What this course is about

“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time.”

T.S. Eliot

“The obvious can sometimes be illuminating when perceived in an unhabitual way.”

Daniel Quinn

This course is an introduction to the discipline of sociology. Sociology is the systematic study of human society and social interaction. All of us, of course, already have considerable experience living in society and interacting with other people. Sociology, however, is an unfamiliar way of looking at the familiar. It can help us understand our experience in a more critical and insightful way, and therefore to use that experience more effectively. The general goal of this course is to help you to be more effective educated citizens in a democratic society. Effective educated citizens are self-aware, self-actualizing, knowledgeable, empowered, socially responsible, and capable of living in community with diverse others. An important way to achieve this is by developing and using the sociological imagination. The sociological imagination is a quality of mind, an orientation, a lens that helps us to understand how individual experience is shaped by social patterns.

This way of looking at the world is a skill that can be learned. Therefore this course is organized as a skills as well as a survey class. That is, in addition to acquainting you with the basic concepts used by sociologists to explain the social world and social interaction, this course will give you elementary skills with which to “decode” society and social life and some insights on how to act on this knowledge. In this course you will acquire skills to understand the social world in order to change it in ways you find appropriate. The basic skills you will learn in this course include the ability to:

- describe, analyze, and contrast the basic value positions, or perspectives, which generate and shape our goals, and articulate your own views in this context;

- observe, analyze, and understand the basic processes of social life, which includes developing an appropriate vocabulary and a critical understanding of the social research methods by which we discover these processes;

- comprehend the patterns and directions of social change and develop the tools to effectively create and intervene in social change processes.

The focus of the course is on helping you to master these skills. More specifically, in successfully completing this course you will master the following objectives:

2. Explain your own perspective on the social world and situate it relative to other perspectives.

3. Explain and appropriately apply basic sociological concepts to your own life experience.

4. Critically evaluate social science research data.

5. Develop and employ a cultural relativist perspective in analyzing social phenomena.

6. Describe the interpersonal and institutional factors and conditions that contribute as well as those that inhibit human social development.

7. Develop appropriate strategies for making social change.

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**Course materials**

**Textbook.** The following textbook is **required** and is available for purchase in the campus bookstore:


**WebCT.** The rest of the content of this course will be delivered via the web through the course software WebCT. This material is password-protected, and is only available to students enrolled in this course. You may access the material from any suitably equipped computer anywhere in the world. For access, you will use the student name and password assigned to you by IPFW. If you haven’t yet activated your account, or have forgotten your username or password, go to the Information Technology Services Help Desk in Kettler 206. You can also get a listing of campus computer labs there along with the hours they are open and when and where help is available. For more information, go to their website: [http://www.its.ipfw.edu/helpdesk/](http://www.its.ipfw.edu/helpdesk/)

To access materials for this course on WebCT, go to [http://webct.ipfw.edu/](http://webct.ipfw.edu/)

The first time you access this page, click on Resources for Students. Here you will find a downloadable Student User Guide, information about STEPS workshops (free short courses on using course-related software) and about your university computer user account. If you intend to access WebCT from off campus, read the sections on Technical Requirements and Student Computing from Anywhere. To access the course material and complete your assignments you will need, at a minimum, the following software:

- Netscape 4.5+ or Internet Explorer 5.5+
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (available as a free download)
- Microsoft Word (available to students in the Bookstore as part of a bargain package for $10)

All of this software is already installed on the computers in the IPFW labs.
On the WebCT page, click on **Log on to WebCT**. Enter your username and password and click within the “Log on” box. (You must mouse click within the box. Hitting your computer’s ENTER key will not work.) On the next screen, click on **SOC S161: Principles of Sociology**. (My name appears beneath it.) You will be at the S161 course home page. Here you will access most of the course content by clicking on the **Units** icon.

Explore all of the course content. Everything is there for a reason, and that reason is to help you learn sociology. Click on whatever you like – *you can’t break anything*. Use the “breadcrumbs” – the words in blue across the top of the screen – to navigate back. If you run into a problem, try using the HELP menu at the top of the screen. Check the online student user guide. If you have a technical problem, contact the IT Services Help Desk: Hours: Monday-Thursday: 8am-6pm & Friday: 8am-5pm  Phone: 260-481-6030  Email: HELPDESK@ipfw.edu

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**Course format and policies**

**Class Meetings.** Class meetings will be organized on a lecture/discussion basis, with **questions, comments, and discussion encouraged during all class meetings.** If there is something you don’t understand, ask about it right then — don’t wait till later. A short period of time will be reserved at the beginning of each class period to answer questions and clarify issues from previous class sessions that, upon review, were unclear or confusing to you. Have your questions and comments ready. In addition, this time can be used for sharing insights into previously-covered course material based on your own experience. Class meetings will also include activities (e.g., videos, small discussion groups, games and other exercises) designed to help you learn course material. Ultimately, how much you learn and remember from this course is closely related to how much you can apply it to your own life. I urge you to make these connections as much as possible, and to share your insights with others.

Class attendance is mandatory, and attendance will be taken. First of all, the lectures will regularly provide information not available in the readings. Second, a major portion of everyone’s learning will come from participation in the in-class exercises and discussions.

Each person in this course has a unique set of experiences and a unique viewpoint to share. This offers a great opportunity for us to learn from each other. Though disagreement and even conflict may occur, I expect your cooperation in maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect for one another.

If you miss a class period, you should try to get the notes from a classmate. I have no objection if you wish to tape record lectures.

**Active Learning.** The key to being a successful student is *active learning*. Pay particular attention to the essay, “A Word to the Student” which can be found under the Student Resources icon. This essay contains valuable tips on how to be a successful student — e.g., how to read and study effectively, how to function effectively in class, how to successfully take tests. This information is based on the research of developmental learning specialists and is proven effective. If you haven’t learned these tips already, master them now. They are keys to your success as a student! If you want further information about study and learning skills, make an
appointment to see a counselor in the Center for Academic Support and Advancement (CASA) in Kettler G23. Also, check out their website: www.ipfw.edu/casa/

**Study Groups.** I encourage you to form study groups with other students enrolled in this class. Many successful students report that the discussions that take place in these groups are valuable in helping them to identify and reinforce important course material. Students also say that group participation helps them to better understand the material through comparing the differing cognitive approaches of group members and the different ways the course material relates to each individual’s life. The groups can also be valuable sources of social and emotional support. In order to overcome problems of disparate locations and conflicting schedules, in this course you can easily create “virtual study groups” using the Chat function within WebCT. You can then talk to other students in real time over the web.

**Writing.** Writing will play an important role in this course, as it is my view that the manipulation of ideas required in the process of writing is a crucial element of critical thinking and analysis. You are also encouraged to rewrite your lecture notes, preferably as soon as possible after class. In addition, I will give you a variety of short writing assignments, both in-class and take-home. Some of these assignments will be evaluated for a grade, as noted later. I encourage you to talk with me about your writing.

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**What you’ll be expected to do**

**Come to class and participate.** Beginning with the second day of class, attendance will be taken at each class session. Moreover, your active participation in class is expected, particularly on in-class games and exercises, some of which may be evaluated for a grade.

You are responsible for making sure that you sign the sign-in sheet each class period. “I came in late and I forgot to sign in” is **not** a valid excuse.

**Complete the workbook exercises.** For each assigned reading you will be asked to complete an electronic workbook – 14 in all. The workbooks are not busy work. They have been designed to help you creatively apply sociological concepts to your own life. They will be the primary way that you will demonstrate that you have mastered the important concepts – by applying them appropriately. Each workbook will consist of about 8 questions. The workbooks will be found within WebCT under each of the four units of the course. They are in the form of Microsoft Word templates. When you click on the link to a workbook (which is in **bold** type on the Unit page), it will open in a separate browser window. Save the workbook form (File-Save As) to your own disk (floppy, zip disk, or hard drive). Do not change the file name or document type. Fill in the form, save it, and then return to me via class mail as an attachment. If you are unfamiliar with this process, please see the online WebCT user guide.

Please see the course calendar within WebCT for the due dates for the workbooks.

**Participate in electronic discussions.** For each unit of the course, I will pose a series of questions on an electronic bulletin board within the course. The discussions are threaded, so that
you can respond directly to my question or to the posting of a classmate. At a minimum, you will be required to post at least 10 substantive messages – 2 in the first unit of the course, 2 in the second unit, 3 in the third unit, and 3 in the fourth unit. A substantive comment is at least a paragraph long and adds information or argumentation to the discussion. Comments such as “I agree.” or “That’s so true.” are not substantive. You are still encouraged to make comments like this when appropriate, they just will not count toward your grade. When communicating electronically students should be aware of some existing conventions, e.g., writing in all capital letters is SHOUTING and communicates anger and sending unsolicited e-mail (Spam) is rude. “Netiquette” is network etiquette. There are many good sites to clue you in to appropriate netiquette. Here’s one I recommend: [http://www.albion.com/netiquette/](http://www.albion.com/netiquette/)

When participating in these discussions, it is perfectly acceptable to have strong opinions – in fact I encourage you to do so. I also encourage you to discuss your own personal experience and relate it to that of others. In the process, however, I expect you to respect the basic intelligence and humanity of each of the other participants in the discussion. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing, as long as there is a commitment to mutual respect. Hateful and demeaning speech will not be tolerated. Please use appropriate Netiquette (see above).

**Write the final paper.** The final paper will require you to summarize important parts of the course and explain them to someone else. The paper will be expected to be 3-4 pages long, single-spaced. Guidelines for this paper will be made available later in the course. This paper will be due on the day of the scheduled final exam for this course. Late papers may be subject to downgrading.

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**How you’ll be graded**

**Attendance.** Attendance will count as 17% of your final course grade. Each unexcused absence will lower your attendance grade 10 points, or about one letter grade. In special circumstances, and with instructor permission, you may be permitted one excused absence with no penalty. Each absence after one excused absence, *for whatever reason,* will lower your attendance grade 10 points.

**Workbook Exercises.** Each set of workbook exercises will be graded according to whether you complete the exercises fully and accurately and apply the concepts appropriately. The workbook exercises for each chapter will count as 3% of your grade. The fourteen chapters of exercises combined will count as 42% of your final grade. Late workbooks receive no credit.

**Participation in electronic discussions.** Your participation in the electronic discussions will be graded solely on whether you meet the target number of substantive comments for each unit. Every comment which in the opinion of the instructor is substantive will count. I will not grade you on the contents of your opinion or experience. Participation in e-discussions will count as 25% of your final grade.

**Final Paper.** The paper will be graded according to the criteria noted below. It will count as 16% of your final grade.
Grading Criteria:
90-100 Outstanding use and application of course materials; comprehensive coverage
80-89 Above-average use and application of course material, but some details are lacking
70-79 Appropriate use & application of course materials, but significant gaps/omissions exist
60-69 Some effort made to use course materials, but major flaws are present
≤ 59 Missed the point altogether or misunderstood the assignment substantially

Grading Summary:
Attendance = 17% of final grade
Participation in e-discussions = 25% of final grade
14 workbooks @ 3% each = 42% of final grade
Final paper = 16% of final grade
100%

Final grades for the course will be assigned according to the following scale:

A = 90% – 100%
B = 80% – 89%
C = 70% – 79%
D = 60% – 69%
F = 59% & below

There will be no curve, and no extra-credit work.

Turning in Your Assignments. Assignments are generally due by midnight on the days listed in the course calendar in WebCT. To protect yourself, always keep a copy of the assignment you are turning in. Make sure that you have enough disks or disk space to keep copies of everything returned to you as well, at least until the term is over and you have received your final grade.

What I will do

- Take responsibility for organizing the syllabus and the general design of the course so that students learn practical skills they can apply to their lives.
  I’ve had the time and training to think about this topic, so it’s appropriate that I take the lead. Your input, however, is always welcome.

- Be enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and organized.
  Within reason, of course. Instructor enthusiasm is highly correlated with student learning. And, as you’ll see, I’m really excited about sociology in general and this course in particular. I really want you to learn this material because I think it’s useful and valuable in living your life.

- Take responsibility for creating a safe, productive, and fun learning environment.
  Classes that involve a lot of participation can be anxiety-provoking for many students. Will someone (me?) say something embarrassing or confrontational? Will conflict occur? What happens if the class gets off on some unproductive tangent? What if I don’t find other students’ contributions useful or educational? These are all concerns for which I, as instructor, take ultimate responsibility. I promise to respect each individual’s viewpoint,
if sincerely offered, and to cultivate this respect in others. And there’s no reason learning can’t be fun, is there?

- Provide a variety of learning aids.
  
  I will make every reasonable effort to help you be successful in this course. If you want to learn about sociology, I want to help you do it (and to certify at the end that you have in fact done so). I have tried to create a rich, multimedia environment both in the classroom and in WebCT in order to provide for active learning and to accommodate a variety of learning styles.

- Accommodate any disability, if at all possible.
  
  If you have or acquire any sort of disability that may require accommodation, I urge you to discuss it with me (preferably after class or during office hours). I want to do everything that I can to help everyone who wants to succeed in this course. If you want to find out what special services and accommodations are available on campus, you are encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities in Walb 118 (481-6657, voice/TDD). [http://www.ipfw.edu/ssd/](http://www.ipfw.edu/ssd/)

- Be available as a consultant for any course-related or college-related issues.
  
  Schedule an appointment, stop by, e-mail or call me. I’d like to chat with you.

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**How to contact me**

If you have any questions or concerns about the subject matter or your performance in this course, I urge you to contact me (sooner is better than later, but anytime is better than no time). One of the easiest ways to communicate with me is by electronic mail through WebCT. You can also leave a voice-mail message on my office telephone if I’m not there. For a question or an issue that just can’t wait, or in an emergency, call me at home and leave a message on the machine if I’m not there.

| My office: CM 235 | Phone: 481-6669 | Home phone: 485-6314 |
| Sociology Office: CM 241 | Phone: 481-6842 | Fax: 481-6985 |
| Office hours: TR 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm, or by appointment |
| e-mail: Please use the e-mail within WebCT to correspond with me on all course-related matters. |

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**Topic outline and reading assignments**

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<th>Week#</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Assignment and Class Meeting Topic</th>
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<td>Jan 14</td>
<td>Philosophy, Overview, &amp; Organization of the Course</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reading:</strong> Kendall, Chapter 1, pp. 1-21</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jan 16</td>
<td>What Is Sociology?</td>
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2  
**Reading:** Kendall, Chapter 1, pp. 21-35  
Jan 21  The Sociological Imagination  
Jan 23  Social Research Methods: The Research Process  

3  
**Reading:** Ashton, “Perspectives on Contemporary Society” [WebCT]  
Jan 28  Social Research Methods: Reliability, Validity, and Sampling  
Jan 30  Introduction to Perspectives  

4  
**Reading:** B.F. Skinner, excerpt from *Walden Two* [WebCT]  
Kendall, Chapter 13  
Feb 4  Contemporary Ideological Perspectives  
Feb 6  Perspectives on Social Change  

5  
**Reading:** Kendall, Chapter 2  
Feb 11  The Nature of Human Nature  
Feb 13  Culture and Society  

6  
**Reading:** Kendall, Chapter 4, pp. 100-113; Chapter 5  
Feb 18  Culture and Social Organization  
Feb 20  Culture and Social Groups  

7  
**Reading:** Kendall, Chapter 6, pp. 159-173; Chapter 3, pp. 70-83  
Feb 25  Institutions and Social Control  
Feb 27  Fundamentals of Socialization  

8  
**Reading:** Kendall, Chapter 3, pp. 83-96; Chapter 4, pp. 113-126  
March 4  Socialization and the Self  
March 6  The Social Construction of the Self  

*March 11, 13*  
**NO CLASS MEETING — SPRING BREAK**  

9  
**Reading:** Kendall, Chapter 11; Chapter 12, pp. 344-356  
March 18  Institutionalization and Socialization: Conditions for Self-Actualization  
March 20  Institutionalization and Socialization: Education and Self-Actualization  

*March 21*  
**Last day to withdraw from courses**  

10  
**Reading:** Kendall, Chapter 10  
March 25  Institutionalization and Socialization: Sex and Gender  
March 27  Gender Socialization and Gender Identity
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<th>Week</th>
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<td>Kendall, Chapter 7</td>
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<td>April 1</td>
<td>Reinforcements/Alternatives to Gender Inequality</td>
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<td>April 3</td>
<td>Economic Inequality in the United States</td>
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<td>April 8</td>
<td>Comparative Inequality and Social Mobility</td>
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<td>April 10</td>
<td>The Ethnic Hierarchy</td>
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<td>Kendall, Chapter 14</td>
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<td>April 15</td>
<td>Ethnicity, Immigration, and Inequality</td>
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<td>April 17</td>
<td>Dimensions of Racial and Ethnic Inequality</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Kendall, Chapter 8; Chapter 15, pp. 434-445</td>
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<td>April 22</td>
<td>Underdevelopment in the Third World</td>
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<td>Perspectives on Underdevelopment</td>
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<td>Kendall, Chapter 16</td>
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<td>April 29</td>
<td>International Inequality and Social Change</td>
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<td>May 1</td>
<td>Processes and Trajectories of Social Change</td>
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Thursday, May 8, 12 midnight    Final Paper due