“The fascination of sociology lies in the fact that its perspective makes us see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives” (Peter Berger, Invitation to Sociology). In this course we will rediscover society and our place in it by learning to apply the theories and scientific tools of sociology. In the end you will be better able to recognize how biographies reflect the times and places in which people live.
In this course we will examine society with a specific focus on the problems inherent in existing institutional structures. We will examine how the institutions themselves create issues that affect groups of people in their daily lives, such as the nature of war, drug use, domestic violence, and crime. In order to do this we must understand what forces transform a social issue into a social problem. We will rely on logic and theory to guide us through this process. My main goal for this class is to instill in each of you a sense as to what problems arise in our society and how to deconstruct complex issues into their component parts.
In this course we take a historical view in examining the role of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class in our society. We explore the social meanings of these social statuses and how they affect us in our daily lives as well as in our group memberships. We also explore the role of intersectionality and its usefulness in understanding the combination of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexuality on our sense of self, thoughts, and actions. Although we cannot experience life directly as a member of another race, we will gain insight into the lives and experience of other races as well as our own race(s).
This course provides an introduction to the study of crime. The first part of the class surveys major themes in criminology and explores the complexities of crime data and crime trends. The second section examines theoretical perspectives and empirical research on the causes of crime and criminality. The final section uses the tools of criminological inquiry to analyze three contemporary issues: mass incarceration, racial profiling, and the collateral consequences of criminal conviction.
This course will explore the dynamics of urban life in a critical introduction to urban sociology. Cities have become the dominant form of social organization and while they can satisfy a wide variety of human desires, they are also beguiled by crime, poverty, exploitation, and pollution. Consequently, we will view the city as simultaneously a social, cultural, and political-economic phenomenon. The course introduces a host of urban THEORIES to help make sociological sense of a variety of issues, such as why people move to the city and what they find; the city’s enabling and constraining qualities; the city as a nexus of ethnic, racial, and class relations and conflicts; the city as a locus of poverty, low-wage work, crime, and violence; as well as strategies of urban development, revitalization, and gentrification.
This course will expose you to the theoretical issues and empirical research related to the criminal justice system. A wide range of topics will be covered. You will learn about perspectives on law, deviance and crime, justice, penal social control, and the key criminal justice institutions in the U.S. Emphasis is placed on how the criminal justice system operates and how justice and morality guide the criminal justice system. After completing this course, you will be able to demonstrate a thorough sociological understanding of the American criminal justice system.
The primary goal of this course is to provide you with the skills necessary to understand, compute, analyze, and interpret introductory-level statistics. This course also aims to provide you with an understanding and appreciation of quantitative sociological research by honing your ability to be critical consumers of statistical information presented in other classes, the media, politics, workplaces, and throughout our daily lives. I hope you will leave this class understanding why knowing about statistics is a vital element of being an engaged citizen, appreciating the relationship between statistical techniques and substantive claims about the way the world works, and feeling capable of interacting with statistical information in your daily life.
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This course combines foundational sociological theories with related and influential empirical studies, to help enhance: 1. your mastery of specific sociological theories, 2. your understanding of their contextual relevance, 3. and your ability to put them into practice. While we begin by profiling the major classical theories in sociology, a large part of the course is dedicated to assessing more contemporary theoretical contributions that address ongoing and systemic issues like racism, gender inequality, intersectionality and consumer behavior. The course supplements assigned readings with videos, news articles and other supporting material to help you develop a theoretical mindset that will enable you to critique, assess and help furnish solutions for social problems that you encounter in everyday life.
This course provides an overview of socio-legal thought and legal processes. Major topics include theories of legal obedience; debates on the transformative power of law; jurisprudence; lawyers, judges, and courts; and deterrent and labeling effects of legal sanctions. Theory will be applied to real-world topics such as immigration, death penalty, same-sex marriage, and the propensity to sue. Students draw on course material to create a legal memo, a reflection paper, and a one-minute video.
This course examines the social and psychological factors influencing individual delinquency patterns. Emphasis is on prevention and rehabilitative programs and the role of community agencies such as social service agencies, juvenile courts, and youth authorities. We examine courts intervention in structuring the scope of law governing juvenile justice systems, rights of the juveniles in adjudication proceedings, and criminalization of youth in schools through the roles of School Resources Officers and school administrators.