

**SOCI 0300 Senior Internship  
Spring 2013**

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## **Senior Internship**

### **Course Description**

The Internship is an academic course with a primary goal of joining theory from the classroom with practice from the work experience. An internship

- 1) allows students to further their knowledge in a specialized area in a way not available within the regular classroom setting;
- 2) provides a capstone experience in the major;
- 3) provides students with valuable work experience;
- 4) makes students aware of job opportunities in their field of interest;
- 5) allows students to sample different career paths; and
- 6) helps create a professional network for students.

It is important to emphasize that this course is designed as part of a learning process, a combination of sociological theory and professional practice. Both theory and practice are emphasized. Students who take this course will gain professional experience by applying their sociological knowledge in their daily professional work.

Theoretically, this course is about the sociological understanding of American society. We shall read Erik Olin Wright and Joel Rogers' critical introduction, think about how things are supposed to be in theory and how they really work in practice. The main author of our textbook, Erik Olin Wright, is the current President of American Sociological Association and a leading scholar in the examination of American society. Besides reading the textbook, our emphasis will be placed on the relationship between sociological theories and the real life experiences. It will involve the use of sociological theory to see general social patterns in the behavior of individuals and social institutions. The whole purpose of this class is to introduce you to a theoretical field that can effectively facilitate you to become a deep thinker who has the analytical mind to understand self and other, and the world.

It is also essential to insure full participation in daily professional practice at your internship site. Observation is important but far from enough. Students are required to perform as active agents who are armed with sociological knowledge and make every

effort to apply it to their daily practice. Students should use their sociological knowledge to do a better job, to perform better than those who do not have sociological training. At the same time, it is important to note that students are NOT required to change anything in their work setting. Students are not asked to play a role as agents to reform the existing system or procedures of the organization.

## Required Text

Erik Olin Wright and Joel Rogers. 2011. *American Society: How It Really Works*, New York and London: W.W. Norton

## Requirements for the Internship Sites

You will receive a list of possible internship sites once you have decided to take this course. You are encouraged to choose your site from the list. However, you have the freedom to find a site of your own choice. If you choose your own site, you must get approval from me. In order for you to get the approval, your internship site must meet the following requirements:

- 1) Internship tasks must be professional; clerical tasks are kept to a minimum.
- 2) Internship sites must be in one of the following areas:
  - A. Business Organizations:  
human resources, marketing, business consulting or customer service, community relations, business associations or law firms.
  - B. Government Bureaus:
    - a. City or Town Halls: mayor's or town administrator's office, community development planning, law department, personnel, retirement, veterans.
    - b. School Departments: director of curriculum, grant/research department, personnel.
    - c. State Agencies, Social Service Agencies.
    - d. Federal Government Offices.
    - e. Criminal Justice System: Courts or other law enforcement agencies.
  - C. Educational Institutions: middle, vocational or high schools.
  - D. Research Institutions.
  - E. Charitable Organizations, Foundations, or Professional Associations.

## Course Requirements



1. Meet with the class online or in-class once a week at the designated time; discuss the theoretical or methodological topics after completing reading assignments.
2. A site must be found before the second week of the semester.
3. At least 120 hours of supervised work experience for a 3-credit course. It is important to insure that the internship should take place predominately at the site.
4. Make appointments for me to meet your supervisor and visit your internship site at least once during your internship.
5. Keep weekly journals. The weekly journals should fulfill two purposes at the same time: answering the weekly theoretical questions and recording your work experience. It is very important for you to think about the application of sociological knowledge to your daily work, and to make sense of it. The following questions must be addressed in each journal:
  - A. What did you do for the week? Describe your work—tasks and accomplishments.
  - B. What was the most enjoyable aspect of your work this week? Explain.
  - C. What was the least enjoyable aspect of your work this week? Explain.
  - D. What have you learned at your internship that you wouldn't have learned in a classroom setting?
  - E. Discuss one sociological idea with your internship experience. The specific idea will be highlighted in the course outline section of the syllabus.
  - F. Have you learned anything that changed your understanding about sociology as a result of this internship?

Each journal must be minimum 2 pages, saved as Word Document and sent to me via PLATO mail or Westfield email, as attachment.



- G. Prepare for your final paper by the thirteenth week of the semester. The paper should creatively explore a single topic with some thoroughness. It is important to be certain the topic is sufficiently specific and it aims at integrating sociological theory and your work experience.

Theoretically, your topic must be able to review, reflect and creatively reconstruct the key concepts/ideas we learned this semester. The theoretical focus of the

semester is on two concepts: Capitalism and Democracy. The key idea of the textbook is how to understand America as a capitalist society with a democratic political institution. There are two opposing potentials of capitalism-- the ideal side of it, the way it is supposed to work, and the bad side of it, the way capitalism actually works from time to time. Since you have been engaging in examining one organization in society through the semester, your final project topic should be designed to position yourself in real life circumstances that highlight your in-depth understanding on the two key concepts.

Thoughtful and detailed weekly journals will assist greatly as you consider the following areas for your final paper: What particular ideas from the readings this semester seemed helpful to you in the internship setting? What specific experiences during your internship seemed to be helpful in further your theoretical understanding? Identify the particular topics, tasks or specific skills through which you demonstrated your sociological training.

The paper does not have to be structured like an ordinary research paper but it might be valued if you could include footnotes and bibliography. Length is a minimum of 10 pages.



**Grading**

Final grades will be based on a possible total of 400 points.

1. Site Supervisor Evaluation = 50% of your final grade or 200 points.
2. Weekly Journals = 30% of your final grade or 120 points for a total of twelve of them. Each will be graded on a perfect score of 10.
3. Final Paper= 20% of your final grade or 80 points.

**Note:** The class depends on engaged learning which is guaranteed through both active professional activities in your site and class attendance at school. You are required to attend all class sessions or go online at least twice a week.

The grade breakdown is as follows:

372-- 400	<b>A</b>	360-- 371	<b>A-</b>	
352-- 359	<b>B+</b>	332-- 351	<b>B</b>	320-- 331
312-- 319	<b>C+</b>	282-- 311	<b>C</b>	270-- 281
240-- 269	<b>D+</b>	220-- 239	<b>D</b>	<220
				<b>F</b>

**Other Information:**

1. Changes in syllabus may be modified as deemed appropriate. All changes will be announced in class.

2. Students with a disability who are requesting academic accommodations should inform me as soon as possible and contact the college administration.



## Course Outline

### Week One (1/22—1/27)

#### Community Building

- a. Settle in your internship organization
- b. Complete the necessary paperwork
- c. Know each other in the class

### Week Two (1/28—2/3)

#### Review of Sociology in General-1

The Sociological Imagination—human beings: animals of the pack.

No reading required.

Weekly Journal-1: What did you do for the week? Describe your work—tasks and accomplishments. What was the most enjoyable aspect of your work this week? Explain. What was the least enjoyable aspect of your work this week? Explain. What have you learned at your internship that you wouldn't have learned in a classroom setting? Have you learned anything at your internship that changed your understanding about the sociological imagination?

### Week Three (2/4—2/10)

#### Review of Sociology in General-2

The Three Major Sociological Theories: Conflict Theory, Structural-Functionalism, and Exchange-Network Theory

No reading required

Weekly Journal-2: What did you do for the week? Describe your work—tasks and accomplishments. What was the most enjoyable aspect of your work this week? Explain. What was the least enjoyable aspect of your work this week? Explain. What have you learned at your internship that have facilitated your further understanding about structural-functionalism? Conflict theory? Exchange-network theory?

**Week Four (2/11—2/17)**

Overview of the Textbook and Relate it to Your Internship Site

Reading: Chapters 1 & 2

Theoretical Discussion: How Much Do We Know About American Society?  
Can you describe the major function and its operation of your internship organization?

Weekly Journal-3: in addition to the general questions you are supposed to address, describe the function of your organization and discuss the following question: Is it more like a community with equality, compassion, and collective welfare as its essence or more like a market place with freedom, rational calculation, and individual competitiveness as its essence?

**Week Five (2/18—2/24)**

Capitalism—1: How It Supposed to Work

Required Reading: Chapter 3  
Theoretical Discussion: What is capitalism?

Weekly Journal-4: define “capitalism” and use your internship organization to explain the two characteristics of it—private ownership of the means of production and free market.

**Week Six (2/25—3/3)**

Capitalism—2: How It Supposed to Work

Required Reading: Chapter 9

Theoretical Discussion: What are the advantages of a capitalist system?

Weekly Journal-5: discuss how capitalism is supposed to work and use real life examples from your internship experiences to highlight the four virtues of capitalist free market. Key idea: the private is the positive dynamic of the public.

**Week Seven (3/4—3/10)**

Capitalism—3: How It Actually Works

Required Reading: Chapter 4

Theoretical Discussion: What are the disadvantages of a capitalist system?

Weekly Journal-6: discuss how capitalism actually works and use real life examples from your internship experiences to highlight the impact of a capitalist system on the real life choices. Key idea: the private is conflicting with the public.

***Week Eight (3/11—3/17 Spring Break)***

***Have Fun!***



**Week Nine (3/18—3/24)**

**Social Class**

Required Reading: Chapter 11

Theoretical Discussion: What are the major factors that affect people's success or failure?

Weekly Journal-7: a person's success depends on her/his path in the capitalist social system, the salient characteristic of American society. Specifically, it is about how s/he achieved her/his functional position in the capitalist social system and her/his critical location in the capitalist web of interpersonal ties. Discuss the challenges and coping strategies people in your internship organization practice that composed of their life opportunities.

**Week Ten (3/25—3/31)**

**Democracy-1: How It Works**

Required Reading: Chapter 16

Theoretical Discussion: What is democracy?

Weekly Journal-8: define "democracy" in both simple and comprehensive ways and use your internship organization to explain the real life practice of democracy.

**Week Eleven (4/1—4/7)**

**Democracy-2: How It Works**

Required Reading: Chapter 22

Theoretical Discussion: What are your rights and power in your organization in particular and in society in general?

Weekly Journal-9: discuss the rationale behind your professional and political decision-making—what issues attract your attention and why. Why do you/don't you spend the time and energy on professional or political issues?

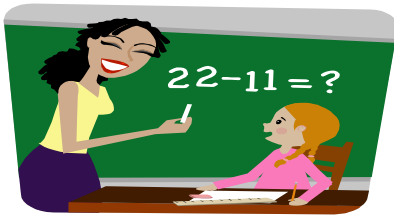
### **Week Twelve (4/8—4/14)**

#### Corporate Control of the Media

Required Reading: Chapter 19

Theoretical Discussion: Why does money is such a persistent issue in American democracy?

Weekly Journal-10: discuss the constraints on democracy, the issue of rational ignorance, the issue of political apathy. Tell real life examples from your internship experience.



### **Week Thirteen (4/15—4/21)**

#### Election and Voting

Required Reading: Chapter 17

Theoretical Discussion: Can you see the interplay of capitalism and democracy?

Weekly Journal-11: capitalism in a political sense is “voting” by money, money that represents people’s engagement, commitment, attention, resources, and power. People strive for money so they have stronger position in the public affairs. Democracy as a political institution is “voting” as individual persons, persons that are free and equal and engage in the public affairs without any precondition. Individuals participate simply because they are a person and have natural and “inalienable” human rights. Why is the top leader of your organization “more equal” than ordinary employees in the democratic process?

### **Week Fourteen (4/22—4/28)**

#### Final Thoughts

Reading: Chapter 23

Discussion Focus: Make a wish: What is the ideal world for you?



Weekly Journal-12: discuss why you regard it as an “ideal” instead of “real”? List the difficulties to actualize it in reality and explain why the difficulties are so difficult—how do capitalism and democracy facilitate your pursuit of your life purpose? How should they be improved so they can make your life easier and more successful? If you are the Mayor of Westfield, the Governor of Massachusetts, or the President of the United States, what will you do to make the society a better place?

**Week Fifteen (4/29—5/5)**

Final Paper Week

Please focus on writing your final paper and wrap up your internship.



***Your Final Paper*** must be sent to me electronically either via PLATO mail or Westfield regular email as attachment on May 11<sup>th</sup> by 11:00 pm.