

SOC 260: People Watching: The Sociology of Erving Goffman
Ursinus College
Spring 2018

General Course Information

Meeting Time: MWF 10:00-10:50 AM
Room: 202 Bomberger
Instructor: Jonathan L. Clark
Email: jclark@ursinus.edu
Office: 223 Bomberger Hall
Phone: 484-762-4283
Office Hours: Fridays (12:00-3:00) or by appointment, if necessary
Prerequisite: ANTH 100, SOC 100, SOC 110, or permission of the instructor

Course Description

When we're walking down the street, or sitting on a park bench, many of us like to engage in "people watching." But few of us do so as systematically as the great twentieth century sociologist Erving Goffman did. Using the method of "naturalistic observation," Goffman made the familiar strange, revealing the unwritten rules that govern our daily interactions with each other. In this course, we'll discuss three of Goffman's most insightful books on social interactions in public places. Outside the classroom, in a public place of your choice, you'll engage in your own Goffman-inspired people watching. You'll jot down notes while in the field and then you'll turn these jottings into fieldnotes. Drawing on your fieldnotes, you'll write three papers over the course of the semester. In each of these papers, you'll use one or more of Goffman's ideas to interpret what you observed in the field. By the end of the semester, you should be a much sharper observer of the social world.

Learning Goals

I designed this course to fulfill the College's core requirement for social science ("SS"). The College's main goals for social science courses are to enable students to "[a]nalyze the complex relationship between the individual and society[,]" and to "[d]ra[w] conclusions . . . [about], [and] conside[r]

[the] implications and consequences [of],” this relationship.¹ In this course, I expect you to develop an appreciation of how Goffman understood the relationship between the individual and society, particularly as it plays out in public places. I also expect you to evaluate the implications of Goffman’s views for our understanding of our daily lives.

Required Books

Goffman, Erving. *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: The Free Press, 1963.

Goffman, Erving. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. New York: Anchor Books, 1967.

Goffman, Erving. *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order*. New York: Basic Books, 1971.

Credit Hours and Workload

Although we’ll meet three hours per week, this is a four-credit course. I expect you to spend the fourth hour doing fieldwork. Through various other activities, including writing fieldnotes; preparing for the field note panels, including reading and commenting on drafts of your classmates’ work; writing your papers; and reading and blogging about the books, you should expect to work approximately six hours outside of class every week.

Grading

Participation: (15% for the blog and 10% for . . .)
 Paper one: 25%
 Paper two: 25%
 Paper three: 25%

Grading Scale:

96.7 and above	A+
93.3 to 96.6	A
90.0 to 93.2	A-
86.7 to 89.9	B+
83.3 to 86.6	B
80.0 to 83.2	B-

¹ “Social Science,” Rubric for Core Curriculum Learning Goal, Ursinus College, accessed October 25, 2017, <https://www.ursinus.edu/live/files/1144-social-science-finalpdf>.

76.7 to 79.9	C+
73.3 to 76.6	C
70.0 to 73.2	C-
66.7 to 69.9	D+
63.3 to 66.6	D
60.0 to 63.2	D-
59.9 and below	F

Course Blog:

You're expected to contribute to the course blog. Canvas does not have a blog feature, so we'll use "Discussions" for this purpose. You'll post an entry for each assigned reading. Post your entry by 11:59 PM on the night before class. You're required to blog even if you're absent. If you miss class, post your entry on or before the day you return to class. (If I've already closed the discussion, just let me know, and I'll reopen it so that you can post your entry.) Unless I give you a prompt, you may write about anything that interests you, so long as you engage with the reading in some way. I also encourage you to engage with entries posted by your classmates, but this should not be a replacement for engaging with the reading. A typical entry should be approximately one paragraph long. The purpose of the blog is to highlight key issues for us to discuss in class. Your score for the blog portion of your participation grade will be based on how many entries you post and how much effort you put into each of them.

The Rest of Your Participation Grade:

Participation takes many forms, and speaking in class is only one of them. Over the course of the semester, I'd like you to keep a journal documenting your participation both inside and outside of class. You'll use this journal to write a short memo to me describing all the various ways in which you've engaged with this course. Be creative! I'm interested in learning more about what participation means to different people. Send me one memo midway through the semester and another at the end. (You need not grade yourself; I just want you to tell me how you've participated, as you define that term.) If you ever want to talk with me about your participation, just let me know.

Papers:

You'll write three papers this semester. In each, you'll take one or more ideas from Goffman and use those ideas to

discuss the significance of something you observed in your fieldwork. In other words, the papers should include both a rich description of what you observed and your interpretation, informed by Goffman, of what you think was going on. I'll have more to say about the papers in class. Each paper should be 5-7 pages long, not including the bibliography. Use twelve-point font, double-spacing, and one-inch margins. Use *The Chicago Manual of Style* or the American Sociological Association's *Style Guide* for your in-text citations and your references. Submit your papers to me by email, in PDF format, naming the files as follows (Last Name Paper #). The papers are due by 11:59 PM on the due date.

Attendance Policy

In keeping with the college's policy,² here's mine:

If you have a good reason for missing class (e.g., illness), let me know, and I'll excuse the absence. Each unexcused absence will reduce your participation grade by 5%. Except in extraordinary circumstances, students who miss more than six classes, whether excused or unexcused, will be dropped from the course.

Tips for Reading

When reading a particular text, ask yourself the following four questions: What is the central issue or question with which the author is grappling? What answer does the author ultimately arrive at? What is the chain of reasoning by which the author arrives at that answer? And what is the most significant shortcoming in the author's argument? After finishing a draft of one of your papers, try asking these questions about it, too. The following paper will help you become a better reader of books:

Edwards, Paul N. "How to Read a Book, V5.0." University of Michigan. Accessed January 16, 2018. <http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>.

Policy on Electronic Devices

When in class, please use them only for class purposes.

Severe Weather Cancellations

I'll email you if I need to cancel class.

² "Academic Policies," Ursinus College, accessed October 26, 2017, <https://www.ursinus.edu/academics/catalog/academic-policies/>.

Policy on Plagiarism

We'll follow the college's policy.³ Plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment or failure for the course. Plagiarism need not be intentional. To avoid plagiarizing unintentionally, acknowledge the source, either by citing or quoting, when you use someone else's ideas or words. Following a style guide will help you avoid plagiarizing.

Policy on Names and Pronouns

At any point please let me know if you would like me to address you by a different name or pronoun.

Academic Accommodations

We will follow the college's policy.⁴

SPTQ

At the end of the semester, please fill out the SPTQ survey. Your feedback helps me improve my courses.

³ "Academic Honesty," Ursinus College, accessed October 26, 2017, <https://www.ursinus.edu/student-life/handbook/academic-policies/academic-honesty/>

⁴ "Faculty Resources," Ursinus Institute for Student Success, accessed October 26, 2017, <https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/ursinus-institute/students-with-disabilities/faculty-resources/>

Date	Topic	Readings, Due Dates, and Other Information
1/17	Introduction	
1/19	<i>Behavior in Public Places</i>	Complete IRB training: https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/institutional-review-board/training/ Ch. 1
1/22		Ch. 2
1/24		Ch. 3
1/26		Ch. 4
1/29		Ch. 5
1/31		Ch. 6
2/2		Ch. 7
2/5		Ch. 8
2/7		Ch. 9
2/9		Ch. 10
2/12		Ch. 11
2/14		Ch. 12
2/16		Ch. 13
2/19		Ch. 14
2/21		Ch. 15
2/23	Discussion of fieldnote panels	

Date	Topic	Readings, Due Dates, and Other Information
2/26	Fieldnote panel one	
2/28	Fieldnote panel two	
3/2	Fieldnote panel three	
3/12	<i>Interaction Ritual</i>	"Introduction" Paper one due
3/14		"On Face-Work"
3/16		"The Nature of Deference and Demeanor"
3/19		"Embarrassment and Social Organization"
3/21		"Alienation from Interaction"
3/23		"Mental Symptoms and Public Order"
3/26		"Where the Action Is"
3/28	Fieldnote panel one	
3/30	Fieldnote Panel two	
4/2	Fieldnote Panel three	
4/4	<i>Relations in Public</i>	Preface
4/6		Ch. 1
4/9		Ch. 2 Paper two due
4/11		Ch. 3

Date	Topic	Readings, Due Dates, and Other Information
4/13		Ch. 4
4/16		Ch. 5
4/18		Ch. 6
4/20		Ch. 7
4/23	Fieldnote panel one	
4/25	Fieldnote panel two	
4/27	Fieldnote panel three	
4/30	To be announced	
		Paper three due during finals week