Last Thursday was Student Symposium Day at Beloit College, and that is always one of my favorite days of the semester. Classes are cancelled, and the day is filled with student presentations. Students demonstrate how they’ve put the “liberal arts into practice” as we say at Beloit. There were fascinating and polished presentations, many of which you would have been thrilled to stumble upon at ASA. The day got me thinking about how we teach students to “do” Sociology. We ask them to conduct empirical research and write up or present their results, sure, but mirroring the research process of academia isn’t all I have in mind when I think of “doing” Sociology. I think of community-based learning, internships, and other experiences that give our students the opportunity to connect text to context. We teach students to employ their sociological imaginations as they navigate the world so that they can understand the structures of a new place and what that means for their position within it. These three brief stories capture ways in which my students have begun to do Sociology in thought-provoking and exciting ways.

Kate Atkinson, a senior who double majors in Sociology and Russian, presented her research on disabled children and their institutionalization in orphanages in Russia. This project began during her semester abroad in Moscow when Kate volunteered at a children’s art center that works with orphaned children, many of whom have disabilities. She tackles the intersection of history and biography by looking at how the construction of disability in pre- and post-Soviet Russia affects the integration, and lack thereof, of children with disabilities into larger society, framing this as a human rights issue.

Nate Brault is a senior who double majors in Sociology and Education & Youth Studies. In the fall, he spent the semester in a Writing for Social Justice Program in Minneapolis. As a part of that curriculum, he interned with a high school theatre program that incorporated hip-hop pedagogy into the classroom. He spoke of having students deconstruct the language of popular lyrics to have conversations about concepts such as race and social class. As part of this “culturally relevant pedagogy,” students also wrote and performed pieces that addressed issues of poverty, feminism, and date rape.

Students don’t have to leave Beloit in order to “do” Sociology. Each semester, my colleague Carol Wickersham, offers a course called the Duffy Community Partnerships. This class meets for two hours each week and students spend 90 hours throughout the semester at
their community site. These range from a food pantry to an organic farm to a local Fortune 500 company. The question that drives the course is, “What makes a good society?” For the past year, Carol and two students—Maggie Cress and Karen Jones—have conducted research on the program that investigates the content of learning in this community-based experience. One of their findings is that many students experience “pivot points,” occurrences where learning isn’t gradual, but rather takes a big jump forward. One way this happens is that a student will make a connection between what is happening in their particular site and what happens in society more broadly. Students begin to get a firmer grasp on the concept of social structure, and this happens because they are embedded in a community site that is accompanied by academic grounding.

As a dedicated teacher, I am always looking for ways to deepen student learning through innovative pedagogy. That is a large part of my attraction to this section—it is filled with educators who care about teaching and learning and who are happy to share their ideas. I’m already looking forward to all that I will learn from you all at ASA in Chicago this summer, but more on annual meeting programming in my next column.

Welcome to Spring! Worcester was the snowiest city in the US this year and I didn’t really think we would ever see a change of seasons (despite what The Byrds—or The Limeliters claimed). Much like Kate and Beloit College, here at Holy Cross we wrap up our semester with our annual academic conference. Our undergraduates present their research projects and theses. It is a wonderful chance to see how young scholars are learning how to “do” sociology. At times it also makes me realize I have a lot more to learn about the doing of sociology.

This edition of our newsletter is chocked full of ideas about doing sociology from fellow members.

After asking members for columns on connecting to the community, we received almost half a dozen. In this edition we include three. Jerry Krase uses visual sociology to document blight and gentrification in his teaching and activism. In a similar vein Jennifer Sullivan uses photography to get her students interested in the local community. Finally, Janet Lorenzen writes about transitioning as a new faculty member and how daunting making connections to the local community can be. She gives several examples and some suggestions on how to make the transition.

We also have several ideas for the classroom in this edition. Benjamin Drury writes about the flipped classroom. In his piece he writes about assigning films, readings, and
recordings to students outside of the classroom and having them come to class ready to discuss the material. Kevin Dougherty writes about Learning Celebrations. Rather than give exams or quizzes, Kevin treats students to a party while they do multiple choice questions. In this way he changes the connotation of what evaluation means and has fun doing it. Qu’ils mangent de la brioche! Dee Hill Zuganelli writes about strategies for dealing with plagiarism and explains that by and large what we currently do simply avoids the problem. Orit Hirsch writes about a project she uses in her classes that includes infographics to help students develop their sociological imagination. Finally, we include a piece by Deborah Abowitz on keeping it real. She shows how designing unique writing assignments keeps students engaged and allows them to use knowledge they have learned in class.

Kathleen Fitzgerald and Salvatore Babones both write about their new books.

We have also included brief blurbs on our candidates for the upcoming election.

I’d also like to put in a personal plug. An edition of *Humanity & Society* I co-edited with Corey Dolgon and James Pennell on teaching humanist sociology just hit the shelves. I hope many of our readers find it useful.

Finally, be on the lookout for two calls for papers from *Teaching Sociology*!

As always, feel free to send ideas and pieces for the next edition of the newsletter.
1. Section Chair's Corner
2. Editor's Introduction
3. Section Officers
4. Call For Papers
5. Connecting the Classroom to the Community
10. Ideas for the Classroom
16. Meet the Candidates
14. Technologies and Teaching Resources
16. Announcements

---

**Call For Papers**

*Teaching Sociology*

Have you tested the effectiveness of an innovative teaching approach? Do you have perspectives on the state of teaching and learning in sociology that you wish to share? Consider publishing your insights in *Teaching Sociology*, a peer reviewed journal of the American Sociological Association.

In addition to reviews, the journal publishes three types of manuscripts. Article submissions are research-based and are approximately 25 pages double spaced. Notes submissions summarize the application of specific teaching strategies or approaches, and do so in a more restricted manner than research articles. They are approximately 15 pages double spaced. Conversation submissions are written to stimulate lively, thoughtful and informed discussion of issues that are subject to debate and controversy. Conversation submissions can be as long as 25 pages double spaced but unlike article submissions they do not necessarily need to include analysis of data or assessment. If you have questions about a prospective submission, contact the editor Stephen Sweet at teachingsociology@ithaca.edu.

The journal is currently seeking all types of submissions, as well as submissions for two special issues.

---

**Special issue of Teaching Sociology: Sociology Instruction in the Community College Context.**

Community colleges present unique opportunities for teaching sociology, as well as challenges. While not restricted to instruction in community college contexts, especially salient concerns include:

- Effective engagement of part time faculty
- Strategies of assuring instructional quality with reliance contingent faculty
- Promotion of professional disciplinary involvement within the discipline
- Curriculum design and decision making processes
- Experiential learning within limited exposure to sociology courses
- Effective responses to teaching demands and resource constraints

Teaching Sociology seeks articles and notes that address issues relating to effective engagement of sociology within community college settings, including concerns that directly relate to instruction, management, and disciplinary engagement. Submission deadline is February 1, 2017.

Instructions for submission can be found at [http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal201974](http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal201974). Questions concerning potential submissions can be addressed to the editor, Stephen Sweet at teachingsociology@ithaca.edu.

**Special Issue of Teaching Sociology: Incorporating Globalization in the Sociology Curriculum**

Teaching Sociology seeks articles and notes that address issues that focus on innovative approaches that incorporate globalization and transnational concerns in the curriculum. Among the topics of interest are:

- Effective strategies that make global and transnational concerns evident to students
- Exercises or assignments that engage students in the study of global and transnational concerns
- Strategies of orchestrating transnational learning experiences, such as class trips abroad
- Critical reviews of ways that global and transnational content are presented in the curriculum

Submission deadline is February 1, 2017. Instructions for submission can be found at [http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal201974](http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal201974). Submissions concerning classroom applications should include assessment data. Questions concerning potential submissions can be addressed to the co-editors of this dedicated issue: Patti Giuffre at pg07@txstate.edu or Stephen Sweet at teachingsociology@ithaca.edu.
Sociologists can connect to the community in many different ways. As a visually-oriented sociologist I do it with images. For example, in the 1970s my students went out into the field to help a racially changing neighborhood, Prospect-Lefferts-Gardens, correct negative, essentially racist, definitions of this and other central city areas into which African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans were moving. Due to the biases of various public and private authorities, the residents and businesses in these communities suffered from such things as poor city services as well as mortgage and insurance red-lining. Below are two images representing neighborhood residents, homes as well as student research and documentary activities.

This Brooklyn College student is audio taping an interview of Mr. and Mrs. Norman McField, who are Prospect-Lefferts-Gardens community leaders.
This is a common example of Prospect-Lefferts-Gardens streetscape that in the 1970s was considered by outsiders a “bad” neighborhood.

As technology advanced my students used new ways to learn about and assist community residents. The following is an excerpt from one such a class project that was available on line:

We are a group of CUNY Honors students at Brooklyn College. Walking the streets of our borough, we constantly observe the history, culture and everyday life of Brooklyn and Brooklynites. People from all over the world settle onto the streets that weave themselves into each other, mingling their cultures, languages, religions and ethnicities, thus creating diverse communities unseen in most other cities in the world. One such community that fascinated us with its unique history, neighborhood spirit and individuality was Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

Calm, shadowed streets lined with turreted houses and beautiful trees are nestled between the bustle of Flatbush and the calm serenity of Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. History seeps from the pavement as one walks around, looking up at the houses and talking with the local residents. One of the most preserved communities of Brooklyn, Prospect Lefferts Gardens is worthy of study and perhaps a trip on the Q train.

We invite you to come with us into Prospect Lefferts Gardens!" (http://macaulay.cuny.edu/student-projects/2006/neighborhoods/9/home.html)

From these kinds of experiences some of my students became community activists, got involved in local politics; one even became a board member of the local Community Planning District.

Ironically, that same neighborhood is today suffering from a reversal of misfortune in the form Gentrification and Displacement. Although no longer teaching full-time I have become involved with The Movement To Protect the People (http://www.mtopp.org/) whose mission is stated below:

Our Mission
Our Mission is to Protect the moderate to low income people from being displaced from the Flatbush Ave, Lefferts Garden area, due to gentrification. We are determined to help true affordable housing, that is based upon the current population income and to provide assistance and support to maintain the current affordable housing stock.

We are also engage with City Planning and behind the scenes developers who want to turn Empire Blvd. into a tourist attraction and make tons of money off the community. We are being played in a bait and switch with community benefits. Told by City Planning that if we don't Up zone Empire Blvd., we won't get assistance from the City to help with our affordable housing. We know that if they get those high risers on Empire, we won't be here, to get any community benefits, so we are not going to fight for a community that won't exist in five years!

These last two images were taken by me during a walking tour to show an urban planner what the problem looks like. MTOPP has engaged the planner to respond to the rezoning study that threatens the affordability of the area with high-rise high-density luxury development.
As a new faculty member, living in an unfamiliar city, how do you get to know a community and develop a place-based curriculum? This was the challenge I faced this year at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. My goal was to assess the connections already in place and open up a variety of opportunities which I could pursue in more depth in the future.

While developing a new course (“Sustainability, Justice & Society”) I encountered a course design I wanted to emulate. Alvarez and Rogers (2006) took their students on seven fieldtrips to help them understand “sustainability in practice.” These fieldtrips (in Australia) included local government offices, a winery, an orchard, a berry farm, and an environmental non-profit organization. Students then wrestled with sustainability in the real world including the conflicting priorities of stakeholders and their divergent perspectives on how to define sustainability. I wanted to recreate this course in the agriculturally rich Willamette Valley but seven fieldtrips seemed like a daunting task. I decided to begin by bringing the community to the class, rather than the class to the community. My course on “Sustainability, Justice & Society” highlights the disconnect between sustainability (often of the built environment) and social justice (focused on labor and health) and the differences between definitions of sustainability in textbooks and the empirical reality of sustainability-in-action that we find on campus and in our local communities (Lorenzen forthcoming). I organized the course so it touched on global connections, local communities, and the campus itself. We began, as many environmental sociology classes do, with a supply chain assignment. We read selections from Confessions of an Eco-Sinner: Tracking down the Sources of My Stuff and watched clips from the film Mardi Gras: Made in China.

In searching for a template for my supply chain assignment I reached out to my social networks and Norah MacKendrick at Rutgers University recommended Belasco (2008, 62-63) – who lays out a detailed assignment on food supply chains. I adapted his assignment to include both food and other products. [Although I did not use it for my course, Belasco (2008) also discusses another assignment: “The New Product Development Game” where students can design and market a new product, then deal with the ethical implications of the product (68-69).] The supply chain assignment had both academic and entertainment value. On the entertainment side, we learned that honey nut cheerios do not have any nuts in them and other odd facts. On the academic side, I asked students to interrogate the “information deficit model” by assessing the likelihood that the “average consumer” could make “better decisions” by seeking out information on resource extraction, farming and labor practices, etc.

In order to compliment the food chain assignment I brought in a guest speaker who was completing a local food assessment (http://oregonfoodbank.org/) and who worked with a local food share that the University had a long-standing relationship with. The food assessment involved interviewing local farmers (What do they grow? Are processing locations accessible?) and organizing town hall meetings to discuss food access. This visit gave students insight into local food webs and their relationship to food insecurity. It also opened up a dialogue between myself and the local food share about future service learning opportunities tailored to sustainability and social justice.
In addition to capitalizing on the pre-existing relationships with non-profits, I also piggy-backed course content onto campus events. For example, when Liz Carlisle (author) and David Oien (Founder of Timeless Natural Food) came to campus to give a talk about the book Lentil Underground and went with my students to watch the documentary film Food Chains which was followed by an excellent panel on fair labor practices. The class followed up by printing letters in support of the Fair Food program from the film’s website and bringing them to the local Safeway (http://www.foodchainsfilm.com/). Accommodating these events required some flexibility in my syllabus, but was worth the effort.

I also coordinated a campus greening project for the course similar to one I had heard about at an AASHE panel (The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) (Johnson and Long 2013). I invited the head of the sustainability institute, food services, facilities and grounds keeping to the class (2 different class periods) to talk about what they have done in the past to green campus and what they hope to do in the future. Students followed up with them and designed a proposal for a campus greening project. In the last third of the class students have the option of carrying out their project. For example, one student group is mapping the edible gardens on campus (there are about 5) and making a webpage about them available to students, staff, faculty and the local community including a nearby homeless shelter. For their final project students also have the option of researching a local organization that is working on both sustainability and social justice issues. This allows me to get to know local groups and gives students the opportunity to explore mechanisms of social change.

I am also building up my own community networks. After attending several environmental lobbying days at the state capital for research purposes, I invited a local pastor to the class to speak about eco-feminism and religious environmentalism. And organized a panel of residents from a nearby eco-village to come to class and discuss their definition of sustainability and trials and tribulations that they have faced because of the housing market collapse. I am currently working with the eco-village to find more ways to make connections between it and University students. My advice for new faculty is threefold: work with existing relationships, embed community outreach into the curriculum, and seek out connections that fit with both your curriculum and research interests.

Works Cited


Connecting the Classroom to the Community

Seeing History Through the Lens of a Camera

Jennifer Sullivan
Mitchell College

Visual Sociology: Photography is an elective sociology course which combines my two passions, sociology and photography, and is taught in a small group setting of 11 students. The course explores documentary photography by examining the photography criticism of Susan Sontag’s, On Photography, and photographers such as Jacob Riis, Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, Dorothea Lange and Lewis Hine. The course is flexible enough to allow for discussions of modern photography criticism and debate (such as morality of photos taken of Abu Gharib) as well as historical mysteries (Roger Fenton’s the “Valley of Death” photographs). Although not a photography skills course, students are required to complete eight weekly photo assignments which challenge them to explore their world through the lens of a camera; digital cameras and cell phone cameras are permitted.

The course incorporates discussion, critical analysis, and hands-on photography elements. However, the most effective teaching tool I have utilized in the course so far is bringing my students to the archive room of the New London Public Library in New London, CT.

New London, CT is a small, waterfront town along the Thames River rich with maritime history. In a letter written in 1864, Henry White of New Haven stated, “I have met no town history, which, in my judgment, is quite equal to it.” The New London Library itself is an important historical building and also contains archives of letters, books and photographs which span 300 years of history in New London County.

The library staff were quite helpful and accommodating in allowing my students and I to carefully sort through the historical documents and pictures of New London and the surrounding towns. During our visit, the students were amazed at the old photographs of a tree lined State Street with horse drawn carriages, and pictures of numerous submarines being built across the river in Groton, CT at Electric Boat. The students were amazed that they were able to hold documents in their hands that were over 100 years old. One student was fascinated by the front page of our local newspaper, The Day, which had articles reporting on World War II. Another student found newspaper clippings from the 1950’s about the history of our institution, Mitchell College, and the fluctuating enrollment of 97 students to an influx of veterans returning home from World War II. One young woman in the course found a picture of the inside of a submarine control room. She told me that her boyfriend is also in the Navy and talks about spending time in a similar control room. Because of the photograph, she was able to understand where he worked and she used her cell phone to take a picture of the archived document to share with him.

Watching the students pore through the files and photographs reminded me that they were learning more by being outside of the classroom and in the community than in any powerpoint lesson I could present. Working independently yet alongside their peers allowed all students in the class to be witnesses to others’ discoveries and allowed me to be curious and amazed as I searched the photographs with them.

An interesting contradiction to the students’ exploration of older documents was their use of modern technology via their cell phones. While in the library archives, students were tasked with finding three photographs that interested them, surprised them or affected them in some way. All of the students used their cell phones as a camera, but some also found another use for their smart phones – as a research tool. Many students found terms and events mentioned in the files which were unfamiliar to them and used the internet as a reference. A photography field trip into the community evolved into students’ individual research projects; an unexpected outcome.
Bringing my sociology students into the community proved to be an invaluable teaching tool and connected Mitchell College students with an important building in our town’s history, the New London Public Library.

One thing that plagues me towards the beginning of every semester is where to draw the line between what content to show, display, discuss, or otherwise present in the classroom and what material students are responsible for consuming outside of class. The overall goal is to stimulate discussion and participation with the lecture. And when trying to select movies of interest to students, or even audio recordings or articles readings, I have to limit them by their length if I want to show them in class. However, last semester I caught wind of a new movement in education that gives teachers the opportunity to release low-stakes assignments related to these longer viewings, or other form of media, and tie them to discussion questions for class time.

I took this question to an on-campus Teaching and Learning Center event last semester entitled “The Flipped Classroom” to investigate this teaching style that requires students to take time out of class to review certain materials – in most cases it is a longer film – and complete review questions for class discussion. In the presentation, our campus digital expert walked us through the process of designing materials to be used in the “Flipped Classroom” that can help students and teachers alike.

The first step in designing a “Flipped Classroom” is deciding what media is important for students to review and connect to the course material. For sociologists, the field is relatively open in terms of media that can be related to course material. However, there were some specific films – PBS documentaries especially – that are lengthy (about 2 hours in runtime) that I believe are immensely powerful in opening student minds to the power of using alternative perspectives to investigate social issues. Second, the instructor needs to link the media to some form of review questions. For me, I designed fairly broad-strokes questions aimed at engaging students with the material. Of course, one can’t make the questions too specific, but, for example, asking how gender, race, or social class influence the outcomes of certain situations can open student minds to the power of social drivers in our life. Third, and perhaps most important, the class discussion. Simply creating these responses is beneficial in and of itself. But when you allow students the opportunity to share their responses, engage with other students who may or may not share their viewpoint, and then have them work together to settle on a shared perspective on the issue is hugely significant. Naturally, after hearing this presentation I was sold and desired the opportunity to test this pedagogy on my own students.

This semester I designed and released a “Flipped Classroom” worksheet – I call them “Chapter Handouts” – for each chapter to give students exposure to a variety of films, audio recordings, and alternative articles. They complete a set of questions related to their viewing and we then discuss them in class. Interestingly, as my fear was that students would feel overwhelmed by this strategy, many students felt this activity brought them to a closer understanding of the material. Overall, I see an increase in student discussions and exam grades, so it appears that the “Flipped Classroom” strategy is working. However, I do need to complete a more focused assessment of student attitudes toward the assignment before fully integrating this method into all of my classes.

One thing that plagues me towards the beginning of every semester is where to draw the line between what content to show, display, discuss, or otherwise present in the classroom and what material students are responsible for consuming outside of class. The overall goal is to stimulate discussion and participation with the lecture. And when trying to select movies of interest to students, or even audio recordings or articles readings, I have to limit them by their length if I want to show them in class. However, last semester I caught wind of a new movement in education that gives teachers the opportunity to release low-stakes assignments related to these longer viewings, or other form of media, and tie them to discussion questions for class time.

I took this question to an on-campus Teaching and Learning Center event last semester entitled “The Flipped Classroom” to investigate this teaching style that requires students to take time out of class to review certain materials – in most cases it is a longer film – and complete review questions for class discussion. In the presentation, our campus digital expert walked us through the process of designing materials to be used in the “Flipped Classroom” that can help students and teachers alike.

The first step in designing a “Flipped Classroom” is deciding what media is important for students to review and connect to the course material. For sociologists, the field is relatively open in terms of media that can be related to course material. However, there were some specific films – PBS documentaries especially – that are lengthy (about 2 hours in runtime) that I believe are immensely powerful in opening student minds to the power of using alternative perspectives to investigate social issues. Second, the instructor needs to link the media to some form of review questions. For me, I designed fairly broad-strokes questions aimed at engaging students with the material. Of course, one can’t make the questions too specific, but, for example, asking how gender, race, or social class influence the outcomes of certain situations can open student minds to the power of social drivers in our life. Third, and perhaps most important, the class discussion. Simply creating these responses is beneficial in and of itself. But when you allow students the opportunity to share their responses, engage with other students who may or may not share their viewpoint, and then have them work together to settle on a shared perspective on the issue is hugely significant. Naturally, after hearing this presentation I was sold and desired the opportunity to test this pedagogy on my own students.

This semester I designed and released a “Flipped Classroom” worksheet – I call them “Chapter Handouts” – for each chapter to give students exposure to a variety of films, audio recordings, and alternative articles. They complete a set of questions related to their viewing and we then discuss them in class. Interestingly, as my fear was that students would feel overwhelmed by this strategy, many students felt this activity brought them to a closer understanding of the material. Overall, I see an increase in student discussions and exam grades, so it appears that the “Flipped Classroom” strategy is working. However, I do need to complete a more focused assessment of student attitudes toward the assignment before fully integrating this method into all of my classes.
It is test day in my Introduction to Sociology class. Students wait nervously outside the classroom door. They talk in muted tones as they compare notes and lament that this is the second or third test of the week for them. The mood is somber. Then the doors to the classroom open.

Signs on the doors read, “It’s time to celebrate!” Balloons and streamers surround a table of treats at the front of the room. Kool and the Gang’s song “Celebration” plays in the background. Members of the teaching staff receive entering students as party guests. The furrowed brows of students quickly change to broad smiles. The muted tones and shuffling of notes are replaced by happy banter and rhythmic nodding of heads to the music. At the appointed time, the music fades. The professor takes the stage, greets students as “community members,” and thanks them for coming to the Learning Celebration. Welcome to test day in Soc 1305!

More than a semantic gimmick, I have been actively working to reframe test day for the past two years. Drawing on social constructionism, my goal is to create an ambience for assessment that enhances learning and joy. I tell students that our course is far too fun for quizzes and exams. Instead, we have Learning Checks and Learning Celebrations. Students are skeptical at first and often slip into the familiar language of quizzes and tests. Members of our teaching team, myself and two graduate teaching assistants, gently remind them that no such activities occur in our course. We institute a different vocabulary and a different set of norms to alter the way students perceive of and experience assessment.

Assessment is for Learning

Learning Celebrations shift the emphasis of assessment from grading to learning. Assessment is an important part of learning. Tests, in particular, are useful tools for learning. Teaching advocates Marilla Svinicki and Wilbert McKeachie (2014) instruct: “Testing and other assessments should be learning experiences as well as evaluation devices” (p. 83). Students tend to think of tests solely in terms of evaluation. They bristle at quizzes and tests as external requirements imposed upon them. By changing the language, I attempt to change the connotation of assessment. The course syllabus describes Learning Celebrations as occasions “to consider and celebrate what we’ve learned.” The choice of a plural pronoun is intentional. We celebrate holidays, birthdays, and other rites of passage with others. In similar fashion, Learning Celebrations are shared events that contribute to a larger goal of transforming a crowd of 200+ strangers into a community.

Assessment Can Be Fun

Learning Celebrations reinforce another lesson for students: Assessment can be fun. Learning Celebrations in Soc 1305 are fun. In addition to the music and décor of the classroom, the content of Learning Celebrations is amusing. Thirty to forty multiple choice questions comprise each Learning Celebration. Students are in many questions. Rebecca adopts a ferret and gets evicted from her campus residence hall in Learning Celebration 1 (formal sanction). Michael marries two female classmates in Learning Celebration 3 (polygamy). Students smile and chuckle as they read about themselves in the questions. This affective response is valuable. Learning has both cognitive and affective dimensions. When students care about a subject and care about classmates, the potential for deep, lasting learning increases (Fink 2013). I want students to care about sociology. It is one of my course objectives. By making Learning Celebrations festive occasions, I aim to raise students’ interest in sociology and their intrinsic motivation for studying sociology.
Response to the Learning Celebrations has been very positive. When I made the change from tests to celebrations in Fall 2013, I added a question about the Learning Celebrations to the course evaluation. Over three semesters (Fall 2013, Spring 2014, and Fall 2014), nine out of ten students agreed that “I enjoyed the Learning Celebrations in Soc 1305.” Remarkably, 41% strongly agreed. I can’t remember another time in my teaching when students were so enthusiastic about multiple-choice questions to assess their learning. Unfortunately, I have no way of testing whether level of enjoyment has changed with the introduction of Learning Celebrations in my Soc 1305 course. It never occurred to me to ask whether students enjoyed the exams. I do have comparative data on student performance. Comparing three semesters of exam scores (Fall 2011, Spring 2012, Fall 2012) to three semesters of Learning Celebration scores (Fall 2013, Spring 2014, and Fall 2014), telling differences emerge. I convert raw scores to percentages for comparison purposes, since the number of questions on exams/celebrations were not uniform across semesters. The mean percentage on exams was 84.65. The mean percentage on Learning Celebrations was 86.48. Hence, students taking Learning Celebrations scored nearly two percentage points higher than did students taking exams in previous semesters. And they did so consistently. The standard deviation for exam percentages was 9.89 in contrast to a standard deviation of 7.34 on Learning Celebrations. These differences are statistically significant (t = -3.73, p < .001). A necessary qualification is in order however. I used to give three exams. Students now vote on the number of Learning Celebrations. The majority vote consistently favors four celebrations. Thus, the frequency of Learning Celebrations may partially account for higher average scores. Nevertheless, taking student opinion and student performance together provides support for Learning Celebrations as a benefit to learning.

Conclusion

Assessment is too important for students to dread. As teachers, we can influence how students perceive of and experience assessment. Make test day something special in your courses. Bring balloons and treats. Students may do better as a result. This is worth celebrating.

References


Plagiarism represents one of the most troubling developments for academic integrity in the present times of higher education. It is troubling for two reasons.

First, plagiarism has not only increased in prevalence over time, but it also now serves as the predominant challenge in academic integrity (Yardley, Rodriguez, Bates, and Nelson 2009). Second, effective solutions for tackling plagiarism prove elusive. Instructors and professors can resort to punitive measures ranging from loss of course credit to dismissal from class to program suspension and expulsion. However, they fail to address the broader context in which cheating occurs: perceptions of high-stakes academic performance, time management skill deficiencies failures to strategize and prioritize workloads, and ever-present temptations of Internet and digital resources.
Heckler and Forde (2015) proposed that cultural values such as freedom, individualism, and fault-finding inform justifications and deterrents for plagiarism. Universities can work to create stronger cultures of learning and social norms and values campaigns to instill the importance of integrity. But how do we translate Heckler and Forde’s university-level recommendations directly into our work in the classroom?

The majority of my teaching experience with plagiarism has dealt with creating and enforcing sanctions. This means creating clear language in course syllabi that defines plagiarism and identifies consequences, ensuring students know the risk, and enforcing sanctions when students get caught. So long as I had written statements to refer to, my responsibility to stop plagiarism ended there. If anything, the cultural argument had more to do with students’ internal moral compasses than any responsibility on my part to change their behavior. And to the extent this sentiment is shared among faculty, it becomes easier and easier to react with disdain. Here’s why.

Plagiarism is a topic that can easily make students’ eyes glaze over. To prevent this, I incorporate stories of former cheating incidents. I keep the required talk fairly minimal – what the term means, copying from the web versus recycling old homework, how I use Turn-It-In, how surprisingly effective it is, etc. After that, we spend more time discussing how relatively innocent behaviors – like working together on homework, sharing copies of assignments, or distributing class notes – present different levels of risk.

The accompanying Powerpoint lesson shows a color-coded thermometer. The topic (e.g., students working together) is the slide title. The thermometer appears next to a series of acceptable and risky variations. Thus, getting together to study is a “safe” behavior whereas exchanging and copying each other’s content is a clear violation. More importantly, intermediary behaviors – such as asking a class mate to see how they word a short essay response in their homework – generate the real responses. “Why is that risky?” a student asks. And then I tell students about the time Friend A asks B for her homework, B voluntarily gives it, only for A to copy her entire assignment and submit it for a grade.

Disdain sets in because of the time wasted in creating as lively a discussion for cheating as possible, only for it to do not one hint of good. It gets worse when instructors confront cheaters who have already attended plagiarism workshops and early sanctions. And in full disclosure, my disdain translated into policy change. If I couldn’t beat students down with a sanction (loss of course credit, loss of letter grade), then I reached for a larger hammer (failing the course). While serving on a college-level taskforce for plagiarism and academic integrity issues, we reflected openly and honestly about these sentiments.

If readers are compelled by Heckler and Forde’s cultural arguments for cheating, then we need to consider our own values that frame how we address plagiarism. Authoritarianism and accountability might appeal to the hammer-wielders out there. But if we want to see student honesty between the cheating and the conference, perhaps we can turn these logics into a more forgiving measure.

I couple my (now, disdain-infused) zero-tolerance policy for cheating with a catch. It’s delightfully simple on their part. If a student voluntarily discloses that they have cheated on an assignment prior to my discovery of it, then he or she is eligible for a lighter sanction. Honesty becomes an effective bargaining chip.

The act becomes a way to *regain* accountability even in the face of prior wrongdoings. Although discretionary enforcement claims to work in the same way, the self-incrimination clause avoids reintroducing the risk of cheating (due to no punishment). It is sufficiently technical and legalistic for the sake of campus rule enforcement while giving students a clear behavioral alternative, especially after wrongdoing occurs. Moreover, this instructor-side intervention may relieve the disdain that inadvertently bubbles up in applying sanctions. It’s easier to approach students who show a capacity for accountability through confession and to treat them with forgiveness in return.

In conclusion, plagiarism and academic integrity issues are unlikely to result in fewer headaches on our collective teaching behalf in the near future. The Internet and the subsequence ease of accessing and sharing materials, copied written and otherwise, will not shrink any time soon. Policies promote reflection and allow us to take stock of anti-plagiarism messages we repeat and promote as
instructive devices. For me, it’s less “You fail the course” and more “Be honest so that I won’t fail you.”

References


How do we engage the students beyond simply learning the terminology for a test? How can we make the sociological theories not to sound encyclopedic, but relevant? How can we demonstrate to our students that the theories they are studying have been developed based on interactions found in everyday life and can be studied on any street corner, shopping mall, and classroom?

After five semesters of testing out various ideas, I have developed a project which successfully engages all of the students in actively learning the material, enriches their understanding of fundamental sociological theories, and causes them to reflect on how they are affected by their social backgrounds in society. The project asks students to examine social problems from a sociological perspective and asks them to suggest policies for modifying the negative aspects of these social problems. Students then create an infographic or a video that leverages their technological skills and present these theories and relevant topics to the class. I have found this project and the technological twist engages almost all of the students. They are invested in applying their sociological knowledge to understanding their social environment.

At the beginning of the semester, I introduce the two-part and provide a list of general and specific topics as examples. The students have the option to select one of the topics and relate it to their own lives or to choose a sociological topic of their own. The topics might be connected to their hobbies, college major, or ideas that were covered throughout the semester. In the past, students have written about diverse topics such as: objectification of women in the media; how social media affects teens; the perception of black hair; racism in soccer; the cultural differences between speakers of Cantonese versus Mandarin; college enrollment for minorities in a 4-year college versus a 2 year college; and addiction to mobile phones.

The first part of the project includes researching the topic of interest by selecting two articles from the popular press (web, magazines, and newspapers) and two articles from a social science journal, which enables students to examine both the popular and social science perspectives on this topic. Their research results in a 4-page essay, which is outlined below:
• Start with an introductory paragraph that outlines and describes your social topic, such as why it is important.

• Select one of the sociological perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism.

• Interpret the social problem from the selected sociological perspective. Furthermore, be specific in your explanation: what you learned from each reading and which sociological perspective you are using.

• Suggest a social policy to improve the social problem

For the second part of the article, the students have to create a video or an infographic incorporating their research.

For each part of the assignment, I meet with the students to discuss the topic they have selected, help them outline the project and make it manageable, and discuss the best way to showcase their research (an infographic or a video). You can choose to have the students work individually or in groups.

This project brings the theories to life and challenges students to view their everyday interactions from a sociological lens. Adding these technological tools somehow made the project seem more fun and creative to students and their engagement overall increased. I noticed that participation during the lectures dramatically increased. Even the students from my 8 a.m. class were more engaged; they asked more questions and volunteered their ideas to the discussions more frequently. As a result, their grades improved as well. As a core class, Introduction to Sociology draws students from diverse educational backgrounds. This assignment allows students to develop a better understanding of sociological aspects by researching ideas that matter to them, while also challenging them to present their findings in a creative way.

I was chatting about student engagement recently with a colleague in Economics. He popped by my office, quite excited after having just taught one of those classes where things “clicked.” He told me about the student-centered examples he uses to make abstract macro-economic models matter to his students. Between us, we have almost six decades of teaching experience; while I spent most of my career at our current institution, he is new to our faculty. Despite our different genders, disciplines and teaching backgrounds, we both ended up in the same pedagogical “place” as teachers: trying to engage students by “keeping it real.” We both accept that teaching today puts the burden on us not to be “boring,” and that most students do not see intrinsic value in what and how we used to teach.

When my students say a course is “boring,” this is code for either material that is too “academic” or an instructor whose style is just “not engaging” to them. When pressed, they confess that “too academic” means course material seems unrelated to or divorced from the “real world,” while “not engaging” mostly refers to old-school low-tech pedagogy (like, gasp!, live lectures). In all, they use “boring” to characterize courses that are not inherently entertaining in form or function (at least, not by their social media-driven standards). Although I actually do use a range of instructional technologies in various courses, I do not rely on high-tech
digital razzle-dazzle to engage my students in class. Instead, like my colleague, I focus on “keeping it real” to help my students connect to sociology while I try to avoid the stigma of being “boring.”

Keeping it real means two things to me. First, whenever possible, I select some required readings that directly connect social theory and data to their lives. I look for studies that have some personal or practical relevance to students (for example, journal articles that use undergraduate samples). Some might perceive this as pandering to their generational narcissism, but it increases the likelihood that they do the readings while providing fodder for some meaningful in-class discussions. Second, and more to the point here, I try to design unique writing assignments requiring creative integration and application of course material to real world situations. Students not only enjoy doing these assignments (something frequently mentioned in end-of-term student evaluations), but these kind of assignments are not easily plagiarized, so I spend less time policing academic dishonesty. Whether teaching introductory sociology, research methods, or upper-level seminars, I have long since put away the long essay assignments and traditional research or “term” papers that were the staples of my own undergraduate and graduate courses. I do not question their pedagogical value, in a perfect world, just their efficacy with my students here and now.

One of the most enjoyable and effective examples of this kind of assignment (this is from my senior seminar on courtship and marriage in the US), has students writing “advice to the lovelorn.” In the role of advice columnists (“Dear Cupid”), they write formal responses to “letters” soliciting advice on personal dilemmas. I craft each “Dear Cupid” letter to reflect topics covered in our course that relate to “real” problems facing 20-somethings. On the rare occasion that there is an older or non-traditional student in the class, the same assignment also draws well from their broader life experience. Some topics come from anonymous questions students submit during the first week of class when I ask what they want to learn from the course. As a result, Dear Cupid letters may include questions about hooking up or about transitioning from hooking up to relationships, but they are just as frequently about cohabitation, work-family balance, and other topics graduating seniors have on their minds.

I grade student response letters on both content and style (this is a writing-intensive course). In terms of content, as Cupid, they need to integrate what they learned from course readings and class discussion into their advice on the letter’s topic. I look at whether their answers: a) reflect a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the issues; b) appropriately apply the material; and c) whether or not they provide balanced perspective on controversial issues. They get bonus points for letters that are witty, not just “smart.” I give students some choice in this assignment, so they can respond to letters with more personal appeal. I post four “Dear Cupid” letters from which they must choose two. Here is a sample letter:

Dear Cupid,
My boyfriend and I have been together for 3 years now. We used to hook up in college but after graduation, we ended up in the same city and finally began dating. We got exclusive last year. Now he says we should move in together since we spend all our time at my place or his and are wasting rent. He thinks this way we’ll be able to tell if we’d make it if we got married. He says he loves me but my mom told me, “nobody buys a head of lettuce or a cabbage that somebody else already squeezed.” She doesn’t think I should live with him until there’s a ring on my finger. So, Cupid, what should I do? I love my boyfriend, but is living together really good practice for marriage, or, is it just an easy way for him to squeeze the leaves?

Signed, Confused Cabbage

Many students fully embrace the assignment, submitting responses to extra letters just for fun. In most semesters, students ask for class time to read their completed letters aloud and share them with the group. The fact that the assignment focuses on “real” courtship and marriage dilemmas matters to them, even though the writing task is much more challenging than first appears. It turns out not to be so easy to integrate and apply almost an entire semester of material on each topic in an accessible (and hopefully amusing) form, but they do not seem to mind struggling with this task.

This assignment works best toward the end of the semester, when students have the breadth of course material and class discussion to draw on. I have not constructed it to serve as a final or culminating class assignment, but with
some revision, it could serve well in that capacity. What this assignment gives me is an indicator of how well they have mastered (learned, integrated, and can apply) the sociology we read and what they took away from class discussions.

Meet the Candidates

Nominees for Chair-Elect

Michelle A. Smith

Present Professional Position
Professor of Sociology, Lakeland Community College, Kirtland, OH, 2002-present

Positions Held in ASA
ASA Task Force on Community Colleges 2012-present
SoTL Nominations Committee 2013-14
SoTL Membership Committee 2005-06
SoTL Cooperative Initiatives Committee 2004-2005

Personal Statement:
As a sociologist, my primary passion is passing the core of the discipline on to undergraduate students. I believe that public sociology occurs every day within the classroom, thus understanding the dynamics of teaching and learning is critical for our discipline. The section on Teaching and Learning has been instrumental in raising awareness about the importance of SoTL, this section is critical to our discipline and all those who convey our discipline to the general public. In many respects my ‘home’ within the ASA is within the SoTL section. My primary professional work occurs within the classroom and thus a main connection to the discipline of sociology is with sociologists who teach and who study the art and science of teaching – these connections are made through this section.

Amy Traver

Present Professional Position
Assistant Professor of Sociology, Queensborough Community College, City University of New York (CUNY), Queens, NY, 2008-present

Positions Held in ASA
Member, ASA Section on Teaching and Learning Pre-Conference Planning Committee, 2012-2015
Member, ASA Section on Teaching and Learning Nominations Committee, 2011-2013
Two-year representative, ASA Section on Teaching and Learning Council, 2010-2013
Member, ASA Section on Teaching and Learning Program Committee, 2010-2012
Member, ASA Section on Teaching and Learning SAGE Award Selection Committee, 2010-2011

Personal Statement:
The ASA Section on Teaching and Learning does a fantastic job of clearing a space for community college faculty at the Annual Meetings and in the organization, more generally. It also recognizes community college faculty as sociologists with insights of value to the Section and organization. I believe that I have the experience to serve as Chair-elect of the Section. For example, I have represented community colleges on NEH-funded pedagogy projects and an AACU research project. I have also sought out and received CUNY pedagogical research awards and a number of teaching and research fellowships and grants, including the Section’s 2009 SAGE Teaching Innovations & Professional Development Award. In addition, and consistent with the focus of the Section, I have published on various pedagogies in community-college contexts. Finally, I have experience as the two-year representative on the Section’s council and as caucus Co-Chair of another national research/teaching organization.
Nominees for Secretary/Treasurer

Carla Corroto

Present Professional Position
Associate Professor of Sociology, Radford University, Radford, VA

Positions Held in ASA
Council, 4-year representative

Personal Statement:
I have found the Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology to be a place of support, collegiality, and scholarly challenge. The members of this Section are committed to sharing the sociological perspective in the classroom, and beyond. Their passion is contagious! I am seeking office to serve the group that mentored me as a new faculty member. From the Carla B. Howery Teaching Enhancement Grants Program to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning sessions and workshops at ASA, this Section is fundamental to the scholarship of teaching and learning in sociology. I have served as chair of the membership committee and am currently on the social media committee for the Section. My goal is to further the shared mission of teaching excellence that I believe is vital to the discipline. Thank you.

Daina Harvey

Present Professional Position
Assistant Professor, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA 2013-present

Positions Held in ASA
Newsletter Editor, Section on Teaching and Learning, 2013-present
Publications Committee, Section on Teaching and Learning, 2013-present
Student Representative, Section on Culture 2010
Nominations Committee, Section on Teaching and Learning, 2010

Student Forum Advisory Board, Chair 2006-2007

Personal Statement:
I would be honored to serve the Section on Teaching and Learning as the Secretary/Treasurer. I have been a member of the section for close to ten years. Ever since attending the pre-conference as a graduate student I have felt that it is my home within ASA. I currently serve as co-editor of our newsletter and am on the publications committee. I have also served on the nominations committee. Within ASA I have also been chair of the Student Forum Advisory Board (where I served on the travel grant, research grant, and outreach committees) and was the graduate student representative to the Culture section. I have also presided over eight sessions, been a discussant at three sessions, and organized two sessions at various ASA conferences. I appreciate your consideration for this important position.

Nominees for Council Members (2-year school)

Alison Better

Present Professional Position
Assistant Professor, Kingsborough Community College, CUNY, Brooklyn, NY, 2011-Present

Positions Held in ASA
ASA Task Force on Community College Faculty, Appointed Member, 2012-2015
ASA TRAILS Area Editor, Sexualities, 2014-Present
ASA Teaching and Learning Section, Program Committee, 2014-2015
ASA Body and Embodiment Section, Council Member, 2010-2012

Personal Statement:
I would like to serve the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning as a Council Member representing two year colleges. In this position, I would be a voice for others at two year colleges and other marginalized scholars. I currently sit on the ASA Task Force for Community College Faculty working to amplify the voices of community college faculty in sociology and in our professional organizations. I have been actively involved in ASA in a variety of ways, including
serving as an Area Editor for TRAILS, a Council Member for the Body and Embodiment Section, and an Organizer for a Professional Development Workshop on teaching. In this position, I would like to continue to serve the organization and help others focused on innovative, creative, high-quality teaching in sociology as well as enhance the visibility of sociologists at community colleges.

Deidre Tyler

Nominees for Council Members (4-year school)

Stephanie Medley-Rath

Present Professional Position
Assistant Professor of Sociology, Indiana University Kokomo, 2014-present

Positions Held in ASA
Editorial Board, Teaching Sociology, 2014-2017

Personal Statement:
I have taught at a range of institutions and settings, including both two-year and four-year, online and face-to-face, and private and public colleges. These diverse teaching experiences have made me the teacher that I am and give me insight into the challenges faced by faculty in each setting. I have taught as an instructor, an assistant professor, and as an adjunct. Honestly, I am not sure my teaching history is all that unique, but I would like to be a voice for those of us who have eclectic teaching histories. I want to serve as 4-year school representative because it is time for me to increase my contributions to the section. My involvement thus far has been peripheral. I have published in TRAILS and serve as an editorial board member for Teaching Sociology. My ASA home is this section and I would like to serve it in a greater capacity.

Debra Swanson

Present Professional Position
Professor of Sociology and Social Work, Hope College, Holland, MI, 1989 - present

Positions Held in ASA
Task Force on Teaching Sociology in the High School, 2012 - 2014

Task Force on Sociology and General Education, 2007

Personal Statement:
I would be honored to serve on the Council of the Teaching and Learning Section of ASA as the 4 year college representative. I have spent more than 25 years teaching at a small liberal arts college. I have been very involved with the North Central Sociological Association, particularly around issues of teaching, and was awarded the John F. Schnabel award for Distinguished Contributions to Teaching in 2008. In 2009, I received Hope College’s Ruth and John Reed Faculty Achievement Award for my role as director of Hope’s Teaching Enhancement Workshop. And more recently (2014) I received the Michigan Campus Compact award for including service-learning in my classes. I love being in the classroom and look forward to the opportunity of being more involved in ASA and the Teaching and Learning Section.

Nominees for Council Members (University)

Jacqueline Bergdahl

Present Professional Position
Associate Professor, Wright State University, Dayton, OH, 2005-present

Personal Statement:
I would be honored to serve as University Representative for the ASA section on Teaching and Learning. I would enjoy the opportunity to pay forward the benefits I have received as a member of the section. I also believe my experience in the Teaching and Learning section of the North Central Sociological Association gives me a good foundation for useful service in the same section in ASA. I hope you will offer me the opportunity to do so.
Lissa Yogan

Present Professional Position
Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminology,
Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN 2007 - present

Positions Held in ASA

Member of Writing Team for
Member, Section on Teaching and Learning, 2008-2015

Member, Section on Race, Class, Gender, 2008-2015

Member, Section on Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity 2012-2015

Personal Statement:

I have taught sociology for almost 20 years and have witnessed the impact of sociology on both general education students and sociology majors. For many, the sociological imagination allows them to see the world and themselves in new ways. The work of this section is vital to society. Many of our students will not become PhD students in sociology but they will all go out into the world and interact and lead various social institutions. Their understanding of sociology and how it can shape their future actions is dependent on excellent teaching that promotes deep learning. The work of teaching can be transformative and I would like to further this section’s efforts at honoring excellent teachers, developing the content which informs the practice of teaching, and building relationships among the many excellent teachers who emphasize varied content areas within sociology. It would be a pleasure to serve alongside the many excellent faculty members who belong to the Section on Teaching and Learning.

New Book

Taking Account of Race, Racism, and Privilege
Kathleen J. Fitzgerald

University of New Orleans

If you are looking for a new sociology of race/ethnic relations textbook, look no further. Check out my new textbook Recognizing Race and Ethnicity: Power, Privilege, and Inequality (Westview Press 2014). This text encourages students to take account of race, racism, and the “other side of racism,” white privilege. To take account of race is to bring it out into the open – to emphasize how membership in particular racial groups works for some while hindering others. It exposes how race is still alive and well as a social divide in our culture and, further, is embedded in our social institutions, cultural ideologies, and identities. The phrase “take account of race” reflects the language used by Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun in his opinion in the affirmative action case Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (1978) where he notes:

A race-conscious remedy is necessary to achieve a fully integrated society, one in which color of a person’s skin will not determine the opportunities available to him or her...In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way...In order to treat persons equally, we must treat them differently.

In this opinion, Blackmun emphasizes a key paradox in American society: that we must recognize race to get beyond it. Simply claiming we live in a color-blind society is not enough as it fails to challenge white privilege or acknowledge ongoing racism.

My objective with this textbook is to offer professors and students an approach to the sociology of race relations that differs rather dramatically from the leading texts on the market. Our goal should be to engage students with an emphasis on self-reflexivity as well as coverage of topics that are more meaningful to their lives: sports, popular culture, interracial relationships, and biracial/multiracial identities. This text reflects the most current research in the sociology of race, including a discussion of the social construction of race, white privilege, and critical race theory.

Announcements
I have taught race relations courses since 1995, yet have failed to find one textbook that addresses everything I think needs to be addressed in a sociology course on race/ethnicity. For instance, no textbook currently on the market addresses white privilege to the extent that it should (for instance, having an entire chapter devoted to the concept). Yet, this is where the investigative lens has shifted in our discipline: to the study of those privileged by societal status hierarchies. It is not enough to study the sociology of racial inequality, how and why some groups are disadvantaged by current societal arrangements. We also have to study race privilege, the other side of racism. If certain groups are oppressed and discriminated against, we have to recognize that some other group benefits from the existing social arrangement. Thus, we must clearly investigate where whites historically and currently benefit from the racial hierarchy, not only where people of color have been disadvantaged. We need to bring white people “to the table,” so to speak, instead of allowing them (us) that comfortable distance while racial/ethnic “others” are being discussed. For too long not only our culture but the discipline of sociology, has treated racial/ethnic minorities as “the problem,” yet excluded ourselves (those of us who are white) from the discussion. The only way to truly alter race relations is to make this invisible aspect of the racial hierarchy visible, to acknowledge that race shapes all people’s lives, for better or for worse.

**New Book**

**Sixteen for ’16 -- A Discussion Book for the 2016 Elections**

Salvatore Babones

University of Sydney

It’s only spring 2015 but the 2016 election season has already begun. The non-candidate candidates have established their "exploratory committees,” the inevitable scandals have started to emerge, and the best-known advisors have been snapped up by the best-financed campaigns. For the candidates of the two major parties the top advisors include publicists, economists, and international relations experts, but not a lot of sociologists. Sociology has important insights to offer about how best to run a country, but unfortunately our insights are rarely (never?) welcome at the table. Most of the signature policies adopted by major party candidates would fail a first-year sociology final take-home exam. America is ruled by political expediency, not by sociological insight.

My new book Sixteen for '16: A Progressive Agenda for a Better America (2015 Policy Press) is one American sociologist's attempt to inject some sociological reality into America's political debate. The book tackles sixteen issues ranging from classic social policy topics (education and healthcare) to controversial areas of debate (abortion and immigration) to areas that sociologists too often cede to others (foreign policy, global warming). Each of the 16 short chapters makes an argument for reasonable, realistic, sociologically-informed policies. I have made every effort to be fair but the book is in no way even-handed. For example, Chapter 1 kicks off with reams of data to show that America needs more and better jobs, especially for young people just entering the labor force, and argues that government must play an active role in creating them. More state budget cuts simply will not create more jobs.

Sixteen for ’16 may not be even-handed but it is emphatically non-partisan. No political party is endorsed or criticized and no likely 2016 Presidential candidates are named. My royalties from the book have been pledged to support investigative reporting by Truthout.org, which is
also scrupulously non-partisan. The publisher, Policy Press is a non-profit press whose credo is "publishing with a purpose." No corporate or political interests are involved in the publishing of this book.

I teach Introduction to Sociology and I have written Sixteen for '16 with the needs of teachers foremost in my mind. Each chapter is almost exactly 2000 words long, appropriate for reading in preparation for a class discussion. The 270 endnotes document every figure cited in the book, pointing mainly to online sources that are easily accessible to students. Perhaps most importantly, the book is cheap: with a list price of $16.00, the paperback is available for just $12.98 online (the e-book will be even less). The argumentation in every chapter is independent of the other fifteen and the chapters can be read in any order. The book uses no advanced statistics and no theoretical jargon. I have worked very hard to ensure that the book accessible for beginning undergraduate students in the sincere hope is that sociology teachers will use individual chapters as discussion prompts throughout the semester. A teaching resources website will go online in June.

Election reporting these days focuses mainly on which side is leading in the polls, not on what they will do once in office. Everyone loves the 538 blog as a fun bit of sport. But our students should be discussing the issues, not the personalities and their prospects for winning. On the issues we have too long focused on criticism, letting economists dictate actual social policy. Our students should learn that practical sociology offers a much better guide to what will work in the real world than highly abstract economic theories. I won't make any money from Sixteen for '16 and I certainly won't get any credit from the sociological research community. This book is written by a teacher for use by teachers. With apologies for making such an explicit plug, I do hope that you will use it -- and enjoy it.