

Activity Guide

A Guide for Students Enrolled in SOC 280-
1435/Introduction to Sociology
Fall 2013 Edition

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The Assignment

Purpose

There are a number of activities you will complete during the semester. These activities include:

- Group Discussions
- Individual Assignments
- Reading Rating Responses
- Seeing Sociology
- Background Knowledge Probe

Each type of activity has a slightly different purpose. The group discussions will give you the opportunity to work with a group of diverse students. The individual assignments will allow you to dig deeper into a topic by writing more extensively than you would in a group discussion. The reading rating responses provide me information on how you are using course materials so that I know which types of readings are working for you and which ones may need to be replaced in the future. Seeing Sociology gives you the opportunity to do something a bit unconventional. In this case you will take photographs and provide a “tweetable” caption, helping you hone your social media skills. The Background Knowledge Probe will be completed twice. This will provide me with information on how much you have learned throughout this semester.

Requirements

Read the following requirements carefully. You will lose points for not following the requirements.

- Several of the prompts require additional work beyond doing the assigned reading. In other words, you can't wait until right before the assignment is due and throw something together. You won't have time to get the information you need to answer these questions at the last minute. Plan ahead.
- Your entries will be graded using the grading rubrics in Canvas.
- Due dates are listed with each prompt and in the course schedule in the syllabus. You may work ahead, but late submissions will not earn credit or be graded under any circumstances.
- Complete instructions for each activity are included in this document. Additional requirements for Seeing Sociology are in a separate document.

Activities

Due August 28

Activity #1: Introduction [Group Discussion]

You need to post a short introduction about yourself to the Introduction Discussion thread under the “Start Here” module by Wednesday at midnight. In your introduction, tell us your name, where you are from, your major, future plans and so on. Please include only those things you are comfortable sharing. Then, answer the following question:

- What is one thing you hope to accomplish with this course?

You will make your introductions to a small group rather than the whole class. You have been assigned to a group and you will work with this group throughout the semester. You will not be required to meet offline, but will work the same people periodically.

Your initial response should be posted by Sunday at midnight each week and your responses to your classmates should be posted by Wednesday at midnight each week. Your initial response should be 200-300 words.

Be sure to respond to each other’s posts.

Late introductions will not earn credit.

Activity #2: Background Knowledge Probe [Individual Assignment]

I will use the Background Knowledge Probe (BKP) to help you learn during the semester. The BKP will also be used to assess your learning over the course of the semester. The BKP includes 15 multiple choice questions. It is graded as complete/incomplete. The BKP is due by Wednesday at midnight in Unit 1. You should plan to complete the BKP before completing other work in this course. It is graded complete/incomplete.

Due September 4

Activity #3: Design a Study [Individual Assignment]

Create a research design to collect empirical data to either support or disprove one of the following claims:

1. People on welfare are lazy and don't want to work.
2. Women are worse drivers than men.
3. Blacks are naturally more athletic than other racial groups.

In your answer, you need to (1) discuss the different variables involved (i.e., independent and dependent variables), (2) whether you are aiming to establish correlation or causality (and you define those concepts), and (3) what method of data collection (e.g., content analysis, surveys) is best suited for your research question.

Keep in mind you are planning the study, not actually completing the study.

Additional expectations for this assignment:

- Your responses should be between 300-600 words (1-2 complete pages). If you do not reach 300 words, you most likely have not answered the prompt and will not earn full credit. You will lose points based on what remains unanswered and lose points for length.
- You need to demonstrate that you understand the course material in your submissions. This means you should go beyond the prompt and refer to other course materials (assigned readings, audio recordings, links, and so on) in your answer.
- Be very careful when including your opinion in your answer. Be sure to ground any opinions you include in the course material or back it up with additional references. You will be asked to back up your opinions with research, so keep this in mind when answering the prompts. None of the prompts are strictly opinion though some may allow a bit more flexibility to include your opinion.
- Use paragraphs to organize your writing. All of your responses should be 2-5 paragraphs in length. In general, use a paragraph to address each question in the prompt.
- If you state information as fact, you must provide a reference using APA format. You do need to include a reference to your textbooks and any other sources you use to answer the prompt.
- You need to include any information that is directly quoted with an in-text citation regardless of where it came from.
- Your submission will be graded for spelling and grammar. Take your time. Proofread. Use spell check. Read your work out loud to catch errors.

Activity #4: Reading Rating Sheet #1 [Individual Assignment]

Complete this Reading Rating Sheet outside of class as soon as possible after completing the reading. You are to rate the readings on their clarity and usefulness in advancing your learning and—most of the time, at least—not on how much fun or how easy the readings are. Reading Rating Sheet #1 is based on p. 15-22 in *The Everyday Sociology Reader*.

Due September 11

Activity #5: Would You Eat? [Group Discussion]

This is an activity that you need to complete before listening to the recording "Culture Shock" in the Unit 3 module.

Food is a cultural creation. That is, human beings define what is and what is not food. Consider, for example, the items listed below. All of the items on the list serve as food among one group of people or another. Which of these foods would you eat and which would you not eat? If there are any you would not eat, why? I have linked each item to something from the web to provide you with more information on what the item is, who eats it, and so on. If you have a weak stomach, you might not want to click on the links, but try to get past that and click on at least a couple of the links.

- [Grasshoppers](#)
- [Cuy](#) (a guinea pig-like delicacy)
- [Cockcombs](#)
- [Raw steak](#)
- [Headcheese](#) (calf's brains)
- [Eel](#)
- [Pork](#)
- [Snail](#)
- [Frog legs](#)
- [Squid intestines](#)
- [Seaweed](#)
- [Squirrel](#)
- [Horse](#)

Once you have your list of what you would and would not eat and have shared it with your group, continue to the recording called "Culture Shock" in the unit 3 module to learn how students typically respond.

Your initial response should be posted by Sunday at midnight each week and your responses to your classmates should be posted by Wednesday at midnight each week. Your initial response should be 200-300 words.

You should respond to at least two of your classmate's posts. Your response to your classmates should go beyond "I agree." You should build on the conversation by asking a follow-up question, giving an example, or referring to the course materials.

Due September 18

Activity #6: Grow Your Social Network [Group Discussion]

Let's imagine you are taking an online college class. How does this differ from, for example, learning in-person? Think about the way technology affects how you interact, the characteristics of the people with whom you're interacting, and how different ways of interacting might affect socialization. Would you feel more connected to your classmates in an in-person class or an online class? Explain. If one purpose of college is growing your network, how can you do this in both online classes and in-person classes?

Your initial response should be posted by Sunday at midnight each week and your responses to your classmates should be posted by Wednesday at midnight each week. Your initial response should be 200-300 words.

You should respond to at least two of your classmate's posts. Your response to your classmates should go beyond "I agree." You should build on the conversation by asking a follow-up question, giving an example, or referring to the course materials.

Activity #7: Reading Rating Sheet #2 [Individual Homework]

Complete this Reading Rating Sheet outside of class as soon as possible after completing the reading. You are to rate the readings on their clarity and usefulness in advancing your learning and—most of the time, at least—not on how much fun or how easy the readings are. Reading Rating Sheet #2 is based on "Socialization & the Advantages of Being a 2nd Generation Student."

Due September 25

Activity #8: The Glue of Society? [Group Discussion]

"It is the deviants among us who hold society together." How would a sociologist explain this paradox?

Your initial response should be posted by Sunday at midnight each week and your responses to your classmates should be posted by Wednesday at midnight each week. Your initial response should be 200-300 words.

You should respond to at least two of your classmate's posts. Your response to your classmates should go beyond "I agree." You should build on the conversation by asking a follow-up question, giving an example, or referring to the course materials.

Due October 2

Activity #9: Seeing Sociology #1 [Individual Assignment]

For this assignment, you are required to take a photograph that illustrates a sociological concept and include a tweetable sociologically-rich description of the photo. For complete instructions for your submission see the separate file, "Seeing Sociology Guide."

Due October 9

Activity #10: Social Service Agencies [Individual Assignment]

There are many programs and agencies to help the poor. Locate one agency (or organization) that helps the poor in your community. Speak with a person who works or volunteers at that agency and gather information on what he or she does. How does that person help the poor? How many people does he or she help in a given year? How is the agency funded (government, church, private donors, etc.)? Are there any structural challenges that you can perceive which might make it difficult for the poor to access the agency's benefits? Is there any way that person might be doing more harm than good? If you work in one of these organizations, you can use your experience to answer the questions. I still suggest you talk to someone else involved to get another perspective. You also need to include the contact information for the organization (phone, address, contact person, organization name, email/website).

Additional expectations for this assignment:

- Your responses should be between 300-600 words (1-2 complete pages). If you do not reach 300 words, you most likely have not answered the prompt and will not earn full credit. You will lose points based on what remains unanswered and lose points for length.
- You need to demonstrate that you understand the course material in your submissions. This means you should go beyond the prompt and refer to other course materials (assigned readings, audio recordings, links, and so on) in your answer.
- Be very careful when including your opinion in your answer. Be sure to ground any opinions you include in the course material or back it up with additional references. You will be asked to back up your opinions with research, so keep this in mind when answering the prompts. None of the prompts are strictly opinion though some may allow a bit more flexibility to include your opinion.
- Use paragraphs to organize your writing. All of your responses should be 2-5 paragraphs in length. In general, use a paragraph to address each question in the prompt.
- If you state information as fact, you must provide a reference using APA format. You do need to include a reference to your textbooks and any other sources you use to answer the prompt.
- You need to include any information that is directly quoted with an in-text citation regardless of where it came from.
- Your submission will be graded for spelling and grammar. Take your time. Proofread. Use spell check. Read your work out loud to catch errors.

Due October 16

Activity #11: Reading Rating Sheet #3 [Individual Assignment]

Complete this Reading Rating Sheet outside of class as soon as possible after completing the reading. You are to rate the readings on their clarity and usefulness in advancing your learning and—most of the time, at least—not on how much fun or how easy the readings are. Reading Rating Sheet #3 is based on *You May Ask Yourself* chapter 8.

Due October 23

Activity #12: Interpret a Table [Individual Assignment]

In this activity, you are to interpret a table¹ about race and high school dropout rates.

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander
1990	9.0%	13.2%	32.4%	4.9%
2010	5.1%	8.0%	15.1%	4.2%

Answer the following questions to interpret the table:

1. Which group had the highest dropout rate in 1990? What was the percentage?
2. High school dropout rates have declined for all racial/ethnic groups. Which group had the lowest dropout rate in 2010? What was the percentage?
3. The high school dropout rate for Hispanics is about three times as high as it is for whites. In 2-3 sentences, explain why you think based on what you have learned in this class, why the dropout rate is so much higher for Hispanics compared to other groups.

Additional expectations for this assignment:

- Your responses should be between 300-600 words (1-2 complete pages). If you do not reach 300 words, you most likely have not answered the prompt and will not earn full credit. You will lose points based on what remains unanswered and lose points for length.
- You need to demonstrate that you understand the course material in your submissions. This means you should go beyond the prompt and refer to other course materials (assigned readings, audio recordings, links, and so on) in your answer.
- Be very careful when including your opinion in your answer. Be sure to ground any opinions you include in the course material or back it up with additional references. You will be asked to back up your opinions with research, so keep this in mind when answering the prompts. None of the prompts are strictly opinion though some may allow a bit more flexibility to include your opinion.
- Use paragraphs to organize your writing. All of your responses should be 2-5 paragraphs in length. In general, use a paragraph to address each question in the prompt.
- If you state information as fact, you must provide a reference using APA format. You do need to include a reference to your textbooks and any other sources you use to answer the prompt.

¹ National Center for Education Statistics. "Dropout Rates." Retrieved August 19, 2013 (<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16>).

- You need to include any information that is directly quoted with an in-text citation regardless of where it came from.
- Your submission will be graded for spelling and grammar. Take your time. Proofread. Use spell check. Read your work out loud to catch errors.

Due October 30

Activity #13: Motivating People to Eat Healthier [Group Discussion]

Sin taxes are additional taxes that are applied to those things Americans find “sinful” as a way to discourage people from using these things. Sin taxes have typically been applied to things like alcohol and tobacco. Some argue that sin taxes should be applied to fast food. What would be an argument in support of sin taxes on fast-food meals? Considering that fast-food meals are usually less expensive than healthier options and provide food quickly for underpaid and overworked Americans, how might sin taxes unintentionally reproduce class differences? View the clip “The Dollar Menu” from *Food Inc.* to help you answer this prompt:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAtYkQh_NqI

Your initial response should be posted by Sunday at midnight each week and your responses to your classmates should be posted by Wednesday at midnight each week. Your initial response should be 200-300 words.

You should respond to at least two of your classmate’s posts. Your response to your classmates should go beyond “I agree.” You should build on the conversation by asking a follow-up question, giving an example, or referring to the course materials.

Due November 6

Activity #14: Seeing Sociology #2 [Individual Assignment]

For this assignment, you are required to take a photograph that illustrates a sociological concept and include a tweetable sociologically-rich description of the photo. For complete instructions for your submission see the separate file, “Seeing Sociology Guide.”

Due November 13

Activity #15: The Pecking Order [Group Discussion]

According to Dalton Conley, what is the pecking order and what does the term mean for children in a family? According to this concept, does your birth position in the family or number of siblings matter to your life chances for success in school and beyond? Be sure to explain what is meant by life chances in your response. This question is not asking about your experience with the pecking order, but about Conley’s explanation of the pecking order.

Your initial response should be posted by Sunday at midnight each week and your responses to your classmates should be posted by Wednesday at midnight each week. Your initial response should be 200-300 words.

You should respond to at least two of your classmate's posts. Your response to your classmates should go beyond "I agree." You should build on the conversation by asking a follow-up question, giving an example, or referring to the course materials. You could talk about your own personal experiences in your response to your classmates.

Due November 20

Activity #16: Is America a Meritocracy? [Group Discussion]

"Through the meritocratic education system everyone has the chance to succeed in America." Do you agree with this statement? Find a theory or a research finding from the assigned readings that supports this assertion and another that challenges it. Do these theories or findings complicate your view of America as a meritocracy?

Your initial response should be posted by Sunday at midnight each week and your responses to your classmates should be posted by Wednesday at midnight each week. Your initial response should be 200-300 words.

You should respond to at least two of your classmate's posts. Your response to your classmates should go beyond "I agree." You should build on the conversation by asking a follow-up question, giving an example, or referring to the course materials. You could talk about your own personal experiences in your response to your classmates.

Activity #17: Reading Rating Sheet #4 [Individual Assignment]

Complete this Reading Rating Sheet outside of class as soon as possible after completing the reading. You are to rate the readings on their clarity and usefulness in advancing your learning and—most of the time, at least—not on how much fun or how easy the readings are. Reading Rating Sheet #4 is based on *You May Ask Yourself* chapter 13.

Due November 27

Activity #18: How Much Unemployment is Out There? [Individual Assignment]

Find unemployment statistics for the nation, your state, and the nearest major city. Be sure to include your statistics in your answer. How do these rates vary on factors such as age, gender, and race? What do these numbers indicate about the likelihood of people in your region finding work? Look at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov), the U.S. Census (www.census.gov), and the Illinois Department of Labor Security (<http://www.ides.illinois.gov/>) to find your statistics. Alternatively, you can use the Google Data Tool (https://www.google.com/publicdata/explore?ds=z1ebjpgk2654c1_&hl=en&dl=en) to find your statistics. If you are having trouble finding these statistics, look for the information in newspapers. The nearest major cities include Champaign, Decatur, St. Louis, Chicago, among others.

Additional expectations for this assignment:

- Your responses should be between 300-600 words (1-2 complete pages). If you do not reach 300 words, you most likely have not answered the prompt and will not earn full credit. You will lose points based on what remains unanswered and lose points for length.
- You need to demonstrate that you understand the course material in your submissions. This means you should go beyond the prompt and refer to other course materials (assigned readings, audio recordings, links, and so on) in your answer.
- Be very careful when including your opinion in your answer. Be sure to ground any opinions you include in the course material or back it up with additional references. You will be asked to back up your opinions with research, so keep this in mind when answering the prompts. None of the prompts are strictly opinion though some may allow a bit more flexibility to include your opinion.
- Use paragraphs to organize your writing. All of your responses should be 2-5 paragraphs in length. In general, use a paragraph to address each question in the prompt.
- If you state information as fact, you must provide a reference using APA format. You do need to include a reference to your textbooks and any other sources you use to answer the prompt.
- You need to include any information that is directly quoted with an in-text citation regardless of where it came from.
- Your submission will be graded for spelling and grammar. Take your time. Proofread. Use spell check. Read your work out loud to catch errors.

Due December 4

Activity #19: Marx and Weber on Religion and the Economy [Group Discussion]

Explain how Karl Marx and Max Weber differ in the way they link religion and the economy.

Your initial response should be posted by Sunday at midnight each week and your responses to your classmates should be posted by Wednesday at midnight each week. Your initial response should be 200-300 words.

You should respond to at least two of your classmate's posts. Your response to your classmates should go beyond "I agree." You should build on the conversation by asking a follow-up question, giving an example, or referring to the course materials. You could talk about your own personal experiences in your response to your classmates.

Due December 11

Activity #20: Seeing Sociology #3 [Individual Assignment]

For this assignment, you are required to take a photograph that illustrates a sociological concept and include a tweetable sociologically-rich description of the photo. For complete instructions for your submission see the separate file, "Seeing Sociology Guide."

Activity #21: Background Knowledge Probe Post-Test [Individual Assignment]

You completed the Background Knowledge Probe (BKP) during the first week of the semester. You will now take it a second time so I can assess how much you learned in this course. It is graded complete/incomplete.