

**Sociology 150**  
**Sociological Social Psychology:**  
**Micro-social Processes and Macro-social Consequences**  
**University of California, Berkeley**  
**Fall 2014**

## Course Details

**Instructor:** Brian Powers  
**Email:** [brpowers@berkeley.edu](mailto:brpowers@berkeley.edu)  
**Phone:** (510) 642-4766 (messages)  
**Office:** 488 Barrows Hall  
**Office hours:** Wednesday, 3:15 – 4.30, Friday, 12 – 1.30, by appt. when feasible

**Lecture:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 2-3  
**Location:** 101 Morgan

**Required books:** O'Brien Jodi. *The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings on Social Psychology* Fifth Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA. Pine Forge-Sage, 2011. This volume is available at CAL Student Store

**Online readings:** Numerous items of required reading are available electronically at the course bSpace site ([bspace.berkeley.edu](http://bspace.berkeley.edu)) and through the UCB library's e-books collection ([site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/](http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/))

## Course Background

This course explores the nature of social action and some of the analytical approaches in interactionist and other schools of social psychology that have been devised to shed light on factors shaping human thinking and action. It seeks to fill in the gaps, sometimes striking, in sociological explanations for events and situations that rely on demonstrated correlations among impersonal variables. Within sociology, social psychology seeks to **answer process questions** concerning the ways and the reasons social forces affect social outcomes, often by affecting the thinking and action of individuals in society.

The course reviews several major analytical perspectives and products of investigations that use them. The strength and fruitfulness of concepts in the classical and theoretical writings are explored in relation to contemporary concerns about the durability of social bonds, organizations and collective behavior, gender and racial identities, social compliance and non-conformity, the structuring of identity and personality in workplaces, schools, and other institutional venues, the maintenance of a stable social order or the emergence of volatility, and the reasons behind obedience or the expression of conscience and defiance. In two data gathering projects students will explore individuals' experiences learning or acquiring some facets of their identities in relation to the ways the documented structure and observed practices of a specific social setting – a workplace, team, living situation, aspect of campus life, school, family, church, etc. -- shape individuals' thinking and action.

## Course Requirements

The instructor reserves the right to make modest, announced adjustments to the schedule of assignments, the weighting of assignments, and the schedule of readings.

Assignment	Handout date	Due date	Grade	Notes
1. Occasional one-page overnight quizzes	TBA	TBA	Part of 10% Participation Grade	1 page response to a prompt question based on a specific reading assignment(s) or course themes
2. Field Report 1 on a Direct, Observational Study of a Context Shaping Forms of Identity or Action	Week 2 M, September 8	Week 4 W, September 24	Part of 20% Research Grade	1-2 pages defining a plan for studying over the semester a social setting or process linked to the formation of a sociologically significant identity or forms of action
<b>3. Paper 1 Comparative Paper on Differences in the Acquisition of Sociologically Significant Social Identities</b>	Week 2 F, September 12	Week 7 F, October 17	20%	Comparison of the formative experiences and effects of social situations in the development in two individuals of two different forms of identity in a common category of identity. 5-7 pages based on interview data
4. Field Report 2  Report on First Five Interviews or First Three Observations	Week 6 M, October 6	Week 8 M, October 20	Part of 20% Research Grade	Status Report on Course Research Project: Early Field Observations
5. Field Report 3  Report on Second Five Interviews or Second Three Observations with Bibliography	Week 8 M, October 20	Week 10 W, November 5	Part of 20% Research Grade	Status Report on Course Research Project: Emerging Analytical Themes from the Field
6. Field Report 4  Preliminary Thesis Statement and Inventory of Data and	Week 10 W, November 5	Week 12 M, November 19	Part of 20% Research Grade	Status Report on Course Research Project: Thesis, Evidence, and your Argument

Bibliography				
<b>7. Paper 2 Analysis of Social Influences on Identity and Action</b>	Week 12 W, November 19	<b>RRR Week M, December 8</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>6-8 Page Paper</b> Report on a Field Study of Effects of a Social Context on Social Identity Formation
<b>8. Final Exam</b>	Week 14 W, December 3	<b>Thursday, December 18, 3 – 6 pm</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>Take home essays distributed/posted in the last week of classes.</b>

Note: Make sure your exam schedule does not conflict with obligations for other classes.

## Grading and Credit

**All requirements must be met for course credit. All assignments must be completed and submitted for this class. A missing assignment, even a quiz, will result in an “F” for the course.**

### *Participation*

Full credit for your participation grade requires:

- At least one visit to my office hours. You are welcome to visit alone or in a group. We may schedule occasional Sociological Chat Sessions. It is valuable to students and to my teaching to meet and chat with as many students as possible!! Think of this as an opportunity, and not a requirement!
- 
- At least three contributions to the bSpace forum discussions, one in each of three areas:
  - A response or comment that you post on course materials, including readings, lectures, or media.
  - A comment or response you post to another posting already up at a discussion.
  - A comment on an incident, topic, issue on campus or in the real world which you find sociologically interesting and to which you can apply sociological ideas.
- Several announced overnight quizzes covering course content, interpretation, and application of course readings, graded P/NP, will count toward the participation grade. They will not be surprise quizzes.

### *Grades*

Grades will be based exclusively on written work. Papers will be graded for their sociological reasoning, and not for writing mechanics or language skills per se, but students’ weaknesses in expository writing and inattention to details of presentation will be noted and can affect grades, especially when they obscure or weaken students’ sociological thinking.

Successful papers are original, well-organized, well-researched and well-supported, with ideas clearly expressed in solid prose. Papers submitted that literally reflect the guidelines of course assignments, even if they do so in a polished way, are considered “good work,” and can be expected to earn a grade of B. As an incentive for creative thinking and writing, grades higher than a B should reflect students’ original contribution to the course material, weaving together themes and material from different parts of the curriculum, reflecting students’

creativity, imagination, initiative, independent scholarship and special insights in ways that show initiative, diligence, and add value to the assignment.

## Course Materials

The majority of course readings will be found in in. *The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings on Social Psychology* Fifth Edition., by Jodi O'Brien (Thousand Oaks, CA. Pine Forge-Sage, 2011). It is available in the Cal Student Store. A copy will be made available on reserve in Moffitt.

Additional required materials will be made available at the course website at bspace in the RESOURCES folder.

Several items are available through the UCB library system's "e-books," which enable you to read digital versions of books on line through your calnet ID.

PowerPoint slides, lecture notes and study guides will be posted online. These will summarize and supplement lectures and conversations in class. These items will be posted at the "Resources" tab at the course site. Please use these materials to help integrate readings, lectures and class discussions in your understanding of the course.

## Course Schedule and Readings

Note: This segment of the syllabus is a map, not a train schedule. Lectures may fall out of sync with the schedule of assigned readings. Please read on schedule to manage the material assigned for the class.

### Week A The Influence of Others in Society

*Friday, August 29*

- Douglas Rushkoff, "Atmospherics" in *Coercion: Why We Listen to What They Say*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1999. Pp.73-110. Film

### Week 1: Sociology and Social Psychology – Forming Thought, Identity, and Action in Society

*Monday, September 1*

*LABOR DAY Holiday, No Class Sessions*

*Wednesday September 3*

- Jodi O'Brien, "Essay: What is Real?" (in O'Brien, pp. 2-10).
- O'Brien, "Learning the Script: Socialization" (in O'Brien, pp. 174 -188).

*Friday, September 5*

- Joel Charon, "The Perspective of Social Science," (in O'Brien, pp. 39-48).
- Dacher Keltner, *Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*. New York. Norton, 2009. "Love," pp. 199-224.

### Week 2: The Plasticity of the Self and the Centrality of Context

*Monday, September 8*

- Philip Zimbardo. *The Lucifer Effect and the Psychology of Evil. Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House, 2007.

*Wednesday, September 10*

- Takahiko Masuda and Richard E. Nisbett. “Attending Holistically Versus Analytically: Comparing the Context Sensitivity of Japanese and Americans.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 2001, Vol. 81, No. 5, 922-934.

*Friday, September 12*

- Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, “Socialization: The Internalization of Society.” (in O’Brien, pp. 189-192).
- Erving Goffman, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,” (in O’Brien, pp. 262-271).

### **Week 3: Language and Symbolic Communication and the Formation of the Self**

*Monday, September 15*

- Jodi O’Brien, *Essay: “Shared Meaning as the Basis of Humanness.”* (in O’Brien, pp. 50-69.)
- Ernst Cassirer, “The Symbol,” (in O’Brien, p. 84-86)

*Wednesday, September 17*

- George Herbert Mead. “The Self, the I, and the Me,” (in O’Brien, pp. 121-125).

*Friday, September 19*

- Eviatar Zerubavel, “Islands of Meaning.” (1991) (in O’Brien, pp. 11-27.)
- George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, “Metaphors We Live By,” (in O’Brien, pp. 87-97).
- Jodi O’Brien. “Who Am I? Developing Character,” (in O’Brien, pp. 108-120).

### **Week 4: Perceived, Imagined, and Digitally Mediated “Others” – Reference Groups and Digital Technologies Influence the Self**

*Monday, September 22*

- Charles Horton Cooley. “The Looking Glass Self,” (in O’Brien, pp. 126-128).
- Tamotsu Shibutani. “Reference Groups as Perspectives,” (O’Brien, pp. 192-198)

*Wednesday, September 24*

- Shenyang Zhao, “The Digital Self Through the Looking Glass of Telecopresent Others.” (in O’Brien, pp. 153-161).

*Friday, September 26*

- Sherry Turkle. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. NY Basic Books, 2011. Chapter 7, “Communion,” pp. 127-147.
- [FYI: Danah Boyd, *It’s Complicated: The Social Life of Networked Teens*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. (Available on campus through e-brary.)]

### **Week 5: Macro Social Developments and the Self: Hikikomori**

Monday, September 29

- Michael Zielenziger. *Shutting out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation*. New York. Vintage. 2006, pp. 15-38; 93-120; 121-145.

Wednesday, October 1

- Alan Teo (2010). "A New Form of Social Withdrawal in Japan: A Review of Hikikomori." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 56(2) pp. 178-185

Friday, October 3

- Howard S. Becker. "Becoming a Marijuana User," (in O'Brien, p.140-149).

## **Week 6: Learning and Doing "Gender:" Sex Roles and Identity**

Monday, October 6

- Michael Kimmel, *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men. Understanding the Critical Years Between 16 and 26*. New York: Harper Collins, 2008. pp 44-69.

Wednesday, October 8

- C. J. Pascoe. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley: UC Press, 2007, pp. 25-83.

Friday, October 10

- Rachel Simmons, *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls*, Orlando: Harvest, Harcourt, pp.155-176.

## **Week 7: Learning and Living a Socially Constructed Racial Identity**

Monday, October 13

- Herbert Blumer, (1958) "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position." *Pacific Sociological Review* 1, pp.3-7.
- Stanford M. Lyman and William A. Douglas, "Ethnicity: Strategies of Collective and Individual Impression Management." *Social Research* 40, Summer 1973, pp.348-359.

Wednesday, October 15

- Amir Marvasti, "Being Middle Eastern: Identity Negotiation in the Context of the 'War on Terror'." (in O'Brien, pp. 306-317).
- Pamela Perry, "Shades of White" (in O'Brien, pp. 198-218.)

Friday, October 17

- W.E.B. DuBois. "Double Consciousness and the Veil," (in O'Brien, pp. 474-478).

## **Week 8: Learning Emotions and Intimate Life in Society and Social Structure**

Monday, October 20

- Robin Simon, Donna Eder, and Cathy Evans. "The Development of Feeling Norms Underlying Romantic Love," (in O'Brien, p. 228-247).

Wednesday, October 22

- Nancy Scheper-Hughes. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 340-399.

Friday, October 24

- Jonathan Ned Katz, "The Invention of Heterosexuality," in Kathy Peiss, ed., *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002, pp. 348-355.

## **Week 9: Learning the Self in Organizations and Total Institutions**

- Monday, October 27

Erving Goffman, "The Moral Career of a Mental Patient," *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Chicago: Aldine, 1961, pp. 127-169.

Wednesday, October 29

- Susanna Kayzen, *Girl, Interrupted*. New York: Vintage. 1993. pp. 5-55.
- Angie Epifano, "An Account of Sexual Assault at Amherst College," *The Amherst Student*, October 17, 2012.

Friday, October 31

- Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975)*. Trans. Alan Sheridan New York: Vintage, 1979, 170-194.

## **Week 10: The Social Psychology of Workplaces and the Market**

Monday, November 3

- Joan P. Emerson, "Behavior in Private Places: Sustaining Definitions of Reality in Gynecological Examination," (in O'Brien, pp. 201-214).

Wednesday, November 5

- Arlie Hochschild, "The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling," (in O'Brien, pp. 320-324).

Friday, November 7

- Marie Jahoda, Paul Lazarsfeld, Hans Zeisel, *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community (1933)*, Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1971. "Responses to Deprivation" and "The Meaning of Time." Pp.45-77.
- Louis Uchitelle, *The Disposable American: Layoffs and their Consequences*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. pp. "The Consequences – Undoing Sanity," pp. 179 - 204.

## **Week 11: Communal Breakdown – Cohesion and Social Persecutions -- Salem and Elsewhere**

Monday, November 10

- Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*. New York: Knopf, 2002, pp. 232-251

Wednesday, November 12

- Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, pp. 295-313.

Friday, November 14

- Media and Discussion

## **Week 12: Compliance and Authority**

*Monday, November 17*

- Screening: *Obedience*, videorecording of the Milgram experiments

*Wednesday, November 19*

- Stanley Milgram, “The Perils of Obedience,” *Harper’s Magazine*, 1974.

*Friday, November 21*

- Jane Mayer. “The Experiment: The Military Trains People to Withstand Interrogation. Are those Methods being Misused in Guantanamo?” *The New Yorker*. July 11, 2005, p. 60.

## **Week 13: Political Spectacles and State Authority**

*Monday, November 24*

- Richard J. Evans. *The Third Reich in Power 1933-1939*. New York: Penguin, 2005, pp. 120-141 (“Enlightening the People: Mobilizing the Spirit”).

*Wednesday, November 26*

- Heonik Kwan and Byung-Ho Chung, “The Modern Theater State,” in *North Korea: Beyond Charismatic Politics*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012, pp . 43-70.

*Friday, November 28*

*THANKSGIVING RECESS – no classes*

## **Week 14: Personal Responsibility – Heroes and Soundrels**

*Monday, December 1*

- Tara McKelvey, “A Soldier’s Tale: Lynndie England.” *Marie Claire* (fashion magazine), May 19, 2009. <http://www.marieclaire.com/world-reports/news/latest/lynndie-england-1>

*Wednesday, December 3*

- Philip Zimbardo. *The Lucifer Effect and the Psychology of Evil. Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House, 2007.

*Friday, December 5*

- Final Thoughts

## **Week 15. Reading, Recitation, and Review Week**

- *Monday, December 8 through Friday December 12*  
*NO FORMAL INSTRUCTION – Review and Office Hours*

**FINAL EXAM**

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2014 3-6 PM**



---

## Course Format

This course requires independent reading and synthesis of assigned materials. It is important for you to show in your writings **that you understand the meaning of the work of particular course authors and course concepts and that you know how to apply the ideas to issues in the social world**, and not that you simply know what someone said or wrote on a specific topic.

The course has several components:

- MWF Course Meetings – We will loosely follow a lecture format. Sessions have a theme and curricular goals. Class time will not be used exclusively in formal exposition of course material by the instructor – the typical lecture. Group work, full class discussion, and media presentations will take place in “lectures.” Students are responsible for understanding the linkages between in-class activities, the learning goals of the class, and the content of readings in the syllabus, although the framing conversation by the instructor will always make these connections clear.
- Reading assignments
- Research tasks
- Media (audio/video, tables and charts, still images)
- Free writes
- PowerPoint presentations
- Supplementary postings from the news media
- ACES presentations

These components complement and reinforce one another. They have been chosen to help you understand the content of course ideas and help you apply them to topics in the real world and research papers that will require you to know, understand, and apply concepts at play in the world of educational research and practice.

Each class session will address a set of concepts drawn from readings, with some data, references to the real world, or references to course media. To do well in this course you will have to attend lectures. However, success in this class requires more effort. The content of lectures will not be limited to facts you need to know for an exam. Instead, lectures are opportunities for you to observe and practice sociological thinking.

Please do not allow yourself to drift or mistakenly think that nothing of value is taking place in class discussions or presentations. If you find yourself thinking that way, see me for help getting back on track.

## Course Sites: [bSpace.berkeley.edu](https://bSpace.berkeley.edu) and [site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/](https://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/)

You will need immediate and regular internet access to the course site. At bSpace, I will post:

- Administrative announcements
- Downloadable assignment instructions
- Handouts
- Power Points, occasional lecture notes, and media stories and links

Access to the course site is also necessary for you to participate in online course discussion groups at FORUMS.

Make sure you have an active email account on record with the registrar ([bearfacts.berkeley.edu](mailto:bearfacts.berkeley.edu)) that you actually look at. I will also email you often via bSpace, which uses an automatically generated course mailing

list from the registrar's data base of student information. I will use the course web site starting today, to which you will have access automatically as an enrolled student.

## Office Hours and Contact Information

Email is the best way to communicate with me, at [brpowers@berkeley.edu](mailto:brpowers@berkeley.edu). You may also leave messages for me with the Sociology office, (510) 642-4766.

My office hours will be in 488 Barrows Hall, on Mondays and Wednesdays from **12.15 to 2.30**. I may also be available by appointment. Please sign up for an office hour slot in advance at [wejoinin.com/brpowers@berkeley.edu](http://wejoinin.com/brpowers@berkeley.edu). Advance requests for office hours get priority. If others are waiting, please check in at wejoinin and please circulate a sign-up sheet to establish an order.

**Each student must visit at least one office hour with me as an individual or in group before Week 13 for participation credit. We can arrange conversations on particular topics as the semester moves along.**

## Assignments

All assignments must be submitted on paper in class and electronically through bspace site under the "Assignments" tab. PLEASE DO NOT EMAIL WORK TO US WITHOUT PRIOR PERMISSION.

Course papers must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the page in 12 pt font (no smaller) and with one-inch margins. You are responsible for keeping a backup of all work submitted. If any work is misplaced, you must be able to furnish a duplicate.

You will be assigned to a reader group. After you are assigned, you must write the reader's name and reader group number on all work submitted. Work not labeled with your reader group and reader name will be penalized by a reduction in one grade step (e.g., A- to B+).

## Course Citizenship

### *Email Etiquette*

When you use email, please remember to write clearly and professionally. Imagine that you are speaking directly to your recipient when you write an email, and monitor the content, tone, and attitude of your message accordingly. Please avoid writing emails in a state of panic or extreme stress. If you do not receive a response from me when you wish, please remember there other students in the course who may be contacting me, and I have other obligations, so I will appreciate your patience.

Despite the many advantages of email, it may not be the best venue for all concerns students have. For example, it is not a good means to resolve issues you may have about the evaluation and grading of your work. It is better to come to office hours to discuss such a topic.

Some emails are not always welcome, especially those that re-ask a question that has been addressed in class, at the course site as an announcement, or in an email to the class. Pay attention to notifications of updates, schedule changes, new materials, and other clarifications. By all means use email for clarification, but monitor your use. Before hitting the send button on a message for information about course procedures, please double check for earlier information and updates.

### *Emailing the reader(s)*

Remember, course readers are not graduate student instructors (GSIs) and they are paid for their limited time and limited teaching obligations quite differently. Please address your questions about the substance of the course and its procedures directly to me. Respect readers' limited responsibilities to a course and its students. The most common topic you will need to email your assigned reader about is your attendance at the office hour scheduled to discuss the grade whenever a major paper assignment is returned. Emails to readers on any other topic are not appropriate. If they require an answer, they will be forwarded to me to answer.

### *Plagiarism and academic dishonesty. THE HONOR CODE*

The campus administration has asked that all instructors refer students to the campus-wide statement of principle and policy about academic integrity and honesty, and I am happy to do so in this class. This campus-wide commitment to an honor code adopted was adopted by the ASUC Senate and the administration.

**Visit the website [www.asuc.org/honorcode](http://www.asuc.org/honorcode) information on the Honor Code movement.**

You should be aware that we will be especially vigilant in responding to academic dishonesty and plagiarism in this class.

**MOST IMPORTANT DETAILS:** You must submit work written by you, in your own words, following a plan of your own design, unless explicitly told otherwise by your teacher (in a collaborative project cleared for credit). You must properly cite sources of all work that is not your own. Consult me for advice in case of uncertainty. You should be aware that penalties for plagiarism are outlined by the university and can include expulsion. Students in my classes have been failed for the entire course for breaching rules of academic honesty. When in doubt about proper use and citations of other's writings in your work, ask for guidance.

Review the principles and policies pertaining to Academic Honesty and penalties for violations at the Center for Student Conduct site: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct>

### *A mutual agreement*

In Sociology 150 I will be present during lectures with an agenda for discussion and reflection based on curricular readings and supplemental sources. I will be available for questions and discussion in office time and via email. I will work at mastering new electronic technologies for to support your learning and use those that I already know. I will post notes, reading summaries, and study questions, as needed, along with power point presentation files at the course website. I will offer staged guidance as you conduct your research, including written handouts, in class elaborations, demonstrations, and help provide the tools to enable you to carry it out successfully. I will work with course readers to assure that your work is evaluated thoughtfully, constructively, and fairly.

If you enroll in this course I expect that you will complete all course assignments, make an effort to introduce yourself to me or the reader(s), keep up with the readings and devote as much time to this course and its learning tasks as you devote to other courses with equivalent unit value, especially those closest to your professional aspirations and academic specialization.

I ask that you open your mind to theories about society that are unfamiliar to you; seek out opportunities to learn with and learn from your co-course members; and continually think about ways to participate in the class sessions, especially to teach your co-course members about the social world you know about may be different from theirs;

I hope that you will listen respectfully and openly to ideas that may challenge your own, and contact course personnel if you need help sorting through new ideas about new parts of the social world.

I expect you to attend all lectures, including video showings, and **will randomly and frequently take attendance over the semester to encourage active participation in the course.** I ask that you be prepared to participate in discussions that emerge during class sessions.

### *Entering the scholarly conversation*

The best way to grow intellectually through the material in the class is to develop your own dialogue with it. Sociology is a skeptical field, asking questions about the world in an effort to make some novel sense of it. You should feel free to be as demanding of sociology as it is of the world it analyzes. Do not expect to get much from this course unless you invest time and energy in the readings, lectures and research.

## **Following the Direction of the Course**

Consider this syllabus a map of the territory in sociology and the social world we will cover in readings, lectures, and other course activities. It does not describe a strict timetable for what will be covered and exactly when materials will be explicitly addressed. Lectures and class activities may move in and out of sync with the schedule of assigned readings. When this happens, I will always tell you which readings are relevant to particular lectures, media presentations, or course activities.

## **Topics and Learning Goals**

- Students recognize how psychological theories and social psychological research are often concerned with socially situated learning processes linked with the development of self-understanding, identity, and motivation of social behavior at the individual level, and in aggregate and institutional terms.
- Students understand how different components of a social setting or structural location affect individuals' perceptions, beliefs, values, identities, and thus, contribute to socially consequential forms of action.
- Students recognize opportunities to explore additional dimensions of the relationships that sociological researchers identify among variables in social life, through social psychological inquiry into the motives, beliefs, and values that underlie readily observable and measurable patterns of behavior.
- Students appreciate the differences and commonalities in the assumptions, methods, and reasoning in different schools of social psychological theory as they highlight different human endowments and processes of learning and communication to explain social action and social outcomes.
- Students appreciate the socially structured character of many features of human subjectivity – personal values, goals, aspirations, and motives -- and recognize how changing social environments are likely to affect thinking, perception, belief, and other individual-level, subjective traits.

- Students familiarize themselves with the processes scholars have described for the construction and communication of meaning among individuals in social settings.
- Students appreciate the role of direct interaction and mediated communication through institutions and their technologies in influencing the perceptions and motivations of social actors.
- Students' writing show their nuanced understanding of the importance of actors' acquired motives and subjective cognition in social action.

## **Topical and Controversial Material**

Conversations about social structure and the self inevitably touch on the subject of differences and disparities in the experiences of individuals and members of social groups, including those defined by race and other socially-defined characteristics. These can be sensitive matters to address, mostly because we are unused to talking about them in analytical terms as artifacts of social processes, as opposed to speaking of them as “natural” differences or regarding them in moralistic and judgmental terms, regarding them as matters of personal opinion or experience. It is easy for them to stir up passions and fan misunderstandings because the ideas often touch on our identities and experiences. This class looks directly at experiences and disparities of the races, genders and other groups, but you should pay close attention to the *institutional* view it follows in exploring group disparities and the ways we think about them analytically.

Since we assume that race is a concept that is a creation of the social world which somewhat impersonally imposes interpretations of their attributes upon individuals and groups, in sociology we feel a bit more comfortable taking up topics often viewed as too hot to handle in general conversation. Based in the approaches available in sociology, this course shows the parts institutions have played in creating and making use of racial and other forms of categorical classifications in the US.

## **Social Ideals and Human Possibilities: Fairness**

Most sociologists are motivated by hopes that the benefits of systems of human cooperation be fully realized and distributed fairly and widely among individuals or groups differently situated in the social order. American ideals about equality, fair play, and shared values define a high standard for societies to live up to, with hopes and expectations of the fruits of social cooperation equally high. The realities of social life are often experienced as disappointing. Sociology helps us measure the distance between reality and the ideals and potential of society. It also suggests reasons for the gaps between hopes and disappointing realities and it sketches out possible pathways and strategies of action to narrow the gap between them.

This is an important point for anyone considering this class to consider. To follow the logic of the course. Students may need to entertain some different assumptions about the world they already know pretty well, including topics on race and other social differences. The course has been designed to create space for rational and research-based reflection about different kinds of experiences in the US. In examining the workings of social institutions and their effects on individuals' attainments and life experiences, we want to avoid the “blame game” that can emerge or is thought to emerge when this set of topics arise. Please remember we are not trying to assign personal responsibility or induce guilt for aspects of US historical and social development that have worked out differently for different groups in the population.