

# Sociology 3: Critical Thinking about Society

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California State University, Fresno  
College of Social Sciences, Department of Sociology  
Fall 2014, Room SA153, MWF 10:00-10:50, 3.0 Units, LEC-70523

**Dr. Jennifer Randles**

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Office Hours: MW 11:00-12:30 and by appointment

**Prerequisites:** Grade of C or better in Soc 1 for sociology majors and minors.

**GE and Soc Major/Minor Requirement:** This course satisfies both the GE Area A3 requirement and the requirement for the sociology major and minor.

**Course Description:** Critical thinking and logical reasoning are two key skills necessary for a successful and meaningful professional and personal life. Regardless of your future profession, you will draw on these abilities as you evaluate evidence and claims in a variety of work settings, interpret news, vote, and develop your personal belief system. To that end, this course focuses on giving you the tools necessary to think logically through situations in which you need to critically evaluate arguments and evidence. It will do so by introducing you to the elements of reasoning through an analysis of significant sociological concepts and social problems, including how social patterns shape individual experience, social inequalities, and social institutions. It will also address skills needed to become an effective critical reader and writer.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:** Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify and critically analyze sociological arguments;
2. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of sociological texts;
3. Distinguish between academic and non-academic sources of evidence;
4. Define various types of plagiarism;
5. Properly cite sources using American Sociological Association (ASA) style;
6. Identify common fallacies of reasoning and strategies for how to avoid them;
7. Distinguish between inductive and deductive reasoning;
8. Recognize and define the structure of arguments; and
9. Articulate a well-reasoned sociological argument about a timely social issue.

**Method of Instruction:** This course will consist of three lectures per week that integrate discussion of assigned readings and application of course concepts.

**Required Texts and Readings:**

1. Hartmann, Douglas, and Christopher Uggen, eds. 2012. *The Contexts Reader*. New York, NY: Norton. (Abbreviated as *CR* on course schedule)

2. Additional course readings, handouts, and announcements on course Blackboard site.  
(Indicated by a “BB” on course schedule)

### **Grade Distribution:**

I will calculate your grade in this class as follows and assign letter grades based on the standard University scale (100 – 90 = A; 89 – 80 = B; 79 – 70 = C; 69 – 60 = D; and 59 or below = F):

- 10 %: Attendance
- 15 %: Exam #1
- 15 %: First Written Assignment
- 20 %: Exam #2
- 20 %: Exam #3
- 20 %: Final Paper

There are no extra credit assignments for this course. I will adhere to the University’s policy about incompletes.

### **Course Requirements:**

#### *Attendance*

To learn the most from this course, you must attend class regularly, arrive on-time having carefully read the assigned readings for that class period, and be attentive. I expect everyone to thoughtfully participate in discussion, respectfully engage with others, and exhibit a willingness to learn. I promise to do these things in return. You can miss three class periods for any reason without penalty, but excessive (four or more) absences will negatively impact your grade. You will lose a full letter grade from your attendance grade for the fourth and each subsequent unexcused absence. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class period, so please be on-time to avoid being counted as absent. You are still responsible for any material we covered in class if you are absent. I will excuse absences for serious and compelling reasons for which you can provide documentation, such as illness or a death in the family.

#### *Required Readings:*

It is a requirement of this course that you carefully read each assigned reading *before* class on the day for which I have assigned it. Completing the reading assignments will help you learn more from lectures and discussions, as I have carefully chosen each reading to complement lecture topics. Please read them carefully. To aid your reading comprehension, I have provided a list of guiding questions on our Blackboard course site. Please be able to answer these questions *before* coming to class so that you can meaningfully participate in an informed discussion about them. I also strongly encourage you to bring any additional questions about the reading to class. Learning to ask good questions is also an important critical thinking skill.

## *Written Assignments and Writing Resources*

Both written assignments are due to me via stapled paper copy at the beginning of class on the noted due dates. Turning in your coursework on-time is extremely beneficial to you, as it enables me to grade your work in a timely manner and get you feedback as soon as possible, while it enables you to focus on subsequent course requirements. I do not accept late papers, unless for serious reasons for which you can provide documentation.

Each written assignment should be typed, double spaced, and written in 12-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins and a bibliography using ASA (American Sociological Association) citation style. Include page numbers in the footer and your name and course number in one line only as a header on the first page. Do not adjust the margins or font to make the text take up more space on the page; simply write the required pages of text. Any deviations from these instructions will result in a deduction from your paper grade. I will also provide grading rubrics for each paper well in advance of the due dates.

I have posted the following writing resources on our course Blackboard site for your reference:

1. This course syllabus indicating due dates;
2. The ASA (American Sociological Association) citation style guide;
3. A key to my written feedback;
4. Sample formatted paper as a Word document;
5. *Writing for Sociology* undergraduate writing handbook for sociology courses;
6. Writing Center contact information and overview of support services.

First Written Assignment: Imagine that Robin Simon (author of *CR*, Chapter 6, “The Joys of Parenthood Reconsidered”) has written our course reading as a feature article in the *Fresno Bee*, and the editor has asked you to write an op-ed piece to be published alongside the article analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of Simon’s argument. In two pages, including a bibliographic third page in ASA citation style, using the critical thinking skills you have developed during the first section of the course, critically analyze the article. We will devote an entire class period to discussing this assignment, during which I will give you a detailed list of questions that will help you think about how to approach the assignment.

Final Paper: Imagine that the *Fresno Bee* editor was so impressed by the op-ed you wrote for assignment one that she has asked you to write a feature article for a series on social problems facing Fresno and the Central Valley. Using the critical thinking skills you have developed over the semester, in four double-spaced pages, including a bibliographic fifth page in ASA citation style, make a well-reasoned and well-argued case for why local government and social service organizations should devote special attention to addressing this issue. This assignment will require some research and reading in addition to that already assigned for the course. We will discuss this assignment at length during a full class period.

## Exams

There will be three non-cumulative, in-class exams for this course consisting of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions pertaining to main topics from lectures, course readings and films, and class discussions. If for whatever reason you miss one of the exams, a makeup exam will not be available. Instead, I will roll over the points for the missed exam to the subsequent exam. Please do not miss the third exam, as a makeup exam will not be available.

### **Course Schedule & Outline:**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Topic</u></b>	<b><u>Readings &amp; Assignments Due</u></b>
Friday, August 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Course Introduction and Overview	Course Syllabus (BB)
Monday, August 25 <sup>th</sup>	Critical Thinking and Sociology	“Invitation to Sociology,” Berger (BB)
Wednesday, August 27 <sup>th</sup>	Stereotypes vs. Generalizations	“Generalizing, Stereotyping, and Social Science,” Charon (BB)
Friday, August 29 <sup>th</sup>	Recognizing Arguments: The Importance of Valid Evidence	UNC Writing Center Handout on Argument; CR, Farkas, Ch. 13
Monday, September 1 <sup>st</sup>	NO CLASS Labor Day Holiday	None
Wednesday, September 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Guidelines for Critical Reading	CR, Wellman, Ch. 2
Friday, September 5 <sup>th</sup>	Critically Thinking about Causal Claims	CR, Simon, Ch. 6
Monday, September 8 <sup>th</sup>	Sociological Evidence: Quantitative Approaches	CR, Schuman, Ch. 64
Wednesday, September 10 <sup>th</sup>	Sociological Evidence: Qualitative Approaches	CR, Weiss, Ch. 66
Friday, September 12 <sup>th</sup>	Deductive Arguments	None
Monday, September 15 <sup>th</sup>	Inductive Arguments	None
Wednesday, September 17 <sup>th</sup>	Logical Fallacies	UNC Writing Center Handout on Common Logical Fallacies (BB)
Friday, September 19 <sup>th</sup>	Logical Fallacy Quiz Bowl	None
Monday, September 22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>EXAM #1</b>	None
Wednesday, September 24 <sup>th</sup>	Class Discussion of First Written Assignment	None
Friday, September 26 <sup>th</sup>	Principles of Good Writing	<i>Writing for Sociology</i> , Chs. 4 and 5, Pp. 45-64 (BB)
Monday, September 29 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the Writing Process	UNC Writing Center Handouts on Procrastination and Writing Anxiety (BB)
Wednesday, October 1 <sup>st</sup>	Using and Citing Valid	UNC Writing Center Handout

	Sources	on Evaluating Print Sources (BB); ASA Citation Guide (BB)
Friday, October 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism	UNC Writing Center Handout on Plagiarism (BB)
Monday, October 6 <sup>th</sup>	Finding Sources of Evidence	None; Meet in Library Rm 2134
Wednesday, October 8 <sup>th</sup>	Self and Society	CR, Erickson, Ch. 1
Friday, October 10 <sup>th</sup>	Social Inequality	“Land of Opportunity,” Loewen (BB)
Monday, October 13 <sup>th</sup>	Poverty and Welfare	CR, Rank, Ch. 22
Wednesday, October 15 <sup>th</sup>	Families and Marriage	CR, Hull et al., Ch. 8; <b>First Written Assignment Due</b>
Friday, October 17 <sup>th</sup>	Balancing Work and Family	CR, Gerson and Jacobs, Ch. 29
Monday, October 20 <sup>th</sup>	Educational Institutions	CR, Downey and Gibbs, Ch. 11
Wednesday, October 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Higher Education	CR, Beaver, Ch. 12
Friday, October 24 <sup>th</sup>	Racial Inequalities and Stereotypes	CR, Herring, Ch. 24
Monday, October 27 <sup>th</sup>	Racial Discrimination	CR, Tomaskovic-Devey and Warren, Ch. 33
Wednesday, October 29 <sup>th</sup>	<b>EXAM #2</b>	None
Friday, October 31 <sup>st</sup>	Class Discussion of Final Paper	None
Monday, November 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Crime and Punishment	CR, Western and Pettit, Ch. 54
Wednesday, November 5 <sup>th</sup>	Religion	CR, Chaves, Ch. 40
Friday, November 7 <sup>th</sup>	Religious Stereotypes	CR, Read, Ch. 37
Monday, November 10 <sup>th</sup>	Age and the Lifecourse	CR, Furstenberg et al., Ch. 41
Wednesday, November 12 <sup>th</sup>	Age Stereotypes	CR, Macarthur Foundation, Ch. 42
Friday, November 14 <sup>th</sup>	Health and Inequality	CR, Berkman, Ch. 49
Monday, November 17 <sup>th</sup>	Environmental Inequalities	CR, Auyero and Swistun, Ch. 19
Wednesday, November 19 <sup>th</sup>	Politics and Civic Participation	CR, Perrin, Chapter 55
Friday, November 21 <sup>st</sup>	Social Change and Community Organizing	CR, Stoecker, Chapter 59
Monday, November 24 <sup>th</sup>	Gender Stereotypes	CR, Hartmann, Ch. 15
WF, November 26 <sup>th</sup> /28 <sup>th</sup>	NO CLASS Thanksgiving	None
Monday, December 1 <sup>st</sup>	Sexuality and Sexual Stereotypes	CR, Armstrong et al., Ch. 30
Wednesday, December 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Gendered and Sexual Inequalities	None
Friday, December 5 <sup>th</sup>	<b>EXAM #3</b>	None
Monday, December 8 <sup>th</sup>	How Critical Thinking Can Help Society	Reread “Invitation to Sociology,” Berger (BB)
Wednesday, December 10 <sup>th</sup>	Course Conclusion	<b>Final Paper Due</b>

## **Additional Course Policies:**

### *Classroom Conduct*

Please be respectful towards me and your fellow classmates. This precludes arriving to class late, leaving in the middle of class, chatting with others, passing notes, sleeping, and texting. Laptop computers are allowed in class *for note-taking purposes only*. The use of computers or cell phones for any other purpose is a distraction to me and the other students. I will ask you to leave class if you are found to be using any electronic device for anything other than note taking. Lectures may be recorded only with my prior permission.

### *Office Hours*

I hold regularly scheduled office hours and welcome the opportunity to speak with students one-on-one. I strongly encourage you to drop by and discuss the course and other academic issues. I recognize that many of you may not be available during my regularly scheduled office hours. If that is the case for you, please e-mail me to schedule another meeting time and list several dates/times that you can meet so that we can schedule an alternative time that works for us both.

### *E-mail*

I strive to be as responsive as possible to student email from 9-5 on weekdays. If you e-mail me during the week, you can expect a response within 24 hours. If you send me a message on the weekend, I will respond on Monday. I will adhere to professional standards of written correspondence in my email communication with you. Please extend the same courtesy to me by using professional language, tone, and style, including proper grammar, spelling, and complete sentences.

### *Syllabus Modifications*

I have tried to outline the course to the best of my ability in this syllabus prior to the beginning of the term. That said, I reserve the right to modify the syllabus if the need arises. If I do so, I will notify you immediately of any changes with the goal of maintaining clear expectations about course requirements and policies.

## **University Policies:**

Refer to the University Catalog or Schedule of Courses for more information.

### *Students with Disabilities*

“Upon identifying themselves to the instructor and the University, students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for learning and evaluation. For more information, contact Services to Students with Disabilities in the Henry Madden Library, Room 1202 (278-2811).”

### *Honor Code*

“Members of the CSU Fresno academic community adhere to principles of academic integrity and mutual respect while engaged in university work and related activities. You should:

- a) understand or seek clarification about expectations for academic integrity in this course (including no cheating, plagiarism and inappropriate collaboration)
- b) neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on examinations or other course work that is used by the instructor as the basis of grading.
- c) take responsibility to monitor academic dishonesty in any form and to report it to the instructor or other appropriate official for action.”

### *Cheating and Plagiarism*

“Cheating is the actual or attempted practice of fraudulent or deceptive acts for the purpose of improving one's grade or obtaining course credit; such acts also include assisting another student to do so. Typically, such acts occur in relation to examinations. However, it is the intent of this definition that the term 'cheating' not be limited to examination situations only, but that it include any and all actions by a student that are intended to gain an unearned academic advantage by fraudulent or deceptive means. Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating which consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished works of others by misrepresenting the material (i.e., their intellectual property) so used as one's own work. Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from a 0 or F on a particular assignment, through an F for the course, to expulsion from the University. For more information on the University's policy regarding cheating and plagiarism, refer to the Class Schedule (Legal Notices on Cheating and Plagiarism) or the University Catalog (Policies and Regulations).”

### *Computers*

“At CSU Fresno, computers and communications links to remote resources are recognized as being integral to the education and research experience. Every student is required to have his/her own computer or have other personal access to a workstation (including a modem and a printer) with all the recommended software. The minimum and recommended standards for the workstations and software, which may vary by academic major, are updated periodically and are available from Information Technology Services (<http://www.csufresno.edu/ITS/>) or the University Bookstore. In the curriculum and class assignments, students are presumed to have 24-hour access to a computer workstation and the necessary communication links to the University's information resources.”

### *Disruptive Classroom Behavior*

“The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained....Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which are supportive of the learning process, creating an environment in which students and faculty may learn to reason with clarity and compassion, to share of themselves without

losing their identities, and to develop an understanding of the community in which they live.... Student conduct which disrupts the learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class.”

### *Copyright Policy*

“Copyright laws and fair use policies protect the rights of those who have produced the material. The copy in this course has been provided for private study, scholarship, or research. Other uses may require permission from the copyright holder. The user of this work is responsible for adhering to copyright law of the U.S. (Title 17, U.S. Code). To help you familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the University encourages you to visit its copyright web page: <http://www.csufresno.edu/library/about/policies/docs/copyrtpolicyfull.pdf>. Technology Innovations for Learning & Teaching (TILT) course web sites contain material protected by copyrights held by the instructor, other individuals or institutions. Such material is used for educational purposes in accord with copyright law and/or with permission given by the owners of the original material. You may download one copy of the materials on any single computer for non-commercial, personal, or educational purposes only, provided that you (1) do not modify it, (2) use it only for the duration of this course, and (3) include both this notice and any copyright notice originally included with the material. Beyond this use, no material from the course web site may be copied, reproduced, re-published, uploaded, posted, transmitted, or distributed in any way without the permission of the original copyright holder. The instructor assumes no responsibility for individuals who improperly use copyrighted material placed on the web site.”