SOC 310: US Society

Spring 2017

Lecture room: Cramer Hall 71

Meeting time: T/R 12:00-1:50pm

Instructor: Kim Langston

Office: Cramer 263

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 or by appointment

Email: ulm@pdx.edu

Textbook: American Society: How it really works by Erik O. Wright & Joel Rogers 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition

Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser

**Course Objectives and Format**

This course is an examination of the United States through a sociological lens. This course will provide students with critical thinking exercises as a way to better understand American society. Sociology is a field of study that explains social, political, and economic phenomena in terms of social structures, social forces, and group relations. In this course, we will focus on several important sociological topics, including inequality, gender, race and ethnic relations, poverty, and political sociology. You will leave this course with:

- The ability to apply these perspectives and theories to contemporary social problems

- Insight into the critical link between social structures, social forces and individual circumstances;

- Insight into how you shape society and how society shapes you.

The focus of our meetings will be to discuss the assigned reading. Therefore, you must have all of the reading completed, and be ready to speak about it, before each day’s meeting. You'll get the most out of the discussion sections if you:

- keep up with and carefully read the assigned readings
- come to class
- ask questions
- participate in class discussions
- have a sense of humor
- keep an open mind
- are interested in learning from others

**Warning:** The topics covered in this course may challenge some of your taken-for-granted assumptions—this is the job of sociology!
**Course Policies and Procedures**

**Read this syllabus!** Make sure you understand course requirements, policies, assignments, and your responsibilities as a student. These are not up for re-negotiation at the end of the semester. Ask questions if you are confused about anything on the syllabus. If you have questions or need help, please come to see me! Do not wait until the last week of the semester if you are having trouble. There's little either of us can do at that point.

**Attendance:** Attendance will be taken every day. This will go towards your participation grade. If you miss more than 2 classes, you will get a 25% deduction in your attendance grade. If you miss more than 4 classes, you will get 50% off your attendance grade, if you miss more than 5 classes, you will get a 0 for participation.

**Make-Ups and Extensions:** No make-up assignments or extensions will be given unless there is a certified emergency (e.g., death in the family, serious illness, etc.) or the student is Participating in an off-campus, university-sponsored activity. These are the only valid excuses. Please do not ask for exceptions. If you meet these criteria then you may make up an exam. **Exam Make-Up Policy.** You must make arrangements with me prior to the exam in order to be eligible for a make-up exam. If a dire emergency occurs immediately before the deadline, I at least expect an e-mail. You may be required to submit verification of your emergency and make-up exams will be taken in the Testing Center in SHAC.

**Class Etiquette:** Please respect other students and the facilitator by arriving on time and staying until the class is over. If circumstances require that you need to arrive late or leave early, please inform me beforehand and make your entrance or exit as unobtrusively as possible.

**Cell phones:** Be sure to turn your cell phone off or on silent before entering this class. Do NOT text or check your phone while in class; this is disrespectful to the instructor, and the people around you.

**Laptop computers/tablets:** Use of computers in the classroom is only admissible as long as you are utilizing the computer for taking notes, and nothing else. You must sit in the front two rows of class, and if you seem to be distracted, or if you are seen to be doing anything unrelated to the class, you will lose the privilege of having your computer open in the classroom.

**Email:** Email is a very useful method of communicating and I try to respond to crucial emails in a timely manner. However, I ask that you respect my time and position as a facilitator by doing the following:

1) Before sending an email, proofread carefully to fix grammar and tone issues. Emails should be respectful of me, and of all others in our community. Emails should reflect well on your own professionalism

2) Allow sufficient time for a response. Do not email the night before an exam or paper deadline expecting an immediate answer; it is your responsibility to budget your time wisely. Though I may reply at a variety of hours, do not expect a response outside of 9:00am to 5:00pm, Monday through Friday.

**Academic Integrity:** If you plagiarize, or otherwise cheat, on any assignment, you will fail this course and your name and the nature of your infraction will be forwarded on for disciplinary action. Plagiarism involves intentionally representing someone else’s words or ideas as your own. If you use outside sources—either in the form of quotes or ideas—you must cite them to indicate where they come from. Please see or email me, or visit the Writing Center, if you need help with citations. When in doubt, ask!
Offensive Material: In this course, you may encounter language, depictions, or attitudes that you find disturbing or offensive. We will be viewing and discussing “R-rated” material at times during the term. Please see the instructor to discuss any concerns you have with course materials.

Guidelines for Discussion (adapted from Jane Baxter 2010)—Keep in mind, this typically applies to graduate students and is a guide to strive toward in your academic career, it is not a mandate. You are NOT obligated to speak in class if you are not comfortable doing so.

1) Discussion should be an effort to engage the course materials for any particular day from multiple perspectives and on levels that move beyond the superficial. Therefore, the reading material should always be central to the work at hand.

2) Relating course materials to things you know is only acceptable if they further the goals of the course or the depth of the understanding of the materials. Connections made to other courses, and making connections in the readings from day to day or discussion to discussion are generally appropriate.

3) It is not appropriate to bring in any sort of anecdotal material to a discussion, “Today, I was riding the bus and…” or “My uncle told me this story once…” are generally not academic and have no place in a classroom discussion. They will not in any way be construed positively towards class participation.

4) It is not appropriate to pull information out of thin air that you have no source for. “I read once that…” or “People say that…” or “I heard somewhere…” If you cannot cite the specific source of your knowledge it cannot be evaluated by your peers and is not acceptable. The very fact that you would be the only one familiar with the source itself also limits its utility. Pulling some information “you heard once” is no substitute for actually preparing for class and will be evaluated as such.

5) It is ok to be critical of a source, but not if that is the sum total of your input and insight. Anyone can criticize a piece of work- it is the very lowest form of intellectual engagement and keeps you away from really engaging arguments and their contexts and implications. If you are going to make a critique of a piece or idea- that is fine, but be prepared to justify your remarks with evidence and insight from the readings.

6) Listen actively to your classmates. Spending the entire class period worried about your contributions to the discussion makes you a poor discussant. Listening carefully and thoughtfully to the ideas of others before judging and formulating a response is a critically important skill. It is ok to have some moments of thoughtful silence in a discussion while people take in and evaluate the ideas of others and formulate thoughtful responses of their own.

7) Everyone is expected to participate in discussion. Being shy or uncomfortable is no excuse for not participating. Learning to participate in discussions is a skill and there is a learning curve, but silence is never a part of that curve. You must engage with the material and your classmates.

8) Asking educated, thoughtful questions can be an important part of discussion. Often things you do not know or understand are the places where the most fruitful discussions take place. It is perfectly acceptable to admit freely that you don’t know something and ask others in the class to discuss the topic. This kind of willingness to be honest rather than right is a positive point for discussions. So is being willing to work with the readings to find the answer.

9) Discussions are not an opportunity to show off what you know, but rather to attempt to deepen your understanding of the material- no matter how intelligent you may fancy yourself to be. Discussions should be kept conversational in tone, and ideas should be presented in ways that encourage others to
participate and that clearly articulate your ideas. Using jargon, contrived language, or other types of devices are not conducive to an open discussion and should be avoided.

University Policies and Resources

**Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is a serious offense that can result in a failing grade and other serious consequences, including expulsion. Plagiarism occurs when you utilize the ideas, expressions, phrases or words of another person without correctly citing that person or source. Make sure you understand how to correctly cite sources, including when and how to paraphrase and quote.

**Students with disabilities**, who may require accommodations, are encouraged to contact the PSU Disabilities Resource Center (DRC) and the professor at the beginning of the term to arrange accommodations. The DRC is located in 435 Smith and can be contacted at 725-4150 or by email at drc@pdx.edu. Visit their site at www.pdx.edu/uasc/drc.

**Recommended Materials**
Here are some helpful on-line grammar and writing resources:
The OWL at Purdue University
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/
The Emory Writing Center
http://www.writingcenter.emory.edu/writing.html

**Resources to Help You Succeed at PSU**
Writing Center (http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu)
One-on-one help with writing, on a drop-in or appointment basis
188F Cramer Hall, 725.3570

**Citation resource**
Millar Library (http://www.lib.pdx.edu)
Reference desk, phone, IM, email, 24/7 chat: http://library.pdx.edu/askus.html
Research guides, research survival guide: http://library.pdx.edu/researchguides.html

**Undergraduate Advising and Support Center (UASC)** (http://www.pdx.edu/uasc)
Drop-in advising hours are Monday-Friday, 10-3 (subject to change) OR call to schedule an appointment 425 SMU, 725.4005, askuasc@pdx.edu

**Student Health and Counseling Center (SHAC)** (http://www.shac.pdx.edu)
Counseling, psychological evaluation and intervention, testing services, and all health-related concerns

**Mental Health Statement**
As a college student, you may sometimes experience problems with your mental health that interfere with academic experiences and negatively impact daily life. If you or someone you know experiences mental health challenges at PSU, please contact SHAC (information above). PSU has personnel trained to respond sensitively to mental health emergencies. Remember that getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do – for yourself, for those you care about, and for those who care about you.

**Title IX Reporting Obligation**
Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or sexual harassment, know that help and support are available. PSU has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and on-housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Information about PSU’s support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found on PSU’s Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website at: http://www.pdx.edu/sexualassault/get-help or you may
call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to either the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. Please be aware that all PSU faculty members and instructors are required to report information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence that may have violated university policy or student code of conduct, I have to share the information with my supervisor, the University’s Title IX Coordinator or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your D2L.

ASSIGNMENTS

There will be a total of 5 assignments for the course. 1 paper and 4 exams as well as participation assignments. Do not miss assignments. We will also have in class group discussions that may require a short written assignment and these will go towards your overall participation grade. Participation will count for 100 points overall that go toward your overall point total.

Paper Tips and Guidelines

• Do not submit garbage, even for the smaller assignments. Have respect for yourself, and me; put effort into your writing.

• ALWAYS use double spacing and 12-point font (Times New Roman). All margins must be exactly 1 inch. You are not fooling anyone with large margins!

• Make sure you have included a reference list as well as utilized in-text citation (see below for citation instructions). You can use any citation style you are comfortable with, but you must cite, and you must be consistent. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW HOW TO CITE. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, VISIT THE WRITING CENTER OR DO RESEARCH TO LEARN THE RULES BEFORE YOU START WRITING.

• Cover sheets are not required.

• Always underline or italicize book and/or article titles (according to your citation style).

• Do not weigh down your writing with unnecessary words. If I have noted that your sentences or word choices are awkward, it is usually because you are using too many words in a grammatically incorrect manner. Also, keep language formal. No contractions (instead of don’t say do not). Instead of huge, say large. Instead of writing ‘really important changes were happening’, try ‘significant progress was observed’.

• Re-read your work before turning it in. Read it through once out loud. It will help you see awkward sentences and other errors you need to correct.

• With modern technology, there is no excuse for obvious spelling errors in your writing. Use spell-check AND re-read your work.

• Wikipedia is NOT a scholarly source, and its use—as well as use of similar sites—will not be accepted. To find acceptable literature, use the library’s resources.

• Things to think about as you put your paper together:
**Focus:** Does the paper fulfill the assignment? Does the paper clearly state a main point? Does the paper stick to the main point?

**Organization:** Does the introduction clearly state the purpose of the paper? Does the body flow logically in support of that purpose? Is there a thesis statement? Does the conclusion provide a sense of closure? Have you avoided unnecessary repetition of ideas and information?

**Support:** Are your points backed up with specific examples and logical arguments? When appropriate, have you backed up your points with research? If you have, did you correctly document the source of that research?

**Proofreading:** Have you verified that all of your grammar and spelling are correct? Have you verified that your word choice and tone are appropriate for college-level writing?

**Proper citation is one of the MOST important feature of college-level writing. You must do it correctly!**

**Paper guidelines**

You are required to submit 1 (3-4page) analysis paper (100pts./paper). By questioning accepted tenets of truth, morality, and the status quo in general, this paper is designed to assist you in looking at your social world from a critical perspective. Generally, you will be asked to look at your preconceived notions, structural inequality, the influence of the media on policy, systemic racism and sexism, and the impact of politics on your day to day life. Your paper should follow this format: an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement and the body of the paper includes applicable sociological concepts/theories and terms central to the topic.

In most instances, it will be difficult to effectively explain your topic in less than three pages, but it cannot be longer than five well-written pages. Type using font size 12, times new roman, and double-space all your papers. Proper grammar and spelling will be taken into account when assessing a grade. I realize that this can be a potentially frustrating or intimidating exercise, but writing is an exercise in which one improves with practice and I am more than willing to assist anyone. I suggest the Writing Center and visit Purdue University Website for help. All reaction papers must be submitted as a Word document via the 'Drop Box' on d2l by the closing due date.

**Paper Requirements:**

You will turn in 1 paper this term. The paper will be an analysis of a film as it relates to course material. This is not a research paper. This is an analysis paper. You are showing that you can apply sociological theory and concepts to a film. This is a sociological paper with examples from the film peppered in. It is NOT a film summary with a few sociological terms peppered in. For the paper, you will need to follow the directions and be sure you are clearly showing understanding of the concepts and social issues we are learning. Papers must be at least three pages (no more than 5 pages), double spaced, using a 12-inch font (Times New Roman), with 1 inch margins. Be sure you use and cite the textbook with in text citations. **Papers are due at the beginning of class on assigned dates via dropbox on D2L in WORD format.**

**Paper Grading Guidelines**

100 points- Use an excellent, well-thought example (s), illustrate applied theory, exhibit insight by making connections to the course with no grammar mistakes, 90-95 points- An excellent example(s), including a solid reference to course material and related concepts, minimal grammar errors, 80-85 points- Good example(s) of course material, but exhibit a lack of conceptual or theoretical understanding,
writing errors, 75 points- A satisfactory example(s) that illustrates concepts, but a weak connection to the course, several writing errors, 60 points- Failing to make connection(s) to class, appearing to have minimal understanding of terms, poorly written. Papers are worth a quarter of your overall grade, do not put in minimal effort or write it the night before the due date.

Exams

There will be 4 exams. They will be multiple choice and true/false. All exams are to be completed via D2l under the ‘quizzes’ tab. Exams will only be available during class time. You do not need to come to class on Exam days. You may take the exam online between 12:00-1:50 on the day of the exam. Be sure to put a reminder in your phone or calendar so you do not forget to take the exam. I do not accept late work. The exams reflect the reading and the lecture notes. The exams consist of 25 questions (every question is worth 2 points) for a total of 50 points for each exam. Exams make up more than half of your overall grade. Do not forget to take exams online.

Overall Course Grading Scale is as follows: There is a total of 400 points to earn for the class (100 for the paper, 200 for exams, and 100 for participation)

360-400= A
320-359= B
280-319= C
240-279= D
239 or below=F

Tentative schedule of readings and assignments. Any changes will be clearly stated in class and announced on D2l

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 4</td>
<td>Introduction to course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 6</td>
<td>Wright and Rogers: Chapters 1-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 11</td>
<td>Wright and Rogers: Chapters 5-7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Apr. 13</strong></td>
<td>Wright and Rogers: Chapters 8-10 (Exam over Chapters 1-10 to be completed on D2l during class time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 18</td>
<td>Wright and Rogers: 11-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 20</td>
<td>Film Shown covering economic inequality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 25</td>
<td>Wright and Rogers 15 &amp; 16</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Apr. 27</strong></td>
<td>Exam to be completed on D2l during class time (covering the film and chapters 11-16 in Wright and Rogers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2</td>
<td>Wright and Rogers: Chapters 17-19</td>
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May 4 Wright and Rogers Chapter 20 (film shown covering power in media)
May 9 Wright and Rogers: Chapters 21-24
May 11 **Paper 1 due by noon via dropbox in D2l (late work not accepted) No lecture that day**
May 16 Schlosser: Chapters 1-2
May 18 Schlosser: Chapters 3-4
May 23 Schlosser Chapters 5-6
May 25 **Exam 3 to be completed via D2l during class time- no class that day. Covering Chapters 1-6 of Fast Food Nation**
May 30 Schlosser: Chapters 7-8
June 1 Schlosser: Chapters 9-10
June 6 Schlosser: Chapters 11-12
June 8 Film Shown
June 13 **Final Exam to be completed on D2l covering chapters 7-12 and film**

**Professors Pet Peeves**

**By Lisa Wade, PhD from the societypages.org**

I got this email from a Yale student when I arrived to give a speech. She was responsible for making sure that I was delivered to my hotel and knew where to go the next day:

Omg you’re here! Ahh i need to get my shit together now lol. Jk. Give me a ring when u can/want, my cell is [redacted]. I have class until 1230 but then im free! i will let the teacher she u will be there, shes a darling. Perhaps ill come to the end of the talk and meet you there after. Between the faculty lunch and your talk, we can chat! ill take make sure the rooms are all ready for u. See ya!

To say the least, this did not make me feel confident that my visit would go smoothly.

I will use this poor student to kick off this year’s list of Professors’ Pet Peeves. I reached out to my network and collected some things that really get on instructors’ nerves. Here are the results: some of the “don’ts” for how to interact with your professor or teaching assistant. For what it’s worth, #2 was by far the most common complaint.

1. Don’t use unprofessional correspondence.
Your instructors are not your friends. Correspond with them as if you’re in a workplace, because you are. We’re not saying that you can’t ever write like this, but you do need to demonstrate that you know when such communication is and isn’t appropriate. You don’t wear pajamas to a job interview, right? Same thing.

2. Don’t ask the professor if you “missed anything important” during an absence.

No, you didn’t miss anything important. We spent the whole hour watching cats play on YouTube! Of course you missed something important! We’re college professors! Thinking everything we do is important is an occupational hazard. Here’s an alternative way to phrase it: “I’m so sorry I missed class. I’m sure it was awesome.” If you’re concerned about what you missed, try this instead: Do the reading, get notes from a classmate (if you don’t have any friends in class, ask the professor if they’ll send an email to help you find a partner to swap notes with), read them over, and drop by office hours to discuss anything you didn’t understand.

3. Don’t pack up your things as the class is ending.

We get it. The minute hand is closing in on the end of class, there’s a shift in the instructor’s voice, and you hear something like “For next time…” That’s the cue for everyone to start putting their stuff away. Once one person does it, it’s like an avalanche of notebooks slapping closed, backpack zippers zipping, and cell phones coming out.

Don’t do it. Just wait 10 more seconds until the class is actually over. If you don’t, it makes it seem like you are dying to get out of there and, hey, that hurts our feelings!

4. Don’t ask a question about the readings or assignments until checking the syllabus first.

It’s easy to send off an email asking your instructor a quick question, but that person put a lot of effort into the syllabus for a reason. Remember, each professor has dozens or hundreds of students. What seems like a small thing on your end can add up to death-by-a-thousand-paper-cuts on our end. Make a good faith effort to figure out the answer before you ask the professor.

5. Don’t get mad if you receive critical feedback.

If an instructor takes a red pen and massacres your writing, that’s a sign that they care. Giving negative feedback is hard work, so the red ink means that we’re taking an interest in you and your future. Moreover, we know it’s going to make some students angry at us. We do it anyway because we care enough about you to try to help you become a stronger thinker and writer. It’s counterintuitive but lots of red ink is probably a sign that the instructor thinks you have a lot of potential.

6. Don’t grade grub.

Definitely go into office hours to find out how to study better or improve your performance, but don’t go in expecting to change your instructor’s mind about the grade. Put your energy into studying harder on the next exam, bringing your paper idea to the professor or teaching assistant in office hours, doing the reading, and raising your hand in class. That will have more of a pay-off in the long run.
7. Don’t futz with paper formatting.

Paper isn’t long enough? Think you can make the font a teensy bit bigger or the margins a tad bit wider? Think we won’t notice if you use a 12-point font that’s just a little more widely spaced? Don’t do it. We’ve been staring at the printed page for thousands of hours. We have an eagle eye for these kinds of things. Whatever your motivation, here’s what they say to us: “Hi Prof!, I’m trying to trick you into thinking that I’m fulfilling the assignment requirements. I’m lazy and you’re stupid!” Work on the assignment, not the document settings.

8. Don’t pad your introductions and conclusions with fluff. Never start off a paper with the phrase, “Since the beginning of time…” “Since the beginning of time, men have engaged in war.” Wait, what? Like, the big bang? And, anyway, how the heck do you know? You better have a damn strong citation for that! “Historically,” “Traditionally,” and “Throughout history” are equally bad offenders. Strike them from your vocabulary now.

In your conclusion, say something smart. Or, barring that, just say what you said. But never say: “Hopefully someday there will be no war.” Duh. We’d all like that, but unless you’ve got ideas as to how to make it that way, such statements are simple hopefulness and inappropriate in an academic paper.

9. Don’t misrepresent facts as opinions and opinions as facts.

Figure out the difference. Here’s an example of how not to represent a fact, via CNN:
Considering that Clinton’s departure will leave only 16 women in the Senate out of 100 senators, many feminists believe women are underrepresented on Capitol Hill.

Wait. Feminists “believe”? Given that women are 51% of the population, 16 out of 100 means that women are underrepresented on Capitol Hill. This is a social fact, yeah? Now, you can agree or disagree with feminists that this is a problem, but don’t suggest, as CNN does, that the fact itself is an opinion.

This is a common mistake and it’s frustrating for both instructors and students to get past. Life will be much easier if you know the difference.

10. Don’t be too cool for school.

You know those students that sit at the back of the class, hunch down in their chair, and make an art of looking bored? Don’t be that person. Professors and teaching assistants are the top 3% of students. They likely spent more than a decade in college. For better or worse, they value education. To stay on their good side, you should show them that you care too. And, if you don’t, pretend like you do.