US Society Soc 310 - 002
Fall 2015

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Office Hours: MW 11:30-12:30 & by appointment

TEXTS:

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will investigate the structuring of contemporary American society using Ritzer’s theoretical model of McDonaldization. The goal is to understand how modern society is structured around patterns of production and consumption. McDonaldization is a description of the ways that social activity is structured in a highly rationalized manner that emphasizes efficiency, predictability, calculability, and social control. This structure shapes our behavior in the economy as workers and consumers. Ritzer’s main thesis is that McDonaldization is increasingly becoming the dominant mode of organization in our society, affecting not only the institution of the economy but also the institutions of the state, education, health care, and family. We will take a close look at Ritzer’s update of Max Weber’s concepts of rationalization, the irrationality of rationalization, and the Iron Cage.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: Students should complete the assigned readings prior to each class, bring the textbooks to class and be prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion regarding the readings. Regular attendance will benefit the dedicated student since exams will cover lecture material not included in the texts. Participation in class exercises and discussions will be factored into your grade. D2L will be a small component of this course, so make sure you can log in to your account at https://d2l.pdx.edu/

CLASS CONDUCT: In an effort to make this class a learning environment for everyone, please be considerate of the other students in class. Please try to get to class on time and refrain from leaving before class is done. Turn off all electronic devices. This includes iPods, phones, and laptops. If you want to have a chat with your classmates, do it outside. We will be discussing topics that may be controversial, so it is very important that we all maintain respect for the diversity of opinions represented in the class. This is an educational environment, so ideas may be questioned and critiqued but personal attacks will not be tolerated. If you have a disability and are in need of academic accommodations, please notify me immediately to arrange needed supports.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Academic honesty is a cornerstone of meaningful education and a reflection of maturity and integrity. Portland State University is committed to the highest standards of academic honesty. The Student Conduct Code prohibits all forms of academic cheating, fraud, and dishonesty, but not limited to plagiarism, buying and selling of assignments for others, unauthorized disclosure and receipt of academic information and other practices understood to academically dishonor. Copies of the Student Conduct Code may be obtained by contacting 503-725-4422, or by visiting room 433 in Smith Memorial Center. Any class work found to be academically dishonest would receive no points and a referral to the appropriate authority.
CONTACT INFO: The best way to contact me is via email. Please be sure to put “Soc 337” in the subject line so I can find your email amidst the spam. If you don’t include that phrase, I might not read your email. Please use my PSU email and not the D2L email.

EXAMS: There will be a midterm and a final exam. Exams will cover readings, lectures, discussions and films. You must take both exams to pass the class. Exams are considered a required part of the class so make your schedule clear NOW for the exams.

IN CLASS ASSIGNMENTS: There will be 3 scheduled in class assignments. These will take the form of group discussions and activities. In class assignments cannot be rescheduled or made up. Each assignment is worth 20 points. There will be a 20-point quiz on Friday of Week 2.

ETHNOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION: Beginning in Week 7, students will begin presenting their ethnographic research into McDonaldization. This will be based on original fieldwork done with a partner. Presentations will be approximately 15 minutes and will be worth 40 points.

GRADES: Final grades will be based on the standard scale (90%+ = A, etc.)
In class assignments - 60 points
Quiz - 20 points
Ethnographic Presentation – 40 points
Midterm exam -100 points
Final exam- 100 points
Participation- 20 points.
You start the quarter with 0 points and accumulate them with each successful project.

CLASS SCHEDULE (a work in progress, subject to change)
M= McDonaldization of Society, F= Fast Food Nation (M1= Chapter 1 of McDonaldization of Society, F2= Chapter 2 of Fast Food Nation)

Week 1: Introduction & syllabus, M1-2, F intro & 1
Week 2: M3-4, F2, QUIZ on Friday
Week 3: M5-6
Week 4: M7, F4, In Class Assignment 1 on Friday
Week 5: M8, F5, MIDTERM EXAM on Friday
Week 6: M9, F6, In Class Assignment 2 on Friday
Week 7: F7, Presentations begin, No class 11/11
Week 8: F8, In Class Assignment 3 on Friday
Week 9: F9, No class 11/26
Week 10: F10, Epilogue & Afterword, Loose Ends

The final exam is Wednesday, December 9 at 10:15am. This is a mandatory part of the course.