

## SENIOR SEMINAR

### Sociology 497

Spring 2012

9:00am-10:40am Tuesdays & Thursdays

Faner 3412

Professor Darren Sherkat, [Sherkat@siu.edu](mailto:Sherkat@siu.edu),

Faner Hall 3396, 453-7614 Office Hours: 9am-11am MW, or by appointment.

#### Course Overview and Goals:

Sociology is a very diverse discipline which encompasses much of other social sciences, including psychology, economics, political science, history, criminology, epidemiology, and anthropology. The senior seminar is designed to give you an overview of the field, and enable you to learn and discuss issues in sociology from the perspective of the field, rather than from a particular substantive problem. We'll run through some of the key issues in theory, methodology, and substantive areas of study. In this treatment, we'll focus on the production of new scholarship. Real humans doing sociology—Who? Where? What? And, how? First, we'll talk about how you get there. Yes, that means graduate school. How do you go? Where should you go? Why should you go? We'll revisit this topic later in the semester when we broaden the focus to include non-academic careers. But, the discipline is academic, and we're starting with that side. Next, we'll focus on publication, journals, books, the peer-review editorial process, professional associations and meetings, and why these things are important for academic careers. After this overview, we'll read and discuss two exemplary sociological studies. One of them is a qualitative micro-sociological investigation of individuals in a specific organization, the other is a longitudinal quantitative macro-sociological investigation. Finally, we'll return to the issue of careers in sociology, and expand our discussion to include the pantheon of options in related academic and nonacademic fields.

#### Course Materials

Rojas, Fabio. *Grad Skool Rulz*. (gift).

Keister, Lisa. 2011. *Faith and Money*. Cambridge University Press.

Lareau, Annette 2003.. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. University of California Press

Other readings to be announced and distributed.

## Course Requirements:

**Seminar Participation:** You are expected to show up for the seminar, to have read the materials, and to discuss issues. Your participation and attendance will be noted, and is weighted as 10% of your grade. Each of you will be assigned at least one chapter to discuss from the materials.

**Short Papers:** There will be three short written assignments based on material covered in class and directed towards the content of the three books. The papers will be 6-8 pages, and will be due the week following the completion of the substantive books. The final paper will be due on the final exam date for this course. Each of these assignments are weighted equally (22.5% of your final grade), and together they make up 90% of your grade. Late papers will lose one letter grade per day.

**Cautionary Note:** Collaboration or plagiarism on any of the papers will be considered cheating. Cheating will result in the failure of the assignment with a grade of 0. All borrowed ideas should be cited appropriately, and direct quotations should be clearly demarcated with quotation marks. Failure to cite and use quotation marks is plagiarism. I prefer the following style of citation at the end of a sentence containing borrowed ideas: (Finke and Stark, 1992:29-30). This reference should then be indicated in a bibliography, for example:

Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. 1992. *The Churching of America: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick. Rutgers University Press.

- \* Dr. Darren E. Sherkat (B.A. Tulsa, 1987; M.A. Duke, 1989; Ph.D. Duke, 1991), Professor, Department of Sociology. Much of my work has focused on the sociology of religion, with special emphasis on individual level changes in participation, Christian fundamentalism, African American religion, and rational choice and structuration theories of religious behavior. My studies include investigations of: the political and individual bases of religious change in the Black Church, the influences of religious fundamentalism on childrearing attitudes and educational attainment, rational choice theories of collective action, and the short and long-term consequences of participation in the student and environmental movements of the 1960s. My recent articles appear in *Social Science Research*, *Social Science Quarterly*, and *Sociological Spectrum*, among other places.

Timeline:

## Higher Education in the United States:

1. The rise of the modern University
2. The development of meritocracy---and its devolution
3. The university as a labor market.
4. University administration and politics
5. Readings, Fabio Rojas, *Grad Skool Rulz*. And others.

Directed paper due February 20

## **Stratification and Human Development**

Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*

Paper Due March 20

## **Religion as a Social Problem**

Lisa Keister, *Faith and Money*.

Paper Due April 24

**Final Paper Due May 11<sup>th</sup>.**

