

## INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

### Housekeeping:

- A. Each of you should include on the paper being sent around:
  - name
  - e-mail
  - year
  - major
  - previous anthropology or sociology courses?
  - why taking the course?
  
- B. Books:
  - 1. Available at the bookstore; they are required
  
- C. The 2003 and 2007 versions of the course are available at OpenCourseWare site
  - 1. This year's version is radically changed
  
- D. Misc.:
  - 1. Lectures will be posted after being presented on the class website
  - 2. All readings have been posted
  - 3. I also sometimes add supplemental readings, usually from the mass media
    - a. If newspaper articles are posted for a particular class, they are always optional reading—only the scholarly pieces are required
    - b. Keep the supplemental readings in mind when you're deciding on a paper topic
  - 4. I periodically add to the supplemental readings
    - a. If you have a pdf or weblink that you think would be useful, send it along

### Nature of course

- A. CI-H course
  - 1. Improve communication skills, especially writing

- a. The syllabus contains the specifics of the CI-H component of the course

B. Course requirements

1. No prerequisites
2. Strong discussion component
  - a. Basic format is one hour interactive lecture, followed by student-led discussion and activities
    - 1) For example, work in groups and present your findings
  - b. Study questions on the readings will be posted at the website
    - 1) You'll be asked to answer these in class at random, or use them when you're leading a discussion
  - c. You may be asked to submit discussion questions
  - d. The Forum Section of the website allows us to read one another's Reader Responses
3. Written assignments are fairly easy
  - a. 3 papers
4. Reading
  - a. As it says on the syllabus, you *must* do the reading
  - b. **Reader Responses**
    - 1) Consisting of *a few sentences, a paragraph*
      - a) Nothing you can't do in 5 minutes, after doing the readings
    - 2) I've found these to be quite useful: students come much more prepared to discuss the reading
    - 3) They must be **reactions** to the reading
      - a) Not about the lectures

- b) Not your random thoughts about ethnicity
- c) Not a synopsis of the reading
- 4) Reader Responses can be about any of the reading for that week
- 5) They're not graded
  - a) They *are* required
- 6) All of this is covered on the syllabus
- 7) They should be posted on the website in the "Forum" section
  - a) You can react to one another's postings
- 8) First one is due next week, posted by noon Tues.

C. We will see several video/DVDs

Organization and intellectual thrust of the course

A. We begin with 3 books: ethnographies

- 1. What is an ethnography?
- 2. One book is about heteronormativity/masculinity
- 3. One about crack dealers in Spanish Harlem
- 4. One about maximum security prisons in Washington State
- 5. You will understand ethnographic research and writing after reading these three books

B. Obviously throughout the course we'll be interrogating "normality"

- 1. A good way to find out about a culture is to find out about what is considered unnatural, abnormal, immoral, unfortunate, wrong
  - a. Do you want to find out about marriage in 17<sup>th</sup> century New England?
  - b. Historian Nancy Cott did, so she studied divorce

2. And the books do exactly this
  - a. By looking at adolescence, because of the “intense identity work” Pascoe finds River High School to be a “particularly fruitful site for illuminating and developing these theoretical issues”
    - 1) The boys and girls are rehearsing for adult life; they exaggerate, they don’t always get it right
  - b. Crack dealers in “El Barrio” teach us about illegal activities and institutions
    - 1) Also we’ll explore the role of race and ethnicity: Spanish Harlem
  - c. The Rhodes book is about men seen to be so “abnormal” that society incarcerates them in “super-maximum” prisons
    - 1) They’re sort of “super-deviants”
    - 2) However, the cause of their periodic extremely deviant behavior within the prison is not clear
    - 3) Which creates a problem for the authorities, who need to define it so they can choose how to respond
    - 4) Is it intentional “bad behavior”?
      - a) Or are these men mentally ill and therefore not responsible for their behavior?
3. We’ll not only look at how society defines “normality”
  - a. But also at what it does to police it
  - b. The social science term is “social control”
  - c. The title of the Pascoe book illustrates social control
    - 1) She discusses students working on a dramatic performance, where the “fag discourse” was absent:
 

“Instead of constantly policing their own and others’ gender displays, they were able to be playful, emotional, and creative.” (p. 81)

- 2) “In groups boys act as a sort of ‘sexual police’...deriding each other’s expressions of love, romance, or emotional desire, such as Dax’s holding of his girlfriend’s hand.” (p. 89)

d. **DISCUSS:** other examples of social control you can think of?

C. Although for the most part we read anthropology and sociology

1. We do have some fiction readings, which often provide an inside perspective
2. Inside-outside, self/other, will be recurrent themes
  - a) Social processes can be understood through the experiences of individuals who live them<sup>1</sup>
  - b) **DISCUSS:** the value of “insiders” telling us about their lives,
    - 1) As opposed to “outsiders” conducting research on these “insiders” and publishing their findings?

D. Progression of course:

1. 2 introductory sessions
2. Then we discuss what I’m calling “analytic perspectives”: research approaches that allow us to understand identity components
  - a. Bodies, history, definitions, deviance studies, sociology of language
  - b. A couple of these (bodies, language) are identity components in themselves, but we will stress their analytic, methodological sides
3. Next we look at certain *individual* identity components I’m calling “deviance”
  - a. **DISCUSS:** difference between individual identity and group identity?
  - b. Of course, deviance is in the eye of the beholder

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Chodorow (2000, as cited in Pascoe, p.16).

- 1) From some positions/viewpoints/perspectives, any of the group identity components will be “deviant”
4. Here I’m using “deviance” as an umbrella term
- a. Stigmatized identity components—defined as “wrong” in some way—are usually considered to pertain to individuals and not entire groups
    - 1) Criminality
    - 2) Mental illness
    - 3) Disability
  - b. Of course, once someone is labeled with a deviant identity, he or she is classified into a group
    - 1) And people will speak abstractly about these groups, assigning them various characteristics
  - c. We will talk about the way some identity components may be chosen—optional to some degree
    - 1) Whereas other components are ascribed, assigned, imposed,
    - 2) Not optional
5. The next section focuses on components of group identity that receive a lot of attention in the literature
- a. Sexuality (sexual orientation as identity)
  - b. Gender
  - c. Religion
  - d. Social class
  - e. Ethnicity
  - f. Race
  - g. There’s not much on national identity—take my other course, “Ethnic and National Identity”

- h. And the readings are mostly about the U.S.
- 6. We will continually need to remind ourselves that in real life, identity components always co-occur, and are very much linked to one another
  - a. But if we want to analyze them, we need to break them down into components
  - b. Keep in mind that identity components are always interrelated
  - c. A number of readings demonstrate this, certainly ones by Pascoe and Nagel

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