

SOCIOLOGY 491
SEMINAR FOR DISCUSSION GROUP LEADERS IN
THE FRESHMAN SEMINAR PROGRAM

Class meets Mondays, 12:30 - 2:20, in Saunders Hall 226

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This is a 6 credit course and consent of instructor (or the sociology department undergraduate advisor) is crucial.

Participation in this seminar is among the highest honors bestowed on sociology majors. The concomitant responsibility is to help a group of freshmen develop their sociological imagination, as general education and as invitation to become sociology majors. There are three major obligations:

First is to meet twice weekly with a section of some ten freshmen in Sociology 100, Introduction to Sociology, guiding their discussions of text readings and the data of current events. Part of that process is to monitor participation, develop and grade quizzes or other assessment instruments, and respond to short essays. Those will be the evidence for recommending to the supervising professor a course grade for each Soc 100 student. (Leaders will keep a journal, including class records, discussion notes, quiz drafts, etc.)

Second is to participate in the weekly seminar of leaders. We will deal with 1) general understanding of sociological content, 2) group process issues arising from the leader role, discussion interaction, and individual problems of the freshmen students, and 3) educational matters relating to curriculum and assessment. (A seminar paper, and associated readings, will be assigned to each Soc 491 student; the theme will be negotiated to apply to each individual's interests and goals.)

Third is to serve as a most visible segment of sociology majors. This seminar might speak to the Department faculty on behalf of other majors, about the strengths and weaknesses of the sociology program. We should consider our relations to the Undergraduate Studies Committee, the Sociology Club, the tutors serving Soc 100 Self-Study section, Alpha Kappa Delta, the Hawaii Sociological Association, et alia.

TEXTS: The major Introduction to Sociology textbook, plus studyguide and instructors' handbook will be given to each leader. Leaders are asked to subscribe to Newsweek, and a weekly study guide will be provided. We will also require, read, and discuss: This Book Is Not Required, third edition, by Inge Bell, Bernard McGrane, and John Gunderson, Pine Forge Press, 2005

SOC 100, SECTIONS 301-308, FRESHMAN SEMINARS, COURSE DESCRIPTION

THE COURSE DESCRIPTION AS IT APPEARS IN THE "UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA CATALOG, 2010-11" PAGE 492:

SOC 100 Introduction to Sociology (3 credits)
Basic social relationships, social structures, and processes.

THE COURSE DESCRIPTION EXTENDED....

Sociology 100, sections 301-308, Introduction to Sociology, Freshman Seminar Sections

These sections are limited to freshmen.

As introductory sociology this course has the goal of developing for each student a "sociological imagination," that is, an ability to link the personal situation of each individual to the social patterns of community and society. These sections are held in the freshman seminar format, wherein students take the explicit responsibility of learning from and for one another, so class members will have the opportunity to develop some aspects of that community and society right in our own classroom. To achieve these ends we will examine and explain basic concepts, theories, and strategies of sociological analysis, and apply them to issues in our backgrounds as well as in the current events of our personal and public lives. Further, we will examine the place of intention in social life, and how people consciously and unconsciously construct social realities.

This course is designed as a seminar and enrollment is restricted to not more than ten students in a section. No formal lectures will be presented. Instead, the seminar leader (with close supervision on the part of the professor in charge) will be responsible for organizing each day's session (although some of that will be delegated to the students). Students are expected to attend classes regularly and to demonstrate that they have kept up with assignments by active and informed participation in discussions; attendance and participation will be monitored. Final grading is made by the professor in charge, on the advice and recommendation of the student leader.

> Required texts:

- > Anthony Giddens, Mitchell Duneier, Richard Appelbaum, and Deborah Carr,
Essentials of Sociology, Second Edition, W.W. Norton & Co., 2008.
- > The Honolulu Star-Advertiser preceding each class.

TO: THE STUDENTS IN SOCIOLOGY 100, FRESHMAN SEMINARS

FROM: MICHAEL WEINSTEIN, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AND
THE PROFESSOR OF THIS COURSE

The "structure*" and "organization*" of our class contrast remarkably with the other sections of introductory sociology, and indeed with most university courses. You will be led by another student and this letter may be the only manifestation of the professor who will certify your course credit. Here I would like to lay out some of my own understandings of what we are about, a little "sociological analysis" to invite you to place yourselves consciously into the process of what this class becomes.

In some ways Freshman Seminars (FS) is a program derived from the student "social movements*" of the 1960s and even the 1930s. Their main point, over-simplified, is that the students themselves, not the professors, not the curriculum, not even the knowledge and information of the larger culture, should be the focus of the university. That is very controversial to say, and it is not at all clear that very many people -- even on campus, maybe even in our class -- agree. There continues to be a debate among sociology faculty, locally and nationally, over whether this format is an adequate way to have students learn sociology. Some of them argue that it would be more efficient and effective to provide lectures by professors, or computerized individual study exams, or social research laboratories. Maybe so. You should know that it took some special efforts to keep FS alive in recent years and we cannot assume that Sociology 100 at UH-M will remain part of FS, or that indeed FS itself will continue. On the other hand, you may be leaders of the student movement of a new generation who reassert the idea that students have the greatest stake in the future of the society, and that you insist on taking responsibility for it. Exactly what this means is pretty open, something we might work on this semester.

You may realize there are other, less ambiguous, less stressful ways to learn the terminology and principles of academic sociology. Many professors and textbooks will tell you the basics straight-out and are willing to examine you on them; we can even find some handbooks and "quick charts" and outlines.

The authors of our text have their own truths about sociology. These are all useful, and interesting -- and different! A key point of our course is that students will have to come to your own understanding of what you are studying as sociology, and why. And then, how will you convince yourselves, one another, and me (as the usually disembodied professor) that you should have a grade and three credits toward your bachelor's degree for this experience? (How can I convince my colleagues and the UH administration? Can we apply these questions to our other courses?)

There are facts you need to keep in mind: The State of Hawaii and the University of Hawaii always have serious budget problems. There was a

two-week faculty strike in April 2001; we have a fairly new UH President; and of course there was September 11, 2001. Leaders and members of all "institutions*," especially the country, the state, and the university, are reconsidering purposes and priorities. One of the main points of this letter, and of our course, is that this is about us in a number of important ways, so that what happens to UH and Hawaii and America will have to be themes in our classes. Sociology students have to pay attention to what is going on in the world anyway, as we get our data from our immediate personal environments as well as local, national, and universal contexts. I am proposing that we view current events by analyzing them with a "sociological imagination*."

The student leaders of our sections are wrestling with their own versions of these issues. They are not "the teacher," even as there are expectations and social pressures to have them "play that role*." They are your fellow students and colleagues. Give them a break. This could be the most important class of your whole undergraduate career, if it convinces you to take responsibility for what happens in this class, and in your life beyond. I'll be around, usually in my office at Saunders Hall 243, and I invite you to come talk with me, especially about how it's going. My office hours will be Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30 to 2:45, and by appointment; I expect to be around a lot. Feel free to call me in my office at 956-9135 (you can leave a message after the fourth ring), or at home at 737-5809 (between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m.), or by FAX 956-3707, or by e-mail: michaelw@hawaii.edu.

It should be an exciting semester!

signed/ Michael G. Weinstein

p.s. Words in this letter marked "*" are key sociological concepts you will learn about. Ask as soon as you are curious.