

WESTMONT COLLEGE
SOC 001: Introduction to Sociology

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or by appointment

Commented [b1]: Dr. Kent's syllabus is being used for template purposes, but all materials related to JRD will also be used in courses taught by Drs. Song, Whitnah, and Jirek. In the event that these other instructors wish to change JRD materials, these materials will be *substantially similar* and always *replaced*, not *dropped*.

The function of sociology, as of every science, is to reveal that which is hidden.

-Pierre Bourdieu

COURSE PURPOSE

Whenever you meet someone that is “different” than you, it’s a safe bet that without even thinking about it you formulate a reason for that difference. *Well, he’s from California, no wonder!* you might say. Or, *She’s pretty religious, so of course she would think that!* We instinctively recognize that a person’s social environment influences his or her personality, beliefs, and attitudes. A person’s sex, religion, age, race/ethnicity, education...all these things matter. But *how* do they matter? The field of sociology explores how social environments shape people—and how people shape their social environments.

This introductory course is meant to help you develop a “sociological imagination,” a learned perspective that will help you understand why and how the world is the way it is, as well as why and how you are who you are. Questions this course may help you answer are: *Where and how do I fit into society? Why is there inequality in society? Is there a way for me to make the world a better place?* Sociology is ultimately about “complicating the ordinary” – taking the everyday world that we often take for granted, and identifying the hidden forces, institutions, and mechanisms that shape our society for good or for ill. This is a field of study concerned about justice, and my goal is that our time together will help you develop a reflective, compassionate, critical, and biblically informed way of thinking and living.

Commented [b2]: Modified from existing syllabus.

This course fulfills two general education requirements: (1) Understanding Society; and (2) Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity on Biblical and Theological Grounds.

Understanding Society engages students in the task of understanding the interplay among individuals, groups, institutions, cultural norms, public policies, and more. Students will be taught to examine society from different theoretical viewpoints and identify how social structure shapes individual attitudes, beliefs, and values – and vice versa. The Understanding Society GE employs the following student learning outcome:

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- *Students will apply appropriate foundational theories to analyze social, political, economic, and/or cultural phenomena.*

Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity on Biblical and Theological Grounds engages students in the task of understanding historical and structural patterns that have created and sustained a variety of injustices in our society, particularly the injustice of structured racism. Students will be encouraged to develop a robust biblical and theological framework enabling them to imagine and embody possible individual and communal responses. The JRD GE holds the following student learning outcomes:

- *Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways.*
- *Students will identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God's loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.*

Commented [b3]: Added to modified syllabus.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Converse in foundational sociological language—including theory and methodology—in order to explore, analyze, and understand social structures and relationships.
2. Articulate how diverse perspectives, including ethnicity, culture, religion, and gender shape the social experience.
3. Identify sources of power, oppression, and discrimination as they affect social structures and marginalized people groups.
4. Discuss biblical and theological perspectives, texts, and values as they relate to race and racism in the United States.
5. Connect personal beliefs and convictions to the sociological enterprise.

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REQUIRED RESOURCES

Benokraitis, Nijole V. 2016. SOC 6 (6th edition). Cengage Learning.

Edmondson, Christina and Chad Brennan. 2022. *Faithful Anti-racism: Moving Past Talk to Systemic Change*. InterVarsity Press.

Commented [b5]: Added to course materials for JRD

Johnson, Allan G. 2014. *The Forest and the Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise* (3rd edition). Temple University Press.

Additional materials will be supplied through Canvas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Sociological Imagination Papers (2): Over the semester you will produce two 4-page (1,000 word) papers (described at end of syllabus). These are not research papers, but will require some kind of “gathering” of information in order to complete. These papers will be uploaded to Canvas using standard font, 1” margins, double spacing and should include a cover page with word count. 10 points will be deducted for each day late. If you would like assistance in improving your writing, please make an appointment with the **writing center** <https://www.westmont.edu/writers-corner>

Field Experiments (2): One of the most fun and interesting parts of being a sociologist is when you have the opportunity to do field research. For this course you will participate in two quasi-field experiments throughout the term. For each one you will report the details of your experiment, including: 1) what you expected the experience to be like, 2) what you did, and 3) how you/others reacted to the experience. Field experiments will be assigned in class and details will be given at that time.

Quizzes: Unannounced quizzes may be given. These will cover reading and lecture materials as a way of helping you remain accountable. Quiz questions are likely to show up again on exams. The lowest quiz score from the semester will be dropped.

Exams: Two exams will be given (mid-term and final). Each will be cumulative in an effort to help you draw connections between the important theories, figures and topics we discuss together. Sociology is all about the interconnected nature of human society, and exams won’t be any different. Format for exams will vary, but you should expect a mix of multiple choice and short answer along with an occasional twist. No early final exams will be given unless they are covered under the College’s final exam rescheduling policy (see <https://www.westmont.edu/office-registrar/final-examination-policies>).

Reading Journal (*The Forest and the Trees, Faithful Anti-racism*): For each assigned chapter of these books you will write a journal response of at least 250 words. There is no required format, but you must show evidence of having read the material. Suggested prompts for response include (but are not limited to) the following:

- What is your overall evaluation?
- How can the piece be summarized in 3 or 4 sentences?
- What is so obvious it almost doesn’t need saying?
- What is so hidden it needs illumination?
- What remains unclear or confusing?
- What is motivating the writer?
- What theoretical or practical insight is the writer driving home?
- Where does the argument work?
- Where does the argument falter?
- How does this piece tie into your existing knowledge?
- What holes in your knowledge does the piece reveal?
- What connections can you make with other readings, courses, etc.?
- What kind of theoretical or practical implications are raised?

Commented [b6]: Students will respond via journals to the entire *Faithful Anti-racism* text.

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- How are cultural, social, political, and structural factors are involved?
- How does this piece align or misalign with your own history, perspective, values, etc.?
- What does your gut tell you about the subject matter? Your brain?
- How this does this reading engage your faith and/or your understanding of the Bible?

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NB: Try to be concise with your writing so you don't waste a lot of words on fluff. The journals should show clear evidence of having read all the pieces. This could mean naming core arguments, raising important questions, interacting with other readings, etc. Journals are graded pass/fail and are due when the assigned chapter is due. Ten journals are required, so you may skip a total of six.

Participation and Attendance: Participation and attendance are two different things, and both will count toward your final grade. A participating student is one who is actively engaged in the collective learning process; an attending student shows up. Please do both. While I know that speaking up in class is hard for many of you, I will provide times of reflection that allow space to gather your thoughts. For full credit you *must* volunteer thoughts during class discussion from time to time. Full attendance but no verbal participation will result in 7 out of 10 for A&P grade. Grades will go up or down depending on missed classes or increased verbal participation.

GRADING

Papers:	30%	A = 93-100%	C+ = 77-79%
Exams:	20%	A- = 90-92%	C = 73-76%
Quizzes:	15%	B+ = 87-89%	C- = 70-72%
Reading Journals	15%	B = 83-86%	D = 60-69%
Field Experiments:	10%	B- = 80-82%	F = below 60%
Participation/Attendance:	<u>10%</u> 100%		

POLICIES

Classroom behavior: Some topics of discussion we will engage in are highly contentious (e.g., race). In order to have productive and meaningful conversations, it is essential that all class members ask themselves (and one another) what it means to engage in conversation marked by love and mutual respect...even when different viewpoints are taken. I ask that all students attempt, when appropriate, to set aside their own interpretive lens and activate their "sociological imagination" in order to see things from a different perspective. Ultimately, just as God reconciles us to himself through Christ, we ought to be reconciled with one another. That doesn't mean we always come to the same conclusion, but it does involve a legitimate attempt to listen and see from another angle. Jesus set this example when he "became like us" (Hebrews 4:15).

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Attendance: Your presence in the classroom is both desired and expected, and attendance will be noted. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to learn what you miss. You should plan to contact your student colleagues for needed information—unless absence is due to a critical and unavoidable cause—in which case I am happy to help get you back up to speed.

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Make-up work: Quizzes cannot be made up (attendance is important!), but the lowest score will be dropped. Exams may be made up only with documentation from a physician or upon the event of a family death. Papers will be reduced by one letter grade for each weekday late. Journals and field experiments are due at the beginning of class (one class period late will result in half credit; no credit will be granted after that).

Academic Integrity & Artificial Intelligence Tools

Westmont College holds all students responsible for maintaining academic integrity. Plagiarism, lying, unauthorized use of AI assistance, & cheating are all examples of academic integrity violations. In the event of any violation, I reserve the right to assign whatever grade for the course I deem appropriate, including F, without regard to the student's accumulated points. Violations of academic integrity will be handled in accordance with the College's policies. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the policies of the College regarding academic integrity and to avoid violating these policies. You will likely find this website helpful:

<http://www.westmont.edu/offices/provost/Plagiarism/PlagiarismStudentInformation.html>.

Regarding AI-generated text, it is unacceptable to submit this in the place of original academic work. By and large, AI circumvents the intellectual labor which produces independent and thoughtful citizens. A student should seek permission from me *prior* to an assignment submission if considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task.

Electronics: Note-taking for this class will be done with pen and paper; no electronic technology will be permitted, including cell phones and laptops. Some types of tablets may be acceptable, depending on their functionality. We will talk more about my reasoning for this in class together.

Accommodations: Students with a documented disability in need of learning accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Services. Please visit <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability/> or write Seth Miller, Director of Disability Services (semiller@westmont.edu) for further assistance.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Getting into Sociology	Due
8/29:	
8/31: Mills, "The Promise" - Canvas	
9/2: Johnson, Introduction and Chapter 1	Journal 1
Week 2: Theory (SOC6 Ch. 1)	
9/5:	
9/7:	
9/9: Ritzer, "McDonaldization of Society" - Canvas	
Week 3: Methods (SOC6 Ch. 2)	
9/12:	
9/14: Kent - "R/S and Gender Trajectories" - Canvas	
9/16: Edmondson & Brennan, Chapters 1/2 (Film: 7 Up)	Journal 2
Week 4: Culture (SOC6 Ch. 3)	
9/19: Johnson, Chapter 2	Journal 3
9/21:	
9/23:	Field Exp. 1
Week 5: Socialization & Interaction (SOC6 Ch. 4 & Ch. 5 - thru 5-4)	
9/26: Edmondson & Brennan, Chapters 3/4 (chs 1-4 discussion)	Journal 4
9/28: Johnson, Chapter 5	Journal 5
9/30:	
Week 6: Power, Crime & Deviance (SOC6 Ch. 7)	
10/3:	Paper 1
10/5:	
10/7: Edmondson & Brennan, Chapter 5	Journal 6
Week 7: Social Stratification & Gender (SOC6 Ch. 8)	
10/10: Fall break - no class	
10/12: Johnson, Chapter 3 (Film: One percent)	Journal 7
10/14: West & Zimmerman, "Doing Gender" - Canvas	
Week 8: Gender & Sexuality (SOC6 Ch. 9)	
10/17: Martin & Hummer, "Fraternalities & Rape on Campus" - Canvas	
10/19: Mid-term exam review	
10/21: Mid-term exam	
Week 9: Race & Ethnicity (SOC6 Ch. 10)	
10/24: DuBois, "Jesus Christ in Texas" - Canvas	
10/26: Johnson, Chapter 7 (Film: Race)	Journal 8
10/28: Edmondson & Brennan, Chapter 6 (Kid's Guide to Race)	Journal 9
Week 10: Religion (SOC6 Ch. 13 - begin 13-4)	
10/31:	
11/2: Tisby, Chapter 7	Journal 10
11/4: Whitehead & Perry, <i>Taking America Back for God</i> intro & Strait, "Let's Talk About Christian Nationalism" - Canvas	
Week 11: Health & Medicine (SOC6 Ch. 14)	
11/7: Mental health day - no class	
11/9: Loftus, "My Neighbor's Health is my Business" - Canvas	

Commented [b9]: This foundational week includes framing the individual/structural dialectic. It is used as a sustaining frame for understanding social structure and the mutually reinforcing power of individual and structural agency.

Commented [b10]: This film examines the lives of 7 year old children in the U.S., demonstrating radically different life trajectories by race.

Commented [b11]: This full class period will be dedicated to discussing chapters 1-4 of *Faithful Anti-racism*.

Commented [b12]: The section contains discussion of how power operates and manifests in structures that result in racial inequality, whether intentional or not.

Students engage in an exercise that asks them to reflect on how power is exercised within churches, crucially highlighting the way our religious institutions are capable of creating and enforcing racial inequality, just like other social institutions.

Commented [b13]: A full week dedicated to race and ethnicity. The week highlights historical constructions of race, myths of genetic difference, and ways social construction of race enables abuse. We refer explicitly to *Faithful Anti-racism* as part of this discussion, as well as several biblical texts. We also read the compelling "Jesus Christ in Texas" by W.E.B. DuBois, based on his research into the Jesse Washington lynching in Waco, TX.

Commented [b14]: These readings, while ostensibly focused on religion and politics, touch on differences between whites and Blacks and how beliefs about church and state manifest in very different sets of social attitudes and intended policies.

Commented [b15]: This week includes material on race as a social determinant of health, demonstrating cumulative disadvantage for Black members of our society.

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11/11: Edmondson & Brennan, Chapters 7/8 (Film: Unnatural Causes)	Journal 11
Week 12: Media, Population & Environment (SOC6 Ch. 15)	
11/14:	Paper 2
11/16: Johnson, Chapter 4	Journal 12
11/18: Edmondson & Brennan, Chapter 9 (Film: 21 Up)	Journal 13
Week 13: Food	
11/21: (Film: Fed Up)	
11/23,25: <i>Thanksgiving Break</i>	
Week 14: Technology & Social Change (SOC6 Ch. 16 - thru 16-2)	
11/28: Johnson, Epilogue; Postman - "Judgment of Thamus" - Canvas	Journal 14
11/30: Twenge "Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?"; Kristian "Can Scripture Compete with Scrolling?" -Canvas	Field Exp. 2
12/2: Edmondson & Brennan, Chapter 10	Journal 15
Week 15: Social Change & Spiritual Structure	
12/5: Edmondson & Brennan, Chapter 11	Journal 16
12/7: Wink, "The Powers That Be" - on Canvas	
12/9: Final exam review	
Final Exam: Fri, Dec 16, 12:00-2:00 p.m.	

Commented [b16]: This second film in the 7-Up series powerfully illustrates life chances as they relate to race by following kids from age 7 to 21.

Commented [b17]: While not directly focused on race, this compellingly challenges students to think about the relative power of Scripture, religious commitments, etc. and social media in their lives.

Commented [b18]: Our final class session is spent discussing a theological treatise that combines theological and sociological principles. Wink asks readers to imagine existing social structures as "powers and principalities" that: 1) are meant to serve God's purpose, 2) are fallen, and 3) can be redeemed. Much of his discussion is based on narratives about apartheid South Africa.

SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION PAPERS

Please review general paper requirements stated in the Course Requirements section prior to submission.

P1. Visual Sociology (Due Oct. 3)

Typically sociologists use methods such as interviews, focus groups, surveys and participant-observation for their work. Another methodology is visual sociology. For this project your assignment is to create a self-portrait *without* the self. Render your life into the sociological via images of objects, places, activities, ideas, values, emotions and dreams...all without you in them. Submit 8-12 photographs (taken by you) with your written reflection (you may place the photos within the text or all at the end). Describe how the photographs tell about you: who you are, how you are situated in the social world, what is important to you, what you love, what defines you, how your environment expands or restricts your opportunities. Describe yourself in *rich sociological detail* - making an effort to dig a bit below the surface - while incorporating the photos into your narrative. Label the photos (photo 1, photo 2 and so on) and refer to them as such in the paper. Photos should be thoughtfully composed, visually arresting, and sociologically compelling. The photos themselves are part of the grade, so take good ones! Note: Photos do not count towards paper length. You must include word count on title page.

P2. Scientific Eavesdropping (Due Nov. 14)

Usually it's not polite to sit and listen in on peoples' conversations, but this time I'm telling you to! Go somewhere you expect to hear a lot of conversation and take notes about what you see and hear for one hour. Describe the environment and tell me where you are. Make a note of who is there and who comes and goes by giving me a total N (i.e. the number of people in the space over the hour) as well as a breakdown by sex and race/ethnicity. Then make rich observations about the kinds of interactions you observe—the *situation* is the unit of analysis! In other words, in this particular situation, how do people behave? Does the setting influence behavior? Are there particular scripts people tend to follow? Does anyone break a script or act in a way that violates a norm for that setting? Be sure to incorporate a variety of microsociology terms and concepts, including dramaturgical analysis. As you do so, reflect upon the power of this particular location and the people within it to shape social interaction (p.s. Wear a mask if necessary and do this in a safe location!)