Soc. 240, section 1
The Self in Society: Studies of Autobiographies
Fall 2004

UMass Boston, Sociology Dept.
Fall 2004
Class Hrs.: Tues/Thurs 2:30-3:45 pm
Class Location: Wheatley, 1st fl, room 64
Prometheus Address: http://boston.umassonline.net/
Prometheus Course ID: 4985, Password: selfsociety1

Prof. Mohammad Tamdgidi
Office Hrs: Thurs. 4-6 pm (or by appt.)
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The central aim of this course is to develop, through autobiographical research, our sociological imaginations about how our selves and broader society constitute one another. The course particularly addresses how the developments of personal identity and self-determination are affected by social processes of exploitation, discrimination, and oppression. Selected readings providing a historical typology of autobiographical self-interpretations and sociologically informed auto/biographical snapshots of everyday lives will aid in the interpretation of our own autobiographies. 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 15-page autobiographical paper developed along two drafts. The key purpose of the paper is to apply the micro and macro sociological concepts and ideas 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 we personally face in our everyday lives today, 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 share our sociological 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 participation, written and oral reading presentations, office-hour meetings, and self-critical thinking. Written and oral reading reports are used to practice the skills of listening, describing, analyzing, and interpreting.

COURSE ORGANIZATION:
The course is organized in a “research seminar” format where “teacher-student” and “student-teachers” learn with one another common subject matters (see Paulo Freire on pedagogy). While the instructor will introduce and guide class readings and discussions, students are required to present readings in class as discussants, sharing their reviews, questions, insights, and critical comments with one another. The students’ work will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

1. Attendance (30%): Attendance in class will be strictly observed. Attendance is not simply physical presence. It means being attentive. This requires having read the material assigned for the session, being prepared with pertinent comments to raise in class, coming on time to class, being vocal and engaged during class, and not leaving the room during the class before it is over. Attendance points will not be given for absences, excused or unexcused; however, excused absences may be made up. All absences for which excusable notice (via email prior to or same day of missed session, and soon in person with documentation) is not given will be considered unexcused. Only excused absences may be made-up based on arrangements agreed upon with the instructor. It is every students’ responsibility to hand in an absence letter (or send an email) to the instructor for each session missed (excused or not), including date of and reasons for any absence, accompanied by all relevant explanation/documentation. Points will
be taken off the student’s total grade for each unexcused, unmade-up absent session (For once-per-week classes 3% per session, for twice-per-week classes 2% per session, and for thrice-per-week classes, 1% per session). Students can make-up for their excused absences by writing a 3-4 page critical commentary on the readings/films/subject matter of the session they missed (format may follow the regular presentation report assignment below). Students with excessive excused or unexcused absences (more than 25% of already scheduled classes) will be disenrolled from class. Taking personal breaks during the class can be disruptive to other students; please try to avoid it.

2. Presentation Report (15%): 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; this will be explained in class). For each assigned reading prepare a written report to be handed in the SAME class in which it is to be orally presented and discussed. The report should be 5 pages (Times font, size 12, double-spaced) comprised of the following (including assigned grade points):
   a)-Summary (3 points). The summary must be in your own words. Rules against plagiarism will apply to presentation reports as well. If you have to quote, you must provide proper citation. You must identify at the beginning of the presentation which part of the textbook you are presenting. Make sure you provide your name and date/topic of presentation at the beginning.
   b)-Concepts (3 points). Identify, list, and define at least 10 concepts related to the perspectives discussed in readings being presented, concepts which you may find particularly useful to your own and perhaps others’ term paper research.
   c)-Linkages (3 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, and previous sessions when applicable. 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 in critically linking 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)-Questions (1 points). A set of three clearly formulated and relevant questions (listed separately at the end of report) arising from the reading in connection to other readings of class, 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)-Oral Presentation (5 points). Presenters must try to orally demonstrate an understanding of the subject in their own words, perhaps aided by some written outlines or notes for specific highlighting of important passages in the text. Suggested format: start with a 2-3 minute summary of what your assigned reading is about, followed by a 4-5 minute 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 the presentation with sharing your questions about the readings. The oral presentation will be evaluated based on the clarity of communication (3 points) and degree to which it generates class engagement and discussion (2 points). Oral presentations should be 8-10 minutes per presenter.
   [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].

3. Self-Research Paper Drafts: 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 Term Paper Guideline is available on the course’s Prometheus site. This assignment consists of a 15 page sociological self-research paper addressing the topic “Critically reflecting on all class readings, films, and discussions what is a fundamental, still unresolved issue I face today, have faced in the past, and/or will face in the future, what is its nature, root causes, and consequences, and how can I move towards its effective resolution?” The autobiographical paper will be progressively developed throughout the course along a 7-page first draft and a 15-page final draft. 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 of the first and final drafts, see the weekly schedule further below.
A-The First Draft (15%): 7-pages. 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 begin to involve concerns and curiosities about broader social forces at work in your life. 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 draft. Although this paper is basically self-reflective, it must be serious, analytical, and as engaging as possible regarding all relevant facts or ideas pertaining to your inquiry.

The breakdown of percentage points for the first draft (15% total) are roughly as follows:

- 4%: Micro exploration of the research problem/question
- 5%: Use of at least 20 concepts from readings from the first half of class preceding the paper deadline (0.25 each concept) (**bold** each concept used in text) [use of each concept must be thoughtful and detailed enough to convey your practical understanding of its meaning in context]. Don’t **bold** generic or common words as concepts; the concepts must be clearly derived from the perspectives learned in class.
- 3%: 1 cited linkage each to three articles in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Journal issues on reserve, samples will be shown in class)
- 2%: 1 point for each linkage to the films viewed during the first half of class preceding the paper deadline.
- 1%: A bibliography of prospective outside **scholarly** readings specifically related to your topic, readings which you will consult and read in preparation of your final draft in the next stage.

B-The Final Draft (30%): 15-pages (including reworked pages of the first draft). The concern with macro dimension of your inquiry, i.e., the relation of your selves and broader social forces must now become the central subject of your investigations. The final draft 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 draft (15 pages, including reworked pages of the first draft) are roughly as follows:

- 8%: Macro exploration of research problem/question (4 points), and linkages to the micro-exploration begun in the first draft (4 points).
- 5%: Use of at least 20 ADDITIONAL concepts from readings for the second half of class (0.25 each concept) (**bolditalic** each of these new concept used in text) (continue the concept usages from the first draft and keep them marked in **bold** only) [use of each concept must be thoughtful and detailed enough to convey your practical understanding of its meaning in context]. Don’t **bolditalic** generic words as concepts; the concepts must be clearly derived from the perspectives learned in class.
- 6%: At least 6 QUOTED and INDEPTH linkages (1 point for each linkage) to issues or arguments advanced in required textbook/readings by Bjorklund and Cahill.
- 5%: At least 1 QUOTED and INDEPTH linkage to each of the readings by C. Wright Mills, , Erik Erikson, Carol Gilligan, Erving Goffman, and G.I. Gurdjieff (you can further explore their ideas in the recommended readings).
- 3%: ADDITIONAL linkages to the other films viewed in second half of class [keep and further develop the linkages to the films linked to in the previous draft]
- 3%: Based on your critical sociological self-explorations in the paper, in the conclusion of the paper list and elaborate on three or more **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.
4. Office Hours (5%): Each student must schedule and meet at least twice (preferably in the first and second halves of semester respectively) 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 of the course. 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.

5. Self-Critical Thinking (5%): Students are expected to view everything, every text, and every viewpoint, especially their own predispositions and perspectives, 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 in order to critically enrich and move beyond 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.

6. Plagiarism: No plagiarism will be allowed in student papers, and the corresponding work will be immediately dismissed with no grade percentage (and no make-up possibility). Any ideas or texts you borrow from your sources must be clearly referenced, and supplied with an accurate bibliography. Each and every citation and passage quoted must be meaningful and relevant to the context of paper, and the reason for the use must be clearly elaborated in your own words before and/or after the quotation. NO PARAPHRASING (copying text from others with few words changed here and there) is acceptable, and will be treated as plagiarism; a passage in your text is EITHER borrowed from someone else, which then should be in quotes and clearly referenced with page numbers, OR is your own ideas and expressed in your own words, without any “floating” citations (will be explained further in class).

7. Special Needs: Students are encouraged to seek assistance from the university’s Academic Support Services and The Lillian Semper Ross Center for Disability Services for accommodation of any special needs. Considerations for disability accommodations will depend on presentation of written documentation from appropriate campus offices.

Final Grade Curve:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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Required Readings: (*in book store, † on reserve)

†Four issues of Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge, Vol. I, No. 1 & 2; and Vol. II, No. 1 & 2. [Two sets of each issue are on reserve; additionally the articles can be individually downloaded from the course’s Prometheus page, to be explained in class].

Recommended Readings:


Terrell, Mary Church. *A Colored Woman in a White World* (1940)
COURSE SCHEDULE:

Note: All students (including each reading presenter) must read all the readings assigned for each session. Presenters basically go further in reading their particular assigned reading more in-depth while preparing their written reports and oral presentations.

WEEK ONE
Tuesday, September 7: First Day of Class.
Course Objective, Organization, Schedule. Assignments of Readings/Introductory questionnaire.
Thursday, September 9: Film: TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE

WEEK TWO
Tuesday, September 14: PBS Documentary AFFLUENZA. Discussion.
Thursday, September 16: C. Wright Mills’ Sociological Imagination. Previous Student Papers Symposium.
Readings:
• Read the short piece by C. Wright Mills, “The Sociological Imagination,” attached to your syllabus
• Each student should carefully read and make commentaries in class on one student article chosen from the table of contents of the four issues of Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge (table of contents and copies are available via Prometheus site of the course--details to be explained in class; two copies of each issue is also available on reserve).

WEEK THREE
Tuesday, September 21: Carol Gilligan and Erik Erikson
Readings:
1. Read the piece on Erik Erikson on the eight stages of life (available as a PDF file online on the Prometheus site)
2. Read the piece on/gilligan regarding gender and human psychology (available as a PDF file online on the Prometheus site)
Thursday, September 23: Erving Goffman and G.I. Gurdjieff
Readings:

WEEK FOUR
Tuesday, September 28: Interpreting the Self. Autobiography as A Social Situation
Readings:
5. Bjorklund, “Prologue” (pp. ix-xii) and Chapter One, “Introduction” (pp. 1-15)
Thursday, September 30: Human Being and Social Reality
Readings:

WEEK FIVE
Tuesday, October 5: The Moral Self
Readings:
8. Bjorklund, Chapter Three “The Self as a Morality Play” pp. 43-65
Thursday, October 7: The Social Construction of Self
Readings:
WEEK SIX
Tuesday, October 12: The Master Self
Readings:
11. Bjorklund, Chapter Four “Masters of Fate” pp. 66-88

Thursday, October 14: The Social Construction of Subjective Experience
Readings:

WEEK SEVEN
Tuesday, October 19: Film: Good Will Hunting (126 min.)

Thursday, October 21: Film continued. Discussion

WEEK EIGHT
Tuesday, October 26: The Uncertain Self
DUE IN CLASS: Oct. 26 ---> 7-PAGE PAPER DRAFTS DUE (No late papers will be accepted)
Readings:
14. Bjorklund, Chapter Five “The Uncertain Self” pp. 89-123

Thursday, October 28: The Self and Social Interaction
Readings:

WEEK NINE
Tuesday, November 2: The Beleagured Self
Readings:

Thursday, November 4: The Organization of Social Interaction
Readings:

WEEK TEN
Tuesday, November 9: Social Interaction and Relationships
Readings:

Thursday, November 11: HOLIDAY (Veterans Day)

WEEK ELEVEN
Tuesday, November 16: Film: Awakenings (120 min.)

Thursday, November 18: Film continued. Discussion

WEEK TWELVE
Tuesday, November 23: Structures of Social Life
Readings:
23. "Working and Resisting at Route Restaurant," by Gretta Foff Paules, ISL, pp. 293-303; AND "Competing Legalities on Sixth Avenue," by Mitchell Duneier, ISL, pp. 304-318

Thursday, November 25: HOLIDAY (Thanksgiving Recess)
WEEK THIRTEEN
Tuesday, November 30: The Construction of Social Structures
Readings:

Readings:

WEEK FOURTEEN
Tuesday, December 7: Film: Patch Adams (110 min.)
Thursday, December 9: Film continued. Discussion.

WEEK FIFTEEN
Tuesday, December 14: Last class session. Student Evaluation.
DUE IN CLASS: December 14 ------> 15-PAGE FINAL DRAFTS DUE (No late papers will be accepted)
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The promise that all such sensibilities—and in fact, human reason itself—will come to play a greater role in human affairs.

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