to enable the optimal free development of each individual, and the exercise of her or his creative powers to foster the same in others globally. However, we may consciously or unconsciously oppress others, and ourselves. Oppressive self/social interactions and societies are oppressive because they limit the free development of human creativity, for some or all members, through a multitude of obstacles and discriminations.

What often makes it possible to justify and practice oppression is the division of groups of people into outsiders/insiders based on their gender, "race"/ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, religion, nationality, belief, ability, or others. Such "Us" vs. "Them" dualisms give oppressors the justification to organize social (economic, cultural, political) structures and interactions in such a way that the free development of their own creative powers comes at the expense of preventing others from developing the same in themselves.

Central to what makes such Insider/Outsider mentality and divisions possible is the deeper dualism of self vs. society. It is this basic dualism that makes it possible to think, feel, or sense as if our lives are somehow not shaped by social structures and forces larger than our own, one one hand, and on the other, that we as individuals have no powers to shape our lives and these larger social structures and forces in return. Therefore, things remain the same partly because we become socialized to think, feel, and sense that our lives are separate from what else goes on in the world.

The central purpose of this course is to go beyond such an Insider/Outsider mentality and lifestyle by developing our **sociological imaginations**, a way of looking at the world and ourselves that helps us understand how our personal troubles and larger public issues have shaped and influenced one another, and can in turn shape and influence one another in non-oppressive ways. The sociological imagination allows us to consciously problematize what we take for granted as the truths and the givens of our everyday lives in ourselves and the world, and inquire whether and how we can transform social structures, "within and without," that limit our creativity and growth as human beings. Using a sociological imagination, we can begin to realize how by oppressing others, we are ultimately oppressing ourselves, and vice versa—i.e. by oppressing ourselves and/or allowing ourselves to be oppressed, we contribute to the perpetuation of oppression in society.

## COURSE ORGANIZATION:

**Overview:** We will study the subject by proceeding from everyday events and experiences to increasingly broader social exploration of our own lives within a sociological framework. Our inquiries into the link between our personal troubles and broader social issues—the central concern of the sociological imagination—will be pursued throughout the course through a 10-page autobiographical paper developed in three stages (1-topic ideas, 2-first draft, 3-final paper). The key purpose of the paper is to apply the perspectives and concepts learned in class in the context of our sociological self-research. To achieve this end, we will pursue three lines of inquiry throughout the course: 1-class readings, presentations, lectures, and discussions will provide us with collective experiences and conceptual tools and methods necessary for our individual/collective self-studies; 2-an autobiographical research paper will focus our attention and explorations on a still unresolved significant question, issue, trouble, or problem that we personally face in our everyday lives today, have faced in the past, or may face in the future; 3-the films incorporated into the course will provide us with a common audiovisual medium in popular culture through which we can experientially share our reflections on ourselves and the world alongside class and outside readings. In addition to the sociological self-research paper, grading will be based on class attendance, class discussion participation, self-critical thinking, one combined individual oral/written presentation report, one individual oral presentation report, and one group oral presentation.

**Format:** The course is organized in a “research working group” format where “teacher-student” and “student-teachers” explore *with* one another a common subject matter. While the instructor will introduce and guide class readings and discussions, students are required to raise questions about and discuss the readings in class, sharing their insights and critical comments with one another. Every week, the weekly extra session will be treated as a “Seven Capabilities Workshop,” focusing on developing the SEVEN capabilities needed to do your best in college. While some workshops will be devoted to team presentations and discussions of a chapter in a required reading, others will accommodate advisor visits, library visits, or discussions regarding time management, choosing a major, etc.

**Important Note About the Required Readings:** We will use the main textbook *Inside Social Life* by Cahill/Sandstrom and the light reading *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom, for the purpose of reading and discussions during regular class time; The textbook by Cahill/Sandstrom is used for the purpose of individual student presentations in regular class sessions. The book *Opening Up* by James Pennebaker will be used for reading and discussions during second (extra) sessions and for the purpose of preparations for and generation of group reading reports and discussions.

The students’ work will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

**1. Attendance (25%):** Attendance is a foundational requirement in this class, because literally everything else is derived from the few hours we spend together face-to-face interacting every week. Therefore it constitutes an important part of student grading. **Attendance grade points will not be given for absences; however, absences may be made up by writing a reading/review report on the subject matter of the missed class session. Although attendance will be taken in class, it is also the student’s responsibility to send an email to the instructor for each session missed, including date of absence, for record keeping purposes and to indicate whether he or she intends to make-up for the absence.** Points will be taken off the students’ total grade for each unmade-up absent session (1.5% for each regular or extra session). Students can make-up for their absences by writing a 2-page critical commentary on the readings/films/subject matter of the session they missed (format may follow the regular presentation report assignment below).

Note on Participation: Participation can range from active listening to raising questions and engaging in discussion. Please note that attendance is not simply physical presence. It means being attentive. This requires having read the material assigned for the session, being prepared with pertinent questions or comments to raise in class, coming on time to class, being engaged during class, and not leaving the room during the class before it is over. Taking excessive personal breaks during the class not only affects your attendance and participation, but can be disruptive to class and other students’ learning; please try to avoid it unless absolutely necessary. For similar reasons, your cell phones must be turned off during class time and as far as possible please avoid eating sound-generating food in class.

**2. Self-Critical Thinking (3%):** Students are expected to view everything, every text, and every viewpoint, especially their own predispositions, perspectives, and biases with a (self) critical eye. You are in this class to learn beyond what you already know, not simply to prove what you already know. This necessarily means being open to question your own existing views and knowledge in order to critically move beyond and/or enrich them with new insights. You will not be graded on whether you agree or disagree with a certain viewpoint. You will be graded on whether you substantively

engage with and demonstrate an understanding of the views you agree or disagree with, and self-critically develop your own viewpoints in a well-rounded, researched, and coherent way. I will assess this in various ways throughout the semester— via your papers, comments in class, etc. I keep the grading for self-critical thinking separate from your written assignments, not because it is separate from them, but because I like to see you develop and demonstrate this skill and attitude across various course activities.

**3. Individual Written/Oral Reading Report (12%):** At the beginning of the semester, students will be randomly assigned discussant numbers corresponding to the numbers assigned to readings (preceding each reading item on the schedule below in parentheses; this will be further explained in class). For the reading assigned to you, you will need to prepare a written report to be handed in the SAME class in which it is to be orally presented and discussed. For example, if you have been randomly assigned the number 12, you will need to prepare a reading report and oral presentation on the reading by Goffman in the class that meets. (You will see that number 12 also appear with a group of other numbers. That will indicate you are part of the group of students assigned the numbers 9, 10, 11, and 12, who will do a Team Oral Presentation (this will be discussed further below).

Students are welcome to choose to revise their already prepared report based on the class discussion, in which case the report will be due a week from the original due date. The report should be 3-4 pages (Times font, size 12, double-spaced) comprised of the following (note the breakdown of assigned grade points):

- a)-Written Summary, 1-page (2 points).** The summary must be in your own words. Rules against plagiarism will apply to reading reports as well. If you have to quote, you must provide proper citation. You must identify at the beginning of the report which part of the textbook you are reporting on. Make sure you provide your name and date/topic of report at the beginning.
- b)-Written Concepts, 1-page (2 points).** Identify, list, and define (using direct quotes from the reading, including page citation) on a stand-alone page at least 5 concepts related to the theories or perspectives discussed in readings being presented, concepts which you may find particularly useful to your own and perhaps others' term paper research. Make copies of this page and distribute it to others in class. This will be a useful/collective effort to "harvest" important and useful concepts from readings and share them with other students.
- c)-Written Linkages, 1-page (2 points).** Critically reflecting on the concepts learned from the reading and the value or shortcomings of the author's viewpoint, try linking the concepts/reading to the other readings of that session, of that week, or previous sessions when applicable (or even to readings you are doing in other classes you are taking). Other useful linkages can be to your own life and self-explorations, and to previous class discussions/films if applicable. **If you make no efforts to critically link your assigned text to other readings of especially that session/week (and previous ones), and/or to other issues as explained above, you will not gain linkage points.**
- d)-Written Questions (1 point).** A set of three clearly formulated and relevant questions (listed separately at the end of report) arising from the reading in connection to other class readings, its personal relevance to you, or in relationship to previous readings/discussions/films in class. Ask creative, mature, and thoughtful linkage questions that merit discussion in class.
- e)-Quality of Writing (2 point).** Overall quality of writing of paper. Spell checking, proofreading, and proper and accurate citation of sources will be considered in applying this part of the grade. All written reports must include a title and bibliography. The quality of your writing and the care you have taken to spell check and proofread it are indicators of the extent to which you have taken your paper seriously and spent time going over it in both content and form. So, make sure you proofread at least 3 times the paper that you hand in to me.
- e)-Oral Discussion (3 points).** Since all students have read the readings assigned for the session, discussants need not present an overly detailed summary of readings as part of their oral presentations (especially given that all students are expected to have read the session readings). The purpose of oral discussion is to help generate discussion in class following instructor's introductory remarks by drawing upon concepts, linkages, and questions as included in the discussant's report. **Suggested format:** It is assumed that all students have read the reading, so give a short summary of the reading, and then go directly to defining and linking/applying (some) of the concepts/ideas learned from the reading and how they can be useful for your/others' sociological self-explorations; then end your presentation with sharing your questions about the readings. Discussants must maintain an active part in the session in generating and guiding class discussion, helping to make the discussion lively, informed, and interesting. The oral presentation will be evaluated based on the clarity of communication (1 point) and degree to which it generates class engagement and discussion (2 points). Each oral presentation SHOULD TAKE NO MORE THAN 5 MINUTES. **Please note that excessively long presentations take important time away from other students and the instructor in making their contributions. So, please make sure to limit your presentation to 5 minutes, and save any additional thoughts to share during the**



**general class discussion.** [NOTE: depending on enrollment, there may be extra discussant reports assigned to volunteering students, in which case an extra 3-pg written/oral report may be presented for up to 2% extra make-up grading value].

**4. Individual Oral Reading Presentation (5%):** Apart from individual written reading reports, students will also take turn in presenting one additional oral reading report in the second half of the semester. The only written part of this assignment is the preparation and copying (for class, 25 copies) of a list of at least five (5) concepts and their definitions drawn from the reading being presented. Students will be graded for their clarity of presentation of the main arguments and concepts of the reading (2%), a list of concepts drawn from the reading and distributed in class (2%), and generating good discussion in class around that reading (1%). These oral reports will be assigned at the beginning of the semester along with the written/oral reading report assignments.

**5. Team Oral Presentation (5%):** Based on the same presentation numbers assigned to each student at the beginning of semester (to be explained in class), students are assigned a team of students to orally present and lead discussions in some of the weekly Seven Capability Workshop meetings as planned in the course schedule. No written presentations are required for this assignment, only that the oral team presenters read the assigned readings more carefully to generate and lead lively discussions during the workshop session. The reading assigned in the workshop will be the one by James W. Pennebaker, *The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*. The team members are expected to meet and prepare together outside class prior to their team presentations. Their teamwork may consist of formats they may creatively devise as they prepare for their presentations. The key goal of this assignment is to show that team members have decided on a collective mode of dividing their tasks, having a fruitful dialogue, generating collective discussions among themselves and later in class. The grade for this assignment will be the same for all team members. Each team presentation will end with some evaluative discussion by the whole class about strengths of the presentation and how it might improve. The purpose of the Team Oral Presentations is to use the discussions of the Pennebaker reading to have a continuing dialogue especially about the following capabilities: 1) Careful reading; 2) Clear writing; 3) Critical thinking; 4) Information literacy and technology; 5) Working in teams; 6) Oral presentation; and 7) Academic self-assessment. A team presentation could use the opportunity of the particular assigned reading to raise questions about or discuss issues regarding the seven capabilities.

**6. Sociological Self-Research Paper (total 50%):** This is the heart of your work in the course, devoted to the serious sociological exploration, within a micro/macro framework, of an important issue in your life in conjunction with class/outside readings and films. A separate “Term Paper Guidelines” will be provided to you with this syllabus. This assignment consists of a 10-page sociological self-research paper addressing the topic **“How does the exploration of the Insiders/Outsiders theme (as stated in this syllabus) through the class/outside readings, discussions, and films, help me to sociologically understand an important, still unresolved issue I face today, have faced in the past, and/or will face in the future? How can I explain its nature, root causes, and consequences, and move towards its effective resolution?”** The sociological self-research paper will be progressively developed throughout the course including a 2-page topic ideas assignment, a 5-page first draft and a 10-page final paper (the final paper includes the revised/improved 5 pages done in first draft; this term-paper is like working on one paper that develops across three stages). They must be typed, double-spaced, in Times font, size 12; relevant charts/tables are encouraged but will not be counted towards paper length requirement. The paper length requirement does not include any title pages or reference/bibliographies. For the due dates, see the weekly schedule further below.

**A-Paper Topic Ideas (5%):** 2 full-pages (3%), plus an annotated bibliography (1%) of potentially useful and relevant sources for your topic; quality of writing is also graded (1%). During the first week of the semester you will be asked to think about 2-3 topic ideas about what you would like to explore in-depth in your research paper. Read the research paper guidelines that will be emailed to you early in the semester to begin working on your topic and paper. You do not need to read anything to choose your topic. The topic can be chosen from the fabric of your own everyday life and how you relate to and experience the world. The sooner you begin thinking about your topic the better since the class readings and films will become more meaningful when you have a pertinent personal topic in mind. Try to come up with 2-3 actual possible paper TITLES that best express the issue to be explored. Note: student papers are treated confidentially and not circulated or discussed in class (unless volunteered), so you should feel comfortable choosing and exploring your own personal topics. For the purpose of course assessment performed by the First Year Seminar committee, if your papers are chosen, you can hand them in anonymously or using a pseudonym. The essay is 3% grade value and the annotated bibliography 2%.

**B-The First Draft (20%):** 5 full-pages. The First Draft involves exploring the problem or issue based on your present knowledge, views, and attitudes towards the subject. The first draft is mostly self-reflective

and microsociological in nature, but should involve efforts to link to the concepts and ideas learned in the first part of the course (readings, films, discussions, etc.). You must also, at the end, include a bibliography of what readings in class or outside may be of relevance to your further self-exploration in the final paper. (Note: although this is a draft, do the best you can on it, since it may provide you with an opportunity to use it later as part of your portfolio to fulfill your Writing Proficiency requirements. Of course, when you have done your best on the longer final paper you might be able to use that instead. But a minimum of 5 full-pages is a requirement for papers included in Writing Proficiency portfolios).

The breakdown of percentage points for the first draft are roughly as follows:

- 4%: Micro exploration of the research problem/question.
- 4%: Use of at least 8 concepts from readings from the first half of the semester preceding the paper deadline (0.5 each concept) (**bold** each concept used in text).
- 2%: The extent to which the concepts above are drawn from at least five DIFFERENT chapters of the Cahill and Sandstrom textbook read in the FIRST half of the semester. If all concepts chosen are from a single chapter, no points are given (0%), but if chosen from two (0.5%), three (1%), four (1.5%), or five (2%) different chapters, corresponding percentage grade points as in the preceding parentheses will be given.
- 2%: 2 quoted linkages to the reading *Opening Up* by James Pennebaker discussed in our weekly group presentation/discussion workshops in the first half of the semester.
- 2%: 2 quoted linkage to two of the articles in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Journal articles are available online at <http://www.okcir.com> and also in Ebsco's SocINDEX with Full-Text database on Healey's website. You can visit <http://healeylibrary.wikispaces.com/SOCIOLOGY> for a link to the database noted above.)
- 2%: 1 point for each linkage to two films viewed during the first half of class preceding the paper deadline.
- 2% All papers must include a title and an annotated bibliography, a further revised and updated (from the topic ideas essay) bibliography of prospective outside SCHOLARLY articles or book chapters (NOT webpages) specifically related to your topic, readings which you will consult in the preparation of your final paper. Use library visits and its online resources to find scholarly resources relevant to your specific topic.
- 2%: Overall quality of writing and creativity of paper. Spell checking, proofreading, and proper and accurate citation of sources will be considered in applying this part of the grade. The quality of your writing and the care you have taken to spell check and proofread it are indicators of the extent to which you have taken your paper seriously and spent time going over it in both content and form. So, make sure you proofread at least 3 times the paper that you hand in to me.

**C-The Final Paper (25%):** 10 full-pages (including reworked and further revised/improved pages of the first draft based on feedback received). The concern with macro dimension of your inquiry, i.e., the relation between yourselves and broader social forces must now become the central subject of your investigations. The final paper is to link together in a purposeful and meaningful way your critical self-reflections begun in the first draft, with class/outside readings and films shown in class. The evaluation and grading of the final term paper will be roughly divided in terms of how students bring the three essential required elements of the term paper together (self-explorations, broader social dimension as learned through required class readings, and ALL films shown in class). Other outside sources with specific relevance to each student's particular topic/issue/problem must also be critically incorporated into the class readings. The breakdown of percentage points for the final paper (10 pages, including reworked pages of the first draft) are roughly as follows:

- 8%: Macro exploration of research problem/question (4 points) and its linkage (3%) to the micro exploration
- 4%: Use of at least 8 ADDITIONAL concepts from readings from the second half of the semester (0.5 each concept) (**bolditalic** each of these new concepts used in text) (continue the concept usages from the first draft and keep them marked in **bold** only)
- 2%: The extent to which the concepts above are drawn from at least five DIFFERENT chapters of the Cahill and Sandstrom textbook read in the SECOND half of the semester. If all concepts chosen are from a single chapter, no points are given (0%), but if chosen from two (0.5%), three (1%), four (1.5%), or five (2%) different chapters, corresponding percentage grade points as in the preceding parentheses will be given.
- 2%: 2 quoted linkages to the reading *Opening Up* by James Pennebaker discussed in our weekly group presentation/discussion workshops in the second half of the semester.
- 2%: 2 quoted linkages to at least two outside scholarly readings (journal articles, book chapters) that directly pertain to your topic (1 point each linkage).

- 2%: ADDITIONAL linkages to the other two films (1 point each) viewed in second half of class [keep and further develop the linkages to the films linked to in the previous draft]
- 2%: Based on your critical sociological self-explorations in the paper, in the conclusion of the paper list and elaborate on specific and concrete steps you can take to bring about important change in your life towards resolving the issues and problems you explored in the paper.
- 3%: Overall quality of writing and creativity of paper. Spell checking, proofreading, and proper and accurate citation of sources will be considered in applying this part of the grade. All papers must include a title and bibliography. The quality of your writing and the care you have taken to spell check and proofread it are indicators of the extent to which you have taken your paper seriously and spent time going over it in both content and form. So, make sure you proofread at least 3 times the paper that you hand in to me.

**Revision Options and Requirements:** Please note that in this course, the grades you receive prior to the final paper can be improved with additional make-up work. You never lose a chance to do the best you can until the course is over. If you miss any points in your written presentation report, and on your topic ideas essay and first 5-page draft of the paper, you have an opportunity to revise and resubmit based on the instructor's feedback and commentaries given, within a duration of two weeks past the receipt of grade for the assignment. Depending on the quality of the revisions made, the grade will be adjusted to reflect the extra work done to improve the report/paper. At the end of the course, for students who have made additional efforts and progress in their final papers (beyond prior assignments or revisions) throughout the course additional percentage points may be added to their accumulated total before calculating their final grades. In order to ascertain that those receiving lower grades on written assignments do proceed to improve their grade, two specific revision requirements are in order:

**1) Individual Written Reading Reports:** If you receive a grade of 6% or lower on the written portion of the individual reading report (which is allotted 9% maximum not considering the 3% for oral grade), you MUST revise and resubmit your report within TWO WEEKS from when you received your report grade. When submitting revised texts, you will need to submit the originally graded text (with my notes on it) with your revised version so that I can compare new work you have done on the text in order to give you proper credit for your additional work. Please note that the class discussion of your reading reports (accompanied by the concept lists you will distribute to students in class) will itself act like a peer review process and as a helpful way to receive feedback from other students and also from the instructor, so pay very close attention to such feedback as it may help in case it becomes necessary later for you to revise your reading report.

**2) 5-page First Drafts:** If you receive a grade of 12% or lower on your 5-page first draft of term paper (which is allotted 20%), you MUST revise and resubmit your draft within TWO WEEKS from when you received your first draft grade. When submitting revised texts, you will need to submit the originally graded text (with my notes on it) with your revised version so that I can compare new work you have done on the text in order to give you proper credit for your additional work.

**Mid-Semester and End-of-Semester Student Self-Assessment:** During two scheduled weekly workshop meetings in the middle and at the end of the semester, students will be asked to fill out a form in order to evaluate their own progress in the course. By reflecting on their original reading of the syllabus, students will be encouraged to identify their strengths and weaknesses and how they plan to improve on them during the semester and/or beyond it. The self-assessments are not graded, and are meant to encourage the students to reflect on their work in progress. Time will be allotted at the end of the two sessions for sharing self-evaluative insights and experiences.

**Library, Advisor, and Career Specialist Visits:** Some of the weekly workshop meetings will be used for library or advisor visits, and discussions surrounding choosing majors, using the internet for research, and other topics as they arise from students' work in progress. The library visits can be used by students to explore the library resources or databases to find at least two scholarly articles or book chapters on the specific topic of their papers. The advisor visit will also be used for exchanging information and advice regarding students' work in progress regarding the planning of their major choice, college education, and careers. A Career Services Specialist will also be introduced in this class to students to answer any questions they may have about their career goals and planning.

**Office Hours:** Experience has shown that those students who regularly consult during office hours with the instructor regarding their progress in the course and their papers do better than those who don't. Each student is encouraged to meet with the instructor during office hours to discuss the topic and progress of her/his research paper. The meetings should indicate serious and active engagement by students with their papers,

readings, and discussions in the course. If you major in the Sociology Department, I'd be happy to serve as your advisor if you have questions about your plans and progress in meeting major requirements.

**Grading Policy:** The grading system used in this course is based on the accumulation of percentage points you receive for each requirement/assignment of the course. In other words, for each graded requirement/assignment, instead of receiving a letter grade (A, B, C, etc.) you will receive a percentage point grade up to the total assigned for that part of the course expectations. The only letter grade you will receive will be your final course grade submitted at the end of semester, per grade system listed below. To see where your course grade stands at any time, add what percentage points you've received so far, and assume you will do perfectly for the rest; then look up the total below. Note that you can miss a few sessions and still receive an A, without doing a makeup for the session (93 out of 100 still brings A); however, by not making up absences, you increase the risks of other grading shortfalls affecting your course grade. So try to makeup for absences, as much as you can.

100-93=A	92-90=A-	89-87=B+	86-83=B	82-80=B-	79-77=C+
76-73=C	72-70=C-	69-60=D	59 or less= F/NP		

**Required Readings:** (\*in book store, †on reserve in hard copy, ††online at <http://www.okcir.com> and also on Healey's SocINDEX with Full-Text--see the "Indexes and Databases" link on the homepage of Healey Library)

\*†*Inside Social Life: Readings in Sociological Psychology and Microsociology*. By Spencer E. Cahill and Kent Sandstrom. Oxford University Press. July 2010. SIXTH Edition. ISBN13: 978-0-19-973326-2 or ISBN10: 0-19-973326-0.

\*†*Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*. By James W. Pennebaker. The Guilford Press, 1997. ISBN-10: 1572302380 or ISBN-13: 978-1572302389.

\*†Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays With Morrie*, Broadway, 2002. ISBN: 076790592X

††Selected articles in previous issues of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*. [These are all available online at my website <http://www.okcir.com>; additionally all journal issues as a whole can be searched electronically and downloaded from the SocINDEX database available on the Healey Library's homepage link "Indexes and Databases," to be explained in class].

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## COURSE SCHEDULE:

### WEEK ONE:

Tuesday, September 3: Syllabus handed out. Course Objective, Organization, Schedule. Introductory Questionnaire. Assignments of Readings.

■ **Advising Session I. The academic advisor assigned to class will introduce you to UMB's advising services and answer any questions you may have about your major requirements.**

Thursday, September 5: FILM: AFFLUENZA. Film. Discussion.

### WEEK TWO:

Tuesday, September 10:

[Note: Tuesday, September 10 is add/drop deadline]

■ **Seven Capabilities Workshops: Information Literacy and Technology: Visit the Healey Library and work on your possible paper topics/finding potentially useful resources (articles, books) for exploring them.**

The Entire Library Workshop: 11 am-1:00 pm

During both sessions, you will learn how to access and use the database SocINDEX with Full-Text, learn about what constitutes a peer-reviewed, scholarly, source, and what is plagiarism, and, if there is time, also how to use an online bibliographic program called Refworks. Also you will begin to seriously explore your possible paper topics and find potentially relevant sources for it. The library Buddy assigned to class will guide and organize the sessions with the help of the instructor. Instead of coming to the usual classroom, **go directly to the library, fourth floor, turn left from the elevator, in the corner, you will find the Center for Library Instruction (room 015 at the Healey Library, see [http://www.lib.umb.edu/instruction/cli\\_policies.cfm](http://www.lib.umb.edu/instruction/cli_policies.cfm) for the CLI's website).**

During the first part the Library Buddy will teach you how use the library, especially the above-mentioned database and software. When learning about SocINDEX with Full-Text, you will specifically learn how to access various articles published in the journal, *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*. For example, in the search field, by putting in "Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge" and choosing the option of "journal title" and hitting return, you will be provided with a list of all articles published in the journal so far that you can search using its search tools. This can be very helpful in finding out what other students have written their paper topics on. By clicking on their abstract information, you will get a sense of what each article is all about.

In the second part of the library workshop, also held at the Center for Library Instruction, you will seriously explore your potential topic ideas, and seek some potentially useful resources from your database searches to work on your paper topic essay/bibliography assignment which will be due on Thursday, September 19.

Thursday, September 12: What is the "Sociological Imagination"?

- Read the short piece by C. Wright Mills, "The Sociological Imagination," attached to your syllabus.
- Read the sample student paper by Minxing Zheng, "Measures of Personal Success and Failure: A Self-Assessment, Applying the Sociological Imagination" published in the issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*. Try to find and download the paper's pdf file from my website given below, and read it; see how this previous student in this first year seminar (who also later served as a peer mentor) used his "sociological imagination" and various concepts learned in class in exploring his topic. Table of contents and all the articles published in *Human Architecture* are available online at <http://www.okcir.com>. To find the article by Allen, go to the website, click on the issue 3 of volume VII (Summer 2009), and find Minxing's article and click on it to download/ print, and read the pdf file. All the papers in the journal are also available in the SocINDEX with Full-TEXT database accessible through the Healey Library "Indexes and Databases" link on the Healey Library homepage. In our library tour session coming up soon, you will learn how to find all the journal articles in that database as well.

■ **Seven Capabilities Workshop: Reading and Writing Skills: Survey of Problems**

### **WEEK THREE:**

Tuesday, September 17: **PART I: Human Being and Social Reality**

Readings:

- (1). "Sociological Mindfulness," by Michael Schwalbe—*Inside Social Life*
- (2). "The Social Foundations of Human Experience," by Berger and Luckmann—*Inside Social Life*
- (3). "Symbols and the Creation of Reality," by Kent Sandstrom—*Inside Social Life*
- (4). "Islands of Meaning," by Eviatar Zerubavel—*Inside Social Life*
- (5). "Speed Culture," by Simon Gottschalk—*Inside Social Life*

Thursday, September 19: **Career Development Specialist Visit to Class. UMB's Career Development Specialist will attend and introduce you to the Career Services and Employment Relations Office on Campus.**

**ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS: Sept. 19, 2-PAGE PAPER TOPIC IDEAS/BIBLIO**

### **WEEK FOUR:**

Tuesday, September 24: **PART II: The Social Shaping of Subjective Reality**

Readings:

- (6). "Smell, Odor, and Somatic Work," by Dennis D. Waskul and Phillip Vannini—*Inside Social Life*
- (7). "Working On Feeling," by Arlie Hochschild—*Inside Social Life*
- (8). "Managing Emotions in Medical School," by Allen C. Smith and Sherryl Kleinman—*Inside Social Life*
- (9). "Mental Illness, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Elusive Self," by David A. Karp—*Inside Social Life*
- (10). "The Organizational Management of Shame," by Daniel D. Martin—*Inside Social Life*

Thursday, September 26:

**Seven Capabilities Workshop: Team Presentation & Discussions (Pennebaker Reading) PRESENTERS # 21, 22, 23, 24, 25. READINGS: Pennebaker, "1. Confession and Inhibition: The Beginnings of an Approach," AND "2. Inhibition as a Health Threat."**

### **WEEK FIVE:**

Tuesday, October 1: **PART III: The Social Construction of the Body and Embodiment**

Readings:

- (11). "Women and Their Clitoris," by Dennis D. Waskul, Phillip Vannini, and Desiree Wiesen—*Inside Social Life*
- (12). "Becoming a Gendered Body," by Karin A. Martin—*Inside Social Life*
- (13). "Risky Lessons," by Jessica Fields—*Inside Social Life*
- (14). "Corporate Logo Tattoos and the Commodification of the Body," by A. Orend/P. Gagne—*Inside Social Life*

Thursday, October 3:

**Seven Capabilities Workshop: Team Presentation & Discussions (Pennebaker Reading) PRESENTERS # 17, 18, 19, 20. READINGS: Pennebaker, "3. Becoming Healthier through Writing," AND "4. Confession in the Laboratory."**

### **WEEK SIX:**

Tuesday, October 8: **PART IV: The Social Construction of the Self**

Readings:

- (15). "The Self as Sentiment and Reflection," by Charles Cooley—*Inside Social Life*
- (16). "The Self as Social Structure," by George Herbert Mead—*Inside Social Life*
- (17). "Young Children's Use of Racial and Ethnic Identities," by Van Ausdale and Joe Feagin—*Inside Social Life*
- (18). "Gang-Related Gun Violence and the Self," by Paul Stretesky and Mark Pogrebrin—*Inside Social Life*
- (19). "The Dissolution of the Self," Kenneth J. Gergen—*Inside Social Life*

Thursday, October 10:

**MAP-Works Assessment by Sophia Sansone, to be held at the TESTING CENTER, Campus Center, Lower Level, across from the Atrium Cafe. So go directly to the Testing Center for this session.**

## **WEEK SEVEN:**

Tuesday, October 15: Film: "GOOD WILL HUNTING."

Thursday, October 17: Film. Discussion.

## **WEEK EIGHT:**

Tuesday, October 22:

■ **Seven Capabilities Workshop: Mid-Semester Student Self-Assessment (first part of the session)**

■ **Advising Session II (9:30-10:20): This session will take place in the TESTING CENTER, located in the Upper Level of the Campus Center across from the Atrium Café. We will go to the Testing Center for this session. The advisor will go over your progress reports and will advise you during an interactive session about your registration plans, major choice and declarations, meeting major requirements, and more.**

**ASSIGNMENT DUE: Oct. 22, 5-PAGE FIRST PAPER DRAFT**

Thursday, October 24:

■ **Seven Capabilities Workshop: Team Presentation & Discussions (Pennebaker Reading) PRESENTERS # 13, 14, 15, 16. READINGS: Pennebaker, "5. The Battle to Inhibit Our Thoughts," AND "6. On Speeding Up Coping."**

## **WEEK NINE:**

Tuesday, October 29: **PART V: The Self and Social Interaction**

Readings:

(20). "The Presentation of Self," by Erving Goffman, *ISL—Inside Social Life*

(21). "Cyberspace and Cyberselves," by Dennis D. Waskul—*Inside Social Life*

(22). "The Gloried Self," by Patricia Adler and Peter Adler, *ISL—Inside Social Life*

(23). "Helping Women and Protecting the Self in an Abortion Clinic," by Michelle Wolkomir and Jennifer Powers—*Inside Social Life*

Thursday, October 31:

■ **Seven Capabilities Workshop: Team Presentation & Discussions (Pennebaker Reading) PRESENTERS # 9, 10, 11, 12. READINGS: Pennebaker, "7. Understanding the Value of Writing," AND "8. The Social Price of Disclosure: Whom to Tell and How to Listen."**

## **WEEK TEN:**

Tuesday, November 5: **PART VI: The Organization of Social Interaction**

Readings:

(24). "Face-Work and Interaction Rituals," by Erving Goffman—*Inside Social Life*

(25). "The Interaction Order of Public Bathrooms," by Spencer Cahill—*Inside Social Life*

(26). "Wheelchair Users' Interpersonal Managt. of Emotions," by Cahil/Eggleston—*Inside Social Life*

(27). "Between Deference and Distinction," by Tim Hallett—*Inside Social Life*

Thursday, November 7:

**[Note: November 7 is Pass/Fail and Withdraw deadline]**

■ **Seven Capabilities Workshop: Team Presentation & Discussions (Pennebaker Reading) PRESENTERS # 5, 6, 7, 8. READINGS: Pennebaker, "9. Love, Passion, and Thrills," AND "10. The Inhibited Personality."**

## **WEEK ELEVEN:**

Tuesday, November 12: Film: "BILLY ELLIOT."

Thursday, November 14: Film Discussion.

## WEEK TWELVE:

Tuesday, November 19: **PART VII: The Construction of Social Structures and Boundaries**

Readings:

- (28). "Society in Action," by Herbert Blumer—*Inside Social Life*
- (29). "Protecting the Routine from Chaos," by Daniel Chambliss—*Inside Social Life*
- (30). "Legitimated Oppression," by Robert J. Duran—*Inside Social Life*
- (31). "Collective Emotions and Boundary Work among Evangelical Christians," by Amy Wilkins—*Inside Social Life*
- (32). "Managing Emotions in an Animal Shelter," by Arnold Arluke—*Inside Social Life*

Thursday, November 21:

**■ Seven Capabilities Workshop: Team Presentation & Discussions (Pennebaker Reading) PRESENTERS # 1,2,3,4. READINGS: Pennebaker, "11. Inhibited Cities," AND "12. Confession in Context: Therapy, Religion, and Brainwashing," AND "13. Beyond Traumas: Writing and Well-Being."**

## WEEK THIRTEEN:

Tuesday, November 26: **PART VIII: Reproducing and Resisting Inequalities**

**ADVISING SESSION III. (Brief Session, Advisor Drop-in: Pre-Registration and Progress Check-in)**

Readings:

- (33). "Borderwork Among Girls and Boys," by Barrie Thorne—*Inside Social Life*
- (34). "Women, Hair, and Power," by Rose Weitz—*Inside Social Life*
- (35). "Straddling Racial Boundaries at School," by Prudence Carter—*Inside Social Life*
- (36). "Doing Gender as Resistance," by Chauntelle Anne Tibbals—*Inside Social Life*

Thursday, November 28: *Thanksgiving Break*

## WEEK FOURTEEN:

Tuesday, December 3: **PART IX: The Politics of Social Reality**

Readings:

- (37). "The Moral Career of the Mental Patient," by Erving Goffman—*Inside Social Life*
- (38). "Being Middle Eastern American in the Context of the War on Terror," by Amir Marvasti—*Inside Social Life*
- (39). "Consuming Terrorism," by David Altheide—*Inside Social Life*
- (40). "Nazi Doctors in Auschwitz," by Robert Jay Lifton—*Inside Social Life*
- (41). "Rose Parks, Collective Forgetting, and the Power of Oneness," by Barry Schwartz—*Inside Social Life*

Thursday, December 5: General Course Review

## WEEK FIFTEEN:

Tuesday, December 10: Film: "TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE." Film Discussion. (Session will last from 8:00 till 10:20, including break to allow for film discussion)

Readings:

- (42). Book: *Tuesdays with Morrie*, by Mitch Albom

Thursday, December 12: **Last Day of Class. Student evaluations of the course. End-of-Semester Student Self-Assessment**

**■ DUE IN CLASS: Thursday, Dec. 12, 10-PAGE FINAL PAPER**

**[Note: There are no final exams during the exam period for this class.]**



From *The Sociological Imagination* by C. Wright Mills, Oxford University Press, 1959. Excerpted in *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings* edited by Charles Lemert, Boulder: Westview Press

C. Wright Mills (1916–1962) was born in Waco, Texas. After undergraduate studies at the University of Texas, Mills did his doctoral work at the University of Wisconsin. There, he met Hans Gerth, with whom he edited, translated, and introduced *From Max Weber*, a still-important collection of Weber's writings. After teaching in what he considered a provincial exile at the University of Maryland, Mills moved to Columbia and the Bureau of Applied Social Research in 1945. His earliest days at Columbia were spent in empirical social research. Yet he never became an accepted member or even a full professor in Columbia's department. In the 1950s, Mills became much more the public intellectual, while teaching primarily undergraduates at Columbia. Works like *Power Elite*, *Listen Yankee!*, *White Collar*, and *The Causes of World War Three*—all written in this period—brought him much public acclaim and informal membership in New York's Left, intellectual elite. Mills was considered arrogant by many colleagues and a hero by many of his readers. He dressed and played the part of the young intellectual radical—complete with leather jacket and motorcycle. However, he suffered from a chronic heart condition that killed him at age forty-five in 1962, the year of SDS's *Port Huron Statement*. Mills was a source of intellectual inspiration to younger radicals and social theorists because, true to his ideal of the sociological imagination, his writings based strong critical ideas on careful empirical work. He read Weber in relation to Marx and the American pragmatists. He sought to unite the best of European and American classical theory into a social philosophy for the New Left.

### *The Sociological Imagination*

C. Wright Mills (1959)

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that

From *The Sociological Imagination* by C. Wright Mills, Copyright © 1959 by Oxford University Press, Inc. Renewed 1987 by Yarraslava Mills. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.

framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues.

The first fruit of this imagination—and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it—is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one. We do not know the limits of man's capacities for supreme effort or willing degradation, for agony or glee, for pleasurable brutality or the sweetness of reason. But in our time we have come to know that the limits of 'human nature' are frighteningly broad. We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove.

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise. To recognize this task and this promise is the mark of the classic social analyst. It is characteristic of Herbert Spencer—turgid, polysyllabic, comprehensive; of E. A. Ross—graceful, muckraking, upright; of Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim; of the intricate and subtle Karl Mannheim. It is the quality of all that is intellectually excellent in Karl Marx; it is the clue to Thorstein Veblen's brilliant and ironic insight, to Joseph Schumpeter's many-sided constructions of reality; it is the basis of the psychological sweep of W.E.H. Lecky no less than of the profundity and clarity of Max Weber. And it is the signal of what is best in contemporary studies of man and society.

No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey. Whatever the specific problems of the classic social analysis, however limited or however broad the features of social reality they have examined, those who have been imaginatively aware of the promise of their work have consistently asked three sorts of questions:

- (1) What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? What are its essential components, and how are they related to one another? How does it differ from other varieties of social order? Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature for its continuance and for its change?
- (2) Where does this society stand in human history? What are the mechanics by which it is changing? What is its place within and its meaning for the development of humanity as a whole? How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? And this period—what are its essential features? How does it differ from other periods? What are its characteristic ways of history-making?
- (3) What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted? What kinds of 'human nature' are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period? And what is the meaning for 'human nature' of each and every feature of the society we are examining?

Whether the point of interest is a great power state or a minor literary mood, a family, a prison, a creed—these are the kinds of questions the best social analysts have asked. They are the intellectual pivots of classic studies of man in society—and they are the questions inevitably raised by any mind possessing the sociological imagination. For that imagination is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self—and to see the relations between the two. Back of its use there is always the urge to know the social and historical meaning of the individual in the society and in the period in which he has his quality and his being.

That, in brief, is why it is by means of the sociological imagination that men now hope to grasp what is going on in the world, and to understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society. In large part, contemporary man's self-conscious view of himself as at least an outsider if not a permanent stranger, rests upon an absorbed realization of social reality and of the transformative power of history. The sociological imagination is the most fruitful form of this self-consciousness. By its use men whose mentalities have swept only a series of limited orbits often come to feel as if suddenly awakened in a house with which they had only supposed themselves to be familiar. Correctly or incorrectly, they often come to feel that they can now provide themselves with adequate summations, cohesive assessments, comprehensive orientations. Older decisions that once appeared sound now seem to them products of a mind unaccountably dense. Their capacity for astonishment is made lively again. They acquire a new way of thinking, they experience a transvaluation of values: in a word, by their reflection and by their sensibility, they realize the cultural meaning of the social sciences.

Perhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between 'the personal troubles of milieu' and 'the public issues of social structure.' This distinction is an essential tool of the sociological imagination and a feature of all classic work in social science.

Troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others; they have to do with his self and with those limited areas of social life of which he is directly and personally aware. Accordingly, the statement and the resolution of troubles properly lie within the individual as a biographical entity and within the scope of his immediate milieu—the social setting that is directly open to his personal experience and to some extent his willful activity. A trouble is a private matter: values cherished by an individual are felt by him to be threatened.

Issues have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of his inner life. They have to do with the organization of many such milieux into the institutions of an historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieux overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social and historical life. An issue is a public matter: some value cherished by publics is felt to be threatened. Often there is a debate about what that value really is and about what it is that really threatens it. This debate is often without focus if only because it is the very nature of an issue, unlike even widespread trouble, that it cannot very well be defined in terms of the immediate and everyday environments of ordinary

men. An issue, in fact, often involves a crisis in institutional arrangements, and often too it involves what Marxists call 'contradictions' or 'antagonisms' . . .

In every intellectual age some one style of reflection tends to become a common denominator of cultural life. Nowadays, it is true, many intellectual fads are widely taken up before they are dropped for new ones in the course of a year or two. Such enthusiasms may add spice to cultural play, but leave little or no intellectual trace. That is not true of such ways of thinking as 'Newtonian physics' or 'Darwinian biology.' Each of these intellectual universes became an influence that reached far beyond any special sphere of idea and imagery. In terms of them, or in terms derived from them, unknown scholars as well as fashionable commentators came to re-focus their observations and re-formulate their concerns.

During the modern era, physical and biological science has been the major common denominator of serious reflection and popular metaphysics in Western societies. 'The technique of the laboratory' has been the accepted mode of procedure and the source of intellectual security. That is one meaning of the idea of an intellectual common denominator: men can state their strongest convictions in its terms; other terms and other styles of reflection seem mere vehicles of escape and obscurity.

That a common denominator prevails does not of course mean that no other styles of thought or modes of sensibility exist. But it does mean that more general intellectual interests tend to slide into this area, to be formulated there most sharply, and when so formulated, to be thought somehow to have reached, if not a solution, at least a profitable way of being carried along.

The sociological imagination is becoming, I believe, the major common denominator of our cultural life and its signal feature. This quality of mind is found in the social and psychological sciences, but it goes far beyond these studies as we now know them. Its acquisition by individuals and by the cultural community at large is slow and often fumbling: many social scientists are themselves quite unaware of it. They do not seem to know that the use of this imagination is central to the best work that they might do, that by failing to develop and to use it they are failing to meet the cultural expectations that are coming to be demanded of them and that the classic traditions of their several disciplines make available to them.

Yet in factual and moral concerns, in literary work and in political analysis, the qualities of this imagination are regularly demanded. In a great variety of expressions, they have become central features of intellectual endeavor and cultural sensibility. Leading critics exemplify these qualities as do serious journalists—in fact the work of both is often judged in these terms. Popular categories of criticism—high, middle, and low-brow, for example—are now at least as much sociological as aesthetic. Novelists—whose serious work embodies the most widespread definitions of human reality—frequently possess this imagination, and do much to meet the demand for it. By means of it, orientation to the present as history is sought. As images of human nature become more problematic, an increasing need is felt to pay closer yet more imaginative attention to the social routines and catastrophes which reveal (and which shape) man's nature in this time of civil unrest and ideological conflict. Although fashion is often revealed by attempts to use it, the sociological imagination is not merely a fashion. It is a quality of mind that seems most dramatically to promise an understanding of the intimate realities of ourselves in connection with larger social realities. It is not merely one quality of mind among the contemporary range of cultural sensibilities—it is the quality whose wider and more adroit use offers the promise that all such sensibilities—and in fact, human reason itself—will come to play a greater role in human affairs.