Introduction to Sociology
Soc. 101

Professor Jill Stein
Soc. 101: Introduction to Sociology

- **Course Basics:**
  - Enrollment
  - Review syllabus
  - Class website: [www.profstein.wordpress.com](http://www.profstein.wordpress.com)

- **Introduction**
  - What is *sociology*?
    - Study of society
  - What is *society*?
    - Range of topics
  - The Digital Age
    - YouTube video: *A Vision of Students Today*
PROFOUNDLY BORED.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

SAME.
Chapter 1: Sociology and the Real World
Overview

- Asking the Big Questions
- The Origins of Sociology
- Levels of Analysis
- The Sociological Perspective
- Starting Your Sociological Journey
Asking the Big Questions

- Understanding social life
  - The role of superstition, myth, religion and tradition
The Origins of Sociology

- The emergence of social sciences (19th Century)
  - Borrow from natural sciences
    - Apply scientific method to study the social world
- A relatively modern discipline
  - Overlap with other social sciences
“I’m a social scientist, Michael. That means I can’t explain electricity or anything like that, but if you ever want to know about people I’m your man.”
What is Sociology?

- The study of society
- The systematic/scientific study of human society and social behavior
  - from large institutions and mass culture
  - to small groups and individual interactions
- The study of “people doing things together” (Howard Becker)
Howard Becker
The fundamental premise of sociology:

Humans are social animals
Society did it.
How Sociology is Organized

LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

MACRO
- Large-scale patterns
  - Political, economic, cultural and other social institutions
- “Top-Down” approach

MICRO
- Small groups and interaction
  - Everyday life, group membership and identity
- “Bottom-Up” approach
Studies on Power and Gender

MACRO

Christine Williams
- Women in male-dominated occupations
  - Glass ceiling
- Men in female-dominated occupations
  - Glass escalator

MICRO

Pam Fishman
- Male–female relationships through conversation
  - women ask 3x as many questions
  - Because they do not expect to get a response by simply making a statement
The Sociological Perspective
What makes a good social thinker?

- Passionate interest in human affairs
- Intense, curious and daring in pursuit of knowledge
- Cares about issues of ultimate importance
  - As well as mundane occurrences of everyday life
CULTURE SHOCK

- We are like “fish in water”
  - How to see what we are immersed in
- Disorientation occurs entering a radically new environment
  - Anthropology field research
  - The impact of a new place on outsiders or foreigners
    - Makes the familiar strange
- Example from the movie “Cast Away”
“BEGINNER’S MIND”

- From Zen Buddhist tradition
  - Adapted to sociology by Bernard McGrane
- Contrast with “expert’s mind”
  - Filled with facts, assumptions, preconceptions, and opinions
- “Discovery is not the seeing of a new thing, but rather a new way of seeing things”
“I see no more than you, but I have trained myself to notice what I see”

Sherlock Holmes
LOUIS CK: EVERYTHING’S AMAZING

YouTube Video:
“The Sociological Imagination”

C. Wright Mills
The Sociological Imagination

- Link between personal experience and broader social forces
- Mutual influence
  - How society shapes individuals
  - How individuals shape society
What is the connection between:

the “personal troubles of milieu”
and
the “public issues of social structure.”
The intersection between biography and history

- Personal
- Individual
- Private

- Social
- Collective
- Public
“Actually, Lou, I think it was more than just my being in the right place at the right time. I think it was my being the right race, the right religion, the right sex, the right socioeconomic group, having the right accent, the right clothes, going to the right schools...”
Which of these helps to define you?

- History
- Nationality
- Culture
- Politics
- Economics
- Social Class
- Religion
- Race/Ethnicity
- Sex/Gender
- Education
- Family
# Starting Your Sociological Journey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Everyday actor: Practical knowledge</th>
<th>Social analyst: Scientific knowledge</th>
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<tr>
<td>partially coherent</td>
<td>completely coherent</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>incomplete</td>
<td>complete</td>
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Table 1.1
Why sociology is so radical

Sociologists must:
- uncover assumptions and beliefs
- focus on the overlooked
- question everything
- reinterpret understandings