Evolution and Revolution
An Introduction to the Study of Comparative Social Change

Sociology 212: Winter 2016

9:30-10:20 MWF

201 Gowen

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Course home page on Canvas: https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1026012

Teaching Assistant: Joan Ryan: jmryan@uw.edu
Office Hours: Savery 10:30 to 12:30 W and by appointment
  • Section AA: 8:30 – 9:20 Thursday  BNS 115
  • Section AB: 9:30 – 10:20 Thursday  LOW 113
  • Section AC: 10:30 – 11:20 Thursday  SIG 228

Objectives:
Sociology 212 is an intermediate-level sociology course that presents a comparative overview of human societies from prehistoric times to the present. It is a macrosociology course that looks beyond the unique characteristics of each society to search for broad patterns—similarities and differences in how societies are organized. Students who take this course will learn how human societies have evolved over the last 100,000 years, and what differences these changes have made in the lives of everyday people, including occupational roles, marriage and family patterns, inequality and opportunity, leisure time pursuits, and religious beliefs.

The study of so many aspects of human societies over the long course of history—all within the limited scope of a ten-week term—is only possible with an overarching theory that attempts to explain many of the major changes in human history. The general theory is called “sociocultural evolution” by some authors and “ecological-evolutionary theory” by Nolan and Lenski (the authors of the textbook used in this course). The theory emphasizes population growth, the environment, and technological change as the key influences on long term economic, political and social change. The theory of sociocultural evolution is not deterministic in the sense that A is always expected to cause B. For example, the general trend of social change from hunting and gathering societies to agrarian societies to industrial societies may be delayed for centuries (or millennia) or even reversed depending on the contingencies of history. The theory of sociocultural evolution does not explain everything, but there are remarkably common patterns of statecraft, warfare, demography, family organization, gender relations, and religion in societies at different stages of technological development.

There are modest differences in sociocultural evolutionary theory presented in the three books (Nolan and Lenski, Chirot, and Diamond), and each author illustrates the theory with different historical societies. The differences are, however, very minor, and comparing the three books will help you to gain a deeper understanding of the theory of sociocultural evolution.
The forces that have shaped historical societies are much clearer than those at the present. The 10,000-year era of agrarian societies provides a wider field to sort out common patterns than the relatively brief 300 years of industrial societies. Moreover, many features of the modern world appear to be in flux as a result of revolutionary changes in science, communications, and production. Not all of the diversity between modern societies can be easily explained by technological differences, but the theory of sociocultural evolution provides a very useful framework to understand the convergences and differences across countries in the modern world.

Readings:
The three required texts for the course are available from the University Bookstore:


The course website also includes a few additional readings and two films that you can stream to your computer or phone. The films are important supplements to the readings. The midterm and final exams will be based on all the course readings, the films and course lectures.

Lectures and the Course Discussion Board:
The primary format of our Monday and Wednesday classes will be lectures, but questions are welcome at any time. In addition to asking questions in class, you can ask questions on the course website on the discussion board.

The discussion board presents an opportunity, in addition to class and sections, for students to ask questions and to offer comments on readings. I will generally respond to all questions posed on the discussion board within a day or two. All students should regularly read the discussion board to keep up with exchanges among students and the instructor. All comments, in class and on the discussion board, should be polite and respectful of the viewpoints of others.

On most Fridays, the class will be an “ASK THE PROF” class discussions. I will respond to some of the particularly interesting and important questions posted on the course discussion board, but additional questions are also encouraged.

Weekly Essays and Section Discussion:
In addition to attending class on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, all students are expected to attend the weekly discussion section on Thursday. The objective of the smaller discussion
sections is to review the readings and lectures in smaller groups that allow for more student participation.

Students are required to write a one-page essay (approximately 250 words) every week on a topic that will be discussed in Sections. The topic question for each week are listed in this syllabus and on the course website. Each student will be asked (by the Canvas website) to write a brief comment (a peer review) on another student’s essay. Your comment should include at least two sentences—the first on something that you learned from reading the essay and a second that offers a constructive suggestion. The objective of this assignment is not to “grade” each other’s essays, but rather to be prepared for active participation in the Section discussion. Students can earn up to 3 points each week: 1 point for submitting a one-page essay, 1 point for peer-review of another student’s essay, and 1 point for actively participating in Section Discussion. The essays are due at 8 am on Wednesdays and the peer review comments are due at 8 am on Thursdays.

The weekly essay and peer reviews will be done through the Canvas website. This process will be explained in class, but you can also learn more how to submit assignments on Canvas from Canvas Video Guides: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3891

In particular, these videos from Canvas may be useful:
Assignment Submissions: https://community.canvaslms.com/videos/1121
Peer Reviews: https://community.canvaslms.com/videos/1133

Exams and Evaluation
The two mid-term in class exams are scheduled on January 29 and February 26. The final exam will be on March 16, 2016 from 8:30 to 10:20 am. The exams consist of objective (multiple choice) questions, short answer questions, and essay questions. The exams will cover all the required course materials, including readings, films and lectures. The exams are “in-class” and “closed-book.” This means that you cannot consult books or notes during the exams. Special arrangements will be made to administer exams to students with learning disabilities through the Office of Disabled Student Services. Please see your TA to make arrangements.

There will not be routine make-ups for the mid-term exams. There will be, however, one general make-up for an exam missed during the term on the last day of the quarter (March 11). Any student, even those who have not missed a mid-term exam, can take this make-up exam if you would like to have one of your previous exam grades dropped. The make-up exam will be cumulative over the entire course and be more difficult than the regular mid-term examinations. The mid-term exams will focus primarily on materials since the previous exam, but the final exam will be comprehensive over the entire course.

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following assignments:
Two mid-term exams @ 20 points each = 40
Final exam = 30
Weekly Essays = 10
Peer Comments = 10
Participation in discussion section = 10
TOTAL = 100

**Tips for Success in SOC 212 (and life):**

You should complete the assigned reading for each week before the first class meeting of the week. The assigned books include many complex ideas, and most students will need to read them more than once to fully understand the major points and arguments. As you complete each chapter, try to summarize the key conclusions. If you cannot explain the major ideas from the reading assignment, you have not yet learned the material. Be sure to study the materials in graphs and charts. Check the glossary in Nolan and Lenski in order to review the meaning of terms and concepts.

In addition to the course syllabus, the course webpage includes lecture notes and discussion questions. The lecture notes are intended to supplement note taking in class. They are not a substitute for attending class. In class I often digress from my notes, elaborate with examples, and make points that are not in the notes.

If you have a question about the course content or logistics (for example, an issue from the course readings that you did not understand or where will the mid-term be held), post your question to the Course Discussion Board. This will allow all students to learn from our exchange. If you have a particular question that only affects you (for example, to schedule a meeting), please send an email to me or to Ms. Ryan.
Readings, Lectures, Class Topics, and Exam Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Sociology and Sociocultural Evolution

Read: Nolan & Lenski, Chapters 1 & 2
Chirot, Chapter 1

January 4: Lecture
Introduction to the Course:
January 6: Lecture
Theories of Biological and Social Evolution;
January 7 Discussion Section Questions:
Can sociology be a science? Can experiments be used to study human societies? What are non-experimental methods? Is objectivity possible?
January 8: ASK THE PROF

Week 2: Societies and Social Structure & Hunting and Gathering Societies

Read: Nolan and Lenski, Chapters 3, 4, and 5
Watch: The Hunters a film by John K. Marshall, [Educational Resources (DER), 1957]
About 1 hour in length
http://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/763912

Class: January 11 Lecture
Ecological Evolutionary Theory; Classifications of Human Societies
Class: January 13 Lecture
Hunting and Gathering Societies
January 14 Discussion Section Questions:
How are systems, including human societies, more than the sum of their parts? Why do the "non adaptive" aspects of cultures and social structures persist over time? What is the role of inter-societal selection in explaining the great paradox? Why does cultural evolution happen so much faster than biological evolution?

January 15 Class Discussion of “THE HUNTERS”

Week 3: The Origins of Agriculture & Horticultural Societies

Read: Nolan and Lenski, Chapter 6
Chirot, Chapter 2.
Class: January 18  **MLK HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**

Class: January 20: Lecture  
The Origins of Agriculture & Horticultural Societies

January 21 Discussion Section Questions:  
If agriculture is an adaptive response that allows for larger and more powerful societies, why are most hunters and gathers reluctant to settle down and become farmers? Would you rather be a member of a hunting and gathering society or an agricultural society (and why)?

January 22 **ASK THE PROF**

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**Week 4:**  **Agrarian Societies**

Read: Nolan and Lenski, Chapter 7 and 8

January 25: Lecture  
The Origins of States and Empires

January 27  
The Class Structure and Ideology of Agrarian Societies

January 28 Discussion Section Questions:  
What does Chirot mean by the "invention of the state" in agrarian societies? What are the common features of states in agrarian societies? How were these features adaptive? Have some cultural values of agrarian societies persisted to the present (give examples).

January 29  
**FIRST MID-TERM EXAM**

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**Week 5:**  **Why Some Preindustrial Societies Collapsed and Others Survived**

Read: Diamond, *Collapse*  
- Prologue, pp. 1-22 read very carefully. As you are reading later chapters, you will need to return to reread pages 11-15 on Diamond’s five-point framework  
- Chapter 1, pp. 27-75. Everyone should read this chapter  
- Part 2, I recommend ch. 2 on Easter Island, chs. 6-8 on Greenland, and ch. 9 on Opposite Paths to Success. Read other chapters if you can.

February 1: Lecture  
Why the Industrial Revolution Happened in Europe and Not in China

February 3 Lecture  
The Short and Long Term Consequences of the Industrial Revolution
February 4 Discussion Section Questions:
Are there any parallels between the cases of Easter Island and Greenland and modern Montana? Does Diamond’s personal reminisces and those of his friends allow you to understand how people can often make individual decisions that led to appear to be economically or ecologically “irrational?”

February 5 Class Discussion of Jared Diamond’s *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed: The Past*

**Week 6: The Industrial Revolution**

Read: Nolan and Lenski, Chapters 9 & 10.
Chirot, Chapter 3

February 8: Lecture
Capitalism and World Economic Change
February 10: Lecture
Political Ideologies in Industrial Societies
The Origins of Democracy

February 11 Discussion Section Questions:
Compare Nolan and Lenski’s phases of the Industrial Revolution with Chirot’s Industrial Cycles? How did the conquest of the New World help propel Europe forward?

February 12: ASK THE PROF

**Week 7: European Expansion, Imperialism, and the Origins of Racism**

Read: Nolan and Lenski, Chapters 11 and 12
Watch: *MAX HAVELAAR* (a feature length film about 170 minutes long)
Part I
https://drive.google.com/a/uw.edu/file/d/0B58rwglCxiRwb1NjOWk4TFJvWDQ/view?usp=sharing
Part II
https://drive.google.com/a/uw.edu/file/d/0B58rwglCxiRbjBGOUNOEJYWWM/view?usp=sharing
Part III
https://drive.google.com/a/uw.edu/file/d/0B58rwglCxiRWSV9oaUNXS0tRRTQ/view?usp=sharing

February 15 **PRESIDENTS DAY – NO CLASS**
February 17: Lecture
Imperialism: European Expansion and the Creation of Underdevelopment

February 11 Discussion Section Questions:
How did the relationship between political and economic institutions change after the industrial revolution? What were the differences in early European colonialization in the (16th to 18th centuries) and later European imperialism (19th and 20th centuries)?

February 19: Class Discussion of MAX HAVELAAR

Week 8: Cities, Families, and Ideology in Modern Societies

Read: Nolan and Lenski, Chapter 13 and 14.
Chirot, Chapter 4

February 22: Lecture
Marriage and Family in Modern Societies
February 24: Lecture
Political and Social Ideology in Modern Societies
February 25 Discussion Section Questions:
How does the technological development of a society affect family patterns, religion, and ideology?

February 26:

SECOND MID-TERM EXAM

Week 9: Economic, Political, and Social Movements in the 20th Century

Read: Nolan and Lenski, Chapter 15

Diamond, Collapse
- Part Three: Chapter 10 (“Malthus in Africa”), pp. 311-328, everyone should read. Also read one or more chapters from Part Three (chapter 11 or 12 or 13)
February 29: Lecture
  The Rise and Fall of Communism
March 2: Lecture
  Economic and Political Change in Developing Countries
March 3 Discussion Section Questions:
  Does the failure of socialism mean that capitalism is the only model for industrial societies?
March 4: ASK THE PROF

**Week 10  Glimpses into the Future**

Read:  Chirot, Chapter 5
       Diamond, *Collapse*
       - Part Four: Chapter 15 (“Big Business and the Environment”), skim this chapter—be sure you understand why some companies are more responsible than others.
       - Chapter 16 (“The World as Polder...”) Everyone should read this chapter.

March 7 Lecture
  Is Demography Destiny?
March 9 Lecture
  Ecological and Ideological Threats to Survival
March 10 Discussion Section Questions:
  How does knowledge of past societies make you more or less optimistic about the ability of modern societies to manage climate change and threats to human survival and wellbeing?
March 11: REVIEW SESSION and MAKE UP EXAM FOR THOSE WHO MISSED AN EARLIER EXAM

| FINAL EXAM: March 16, 2016 8:30 AM to 10:20 AM in GOWEN 201 |