

Soc. 600
Fall, 2021
Weds. 7:00-9:45
TA: Bonnie Ly (Zoom hrs by appt.)

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FOUNDATIONS OF APPLIED SOCIOLOGY

This course in the Graduate Program in Applied Sociology introduces sociology as a discipline and its application as one approach to sociology as a profession. We will study historical and contemporary controversies about applied sociology, how the discipline of sociology has been shaped by the surrounding society, and how it can be used to understand and respond to today's social issues. We will focus particular attention this year on how sociology can be applied to improve understanding of the impact of digital communication and the sources of group identity.

Class discussion and related activities will be a critical component of the course, in addition to much time reading and writing. You will learn about applied sociology by talking, listening, reading, as well as by *doing* applied sociology and *meeting* applied sociologists.

Course goals are to learn:

- 1) The history of sociology's development
- 2) Major controversies about the role and direction of sociology
- 3) Sociological perspectives on digital communication and group identity
- 4) Substantive contributions made by applied sociologists

REQUIRED READINGS

The assigned readings will enrich your understanding of sociology as a discipline, of how social context has influenced the discipline, and of why sociology's professional role continues to be a subject of debate. The readings in the second half of the course will also engage you in thinking creatively about the sources and impact of group identity and about the ongoing transformation of social relations through digitally mediated forms of communication. Most importantly, the readings will help you recognize different approaches to doing sociology and position yourself as a practitioner of sociology. The assigned books are available for purchase through the bookstore and two are available online through Healey Library (Appiah is available only in print and is on reserve); assigned articles are linked to our Blackboard site (or through a direct web URL).

BOOKS

The course books describe and analyze the social environment that shaped sociology's emergence and identify key dimensions of the current social environment in which sociological research is applied. In *The Scholar Denied*, Aldon Morris describes W.E.B. DuBois's pioneering work at his Laboratory in Sociology at Atlanta University and explains why these contributions had little impact on sociology during the subsequent 100 years. Our lessons from this book will be supplemented with provocative essays by leading sociologists about applying sociology. Our other two assigned books, by NYU philosopher and legal scholar Kwame Anthony Appiah and by MIT sociologist Sherry Turkle present extensive scholarship on two of the greatest challenges faced in modern society: the impact of group identity and the effect of the internet on social relations. We will use these two books to focus our thinking about how to apply sociology to understand the social world.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 2018. *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity*. New York: Liveright.

Morris, Aldon D. 2015. [*The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. DuBois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*](#). Oakland: University of California Press.

Turkle, Sherry. 2015. [*Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*](#). New York: Penguin Books.

Other books listed in the course bibliography provide a broader picture about the history and role of applied sociology.

ARTICLES AND OTHER READINGS

The articles reveal controversies over sociology's direction among disciplinary leaders and examine the value of applying sociology to social issues.

History

[Durkheim, Emile. 2007 \[1887\]. "Course in Social Science: Inaugural Lecture." Reprinted in *Sociological Inquiry* 44:193-204.](#)

Lathrop, Julia C. 1894. "[Hull House as a Sociological Laboratory](#)." Also "[Hull House](#)." VCU Libraries Social Welfare History Project.

New York Times. 1883. "The Selfish Sciences." *The New York Times* March 9.

O'Connor, Alice. 2007. *Social Science for What? Philanthropy and the Social Question in a World Turned Rightside Up*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Chapter notes in Soc. 600 Blackboard Readings folder.

Schutt, Russell K. and David Sloan Wilson. 2016. "[Why Did Sociology Declare Independence From Biology \(And Can They Be Reunited\)? An Interview with Russell Schutt](#)." *This View of Life*.

Smelser, Neil J. 2003. "Sociology: Spanning Two Centuries." *The American Sociologist* 34:5-19.

Controversy

Berk, Richard. 1981. "On the Compatibility of Applied and Basic Sociological Research: An Effort in Marriage Counseling." *The American Sociologist* 16:204-211.

Burawoy, Michael. 2005. "For Public Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 70:4-28.

Coleman, James S. 1987. "The Role of Social Policy Research in Society and in Sociology." *The American Sociologist* 22:127-133.

Hauser, Phillip M. 1981 "Sociology's Progress toward Science." *The American Sociologist* 16:62-64.

- Janowitz, Morris. 1972. "Professionalization of Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 78:105-135.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1959. "Some Problems Confronting Sociology as a Profession." *American Sociological Review* 24:547-559.
- Rhoads, John K. 1972. "On Gouldner's Crisis of Western Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 78:136-154.
- Rossi, Peter H. 1980. "The Presidential Address: The Challenge and Opportunities of Applied Social Research." *American Sociological Review* 45:889-904.
- Tittle, Charles R. 2004. "The Arrogance of Public Sociology." *Social Forces* 82: 1639-1643.
- Turner, Jonathan H. 1998. "Must Sociological Theory and Sociological Practice Be So Far Apart? A Polemical Answer." *Sociological Perspectives* 41:243-258.
- Turner, Jonathan H. 2008. "The Practice of Scientific Theorizing in Sociology and the Use of Scientific Theory in Sociological Practice." *Sociological Focus*:281-299.

Application

- Brown, Phil. 2024. "Integrating Medical and Environmental Sociology with Environmental Health: Crossing Boundaries and Building Connections through Advocacy." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 54:145-164.
- Elliott, Eva and Gareth Williams. 2008. "Developing Public Sociology through Health Impact Assessment." *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 30:1101-1116.
- Farrell, Bill and Larry Koch. 1995. "Criminal Justice, Sociology, and Academia." *American Sociologist*, 26:52-61.
- Kerr, Anne, Emily Ross, Gwen Jacques, and Sarah Cunningham-Burley. 2018. "The Sociology of Cancer: A Decade of Research." *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 40:552-576.
- Montez, Jennifer Karas and Anna Zajacova. 2013. Policy Brief. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 54:165.
- Neeley, Elizabeth. 2008. "Doing Sociology: Applied Sociology for Justice System Policy Reform 1." *Sociological Origins*, 5: 39-44
- Schutt, Russell K., Xiaogang Deng, and Taylor Stoehr. 2013. "Using Bibliotherapy to Enhance Probation and Reduce Recidivism." *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 52:181-197.
- Schutt, Russell K., Lidia Schapira, Jennifer Maniatis, Jessica Santiccioli, Silas Henlon, JudyAnn Bigby. 2010. "Community Health Workers' Support for Cancer Clinical Trials: Description and Explanation." *Journal of Community Health* 35:417-422.

Whyte, William Foote. 1982. "Social Inventions for Solving Human Problems." *American Sociological Review* 47:1-13.

ACTIVITIES AND GRADING

Discussion is a very important part of the learning process, so be sure to read assigned material before the corresponding class session. Invited speakers on our faculty and from program alumnae will supplement the readings and enrich the classroom experience. Your presentations during the course and your final paper will also build on the assigned readings. The course bibliography provides additional readings for those topics you'd like to explore in more depth. You will also need to do some searching for new literature to incorporate in your final paper.

Plan to post an answer to one discussion question about the readings before the start of most classes. Your posted answers will help us prepare for each week's discussion and will also ensure that the entire class can learn from your thoughts about the readings even when there isn't enough time to discuss them all during class. One or two discussion questions are posed for most weeks in a Blackboard discussion thread. A total of eight such answers will be required for full credit. Answers should be 2-3 paragraphs and no more than one page in total. Each answer should include an explanation of your reasoning. Your answers will be graded for clarity, persuasiveness, and originality, so try to avoid repeating points already made in the discussion thread by another student (it will usually be best to focus your answer on a different reading or on a different issue in the same reading than answers posted by other students).

You will also need to respond to another student's comments in at least 4 weeks (and no more than two comments per original student answer; first come, first served). I will often ask you to review your discussion answer or response to another student's answer in class.

You will also participate in a mid-term activity: a debate in Week 5 or a presentation in Week 6. Debaters in Week 5 will use the related assigned articles to support or oppose the proposition that sociology should be an applied discipline. The presentations in Week 6 will focus on *The Scholar Denied* and draw in related readings. The goal will be to evaluate the extent to which sociology has (or has not) "risen to the Du Boisian challenge" in one or more of the specific areas identified in Morris's 2021 meeting theme. Detailed instructions will be provided in a separate handout. A sign-up will be available in Week 2, with 8-10 openings for Week 5 (4 or 5 on both of the opposing sides) and 8-10 in Week 6.

Plan to give a short (5-10 minute) presentation of a research report in Weeks 4, 11, or 12. The reports are listed in the syllabus and you will be able to indicate your choice in the second week of the course.

You will develop your skills and plans for applying sociology in your final presentation and paper. The final paper is to review the way in which sociology has been applied in the study of a social issue related to group identity or digital communication and propose how the practice of sociology could be improved in relation to this social issue. You are to include in your analysis the work of individual sociologists and the role of research institutions or centers and/or

government funding agencies, as well as some attention to the social context that has influenced sociological practice. You are to discuss how the social practice of identity (Appiah) and/or of digital communication (Turkle) seems to have shaped this social issue, what social science research has revealed about this influence, and how sociologists could improve research and/or theory on this issue. Your final presentation will report on your work on the final paper up to the time of the presentation and include questions that you are grappling with as you develop the paper (in other words, the paper does not have to be finished at the time you present your work in class). A separate handout will provide more details.

Course grades will be computed as follows:

Discussion questions (8)*	20%
Discussion responses (4)*	5%
Presentation or Debate	25%
Report review	10%
Research presentation	10%
Research paper	30%
	100%

*If more than 8 (or 4) questions are answered, the grade will be based on the 8 (or 4) with the highest scores.

Throughout the course, you should feel free to speak with me about the course material in general and about specific issues pertaining to course requirements. I will be available during my regularly scheduled office hours (see above) and at other times by appointment. You also can communicate with me by email (address above).

Each 2.5-hour class session corresponds to one week of class time, so it is important to attend each session and to keep up in the coursework. I will not give a grade of "Incomplete" in other than the most extreme circumstances, and when we have developed a plan; receiving an incomplete will hinder your progress toward your degree and will not result in a better grade.

The Blackboard site for the course includes additional resources and web links. You will use this site throughout the course to arrange presentations and coordinate activities, as well as for our class sessions.

ACCOMMODATIONS

UMass Boston is committed to creating learning environments that are inclusive and accessible. If you have a personal circumstance that will impact your learning and performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible, so we can discuss the best ways to meet your needs and the requirements of the course. If you have a documented disability, or would like guidance about navigating support services, contact the Ross Center for Disability Services by email (ross.center@umb.edu), phone (617-287-7430), or in person (Campus Center, UL Room 211). To receive accommodations, students must be registered with the Ross Center and must request accommodations each semester that they are in attendance at UMass Boston. For more information visit: www.rosscenter.umb.edu. Please note that the Ross Center will provide a letter for your instructor with information about your accommodation only and not about your specific disability.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Education at UMass Boston is sustained by academic integrity. Academic integrity requires that all members of the campus community are honest, trustworthy, responsible, respectful, and fair in academic work at the university. As part of being educated here, students learn, exercise, increase, and uphold academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential within all classrooms, in the many spaces where academic work is carried out by all members of the UMass Boston community, and in our local and global communities where the value of this education fulfills its role as a public good. Students are expected to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct, including policies about academic integrity, delineated in the University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Studies Bulletin, Undergraduate Catalog, and relevant program student handbook(s), linked at www.umb.edu/academics/academic_integrity.

HEALTH, WELLBEING, AND SUCCESS

We are still coming through the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the emerging COVID-19 variants, all members of the UMass Boston community — students, faculty, and staff — as well as contractors and visitors are required to wear face coverings in public indoor spaces on the UMass Boston campus. The requirement applies to vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals. Wearing a face covering is important for the health and safety of our community, and each of us has a responsibility to do our part. While on campus, if you notice someone without a face covering indoors, you should feel free to distance yourself to the extent possible or, if you are comfortable doing so, politely remind them of the university policy requiring face coverings for all individuals indoors. As an instructor, for classes on campus, I will remind all students about the indoor masking policy. I will ask students to leave class if they do not comply and I may also refer students to the Dean of Students. If a student refuses to wear a face covering and does not heed requests to comply with the policy, the UMass Boston Police Department may be called to assist. To safeguard your own health and safety as well as that of all students, staff, and faculty, you are reminded that vaccinations are required for all faculty, staff, and students, with limited exceptions (see www.umb.edu/healthservices/corona_virus_information/coronavirus_vaccination_requirements). Following current public health guidance from the CDC and given the protection flowing from a highly vaccinated population, enhanced HVAC and air filtration systems, and the indoor face covering mandate, we have lifted the social distancing requirement. However, if you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should not come to campus. Flexibility and support will be provided for students in such situations and are addressed in this syllabus.

UMass Boston is a vibrant, multi-cultural, and inclusive institution committed to ensuring that all members of our diverse campus community are able to thrive and succeed. The university provides a wide variety of resources to support students' overall success. As we continue to deal with the evolving impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, these resources are more important than ever.

- Are you in emotional distress? Call 617.287.5690 to speak with a licensed clinician 24/7 who can offer support, crisis recommendations, and assistance with finding resources.
- Have a campus question or issue? Use Here4U in the UMass Boston app or via www.umb.edu/here4U.
- Want advice in navigating a university or life situation? Contact the Dean of Students Office at www.umb.edu/deanofstudents.

- Want to connect with housing and food insecurity support, legal issues, student life groups and events, or recreation activities? Visit www.umb.edu/life or https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/uaccess
- Want to access resources specifically for immigrant-origin, DACA, TPS, and undocumented students? Visit www.umb.edu/immigrant.
- Looking for additional identity-based community support? Find more resources at www.umb.edu/identity-support
- Want to make the most of your academic experience? Visit www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/academic_support.
- Unable to attend class on a specific date or participate in an exam or class requirement due to a religious observance? Fill out the excused absence form (requires 2-weeks' notice) to request religious accommodation at www.umb.edu/religiousabsence.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I: The History of Applied Sociology

Week 1, INTRODUCTION (September 8)

Course goals
Backgrounds and interests
The state of the discipline

Reading: [The American Sociological Association](#)
[Communities and Sections | American Sociological Association \(asanet.org\)](#)
[ASA Membership](#)
[ASA: Degrees](#)
[ASA Job Bank, career opportunities](#)
[Trends in sociology](#)
[Today's pipeline](#)
[Beyond the Ivory Tower](#)
[Trends in sociology degrees](#)
[The MA in Sociology](#)
[MA graduates in the workforce](#)
[Applied Sociology at UMass Boston](#)
[Love for sociology](#)
[Theme and Program Committee | American Sociological Association \(asanet.org\)](#)

Questions: What motivates you to apply sociology?

ADD/DROP ENDS (September 14)

Week 2, THE SOCIAL CONTEXT FOR SOCIOLOGY'S EMERGENCE (September 15)

First things first: the social context of the classroom
The scientific revolution
Industrialization and urbanization
Marx, Weber, & Durkheim
Slavery and its aftermath
Rise and demise of Social Darwinism
The social evolution of Homo sapiens

Reading: Turkle (*Education*); Durkheim; Morris (ch. 1); *New York Times*; [Schutt & Firat](#) (p. 23); [Schutt & Turner](#); [Schutt & Wilson](#)

Questions: (1) How well do you think Marx, Weber, OR Durkheim captured the societal impact of the transition from feudalism to capitalism? Explain your reasoning.

(2) There is little attention to slavery, social Darwinism, or social evolution in the work of the above 3 theorists. What do you think sociology might gain, or lose, from including one or more of these considerations in general social theory?

Week 3, APPLICATION AND CONTROVERSY (September 22)

"The social question"
Jane Addams's Hull House
Du Bois's Laboratory of Sociology
The Pittsburgh Survey
From the Roaring '20s to the Reactionary '80s

Reading: Lathrop; Morris (chapters 2-8); O'Connor (Chs. 1-6); [ASA History](#)

Questions: (1) What was W.E.B. Du Bois's vision for sociology and how was that vision reflected in his Laboratory in Sociology? How did he approach the standard of value neutrality? What was his perspective on race and society? What would you identify as the most and least appealing aspects of this vision?

(2) Consider either sociology's split from social work or the discontinuance of projects like the Pittsburgh Survey. Do you consider it a loss for sociology or a step in the right direction? How do you think the history of sociology might have differed if this step had not been taken?

Week 4, BUILDING APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECTS (September 29)

Developing applied research projects
Managing constraints and opportunities
Analyzing social data

Reading: Berk/Hauser; Burawoy/Tittle
[Changing Lives Through Literature](#)
[Teen Empowerment](#);
[Employment and Training for Homeless Persons](#)
[AIDS/HIV Prevention Practice in Massachusetts Shelters](#);
[Homeless Persons' Residential Preferences and Needs](#)

Questions: (1) Review two of the applied sociology research reports. How would you evaluate each of them from the standpoint of Berk? From the standpoint of Hauser? OR, from the standpoint of Burawoy and from the standpoint of Tittle? What type(s) of changes in the reports would improve them from either standpoint?

(2) Which of the five applied reports provides what you think is the best model for using research to influence social policy? Why? Which of the

five applied reports do you think is the least effective model for how to use research to influence social policy? Why?

Speakers: Andrea Leverentz, PhD

Week 5, DEBATE OVER APPLICATION (October 6)

Application at issue across the discipline

Reading: Berk to Turner.

Activities: Student debate

Question: What did both sides of the debate add to your understanding of the challenges confronting applied sociology? Which articles and arguments did you find most persuasive? Why?

Part II: Opportunities for Applying Sociology

Week 6, RISING TO THE DUBOISIAN CHALLENGE (October 13)

Directions for sociology

Reading: Morris; Brown to Whyte

Activity: Student presentations

Question: What should applications of sociology include to “rise to the DuBoisian challenge” (consider both Morris’s book and his ASA statement)? Evaluate one of the examples of sociological application in relation to these standards.

Week 7, EMPATHY, THE SELF, AND SOCIAL CONNECTION (October 20)

Personal autonomy and the internet

The impact of digital forms of communication on social connection

Reading: Turkle (Conversation, One Chair, Two Chairs)

Questions: (1) How well do Turkle’s examples of the impact of digital communication reflect your own experience? Has she convinced you of the importance of her concerns about the social impact of the internet? Why or why not?

(2) Try to rebut Turkle’s central arguments in one of these three book sections. How do you recommend that society respond to the tensions Turkle discusses in this section?

Speaker: Andrew Nevin, PhD

Week 8, EDUCATION, WORK, POLITICS, AND THE FUTURE (October 27)

Taylorism, human relations, and lessons of the pandemic
The role of the internet in political polarization

Reading: Turkle (Three Chairs, The Path Forward, A Fourth Chair?)

Questions: (1) Review Turkle's arguments and evidence about the impact of digital communication in the workplace and/or the classroom. Has the dramatic increase in the use of digital communication during the pandemic provided more support for her arguments or less? Explain.

(2) What has Turkle added to your understanding of the bases of political polarization? Has the experience of polarization since 2016 strengthened or weakened support for her arguments?

Speakers: Lydia Todd, MA (NFI)

Week 9, IDENTITY: CLASSIFICATION, CREED, COUNTRY (November 3)

Individuality in social context
Religion as bond or barrier
National identity in a global world

Reading: Appiah (Chapters 1-3)

Questions: (1) Are individual, religious, and/or national identities barriers to community cohesion or supports for it? What are circumstances that would change your answer(s)? Explain.

(2) What social pressures can lead to changes in religious and national identities? What are the costs and benefits of these identities remaining stable?

Speaker: Evan Stewart, PhD

Week 10, IDENTITY: COLOR, CLASS, CULTURE (November 10)

Race, class, and intersectionality
Culture and social structure

Reading: Appiah (Chapters 4-6)

- Questions: (1) How can the origins of racial categories help to understand current racial divisions?
- (2) How do you evaluate the concept of meritocracy? What are its strengths and weaknesses as an ideal for allocation of economic rewards?
- (3) To what extent do Americans have a common culture? Across racial and class lines? What are strengths and weaknesses of “the melting pot” ideal for U.S. culture?
- Speakers: Phil Kretsedemas, PhD

Week 11, HEALTH IN MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS (November 17)

Applying sociology to health and health care services

- Reading: [Service Use, Residential Stability, Preferences](#)
[Increasing Health Service Access](#)
[Case Management in Women’s Health](#)
[Expert Panel on Women’s Health](#)
[Continuum of Care](#)
[PCORI Comparative Effectiveness Study](#)
- Questions: (1) What types of conditions can complicate identifying practical implications of research findings?
- (2) How can social research help to improve health practices?
- Speakers: Laura Golden, MA

P/F AND COURSE WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE (November 19)

Week 12, RESEARCH APPLIED TO THE PANDEMIC (November 24)

Developing social research on the COVID-19 pandemic
Taking account of neighborhood context

- Reading: O’Brien, Hargraves, Schutt (NSF proposal)
 Living in Boston During COVID-19: [Economic](#), [Health](#)
- Questions: (1) Discuss advantages and disadvantages of survey research for identifying neighborhood effects?
- (2) What might increase the importance of effects of neighborhood or other geographic area?
- Activities: [Center for Survey Research](#);
[SEAN COVID-19 Survey Archive \(parc.us.com\)](#)
[BARI: Neighborhood Context](#)

Speakers: Christopher Contreras, PhD; Dragana Bolcic-Jankovic, PhD

THANKSGIVING RECESS (11/25-28)

Week 13, STUDENT PRESENTATIONS I (December 1)

Week 14, STUDENT PRESENTATIONS II (December 8)

SEMESTER ENDS (12/14)

FINAL PAPER DUE DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Turner, Stephen Park and Jonathan H. Turner. 1990. *The Impossible Science: An Institutional Analysis of American Sociology*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- White, Patricia, Roberta Spalter-Roth, Amy Best, and Kelly Joyce. 2016. *A Relational Model for Understanding the Use of Research in the Policy Process*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.