# SOC&101 Introduction to Sociology Instructor Course Guide

## Overview and Approach

This is a transfer-level Introduction to Sociology course. It is accepted at colleges and universities as meeting general education requirements, and is widely offered as a 100-level course. There are no prerequisites, so it can be assumed that students have little or no background in sociology. The course is presented to be taught fully online. In the Using this Course section of this guide, there are brief suggestions for adapting the course to the hybrid and face-to-face modalities .

The course objectives, the units and topics covered, and the learning activities would be considered “standard” in the sense that they reflect what is found in widely adopted mainstream Introduction to Sociology textbooks. The course activities are also standard for introductory college courses in that readings and media are used to share content with students, and discussions, essay assignments, and exams are used to assess students.

## Course Goals

* The overriding goal is to provide learning activities that facilitate the use of the sociological imagination. Understanding the impact of external social forces on people and society and the interplay between these forces and people is key. Looking at the influence of social forces is the core of thinking like a sociologist. In the U.S. the individualistic perspective is widely adopted, which is why thinking sociologically can be challenging and enlightening for students.
* Students will also explore the ways in which people may influence social structures and processes. People are shaped by social forces, but are also capable of shaping them.
* Of course, any introductory or survey course of a field asks students to get a handle on the basic concepts and theories. I’m not that interested in having them memorize these things, but rather I hope they will be able to apply them to their own lives and the lives of others.
* Students are expected to view societal patterns from multiple perspectives, both sociologically and culturally. The orientation of this class leans toward the conflict perspective, although the contributions of the functionalist and symbolic interactionist perspectives are also explored. A primary goal of the course is to instill a sense of cultural relativism and an interest in taking a global perspective in the examination of social issues. While sociologists tend to focus on the study of their own society (in our case, the U.S.), the theories and concepts can be useful in understanding societies around the world. We can also learn a great deal about our own society through an examination of other societies.
* A further goal is for students to gain an appreciation of the insights that the sociological perspective can provide in understanding, evaluating, and constructively critiquing social institutions and policies. Sociologists are concerned with the extent to which various institutions and policies put some people at a disadvantage, while others benefit. Thus, they are critical of these types of arrangements, and encourage students to think about how our society could be improved. Experience with identifying scientifically valid information about people and society will assist students with this.
* Ultimately, it is hoped that this course will motivate and equip students to be life-long learners and engaged citizens. They will be confident and informed consumers of information, will understand their own values and how these values are reflected in policies, and will in critical analyses of controversies about our society and the world. They will balance an interest in their own personal goals with an interest in goals related to the social systems of our community, nation, and world, and develop the ability to see the connection between their lives and these systems. Most likely, students have already developed some goals for themselves and their families, and believe that achieving those goals will improve their personal situations. Sociologists encourage people to think more broadly, and to envision how their situation could improve if they developed and achieved goals that affect larger numbers of people, such as people in their community, their nation, and the world.

## Course Objectives

* Explain the basic concepts and theories of the field of sociology, and apply them to yourself and other people.
* Distinguish between the sociological perspective and the individualistic perspective, and specify the different ways in which you understand people and society based on the perspective you are using.
* Identify, explain, and apply the major sociological theoretical perspectives – conflict, functionalist, symbolic interactionist.
* Discuss the impact of a variety of social forces (including culture, socialization, groups, inequality, institutions, deviance, and social change), and explain how your own life and the lives of others are influenced by them.
* Question the usefulness of understandings of people and society based on your own personal experience, media portrayals, or “conventional wisdom,” and locate valid information about people and society.
* Develop an approach based on the sociological perspective to evaluate and constructively critique social institutions and policies, and explore solutions.

## Achieving the Course Goals through Learning Activities

Learning activities, including course content (readings, videos, websites), discussion topics, application essay assignments, and exam questions have been selected to:

* Inform students about sociological concepts, theories, and perspectives
* Challenge students to apply sociological ideas and perspectives to topics
* Assist students in exploring their thoughts and experiences in relation to sociological ideas and perspectives
* Expand cultural views and recognize the benefits of cultural relativism
* Practice evaluating the validity of internet information
* Interest students in societal issues and in employing the sociological perspective in addressing them.

Readings and videos are used primarily to inform students about concepts and theories, expose them to issues and solutions, and provide guidance. Discussion forums and application essays are used to allow them to apply ideas and explore thoughts. Exams are used to not only assess reading comprehension, but to evaluate depth of understanding and the ability to synthesize ideas and theories

## Required Resources for the Course

**Textbook:** Sociology: Understanding and Changing the Social World, brief edition. Barkan, Steven. Flat World Knowledge. [http://www.saylor.org/site/textbooks/Sociology,%20Understanding%20and%20Changing%20the%20Social%20World%20-%20Attributed.pdf](https://mail.scc.spokane.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=QD7kbqNH_EeU0c3M5Ok9qfgQxZeD5c9I2jjZTsAbERxytvKNURRaXORKaJ-Xysjmpuw-tIRdQdk.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.saylor.org%2fsite%2ftextbooks%2fSociology%2c%2520Understanding%2520and%2520Changing%2520the%2520Social%2520World%2520-%2520Attributed.pdf)

This is a text that covers the key topics found in all traditional textbooks, written by an established author whose texts have been widely adopted throughout the country for many years. The link above is to the online book only, but at a very low cost, students can choose to order the book in print, eBook, or audio formats. Study aids are also available to students. In addition, the text can be customized at the Flatworld site, and they will disseminate it to students with the modifications. I have used this text for three years, and even if it were not available free online, I would likely still adopt it for its concise and thorough coverage, its accessibility, and its focus on social change and policies based on sociology to improve our society.

**Supplementary book:** *There Are No Children Here* by Alex Kotlowitz, published by Anchor Books in 1991.

This best-selling book is a true account, written by a journalist, of the lives of two boys growing up in a Chicago housing project. Although it was published in 1991, and many of the conditions in the Chicago projects have changed to some extent, I’ve found the use of the book to be extremely effective. We are able to discuss socialization, social structure, theories of deviance, inequality, and institutions and apply them to a real life situation. We are also able to discuss how social problems are addressed, how those in power keep those with few resources at a disadvantage, and how solutions to societal issues have both positive and negative consequences. The most consistent comments in course evaluations I’ve had about the class over the years have been the impact of this book, and how the sociological perspective, the theories of deviance, the operation of institutions, and the insidious results of inequality come alive from reading the story of these two boys. This book is readily available, both used (very inexpensive) and new (about $11), at Amazon.com and other booksellers.  It can also be ordered as an audio book and eBook. It is used toward the end of the course for discussion forums, an application essay, and exam questions.

**Articles, videos, websites:** Links to these materials are located in the Course Activities documents within each module.

## Using this Course

The course can be adopted as a whole, units chosen, and topics within units, providing maximum flexibility. All course orientation documents, objectives (course, unit, and topic), discussion topics, application essay assignments, and essay exam questions may be used and modified by adopters. In other words, all content within the course modules are open educational resources (OER).

**Course Orientation Module:** Instructions for assessments can be found here. I suggest that instructors add the course syllabus and any other documents that may be useful to students in preparing to take the class.

**Lectures:** Instructors will likely wish to lecture on topics of interest. Lecture notes are not provided within the course. However, registering as an educator at the Flat World Knowledge website will provide access to the instructor’s manual and PowerPoint lecture notes.

**Essays:** Instructors may choose to use topic or unit objective quizzes in addition to or instead of essay exams. Extensive test banks are available for instructors at the Flatworld Knowledge site.

**Adaptation to hybrid or face-to-face modalities:** It is assumed that readings will be assigned for outside of class for all modalities. Instructors could show films and explore websites in class or assign them for students to view outside of class. For a hybrid or face-to-face course, the instructor could present lectures in class. Discussion topics could be used for full-class discussions or in-class seminars.

**Additional sources not OER or videos not captioned:**

Some sources identified as potentially useful for this course were not officially approved for inclusion, either because they are not OER or not able to be closed captioned. Instructors may wish to pursue these sources to determine whether they might enhance student learning. They are listed below by topic.

Social interaction, social structure and groups:

*The Stanford Prison Experiment* at <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/quiet-rage-the-stanford-prison-experiment/>

Racial inequality:

*White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, which can be found at numerous websites, including <http://ted.coe.wayne.edu/ele3600/mcintosh.html>

ABC Primetime Live *True Colors: Racial discrimination in everyday life*, which can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyL5EcAwB9c>

News story about *A Girl Like Me* <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=2553348&page=1> To see the actual short documentary <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWyI77Yh1Gg>

Gender inequality:

ABC Primetime Live *The Fairer Sex*.   
The Fairer Sex Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhVOdsWI88U&feature=related>  
The Fairer Sex Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iA3vGtMctUU&feature=related>

Education:

*Why Finland Leads the World in Education* <http://video.pbs.org/video/1691594757>

Inner-city poverty:

At [hcz.org/index.php](http://hcz.org/index.php?option=com_seyret&Itemid=44) there are numerous brief videos at the Harlem Children’s Zone site, including *60 Minutes Featuring the Harlem Children’s Zone, Oprah Winfrey Show Featuring Geoffrey Canada,* and *Transforming Public Housing and Keeping Children Safe in Harlem*.

**Developer:** My name is Dr. Cecile Lycan. I developed this course between January 2012 and February 2013. I was awarded a Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD in Sociology by Washington State University. I have been an instructor at Spokane Community College in Spokane, Washington as an adjunct from 1985 to 1990, and as a full-time instructor from 1990 to now. I was the original developer of the Introduction to Sociology course for Washington Online in 1998, and have been teaching online since that time.