

SOCIOLOGY 498, Section 1: Senior Seminar, Self, Society, and Social Problems

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Prerequisites: Sociology 300, 375, Methods Seminar (each with a minimum grade of C-)

GE: No

Course Description

This seminar addresses relationships between self and society and emphasizes their significance in understanding social problems. Throughout our discussions, we will study how people's inner lives are affected by their social interactions and the sense they make of these interactions. We will pay particular attention to looking at selves and situations in a range of social problems. The situations described in the readings may vary, but we may discover general principles and similar patterns among them.

A symbolic interactionist perspective will provide the theoretical framework for the course. We will first review the major presuppositions and principles of this perspective, and then examine how it has informed empirical research about self, society and social problems. The readings will cover a range of topics and ideas that show how implicit or explicit use of the perspective has generated new insights. Specific readings about social problems will mainly consist of articles available from the SSU Library's electronic collection that you can easily download.

This seminar is your final capstone course for the major. You have a marvelous opportunity to use and apply all that you have learned. The course emphasizes symbolic interactionism and you need to take it into account in some way in your project. You may, however, adopt any theoretical perspective that fits your research problem to provide the overarching theoretical framework for your project. Your research project should represent your best thinking and most diligent work. You can delve into a sociological topic that fascinates you and explore it in depth. I encourage students to choose a topic that addresses selves and social problems.

Course Objectives

1. To apply sociological theory and research methods to a research problem that you design.
2. To understand and critique how to use the perspective to guide empirical research.
3. To give you an opportunity to apply your theoretical knowledge and methodological skills through completing an independent research project.
4. To provide a structure for your participation in seminar discussions and presentations.
5. To improve your writing, critiquing, analyzing, and speaking skills.
6. To assist you in doing your best work in your major.

Course Requirements/Grading

You will each conduct a first-hand research project and complete a research report about your findings of no less than fifteen double-spaced typed pages. The project is incrementally developed throughout the semester through discussions of phases of the research process and written assignments about it. Each student must give an oral presentation of his or her work at the end of the semester. I will also have written assignments or tests that cover the readings. You must be willing to share your work in groups, present chapters from the readings in class, study the readings, and meet deadlines.