Soc. 605  
Applied Sociological Theory  
Fall 2012

UMass Boston, Sociology Dept.  
Prof. Mohammad Tamdgidi

Class Hrs.: Thursdays 7:00-9:45 pm  
Office Hrs: Th 2-4 pm (or by appt.)

Class Location: Wheatley 04, room 0022  
Office Location: 3 Wheatley Bldg., 4th fl.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

According to C. Wright Mills (1959/2000), the sociological imagination is that mode of thinking that enables its beholder to relate one’s intra/interpersonal troubles to increasingly global and world-historical public issues. In this graduate course we learn sociological theory in the applied form of critically developing our sociological imaginations by conducting sociological self-research. We will learn and apply the six major theories and perspectives practiced in sociology today—Phenomenology, Symbolic Interactionism, Exchange/Rational Choice Theory, Functionalism, Conflict Theory, and the Postmodern perspective—as component micro/macro parts of a holistic sociological imagination in order to better understand and deal with our everyday troubles as explored within a global and world-historical framework. We will study the classical theories through the lens of contemporary perspectives, proceeding from microsociological theories to increasingly macro perspectives. Our inquiries into the link between our personal troubles and broader social issues will be pursued in the course through a 20-page “autosociobiographical” 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 paper. To achieve this end, we will pursue three lines of inquiry throughout the course: 1-class readings, lectures, presentations, and discussions will provide us with collective experiences and conceptual tools and methods necessary for our individual/collective self-studies; 2-an autosociobiographical 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 theoretical 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, a written and oral reading report, and self-critical thinking.

COURSE ORGANIZATION:

The course is organized in a “research working group” format where “teacher-student” and “student-teachers” explore with one another common subject matters [see Paulo Freire (1970/2000) on pedagogy]. While the instructor will introduce and guide class readings and discussions, students are required to raise in-depth and substantive questions about readings in class as discussants, sharing their insights and critical comments with one another. 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 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 readings/films and subject matter of the missed class session. Although attendance will be taken in class, it is also the student’s responsibilitys to send an email to the instructor for each session missed, including date of absence, for record keeping purposes and to indicate whether you intend to make-up for the absence. At the
end of semester when calculating the final grade, points will be taken off the student’s total grade for each unmade-up absent session (for once-per-week classes such as this course, 3% per session). Students can make-up for their absences by writing a 4-5 page long critical commentaries on the readings/films/subject matter of the session they missed, demonstrating they have read the readings for the session and can list, define, and apply some of its most important concepts (format may follow the regular presentation report assignment below). In case of film sessions missed, the same length requirements for makeup essays apply, but in this case the student should demonstrate an ability to link the film to various theories and concepts previously covered in class, so the make up assignment should go beyond merely summarizing the theme of the film.

2. Class Discussion Participation (5%): 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.

3. Self-Critical Thinking (5%): 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.

4. Written Reading Report and Oral Discussion (15%, 5-6 pages): 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. 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 at least 5-6 pages (Times font, size 12, double-spaced) comprised of the following (note the breakdown of assigned grade points):

a)-Written Summary (3 points, 2 pages). The summary must be in your own words. Rules against plagiarism will apply to 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 (3 points, 1-2 page). Identify, list, and define (using direct quotes from the reading, including page citation) on a stand-alone page at least 10 concepts related to the theories or perspectives discussed in readings you are presenting, 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 (3 points, 2 pages). 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 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)-Written Questions (1 points, half-page).** 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/Discussion (5 points, 6 minutes).** The purpose of oral presentation/discussion is to help generate discussion in class following the instructor’s lecture by drawing upon concepts, linkages, and questions as included in the discussant’s report. **Suggested format:** We assume all students have read the reading, so make a quick summary of the most important points about 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. Following the student presentations in each session, the floor will be opened for student discussion (response to presenter questions, new questions, comments), followed by the instructor’s lecture/contribution. Discussants must maintain an active part in the session in generating and guiding class discussion, helping make the discussion lively, informed, and interesting. The oral presentation will be evaluated based on the clarity of communication (2 points) and degree to which it generates class engagement and discussion (3 points). Each oral presentation SHOULD TAKE NO MORE THAN 6 MINUTES. So, it required adequate preparation on the part of the presenters to render their thoughts in a concise, clear, and condensed way to the class. **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 6 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].

**5. Sociological Self-Research Paper (50%, 20 pages):** 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** will be emailed to you as a pdf file soon after the first session of the course. This assignment consists of a 20-page sociological self-research paper addressing the topic “Comparing all the six major elemental theories and perspectives in sociology studied through class/outside readings, discussions, and films, how do they jointly help me understand in a global context an important, still unresolved issue I face today, have faced in the past, and/or will face in the future, its nature, root causes, and consequences, and how I can move towards its effective resolution?” The sociological self-research paper will be progressively developed throughout the course along a 10 page first draft and a 20 page final paper. 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 drafts and final papers, see the weekly schedule further below.

**A-Paper Topic Ideas/Preliminary Bibliography (5%, 2-4 pages):** 2 full-pages of explorative writing, plus a bibliography of potentially useful and relevant sources for your topic. Early in 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 **Term Paper Guidelines** emailed to you at the beginning of the course to begin working on your topic and paper. You do not need to read anything to choose your topic, but finding a list of potentially relevant readings (articles, book chapters, etc.) will give you a great start in choosing good topics and finding out what sort of scholarly readings are out there to help your research. The topic should 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 for discussion), so you should feel comfortable choosing and exploring your own personal topics. The essay is 3% grade value and the bibliography 2%. 
B-The First Draft (20%, 10 pages, not including title/bibliography 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 larger national and global forces at work in your life. You must also, at the end, include a further updated and refined bibliography of what readings in class or outside may be of relevance to your further self-exploration in the final paper. 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 (20% total) are roughly as follows:

- **5%**: Micro exploration of the research problem/question
- **5%**: Use of 15-20 major concepts from readings from the first half of class preceding the paper deadline (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 theories and perspectives learned in class. Repeat concepts only will be graded once for its applications in the text.
- **3%**: 3 quoted linkage to one or more student paper articles in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Journal articles available as PDF files on the website http://www.okcir.com and also in Healey Library’s SocINDEX database, sample hard copy issues will be introduced in class)
- **2%**: Two linkages to the two films viewed during the first half of class preceding the first draft deadline.
- **2%**: A bibliography of prospective outside scholarly readings (scholarly journal articles, book chapters, books if applicable) specifically related to your topic, readings which you will consult and read in preparation of your final paper in the next stage. Make sure to include the class’s own readings in your bibliography, since you will obviously be citing from them in the first draft. Use the ASA Style Guide (to be emailed to you and also found on the web) as a means to precisely format the bibliography following the standards. This will be considered in applying the grade points to this section.
- **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 the 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%, 20 pages including reworked and further revised/improved 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 in this final paper. 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 (20 pages, including reworked pages of the first draft) are roughly as follows:

- **8%**: Macro exploration of research problem/question (4 points) and its linkage to the micro exploration (4%). Notice these are two distinct efforts, one focuses on
introducing and exploring the macro dimension of your study, and the other on how
the latter relates to the micro explorations carried out in the first draft.

- **5%**: Use of 15-20 ADDITIONAL concepts from readings for the second half of class
  (0.25 each concept) (bolditalic each of these new concept used in text) (maintain 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 theories and perspectives learned in
  class.

- **5%**: 5 quoted linkages to at least three OUTSIDE scholarly readings (journal articles,
  book chapters, books) that directly pertain to your topic (1 point each linkage). These
  may include relevant readings you are doing, or have done, in your other classes, but
  they have to be directly pertaining to the topic of your paper.

- **2%**: 2 ADDITIONAL linkages to the other two film(s) 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.

**Grading Policy and Final Grade Curve**: 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 curve 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.

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<th>Percentage Points</th>
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<td>100-93</td>
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<td>92-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>86-83</td>
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<td>82-80</td>
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<td>59 or less</td>
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**IMPORTANT NOTE**: If you are taking this course to fulfill major requirements, it has to
be taken with letter grading option; so no pass/fail grading option is to be chosen for this
course for major requirement purposes.

**Revision Options**: 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, your topic ideas
essay, or first 10-page draft of the paper, you have an opportunity to revise and resubmit based on
the instructor’s feedback and commentaries given. Depending on the quality of the revisions made,
the grade may 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. 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, if merited.
Office Hours: Based on past experience, those students who regularly consult during office hours with the instructor regarding their progress in the course and their papers have done 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 of the course.

Plagiarism: No plagiarism will be allowed in student papers. All quoted and borrowed texts and ideas must be properly credited to their authors and sources. Any ideas or texts you quote from your sources must be clearly referenced, and supplied with an accurate bibliography. Each and every citation and passage quoted must be properly cited, and the reason for its use in text must be clearly elaborated in your own words before and/or after the quotation. Students are therefore required to adhere to university policies on academic honesty and student conduct. The current Code of Student Conduct, including information about academic dishonesty and plagiarism is available online at: http://www.umb.edu/academics/undergraduate/office/students/CodeofStudentConduct.html.

Accommodations of Special Needs. 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 Referral Program: If it appears to the instructor that you might not pass this course, and if the instructor cannot find a way 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.

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)

††Selected articles in previous issues of Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge, especially the Winter 2011 issue titled “Graduate Theorizations” [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].

Selected Recommended Readings:
59451-196-9
COURSE SCHEDULE

Important Note:

All students (including each 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
Thursday, September 6: First Day of Class.
Syllabus: Course Objective, Organization, Schedule. Assignments of Readings/Introductory questionnaire.
FILM (1): “Girl in the Cafe” / DISCUSSION

WEEK TWO
Thursday, September 13: The Sociological Imagination and Overview of Sociological Theories. Getting to Know Each Other.
Readings:
Also Read:
• The short piece by C. Wright Mills, “The Sociological Imagination,” attached to your syllabus.
• Read one sample graduate student paper (to be assigned in previous week session based on the list below) published in the Winter 2011 issue of Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge as found on the journal website: http://www.okcir.com. The Journal issue is titled “Graduate Theorizations” and it includes, among others, six selected student papers from previous offerings of this graduate course which instructor taught in Fall 2010 at UMass Boston. Try to find and download the paper’s pdf file from my website given above, and read it; see how these previous graduate students enrolled in Soc. 605 used their “sociological imagination” and various concepts learned in class in exploring their topic. Table of contents and all the articles published in Human Architecture are available online at http://www.okcir.com. The issue includes many student papers from a variety of undergraduate courses the instructor has taught, plus other faculty papers. To find the articles, go to the website, click on the issue for Fall 2012, and find the articles 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. The papers are compiled in several other academic databases the library subscribes to.

“Five Doors, Three Cameras, and A Dead Bolt: How Fear of Crime Is Filling Our Prisons and Consuming Personal Liberty”—Alison Michelle Ireland, University of Massachusetts Boston

“Congratulating Conscious Choice: Exploring Society and the Self through Marriage and Divorce”—Julianne M. Siegfriedt, University of Massachusetts Boston

“Growing Up A Third Culture Kid: A Sociological Self-Exploration”—Kate M. Russell, University of Massachusetts Boston

“Myth of the Life Plan: A Search for Happiness”—Linda M. Lazcano, University of Massachusetts Boston

“Drawing Attention to A Public Deficit: Sociological Self-Reflections on Growing up with ADD”—Ellen Maher, University of Massachusetts Boston

“The Present Father: Applying Sociological Theory from A Father’s Standpoint”—Edmund J. Melia, University of Massachusetts Boston

[Note: Tuesday, September 18 is add/drop deadline]
WEEK THREE  
Thursday, September 20: Micro Theories: Phenomenology  
**DUE IN CLASS: September 20----> 2-4 PAGE PAPER TOPIC IDEAS/PRELIM. BIBLIOGRAPHY**  
Readings:  
2. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 13, 518-554.

WEEK FOUR  
Thursday, September 27: Micro Theories: Symbolic Interaction and Mead  
Readings:  
3. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 8 (Mead), 289-256.  
4. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 12, 463-517.

WEEK FIVE  
Thursday, October 4: Micro/Macro Theories: Exchange/Rational Choice Theory  
Readings:  
5. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 11, 413-462.  
FILM (2): “Multiple Personalities” / DISCUSSION

WEEK SIX  
Thursday, October 11: Macro Theories: Structural Functionalism and Durkheim  
Readings:  
6. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 3 (Durkheim), 77-124.  
7. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 9, 324-374.

WEEK SEVEN  
Thursday, October 18: Macro Theories: Conflict Theory I: Critical Theory and Marx  
**DUE IN CLASS: October 18----> 10 page FIRST DRAFT DUE**  
Readings:  
8. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 2 (Marx), 20-76.  

WEEK EIGHT  
Thursday, October 25: Macro Theories: Conflict Theory II: Weber  
Readings:  
10. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 4 (Weber), 125-184.

WEEK NINE  
Thursday, November 1: FILM (3): “The Corporation” / DISCUSSION

WEEK TEN  
Thursday, November 8: Macro Theories: Conflict Theory III: Feminist Theory and Gilman  
Readings:  
11. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 5 (Gilman), 186-217.  

WEEK ELEVEN  
Thursday, November 15: Conflict Theory IV: The Global Society, Racism, and Du Bois  
Readings:  
13. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 7 (Du Bois), 256-288.  

WEEK TWELVE  
Thursday, November 22: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
WEEK THIRTEEN
Thursday, November 29: Macro/Micro Theories: Simmel/Poststructural/Postmodern “Perspectives”/Theoretical Syntheses
   Readings:
   15. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 6 (Simmel), 218-255.
   16 Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 15, 607-650.
   17. Appelrouth/Edles, Chapter 16, 651-746.

WEEK FOURTEEN
Thursday, December 6: FILM (4): “Tuesdays with Morrie” / DISCUSSION
Last Class. Student evaluations of the course. Make sure to attend the last class.

WEEK FIFTEEN
DUE: Tuesday, December 11, noon-------> 20 page FINAL PAPER DUE
(put in my mailbox in the Soc. Dept., or slip under my office door)

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

C. Wright Mills (1959)

The Sociological Imagination is a book by sociologist C. Wright Mills, first published in 1959. The book explores the relationship between individuals and social structures, and the role of sociology in understanding and changing society. Mills argues that sociology is a discipline that connects the personal experiences of individuals with the social structures that shape those experiences. He calls for a sociology that is concerned with the "sociological imagination," a concept that helps us understand how social forces shape our lives and how we can make sense of the world around us.

The book is divided into three parts: The Power Elite, The Middle Class, and The Sociological Imagination. In the first part, Mills examines the power elite, which he defines as a group of individuals who control the major institutions of society and thus have a disproportionate influence on political and economic policy. In the second part, he discusses the middle class, which he sees as a source of social conflict and a barrier to social change.

In the third part, Mills introduces the concept of the sociological imagination, which he defines as "the imaginative recreation of society and the personal world." He argues that this recreation is necessary for understanding the social world and for making social change possible. Mills' work has been influential in the development of critical theory and has been widely discussed in the fields of sociology, politics, and culture.

From the Socialthe Socio-Imagination: The Multicultural and Classic Readings

Edited by Charles Lemert

Oxford University Press, 1999


C. Wright Mills (1959)
fers the promise that all such sensibilities—and in fact, human reason itself—will come to play a greater role in human affairs.