Instructor: Ericka Cooley

Class Times/Places: Fully online course.

Contact Info: The best way to reach me is via email. My email address is cooleyec@cwu.edu. I check my email every day and you can normally expect a response within 24 hours, although maybe not over the weekend all of the time.

My cell phone number is 360-320-9399. I have no office phone. You may call if it is urgent, but please respect that this is my personal phone and call at an appropriate times. I tend not to answer when I don’t recognize a number, so leave a message if I don’t answer and I will call back.


Required Films:
We will also have films to watch most weeks, and you may sometimes have to pay a little bit for them. All videos will be available to stream online, you won’t have to track them down. But, in some cases I am unable to provide them for free, so you may need to rent them online. This generally costs $4 to rent for 48 hours. Sometimes, more tech savvy students find links to the films online for free that I didn’t. If you find one for free online, email me and I’ll share that info with the class.

If you have access to Netflix or Amazon Prime, you can get more of them for free as well. The total cost of renting films will not exceed $25. Given how reasonably priced the text is, text plus films rented is still less money than most courses’ books.

Course Description:

What kind of country do we live in? What does it even mean to talk about a “kind” of country? We all know what it means to ask of a strange creature “what kind of animal is this?” But it is less clear how to ask the same question of a society. The question is muddied further by the fact that societies can change. A leopard can’t change its spots. But a society can become more or less productive in the organization of its economy, more or less equal in its distribution of opportunity, more or less democratic.

This course provides an extended discussion and answers to the question of what kind of a country the United States is. It also explores the implications of that answer for understanding, and making progress in solving, some of the social problems that confront America today.

Our discussion revolves around five key values that most Americans believe our society should realize:

1. Freedom: the idea, commonly thought to be the most essential to the “American creed,” that people should be able to live their lives, to the greatest degree possible, as they wish. This means people should be free from coercive restrictions imposed by others and, as much as possible, have the capacity to put their life plans into effect.

2. Prosperity: the idea that an economy should generate a high standard of living for most people, not just a small privileged elite.
3. **Economic efficiency**: the idea that the economy should generate rational outcomes, effectively balancing costs and benefits in the way resources are used.

4. **Fairness**: the idea that people should be treated justly and that they should have equal opportunity to make something of their lives without unfair privileges and unfair disadvantages.

5. **Democracy**: the idea that our public decisions should reflect the collective will of equal citizens, not of powerful and privileged elites.

A central theme throughout the course will be: *To what degree does contemporary American society realize these values, and how might it do a better job?* There will be an emphasis on not only learning about the realities of our system/institutions and society, but also discussing our cultural values and whether our system really matches or reflects those values we feel are an integral part of American culture and society. So, even though this is a Sociology class, we will be learning about and considering our society from the some of the standpoints and philosophies of Political Science, Philosophy, and Economics.

**An Overview of How the Class is Set Up:**

I have provided a very detailed schedule with this syllabus, and I suggest you print it out or put it somewhere where you can access it easily. There are assignments with due dates every week you will need to keep track of.

You will find a module for each week/unit on Canvas, with links to the weekly notes, film review assignments and Current Events Discussion Boards. You will have a film to review each week, and discussion board to attend to each week. In general, you should do your text readings, then read my notes, watch the film and do your review, and then attend to the discussions. Once in the quarter you will lead an online discussion, and the other weeks you will respond to others' posts.

**Canvas & Deadlines:**

So generally, when I create an assignment, Canvas tells you the due date and you are able to set it up to remind yourself. But, **this fails on the Current Event Posts**, as they are due to be posted on the discussion boards by Thursdays at noon, but the rest of the class’ responses are not due until Sunday. I can’t program 2 due dates. So, there will be a list of which student has which topic and due date for the CE Posts in the first week’s module. Make sure you mark your own reminder for that!

It is up to you to use the course schedule to make sure you turn things in on time. I will not accept as an excuse for late work that Canvas didn’t let you know you had something due. I have made weekly predictable due dates (most things are due the same day of the week each week) to help you keep things straight. Make sure to write down which week you need to do your Current Events Posts right at the start of the term, it’s probably the one you’d be most likely to miss.

**Course Requirements and Assignments:**

**Discussion Boards (DBs):**

*Please read the DB Guide in the First week’s module for details!*

Every week, there will be a discussion board opened up that corresponds to the weekly topic (Current Events) and one where I ask a general question from the week’s materials (Weekly DB).

**Current Events Posts/Responses:** You will be assigned, by the end of the first week of class, to a week when you need to come up with a Current Event Topic post for the DB. The DB guide details the expectations of the assignment, but basically you will need to find a current issue or newsworthy event that illustrates or
corresponds to the weekly topic, and create a post where you summarize the issue and connect it to concepts and terms from the text. During the week you are a Current Events Poster, you do not have to write DB responses (although you can for extra credit).

Then, except for the one week when you post a CE topic, you will be asked to read and respond to those posts. Each of these weeks, you will be asked to contribute to the conversations 2 times, essentially responding to the current events posts by discussing the issue, linking it to other course concepts or adding to the thoughts/considerations.

Current Events posts and responses will not be accepted late at all. These are meant to function like a conversation, so being late doesn’t work.

Weekly DB: Each week I will pose a question to be answered based on the materials for that week, and you will write one response.
Weekly DB Responses will be accepted up to one week late, and subject to a 25% penalty. They will not be accepted after one week past the due date.

Films/Film Reactions:
Nine of the ten weeks of this term, you will be asked to view films that relate to and inform our thoughts about the topic of the week. I have chosen films that have numerous availability options, are online and many are free. The schedule has instructions or links to where the films are available. Expect to watch about 1 ½ - 2 hours of film each week.
You will be asked to write an original reaction to each of the weekly films, at a length of 350 - 500 words.
There will be a guide to writing film reactions on Canvas.
Film reactions will be accepted up to one week late, and subject to a 25% penalty. No film reactions will be accepted after one week past the due date.

Exams:
There will be 2 exams in the class, they will be completed at home and turned in on Canvas. They will be short-answer essay format, with varying answer lengths. Required answer lengths will range from one to 3-4 paragraphs. Each exam will have about 10 questions, and will be posted more than a week in advance. The final exam will not be cumulative, although some reference to the first unit is possible.
Exams questions are drawn mostly from the text. Much of our weekly work does not require using the text directly, so the exams are there to make sure you do your reading. If you do not do the reading and “wing it” through the film reviews and discussion boards, the exams will be very hard for you. This text does not have lots of headings and bold vocabulary words... it is not easy to find answers if you have not read the sections beforehand.
Exams will not be accepted late unless you talk to me before it is due and you have a serious emergency or situation arise. If an emergency happens, at least text me briefly and let me know ASAP.

Grading:
I wanted to give you a general idea here of my preferences and what is important in terms of getting a good grade in this course. First of all, effort and participation are really important to me. You will not receive full credit for anything that is short of whatever length requirement I have set. That's true from DBs to films reactions to exams. Do not expect full credit if you don't fulfill my basic requirements (and don't worry they are always very specific). Another thing is to pay attention to your writing. Do not send me anything that is not well formatted, spell checked and edited for grammar and sentence structure. It totally offends me to get a paper smattered in red and blue underlines in my Word program.
You will find that this class is more about putting in effort and attempting to think about/analyze the concepts and situations we study, than getting any answers right. In Sociology, there are few topics with right and wrong answers, there are mostly concepts to learn and then apply in some way. What is important to me is that you show investment and thought about the topics. I hope that might help you know how to get your best grade in this class ☺️.
Extra Credit:
In some weeks, there will be an extra credit opportunity to watch an additional film and write a reaction. Sometimes I know of more than one film that is good/appropriate for the week’s topic, so I’ll offer EC if you watch and write about it. Also, every week you can do up to 3 extra responses on the DB for EC. The guidelines are in the DB guide.

Deadlines/Late Assignments:
If something like an emergency or other crisis happens that will hamper your ability to get things done on time in the class, contact me ASAP. I can be understanding about things and will give exceptions - if I feel it is warranted, and you have spoken to me about as soon as possible. If this is the case, we will work together to figure out how to go forward with assignments and such. See above for later policies in each category of assignment....

Grade breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Film Reactions: (9 @ 15 each)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Event Post:</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Events DB responses:</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly DB Responses: (10 @ 10 each)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm:</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final:</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>590</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final Grade Scale:

A = 94-100%
A- = 90-93%
B+ = 88-89%
B = 84-87%
B- = 80-83%
C+ = 78-79%
C = 74-77%
C- = 70-73%
D = 60-69%

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Writing Expectations: First off, plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment, period. If you are unsure of citing etiquette, please refer to the following link to make sure you know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it: [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml)

Sources should be cited in APA style. Here is link if you need to learn about this: [http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPAOrientation.html](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPAOrientation.html)

As well, you need to pay attention to detail before handing in your writing assignments. That means that you have grammar and spell checked the entire paper, as well as proofread it yourself a couple of times. If you have had problems with writing mechanics in your college career I suggest having a friend read over your papers before turning them in. In fact, it is always good to have another person read your papers, as they often detect issues that you don’t see.

Incomplete Grades: No student will receive an incomplete grade unless he/she has discussed it with me. If you disappear from my class and all of your work is not completed, you will receive the grade from the average of those assignments completed.

Disabilities: Please let me know if you need accommodation due to a disability. I will make every effort to accommodate you in notes, etc.