SOCI 112: Social Interaction

COURSE OVERVIEW

About the Course

This is an introductory course in microsociology. This means that we will look closely at social interaction, rather than focusing on the abstractions of social structure examined by most macrosociology courses. We will go "inside social life" to explore the ways that people create, make sense of, reproduce, and/or challenge the meaning and experience of everyday life. We will use a theoretical perspective known as "symbolic interactionism," which views humans as continually engaged in the process of seeking and creating meaning through interaction with others. Our starting point will be the social construction of "the self." However, we will give increasing attention to the ways that individual action both shapes and is shaped by social contexts and institutional structures as we move through the course. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to provoke thought about what we take for granted as "natural" about the social order of everyday life, in order to think more critically about the ways our own social interactions both reinforce and challenge the cultural practices and social institutions that constrain those very interactions.

About your Instructor

My name is Brandon Gorman, and I received my PhD in sociology at UNC-Chapel Hill in May of this year. My research investigates how individuals and organizations engage with international politics by analyzing large bodies of texts from newspapers, government publications, and internet message boards, cross-national public opinion surveys, and in-depth interviews. Much of this work is on the Middle East and North Africa, primarily Tunisia.

My intent is to make this class a cooperative, group effort, which means that we learn together and with one another. In this effort, I see us as cooperating toward achieving a joint goal, rather than competing as individuals to achieve solo goals. I will help you with course content, and I hope that you will help your fellow students as well. I expect to learn from you, and for you to learn from each other. This class will be unique in that our topic is social interaction but we will be interacting via the course Sakai site. It should make for a great semester!

REQUIRED READING

Textbooks

- Cahill, Spencer and Kent Sandstrom. (2010). *Inside Social Life: Readings in Sociological Psychology and Microsociology*, 6th edition. Los Angeles: Roxbury. ISBN: 978-0-19-973326-2.
- Schwalbe, Michael. (2008). *The Sociologically Examined Life: Pieces from the Conversation*, 4th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 978-0-07-338011-7.

You can find information on how to purchase textbooks and required materials on the Textbooks page of the Friday Center website. **Note:** If you purchase your textbooks from UNC Student Stores, be sure to purchase the

textbooks from the 990-992 section of the course to ensure you obtain the correct materials.

Library Reserves and E-Journals

Throughout the semester, I will have several assigned readings available online through the UNC-Chapel Hill Libraries Web site. Some of the readings will be listed as **"Course Reserves**," and you can access them through the library's electronic reserves system. Others, designated "**e-journal,**" will be available through the library's electronic journal subscriptions. Both types of articles will be in PDF format, so you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to view the articles. If you don't have it on your computer, you can download it for free at www.adobe.com. More information on accessing the library's electronic resources is included in Course Mechanics.

Some readings are also described as being in "Resources section." To access these readings, you should click on the "Resources" link on the left sidebar of Sakai. As with the Course Reserves readings, readings from the Resources section will be in PDF format.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will be based on the following assignments:

- Analytic Reflection Papers (40%)
- Discussion Forum Participation (20%)
- Midterm Exam (20%)
- Final Exam (20%)

I will describe each component in detail below, but please let me begin by suggesting that you save all of your work to use for studying and your records.

Also, please note that you are responsible for submitting all work by the due date. I do not accept late work.

Readings, Guiding Questions, Lesson Notes

For each reading, I will provide a list of reading questions. You don't need to write out answers to these or hand them in. The questions are guides that will help you identify key ideas in the readings. When you're finished with a reading, go through the questions again to check your understanding—you should be able to answer the questions for yourself. If you can't or are unsure of an answer, then you know to follow up with me either using our Online Q&A discussion forum or via e-mail.

Each lesson also includes Lesson Notes to guide you. You should read the Lesson Notes for each lesson; they explain and clarify difficult concepts from the readings and go over material that will be on the midterm and final exams.

Analytic Reflection Papers

For each lesson, I will assign a question, topic, or activity based on the readings. You will need to answer in a reflection paper of approximately **two double-spaced pages**. Please prepare your paper using 12-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. Reflection papers should usually be turned in to the Sakai Dropbox by the due date for each lesson (check the lesson pages). **Please label the filenames of your papers as follows: Lastname_soci112_lesson#.doc**. For example, I would save a copy of my paper in the Sakai Dropbox as "Gorman_soci112_lesson1.docx".

When grading your reflection papers, **I will look for a thesis statement**, whether you used ideas from the

reading in your work, and whether you made an argument instead of merely stating "I like this." I will also look to be sure that you **cite the readings** in a meaningful way. I do not care what kind of citation system you use as long as you are consistent. If you have a question about citations, please ask.

I will grade reflection papers on a 0-4 scale. **Omitting components of the assignment ensures that you will not receive full credit for the paper.** Individual feedback will be given via comments on your papers. Receiving comments does not mean you have written a bad paper—it is a way of providing you with individual feedback.

Here are some guidelines on how to write reflection papers (excerpted and paraphrased from Sherryl Kleinman's "Guidelines for reaction pieces"):

- *"Society says…"* : If you've written "society says…" or "society makes us feel or do…," ask yourself **who** and **what** you're referring to. Society consists of people doing things; it is not some object doing things to people. We produce society and are a part of it. So, be specific. Do your friends, your parents, the writers at *Time* magazine, for example, teach you certain ideas? Think about where you learned particular ideas. Also, think about the ways **you** participate in society, or reinforce certain ideas and practices. For example, I might write, "In a recent issue of *Maxim*, I saw X, which made me think Y."
- *"Human nature…"* : Sociologists look at variation among people rather than posit that there is a (or the) human nature. So, if you've written "that's just natural" or "it's just human nature," think instead about the conditions or circumstances that might produce particular behaviors from a person in a certain group in a given time period. Some circumstances may elicit "good" (or bad) behaviors. Also, remember that what people considered "natural" in one time period for certain groups of people may change over time.
- *Reacting isn't just writing "I agree," "it's great," or "this was simplistic."* Although these are starting points, tell me **why** you think it was great or simplistic. Maybe it made you think differently about a topic. Tell me about it. Or, tell me what you think the article left out. Offer an alternative or argue with particular points.
- *One way to start is with a quote you found particularly insightful or disagreeable.* Or, find a quote that best summarizes the article, and go from there. Tell me what you found insightful (or disagreeable) about the quote.
- *Relate the article to your own experience.* Think about something you've read or seen on TV; think about a conversation you had recently. How did the article help you to understand what you read, saw, or talked about?

If you need help with writing, check out UNC-Chapel Hill's [Writing Center]. The Writing Center has an online tutor option, too.

Discussion Forum Participation

Each lesson will include a short online activity or a couple of thought questions to provoke and guide discussion. You need to submit **two** posts each week. The first should be your thoughts on the reading (or answer to the guiding question) and the second should be a response to at least one other student. Your first response to the reading should be at least **four** sentences long.

Your posts will be graded with a check, check-minus, or zero. Like the grading for the reflection papers, I will look for a thesis statement, whether you brought ideas from the reading assignment into your post, and whether you made an argument instead of simply stating "I like this."

This is a class about social interaction. Part of interacting in a sociologically mindful way is to practice sensitivity and respect in all discussion board communications. I hope that we all will feel free to share as much as you are comfortable with about relevant personal experiences, but you must keep in mind that your classmates' beliefs and experiences may be different from yours and are equally deserving of respect. In addition to religion, I expect you to also respect everyone's race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and so on, as is the Carolina Way.

Online Q&A: An optional component of the course is our Online Q&A forum. If you have questions about the readings, you can post them to the Online Q&A for answers from your classmates or me. You can also e-mail me privately, but if your question is important for everyone to know, I'll also post an answer on the Online Q&A.

One more reminder: You are responsible for submitting all posts on time. I will not accept late posts. You should verify that your post appears in the forum after you submit it.

Exams

We will have two exams during this course—a midterm and a final. Each exam will consist of several short answer questions that you will answer over two hours. You should review for the exam by going over the guiding questions for each lesson and the main points of course readings. There are specific midterm and final exam discussion boards that you can use to help each other review. Each exam is worth 20 percent of your final grade and is **closed book and closed notes**.

GRADING

For the purpose of determining your final grade, checks and check-minuses are translated to point values as follows:

- reflection papers: check = 4 points, check-minus = 2 points
- discussion forum participation: check = 2 points, check-minus = 1 point.

Letter grades will be assigned using the following scale:

A	94–100
A-	90–93
B+	87–89
B	83–86
B-	80–82
C+	77–79
C	73–76
C-	70–72
D+	67–69
D	63–66
D-	60–62
F	under 60

ACADEMIC POLICIES

By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of online resources. Please consult the Acceptable Use Policy on topics such as copyright, net-etiquette, and privacy protection.

As part of this course, you may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may

include personal information about you or other students in the course. Please be respectful of the rights and protection of other participants under the UNC-Chapel Hill Information Security Policies when participating in online classes.

When using online resources offered by organizations not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill, such as Google or YouTube, please note that the terms and conditions of these companies and not the University's Terms and Conditions apply. These third parties may offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to online content. You should be well aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC-Chapel Hill.

When links to sites outside of the unc.edu domain are inserted in class discussions, please be mindful that clicking on sites not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill may pose a risk for your computer due to the possible presence of malware on such sites.

Office of Accessibility/Special Accommodations

If you are a student with a documented disability, you can receive services through Accessibility Resources & Service. You must self-identify through Accessibility Resources to receive services or accommodation from either of these offices. Accessibility Resources works closely with programs, offices, and departments throughout the University to help create an accessible environment.

The office is located in Suite 2126 of the Student Academic Services Building (SASB), 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC, and is open from 8 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday. You can contact them by phone at 919-962-8300 or 711 (NC-RELAY), or by email at accessibility@unc.edu.

Honor Code

Remember that as a student of UNC-Chapel Hill, you are bound by the University's Honor Code, which states that "It shall be the responsibility of every student at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to obey and support the enforcement of the Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing when these actions involve academic processes or University students or academic personnel acting in an official capacity."

All graded academic work must include a pledge comprised of the following: "No unauthorized assistance has been received or given in the completion of this work."

An especially serious Honor Code violation is plagiarism. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, contact me and/or familiarize yourself with this plagiarism tutorial, courtesy of UNC Libraries.