

SOC 201.A-ONLINE
Introduction to Social Sciences
Summer 2020



Time: Wednesdays & Thursdays, 8:40-11:30am

Location: online on Microsoft Teams

Instructor: Dr. Fiona Gedeon Achi

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Office hours: By appointment via Microsoft Teams, Skype, or Zoom

Course Description: What is social science? What does it mean to conduct social science research? When and why did the project to scientifically study “society” arise? How do the social sciences differ from other ways of knowing the world, especially human beings and their “social” relationships? In this course, we will learn about how thinkers and scholars have thought about “the social world”, both in the past and today. For this reason, each week will be dedicated to a specific social science discipline: sociology, economics, anthropology, political science, and more. We will learn about the history of that specific discipline, the methods it uses to know the world, and understand what it has become today through contemporary case studies. In this course therefore, we will not only look at what social scientists can teach us about ourselves and our universe, we will also examine what it means to “know” and acquire tools to assess the potential and limits of the knowledge we hold as students, engaged citizens, or social science scholars.

Teaching philosophy: My philosophy is to teach interesting and challenging material to my students, while allowing them to learn at their own pace. My intention is not to teach truths or facts to students which they can learn by heart or revise just before an exam, but rather to bring them to observe and think differently about the world around us, in order to appreciate its complexity and nuances. I recognize that everyone will come to this class with different backgrounds and knowledges and I believe that such diversity is very valuable to the classroom. I therefore assign limited readings to allow ample space for discussions and understanding key arguments. In turn, I expect that students be committed to the course and

fulfill course requirements in due time. This includes close readings of the texts, participating actively and respectfully in class discussions, and submitting assignments by given deadlines.

Course objectives:

By the end of this course, students will have:

1. Developed conceptual tools to reflect analytically on contemporary challenges related to politics, the economy, social issues, and more
2. Gained a good understanding of the purpose of social science in general and of its diverse fields (sociology, anthropology, economics, etc.)
3. Learned how to critically engage with social science research, by deriving the methods and questions used and conclusions and assumptions produced by diverse texts, and engaging in collective discussions and debate about them
4. Improved communication skills in English through written assignments and in-class discussions

Evaluation and Grading:

Reading reflection (20%): You will choose one reading of the course which you will comment before the class for which the reading is due. For example, if you choose the reading from *Poor Economics*, your reading reflection is due at the latest one day before class, on July 7 at 9am on LMS. While you should explain the main arguments, questions, and research methods of the text, the reading reflection is NOT primarily a summary of the reading. Rather, you should critically examine the text. For example, you can comment on whether you think the data provided effectively supports the arguments made by the author. Finally, you should provide a few questions that the text triggered for you, perhaps even including what you wish the text had discussed but didn't. The length of the reading reflection should be between 250 and 300 words. You are responsible for making sure that you submit this assignment and do so on time; no late assignment accepted.

Midterm exam (25%): The midterm exam will include one or more essay questions, will be distributed in our online class **on July 16 and will be due at 6pm the same day on LMS.**

Interview questionnaire assignment (20%): For this assignment, you will select a topic that you want to learn about and you will choose a real or imaginary person that you could interview as a way to conduct research and know more about your topic of interest. You will draft an interview questionnaire with questions you wish you could ask that person in order to capture her perspective and experience concerning your topic. The questionnaire should contain at least 6 questions.

For example, you could choose as a topic how the coronavirus pandemic has been managed in France and that you wished you could interview the French prime minister. Questions you might ask the prime minister might include: what were the first steps that the French government undertook to curb the epidemic, and why? How did you determine the appropriate lockdown measures? What were your previous experiences with managing such a health crisis? Another example is that you might want to learn about how the construction of the new Istanbul-Izmir highway has affected people who live next to the highway, and you could choose to interview a farmer whose land has been claimed to build the highway. In this case, questions might include: how did you feel when you first learned about the highway construction project? In which ways did you have to modify your professional activity since the highway has been built?

Since you want to learn about people's perspectives and views in a detailed you're your questionnaire should not contain questions that be answered by a simple "yes" or "no". For instance, instead of asking: "did you feel concerned when you heard about the highway construction project?", you can ask "how did you feel when you first learned about the highway construction project?" This would allow your interviewee to reply in the way they want and to provide details of their experience. ****Due August 7 by 5pm, on LMS. No late assignment accepted.**

Final exam (35%): The final exam will be cumulative. It will cover readings, lectures, discussion, and films shown in class as well as course materials. The exam will include: (a) Multiple choice, matching, and short answer questions and; (b) Short essay questions (you will choose from several possible questions). The exam will take place during the final examination period and the exact date of the exam will be determined by Student Services. It will take place on Microsoft Teams or Zoom, to be determined later.

The following values will be used to determine final grades:

Final Average of All Coursework	Letter Grade Equivalent
85-100%	A
80-84%	A-
75-79%	B+
70-74%	B
65-69%	B-
60-64%	C+
55-59%	C
53-54%	D+
50-52%	D
Below 50	F

***Important Notes:**

- It is mandatory to keep your video turned on throughout the class time on Microsoft Teams.
- Questions from students and in-class discussions are very valuable to productive learning and an interactive class environment. Please ask your questions orally (not using the chat). Do not worry about your level of English, what is important is that you participate.
- Students who do not take the midterm exam are not eligible to take the final exam.
- How to read for this class: You are expected to read the day's reading in advance of the class section for which it is assigned and to think about them carefully. It is fully normal to experience difficulties with the assigned readings and have many questions about them. Write them down and bring them to class, so that we can address them together. Also, please have the course text with you as we will refer to them in class. Texts, even those written by well-known scholars, should not be taken as final truths. Rather, I encourage you to actively engage with the readings for this course. Pay attention to what new ideas

you learn, what questions and feelings the texts generate for you, and what more you wish to learn now that you have read this text.

- To participate in this course, your technical system must meet the following criteria:
 - A computer with at least i3 Processor with 4GB RA
 - A reliable internet access robust enough to watch online videos or movies (i.e. at least 8 mbps internet access)
 - A fully-functioning web camera and microphone to transmit your audio and video (Web cameras and microphones of laptops, or external equipment for desktop computers can be used for this purpose).
 - During the remote examinations, your voice, face, identification details, and the physical room where you are taking the examination will be recorded. Please direct any questions or concerns you may have about privacy to Guray Erkol (guray.erkol@ozyegin.edu.tr).
 - If you have any technical difficulties or questions, please contact the Solution Center.
- This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Any and all changes will be announced on LMS or via e-mail and students are responsible for checking e-mail daily.

Class Schedule & Readings

Please note that this schedule is subject to change

*Mandatory readings are available on LMS

Week 1 – Introduction

June 24 – Welcome

June 25 – What is social science?

Week 2 – Sociology

July 1 – The emergence of sociology

*Reading: Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2008. “How Does It Feel to Be Black and Poor?” *In* Gang Leader for a Day, pp. 1-25.

July 2 – Sociological questions (inequality, class, race, and gender)

Week 3 – Economics

July 8 – The economic man and political economy

*Reading: Banerjee, Abhijit & Esther Duflo. 2011. “Top of the Class” in *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of The Way to Fight Global Poverty*.

July 9 – International development and the economics of poverty

**In-class video: “Social Experiments to Fight Poverty”

Week 4 – Midterm exam

July 15 – No class (holiday)

July 16 – ****Midterm: take-home exam**** - exam questions distributed in class, due at 6pm on LMS.

Week 5 – Anthropology

July 22 – Us and the other: the culture concept

*Readings: (to be confirmed) Le Marcis, Frédéric and Vinh-Kim Nguyen. 2015. An Ebola Photo Essay in *Limn, Issue 5: Ebola's Ecologies*.

& Livingstone, Julie. 2013. Revealed in the Wound. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. October 10, 2013 vol. 31 no. 29 3719-3720.

July 23 – Medical anthropology

**In-class film: To be determined

Week 6 – Psychology

July 29 - Tricky minds

*Reading: Ariely, Dan. 2008. "Introduction - How an Injury Led Me to Irrationality and to the Research Described Here", pp. xxi-xxxii & "Chapter 8 - Keeping Doors Open", p.139-154, in *Predictably Irrational*.

July 30 – No class (holiday)

Week 7 – Political Science & Geography

August 5 – The state, nationalism, and citizenship

*Reading: (to be confirmed) Baban, Feyzi, Suzan Ilcan, and Kim Rygiel. "Syrian refugees in Turkey: Pathways to precarity, differential inclusion, and negotiated citizenship rights." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43.1 (2017): 41-57.

August 6 – Space and movements

*****Interview questionnaire assignment due August 7 on LMS by 5pm*****

Week 8 – The invention of the social?

August 12 – Studying non-human things

*Reading: Raffles, Hugh. 2010. *Insectopedia* [Selections]

August 13 – The politics of social science research

*No readings

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