

SOC 110: Survey Sociology

Autumn 2016 • University of Washington

Instructor: Susan Pitchford

Overview

This course is an introduction to the field of sociology. It is designed to acquaint students with the ways sociologists use theory and research to understand the social world. In particular, the course aims to introduce students to the "sociological imagination," or the ability to see how our lives are shaped by the interplay of personal traits and actions on the one hand, and on the other, large-scale social forces outside ourselves. The course is divided into three main units. One focuses on education in the U.S., and asks whether our system promotes meritocracy and equal opportunity, or hinders them. In another, we examine globalization and global inequality. Here we ask why the gaps between wealthy and poor nations exists, why they persist, and how they affect real people in the global North and South. Finally, we have a unit on race and racism. We look at how "race" is understood, and the dynamics of prejudice and discrimination. Course goals include raising students' awareness of important global and domestic issues, and challenging them to consider how these issues affect them personally. We also use the material as an opportunity to think through these issues using the analytic tools sociology provides.

Role of Service-Learning in the Course

Students in this course are asked to engage the material, not only intellectually and analytically, but practically and personally. Service learning will be a major way of accomplishing that goal. Students will be asked throughout the course to reflect on how, in their work with community partners, they see people's lives affected by the interplay between their own actions and the social contexts in which they act. Working in organizations that offer tutoring and enrichment activities to young people will give students insight on the functioning of our education system. Students who work with partners that serve people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures will gain perspective on both globalization and race.

Assignments Related to Service-Learning

Course requirements include a weekly memo in which students are required to reflect on course material for that week and how their service learning experience relates to it. These weekly reflections are the basis for discussions in both class and quiz sections.

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