

# Welcome to Sociological Inquiry!

This is an online (WebCT) version of the introduction to sociology course. Students will learn about the questions with which sociologists are concerned and the methods that we use to address them. Students will cultivate their own skills of sociological inquiry either through a peer-reviewed research paper or a book review and discussion group.

All students will read two texts and take weekly quizzes to test their knowledge of these texts. The quizzes will be open-book and open-note, and may be taken at any time during the week, but they must be completed without consulting anyone else, and they each must be completed within the prescribed period of time. This will constitute the 'Common Work' undertaken by the entire class. The required texts are:

- Bruce, Steve. 2000. *Sociology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. 100 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-285380-6.
- Charon, Joel M. 2007. *Ten Questions: A Sociological Perspective*, 6th edition. Thomson-Wadsworth. 328 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-495-00690-9.

Students must obtain these texts before the session begins, and will complete their first reading of them by the end of the fourth week of the session. (These texts are available at the MSU Bookstore.) Students are encouraged (but not required) to read a rather provocative comic book: Osborne, Richard and Borin Van Loon. 2002. *Introducing Sociology*. Icon/Totem Books. 173 pp. ISBN: 1-84046-583-2. (Also available at the MSU Bookstore.)

Each student will undertake some 'Custom Work' in addition to the 'Common Work'. This may take one of two forms, at the discretion of the student:

- *Sociology Book Review*: Read a classic introduction to sociology and write a book review/essay that compares and contrasts the classic text to the student's own experience and common sense *as well as* the descriptions of sociology given by Bruce (2000) and Charon (2007). Students may select any of the following classic texts:
  - Berger, Peter L. 1963. *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*. Anchor Books. 176 pp. ISBN: 0-385-06529-9.
  - Lemert, Charles. 2005. *Social Things: An Introduction to the Sociological Life*, 3rd ed. Rowman & Littlefield. 216 pp. ISBN: 0-7425-3548-7.
  - Mills, C. Wright. 2000 [1959]. *The Sociological Imagination*.

Oxford University Press. 242 pp. ISBN: 0-19-513373-0.

Students who choose this option must select and obtain one of these texts by the end of the second week of the session, complete their review essay by the end of the fifth week, and participate in online discussions of the text during the sixth week of the session. (These texts also are available at the MSU Bookstore.)

- *Social Problem Research*: Select a social problem of interest to the student, do some preliminary research regarding the problem and write an essay that describes the problem and how sociologists have addressed it—or might address it, using concepts presented in Bruce (2000) and Charon (2007)—and also outlines the issues that require further research. Students choosing this option must submit a one-page proposal by the end of the second week of the session, complete their research essay by the end of the fifth week, and review/discuss other students' research essays during the sixth week of the session.

These options will be discussed in more detail in the **Syllabus** and in *Announcements* that will be made using the WebCT **Discussions** tool.

Whichever option is chosen, the 'Custom Work' involves the development of a simple web page in WebCT using the **Presentations** tool. Students do not need to be computer programmers, but they do need to be computer literate to successfully complete this course. *Students who are afraid to learn how to use text editors (e.g., Notepad on Windows PCs or TextEdit on Macs), how to manage files on their own computers/drives, and how to upload/download files to/from the WebCT server (using tools in WebCT) should **not** take this course.* I express this as a matter of fear rather than ability because none of these tasks involves rocket science—yet many students are intimidated by these aspects of information technology. Students can do all that is asked of them so long as they are diligent, *read/follow instructions, and **Don't Panic**.*

Before the session begins, students should:

- *Check Browsers*: WebCT will not work with every computer configuration, so students should 'validate' the browsers/computers that they will be using to take this course. Go to [the WebCT login page \(https://webct.montana.edu/\)](https://webct.montana.edu/), click on the 'Check Browser link', and follow the instructions. If you have problems performing your browser 'tune-up', please contact the good folks of the MSU WebCT Support Staff by email (at [msuwebct@montana.edu](mailto:msuwebct@montana.edu)) or by

phone (at 800.435.1286).

- *Test Themselves*: A self-assessment quiz is available online at <http://eu.montana.edu/Distance/quiz/>. Students should take this quiz and be honest with themselves about whether they are good candidates for online learning.
- *Get Books*: Books are available through the [MSU Bookstore](#). Unfortunately, they do not yet support online orders, but students can contact them at 406.994.2811 (from Bozeman) or 888.247.2546 (from elsewhere). Be sure to ask for the textbook department.

If you need to contact me (the instructor—Dan Steward) prior to the start of the summer session, either because you have burning questions that just can't wait or because you want to be on a waiting list for a *possible* third section of the course, please send email to me at [dsteward@montana.edu](mailto:dsteward@montana.edu) (and be sure to put 'SOC 101' in the subject line). After the summer session begins, enrolled students should use the WebCT **Mail** tool to contact me.

I will be sending an email message to registered students the week before the summer session starts. It will contain additional information about the course and about how to login to WebCT. Please be sure that the MSU registrar has the correct email address for you. I look forward to meeting you all—virtually—this summer, and wish you the best of luck.

cheers!

*Dan Steward*

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*Remember to tune your browser and get your books!*

Log in Cancel