

Tim Clydesdale, Ph.D.
Social Science Bldg 338, x3153
E-mail: clydesda@tcnj.edu
Office Hours: by appointment only
before & after class and
Wednesday afternoons

SOC499: SENIOR SEMINAR IN SOCIOLOGY - CAPSTONE

Spring 2009: SSB340

Tuesday, 4-6:50 pm & Wednesday, 9-11:50 am

Course Purpose and Description: This seminar is designed to be a culminating educational experience for soon-to-graduate sociology majors. As such, it offers a final opportunity to engage both intellectually and as human persons, and to assist in applying sociological knowledge and skills to the myriad but very real pathways that lie beyond graduation day. A college diploma provides access to opportunities that much of the world's work force lacks, and bestows on its holders a measure of choice that proportionately few enjoy. At the same time, a college diploma is a diminishing privilege, as graduate school diplomas flood the marketplace and those with bachelor degrees only often find themselves underemployed and under challenged. This seminar addresses both of these realities head-on: recognizing the privileges of a college degree as well as its limits, and challenging students to devise long-term strategies to pursue a meaningful and engaged life despite the Herculean odds against the same.

In short, this seminar will be like a semester-long series of flights in a single-engine propeller airplane, taking off to enjoy lofty sights and wide vistas, yet landing frequently to fuel and gather essential supplies. At times, then, the seminar will seem schizophrenic, as we shuttle between visions of healing tuberculosis across the globe to understanding how 401k plans work or miscommunication patterns between men and women in the workplace. But maybe the seminar is schizophrenic because contemporary American life is also. One cannot underestimate the importance of attending to the nitty-gritty; accumulate too much debt, for example, and you might as well handcuff yourself to your local bank and throw away the key. We must effectively manage nitty-gritty realities if we ever hope to gain traction on our larger dreams and shared ideals.

A century and a half ago, Henry David Thoreau penned this famous statement: "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Two and a half *millennia* ago, Socrates declared "the unexamined life is not worth living." Both statements continue to ring true today, and not only that, they are powerfully linked. That is, the majority of humanity prefers to live an *unexamined* life, hiding their desperation behind busy-ness, debt & consumption, romantic fantasies, and substance use, and keeping their heads in the sand about political change, social injustice, and rampant inequality. That link between unexamined lives and desperation, as culturally-embedded as it may be, however, can be broken by repeated use of a tool you all by now possess: the sociological imagination. This seminar invites you to pick up that tool, polish your skill in using it, and carry it with you as you move to the next chapter in your life journey.

Learning Goals:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Apply the sociological imagination to one's own post-college plans (i.e., understand the link between personal biography and socio-historical forces)
- Demonstrate confidence in a conference room setting - contributing informally, making presentations, and learning how to deploy one's understanding of diverse topics
- Discover one's transferable work skills and use those in seeking a career
- Express a critical perspective on American consumption and addiction to debt

- Find on-going sources of inspiration for difficult days and unanticipated roadblocks, and appreciate the importance of taking “the long view.”
- Identify work and life skills that distinguish effective and ineffective people
- Know the basics of personal finance, and how to put that knowledge to work to facilitate life goals and pursue dreams
- Read popular business bestsellers with a sociological perspective
- Recognize the familial/cultural and global economic changes of the past half-century and appreciate their impact on emerging adulthood
- See the range of career and graduate school possibilities for sociology undergraduates, and know the steps necessary for their pursuit
- Understand the importance of continually gaining marketable skills and of marketing oneself in the new global economy
- Work with a group of peers to successfully accomplish an assigned task
- Write an effective resume and cover letter

Required Readings:

Tracy Kidder (2004). *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure The World*. Random House.

One of the following personal finance books:

- Sara Y. Fisher & Susan Shelly (2005). *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Personal Finance in Your 20s & 30s, 3rd Edition*. Alpha.
- Suze Orman (2007). *The Money Book for the Young, Fabulous & Broke*. Riverhead Trade.
- Eric Tyson (2006). *Personal Finance for Dummies, 5th edition*. Wiley.

One of the following work/life skills books:

- Deborah Tannen (1995). *Talking from 9 to 5: Women & Men at Work*. Harper Paperbacks
- Travis Bradberry et al (2005). *The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book*. Fireside. [Note: because of the brevity of this text, those who select it must also read a text on EQ by Nancy Gibbs, posted on SOCS. ALSO, BE SURE TO BUY A NEW COPY OF THIS TEXT, AS IT CONTAINS A CODE FOR AN ON-LINE TEST THAT CAN BE USED ONLY ONCE]
- Stephen R. Covey (2004). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Free Press.
- Marcus Buckingham & Donald O. Clifton (2001). *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. Free Press [MUST BUY A NEW COPY, AS IT CONTAINS A CODE FOR AN ON-LINE TEST THAT CAN BE USED ONLY ONCE]

Students must also read the following articles:

C. Wright Mills (1959). Excerpt from *The Sociological Imagination*.

Frank Furstenberg et al (2004). “Growing Up is Hard to Do” *Contexts*.

NY Times “Quarterlife Crisis?” and letters (2001)

Juliet Schor (1998). Excerpts from *The Overspent American*

Mark Schwehn & Dorothy Bass (eds, 2006). Excerpts by the editors, William James, Albert Schweitzer, Arlie Hochschild, and Mary Catherine Bateson included in *Leading Lives That Matter*.

Alexandra Robbins & Abby Wilner (2001). Excerpts from *Quarterlife Crisis*

The professor also reserves the right to add articles throughout the course (and you have the right to suggest the same), based on the course of our class discussions, student interest, and current events.

Course Policies:

1. *Attendance and Participation:* Students demonstrate their commitment to learning by regularly attending class, by arriving on time and staying for the full class period, by contributing usefully to class and internet discussions, by doing their part to create an atmosphere of respectful and serious learning, by reading the assigned material in advance of the class, and by *making time*

outside of class to coordinate with their classmates both in-class presentations and on-line assignments. You will be expected to so express your commitment in this class, and an important portion of your final grade will be based on your class readiness & participation. You may also expect that I will start class promptly, end on time, answer your questions fully and respectfully, provide feedback on your assignments in a timely manner, and be available to meet with you during my office hours.

2. *Papers & Assignments:* Students demonstrate their academic seriousness by turning in all papers and assignments on time, and by rigorously maintaining the highest standards of academic writing. This includes (but is not limited to) spelling, grammar, style, documentation, and format (thus, hard copies of papers & assignments, when required, should be printed on 8.5x11 inch white paper, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins and a 10-12 point typeface, stapled in the upper left-hand corner--*no manila/plastic/cardboard covers, please*). Dedicated students for whom this presents a challenge will avail themselves of the college's writing tutors. *Please note I have strict word limits:* it is far harder to write a brief, focused paper than to write a long one – allow plenty of time for editing and rewriting. I have high standards about written work.

a. *All assignments must be turned in on time.* Overwork, personal struggles, and the like are important issues, and I encourage you to avail yourselves of your residence staff, student development staff, or the college's counselors for help in these matters. Such issues, however, do not constitute a valid excuse for lateness. Neither do variations on "the computer ate my paper," "I can't get the computer to print," "I know I submitted the correct paper to SOCS" or "Didn't you get my paper in the mail (or SOCS, or via FedEx)?" count as valid excuses. Valid excuses are a death in the immediate family or severe illness (which I will confirm with family members, the Dean of Students, &/or the Health Center). Late papers are *severely* penalized (i.e., ½ letter grade for papers not turned in *at the start of class*, 1 letter grade for papers arriving after class on the day assigned, 2 letter grades the following day, 3 letter grades the day after that). Papers and assignments must be turned in on time. Thanks to SOCS, I can see exactly when you submitted your assignments to me.

b. *Plagiarism/Cheating* will be prosecuted to the fullest extent possible. Don't be foolish--you don't want me as your adversary. I have respect for the student who accepts the consequences of poor preparation and turns in his/her *own* work. Do what is honorable and right.

3. *Grading:* Your course grade will be based on the following points:

Class Readiness & Participation	50
SOCS Blog Posts & Comments	200
SOCS Wiki	150
Q.O.R.C.s	50
Seven stories, transferable skill report, resume	25
Coordinated Presentations	125
Final Presentation	75
Final Synthesis	<u>300</u>
TOTAL	1000

Grade distribution is as follows: 930-1000=A, 900-929=A-, 870-899=B+, 830-869=B, 800-829=B-, 770-799=C+, 730-769=C, 700-729=C-, 670-699=D+, 600-669=D, less than 600=F.

4. *E-mail & SOCS:* I will be making extensive use of e-mail and the course website on SOCS. Remember, if you don't use your TCNJ e-mail address, put in a forwarding order so that you'll receive notices (you are required by college policy to check your TCNJ e-mail for notices, etc.)

Course Assignments:

1. *Internship:* This is a core element of the senior seminar, as it provides a great way to learn about an organization and a potential career field. Your internship sites and learning goals must be pre-approved by me, and you must complete at least 90 hours at your internship site and submit a site-supervisor counter-signed certification of those hours. The internship hours should

be complete by the last day of classes, April 30th. The grade for the internship is variously embedded in the assignments that follow; note, however, that *you cannot pass this class without completing your 90 hour internship requirement.*

2. *SOCS Blog:* You will each need to create a blog on the SOCS website for this course, and post to it regularly during the semester. Specifically, you will *post once each week* to your blog, and you will also *comment once each week* on a classmate's blog. A blog, of course, is a website on which individuals can post thoughts, musings, reflection, opinion, and arguments – and invite others to comment on their posts. Your course blogs will be visible to everyone else in the course, including your professor, but they are not accessible to those outside the class. Your posts should average 150-250 words, and your comments about others' posts should be at least 75 words. Of course, you don't need to agree with each other or with me, but you will be expected to be civil. By the end of the semester, you should have at least 14 posts to your blog and at least 14 comments on others' blogs.

OK, so what should you post to your blog about? Half of your blog posts (7) will be about your internship, and three of these will be informational responses to the following: 1) where are you interning, and why?, 2) what is the organizational structure & culture of your internship site?, and 3) what are the different staff positions in the organizations, what training is necessary for these positions, and what rights/responsibilities does each position hold? The remaining 4 internship posts will convey your observations, insights, and reflections about your internship experience, especially as they connect to the larger themes of the seminar.

The topics for the other half of your blog posts are open. Here are some suggestions. On the first page of the syllabus, you'll find a description of the course. You can blog about that. You can also blog about the learning goals. You can blog about texts/readings, discussions in class, or my comments in class. You can even be daring (occasionally) and blog about stuff outside of class – e.g., a news article or op-ed; a movie; or an observation. What I'm looking for with this assignment is: evidence of your ability to engage thoughtfully with the class materials/issues, to think analytically and critically, to make integrative/synthesizing connections, to demonstrate that you've read the assignments, and to consider the implications of what you are learning. As a general rule, *you shouldn't post about the same source/issue/topic more than twice* – be sure to vary your "stimuli," and *at least 4 of these posts should connect specifically to the course readings.* As for comments on others' posts, I will ask you to spread around your attention here as well. There are 12 students in the class, so no one student should receive more than 2 comments from you.

Twice during the semester I will review your posts and comments and record a grade: the first grading period will cover the first seven weeks of the semester (ending March 6 at 11:59 pm), and the second grading period will cover the second seven weeks of the semester (from March 7 to April 30 at 11:59 pm). Keep up with the 1 post, 1 comment per week rate – *there will be no make-up posts/comments accepted.* When I grade, I'll be checking that you posted and commented each week as well as evaluating the substance/quality of your work.

3. *SOCS wiki:* "So what are you going to do with that?" It is a question every sociology undergraduate will hear – and this wiki (which is a collectively-written and edited SOCS document) will be your collective response to this question. Specifically, each student will contribute to the wiki in multiple ways – adding informational paragraphs and helpful links to the career, graduate school, and alternative paths sections. You will draw from multiple information sources, including your internship site, library print resources, conversations with professionals/experts, and web resources.

Half of you will also serve as wiki sub-coordinator, working with your classmates to apportion and assign wiki work, monitoring your section of the wiki as material is added so that it is coherent, and editing to maintain consistency and readability. And since this seminar meets in two sections, you will need to coordinate this work with your counterpart in the other seminar. (FYI: all seminar participants will serve as either a wiki sub-coordinator or a presentation/discussion coordinator.)

4. *QORCs (Questions, Observations, Reflections, & Connections)*: To facilitate a good and thoughtful discussion of the course reading assignments, you will prepare a 300-500 word reading response document which I call a "QORC" on the assignments as indicated in the course schedule. These documents, which you'll submit to SOCS before class begins and give to the professor in hard copy at the end of class, will begin with your questions (if any) for clarification or discussion, move to a discussion of the reading's key themes (i.e., "observations"), and conclude with reflections on the reading and connections between the reading, other course materials, and your college education in general.

In other words, QORCs are glorified reading notes, and the wise student will write these so that they can be readily adapted for use in her/his final synthesis project (below).

5. *Presentations*: As college seniors, you will be expected to contribute helpfully to the class at several points, and do so with preparation and professionalism each time (think of our seminar room as a board room in which you be expected to make a variety of useful contributions). The *first* set of presentations will be relatively informal, as you work with your text's presentation coordinator to summarize and illustrate key points from your chosen personal finance text. You will each divide your text into 4 relatively even parts, and come prepared during these weeks to present what you've learned with your classmates. I will give you a few moments before these presentations to organize yourselves in collaboration with your presentation coordinator. The *second* set of presentations will be semi-formal - as you'll divide your work skills texts in two, and carry out a more structured presentation and discussion of that text's key themes and illustrations. It will be useful to have visual aids or other prepared materials to assist you (e.g., play-act a conversation). Presentation coordinators will collaborate with their classmates to make sure their text is covered sufficiently, and

The *third* presentation will be the most formal, and it will be yours alone. During it, you will 1) review select highlights from your final synthesis, 2) tell us about your top 5 course "take-aways," and 3) conclude by describing your practical, grounded application of the sociological imagination to your life after college.

6. *Final Synthesis*: You can think of this as a portfolio and an essay, as it will incorporate your work throughout the semester, as well as your statement about how YOU will apply the sociological imagination to your journey after college. So be sure to save all your writing, as you'll want to draw from it in constructing this final synthesis.

There are 2 elements in your final synthesis. First, you will write what you learned during this seminar from your 1) internship, 2) wiki work, 3) transferable skills & resume workshops, 4) financial skills texts, 5) work/life skills text, 6) diagnostic reading excerpts by Hochschild, Schor, Furstenberg, Robbins/Wilner, 7) aspirational reading assignments by Kidder, James, and Schweitzer, and 8) discussions with your classmates and professor. Second, you will apply the sociological imagination to your journey after college. Re-read the Bateman text, and with that and everything else you've done in the class in mind, write an essay that addresses the following five questions: 1) how do you compose your life story, and how do you want to tell its next chapter? (i.e., what are your hopes, dreams, and plans for life after college?) 2) what are the social (micro, mezzo, and macro) as well as the cultural obstacles that stand in the way of your hopes, dreams, and plans? 3) how will you employ your sociological skills to manage these obstacles? 4) who will support you and keep you honest in this endeavor? 5) any final thoughts? You'll need to turn in a hard copy of your internship hours certification, but the rest of your materials must be submitted to SOCS. I am really looking forward to reading these!

Course Schedule: (tentative; the professor reserves the right to adjust)

Date:	What's happening:	What's due:
Jan 20/21	Seminar Overview On emerging adulthood & quarterlife crises? Coordinator assignments	Read: Furstenberg "Growing Up is Hard to Do" & NY Times "Quarterlife Crisis" article and letters
Jan 27/28	It's a jungle out there ...	QORC #1 due on: Schor; Robbins/Wilner; Hochschild; Schwehn/Bass Intro; James; & Schweitzer readings
Feb 3/4	***abbreviated seminar, will end at 2 hour mark*** Transferable skills workshop Who is Paul Farmer? On imaginations & life stories	Due: write 7 stories from your own life about enjoyable and satisfying experiences or accomplishments QORC #2: Kidder, part 1; C. Wright Mills & Mary Catherine Bateman excerpts
Feb 10/11	To Haiti & beyond Student informal presentations on the basics of personal finance	Due: ranked list of top 10 transferable skills, to SOCS w paper copy to professor QORC #3: Kidder, part 2 Inf. presentations on selected Personal Finance text, part 1 of 4
Feb 17/18	To Peru & beyond Personal finance presentations, part 2	QORC #4: Kidder, part 3 Inf. presentations on selected Personal Finance text, part 2 of 4
Feb 24/25	***1 hour delayed seminar start*** To Russia & beyond Personal finance presentations, part 3	QORC #4: Kidder, part 4 Inf. presentations on selected Personal Finance text, part 3 of 4
Mar 3/4	***No Seminar Meeting***	<i>Reminder – complete 7th blog post & comment by 11:59pm on March 6</i>
Mar 10/11	***Your final spring break, plan to enjoy it!***	Absolutely nothing

Date:	What's happening:	What's due:
Mar 17/18	<i>Tentative:</i> Field trip to TCNJ Career Services Office	<i>Bring copy of your resume with you</i> Wiki assignment must be completed by end of this week
Mar 24/25	To cure the world ... Personal finance presentations, part 4	QORC #5: Kidder, part 5 Inf. presentations on selected Personal Finance text, part 4 of 4
Mar 31/ Apr 1	Business bestsellers in sociological perspective	Semi-formal presentations, part 1, on first half of life/work skills text
Apr 7/8	Business bestsellers in sociological perspective, continued	Semi-formal presentations, part 2, on first half of life/work skills text
Apr 14/15	***1 hour delayed seminar start*** Wiki review & discussion Internships: the good, the bad, the ugly	QORC #6: Read entire wiki; come prepared to present own contribution and discuss what you've learned from the wiki
Apr 21/22	Final Presentations: last six students listed on my section roster	<i>Come prepared to ask questions and start conversations with each presenter.</i>
Apr 28/29	Final Presentations: first six students listed on my section roster	<i>Come prepared to ask questions and start conversations with each presenter.</i> <i>Reminder: complete 14th blog post and comment by April 30th at 11:59pm</i>
Final exam period	Final Synthesis due to the SOCS dropbox at the start of the scheduled exam time	<i>See Final Exam Schedule on-line</i>



"I'm a college professor, Jason. You need to ask someone else if you want advice about the real world."