**SYP 4112: Microsociology**

**Department of Sociology**

Florida Atlantic University

Summer 2018

**Instructor: Dr. J. Lotus Seeley Email: seeleyj@fau.edu**

**Day/Times: Monday/Wednesday 1.15-4.25pm Phone: 404.402.8740 (calls only)**

**Classroom: Office: 261 Culture and Society Building**

**Details: CRN62694, 3 credits Office Hours:**

**Course Description:**

This course will provide students with an overview of the subfield of microsociology, which focuses on social construction of reality through local and interactional processes. We will examine the micro-level processes through which individual identities and selves are socially produced as well as how individuals in interaction produce social life. The foundational theories of Harold Garfinkel (ethnomethodology) and Erving Goffman (symbolic interactionism) will be explored. Special attention will be paid to microsociological theories of categorical identities, which argue that race, gender, and class are something we *do*, not something we essentially or inherently *are*.

**Course Objectives:**

- Students will be able to distinguish between macro and micro perspectives in sociology as well

as the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

- Students will understand the major foci of microsociology, including the social construction of

reality, the social construction of emotions, the interactional (re)production of social life and inequality, and the self as social construction.

- Students will know the main ideas of and differences between the microsociological theories of

Harold Garfinkel (ethnomethodology) and Erving Goffman (symbol interactionism).

- Students will understand sociological theories of “doing gender” and applications of the doing

gender approach to studying race, class, and other identities.

- Students will gain an appreciation for how microsociological theories can provide insight into

their own experiences.

**Course Context:**

*Prerequisites*: Three Sociology courses at the 1000-3000 level or permission of the instructor.

This course can be counted towards the sociology major or minor.

**Required Texts:**

All readings will be posted to Canvas.

**Assignments and Grading:**

**Attendance and Participation: 16%**

Student engagement is essential for the success of the class. Students must commit to reading carefully, thinking deeply, being present, listening attentively to each other, and participating in class discussions. Each student is expected to be fully engaged with the day’s activities and make meaningful contributions to class discussion on a regular basis. Failure to be engaged will result in the lowering of your grade; being brave enough to contribute your ideas – even if you’re unsure of them – will be rewarded.

Attending class is essential to your success. Missing class means missing activities, movies, and discussions about which questions may be asked on the final exam. If you are absent, please check our Canvas site for posted materials, talk to a classmate about what you missed, and then come see me for questions and clarifications.

Each unexcused absence in excess of **one** absence will result in a reduction of your overall grade for this class by **one point.**

Being caught texting during class 2 or more times will result in a reduction of your overall grade for this class by **2%**.

**Journal Entries: 24%**

Due **May 31** and **June 12**.

Students will write **2** short (2-3 pages) informal journal entries reflecting on the applicability and utility of class readings and concepts for understanding their own lives. These writings should document your thinking while reading and engaging with class concepts, not summaries of the material. Each journal entry is worth **12%** of your grade.

**Breaching Experiment: 30%**

Due **June 26**

Students will engage in breaching experiments in order to examine the social construction of daily life. Students will write a short paper (3-4 pages) detailing their experiences and reactions.

**Final Exam: 30%**

**June 26** (during class)

The final will cover all material from this class, including assigned readings, films, and lectures. A formal excuse is required to make up a missed exam.

**Grading Scale:**

A 93-100% B+ 87-89% C+ 77-79% D 60-69%

A- 90-92% B 83-86% C 73-76% F 0-59%

B- 80-82% C- 70-72%

**Class Policies and Etiquette:**

*Attendance*: In accord with university policy, absence from class will be excused for reasons that include religious observances, required and documented participation in a university-sponsored activity (such as athletic competitions or academic conferences), and certain documented civic and military obligations. Students should notify Dr. Seeley *in advance* of these absences, and they will be accommodated on an individual basis.

*Special Circumstances*: Proactivity will always be looked upon positively, so please let Dr. Seeley know as soon as possible if you think you will have any problems related to this class for which we will need to devise solutions. I am willing to provide accommodations that are reasonable as well as fair to your classmates, but this requires timely communication with me. Waiting until the last minute or after the fact will produce less optimal outcomes.

*Grade Contestation*: You must wait 48 hours from the time it is handed back to you to contact me with your dispute. I will not take complaints after class except regarding bad math or clarification of my handwriting. To put forth your grade dispute you must send me a formal email detailing what you think was graded unfairly, what your original answer was, what my comments were, and a logical argument about why you think you should have your original grade changed. If you fail to follow these instructions, your dispute will not be considered. Contesting a grade may result in the raising or lowering of your grade.

*Late Work*: All work should be submitted on time and in the form (hard copy or online) indicated on the relevant instruction sheet. Students submitting a late assignment will be penalized 10 points for every 24 hours it is late, meaning assignments submitted one day late (up to 24 hours after original due date/time) will lose 10 points, assignments submitted two days late (25-48 hours after the original due date/time) will lose 20 points, and late assignments three days late (49-72 hours after the original due date/time) will lose 30 points. **No late assignments will be accepted after 72 hours have passed from the original due date and time.**

*Technology*: No laptops or cell phone will be permitted except by express permission from instructor for class-relevant usage or accommodation. Please keep your phones stowed during class time.

**Academic Integrity:**

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the University mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see the Code of Academic Integrity in the University Regulations: http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001\_Code\_of\_Academic\_Integrity.pdf

All work (written or otherwise) for this course must be your own. Academic dishonesty of any sort – including (but not limited to) unintentional or intentional plagiarism, cheating, fabricating classmate’s attendance, falsifying absence documentation, and/or unapproved collaboration – will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic grade of F for the course. By registering for this class you acknowledge and agree to this policy and accept responsibility for educating yourself regarding FAU’s Code of Academic Integrity. Be advised that all cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate administrators and may result in additional punishment beyond failing the course.

**Students with Disabilities Accommodation Policy:**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS)—in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Davie, LA 131 (954-236-1222); or in Jupiter, SR 110 (561-799-8585) —and follow all SAS procedures. For more information, go to http://fau.edu/sas/

**Class Schedule:**

*Week 1*

**5/15 Topic: What Is Microsociology?**

Welcome (No Assigned Reading)

**5/17 Topic: What Is Microsociology II?**

“Emotion Work and Feeling Rules” by Hochschild (7p)

“The Social Division of the World” by Zerubavel (15p)

Movie: *7 Up*

*Week 2*

**5/22 Topic: Ethnomethodology I: Background Assumptions and Breaching Experiments**

“A Conception of and Experiments with ‘Trust’ as a Condition of Concerted Stable

Actions” by Garfinkel (13p)

**5/24 Topic: Ethnomethodology II: Passing**

“Doing Gender” (Selection I: Garfinkel and Agnes) by West and Zimmerman (5p)

“Passing as Black” by Khanna and Johnson (14p)

Movie: *21 Up*

*Week 3*

**5/29 MEMORIAL DAY – NO CLASS**

**5/31 Topic: Symbolic Interactionism I: Presentation of Self**

JOURNAL ENTRY #1 DUE

“The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” by Goffman (15p)

“Salvaging the Self” by Snow and Anderson (15p)

Movie: *The Aggressives*

*Week 4*

**6/5 Topic: Symbolic Interactionism II: Stigma**

“Stigma and Social Identity” by Goffman (19p)

“Salvaging Decency” by Kusenbach (11p)

**6/7 Topic: Doing Gender**

“Doing Gender” (Selection II: Gender as Interactional Achievement) by West and

Zimmerman (12p)

“Becoming a Gendered Body” by Martin (16p)

Movie: *Merchants of Cool*

*Week 5*

**6/12 Topic: Doing Race**

JOURNAL ENTRY #2 DUE

“Being Middle Eastern American in the Context of the War on Terror” by Marvasti (13p)

“We Don’t Sleep Around Like White Girls Do” by Espiritu (10p)

*Race: Power of an Illusion*

**6/14 Topic: Doing Class**

“Birthdays, Basketball, and Breaking Bread” by Jackson Jr. (6p)

“Class Reproduction by Four Year Olds” by Streib (15p)

*Week 6*

**6/19 Topic: Doing Class II**

No Assigned Reading

Movie: *56 Up*

**6/21 Topic: Microaggression**

BREACHING EXPERIMENT PAPER DUE

“Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life” by Sue et al. (15p)

“‘They Think Minority Means Less Than’” by Allen (14p)

*Week 7*

**6/26 FINAL EXAM**

**Journal Entry Instructions**

Microsociology – Seeley – Summer 2018

**Due Dates:** Journal Entry 1: May 31

Journal Entry 2: June 12

Submit hard copy at **start** of class.

Each journal entry is worth **12%** of your grade.

**Instructions:**

Twice this term you will write and submit a **2-3 page** informal journal entry engaging with the course readings and materials. After having read the assigned texts and attended lecture, you will write up your reactions to the author(s) and their ideas. The goal is to show that you have not only read and attended class but also thought deeply about the material presented.

Journal Entry 1 should cover readings, lectures, and/or movies from Weeks 1 and 2.

Journal Entry 2 should cover readings, lectures, and/or movies from Weeks 3 and 4.

Journal entries must discuss at least **2** readings from the relevant weeks in addition to any lectures, activities, or movies you wish to address.

Possible topics include but are not limited to: why you did or did not enjoy the readings, things you agreed or disagreed with and why, the applicability or not of the readings to your own life and/or the lives of those around you, the utility or not of the readings to understanding your own life or current events, how things you saw or heard in the media relate to and/or make more (or less) sense because of the readings, quotes that resonated with you and why, and/or any other reactions to the texts that give evidence of your sustained engagement with the author(s) and ideas.

You should *not* summarize the readings. Summarizing without reflecting will result in a loss of points. Instead, you should take this opportunity to think critically about the ideas presented by the author(s). You will not be graded on your opinions of the texts or authors; what matters is that you show to me that you have opinions about the texts and authors.

You will not be graded on grammar or mechanics; however, should your paper be difficult to understand because of being ungrammatical or poorly proofread, you may receive less than full points.

**Formatting**: Double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman font, no cover page, remove extra spacing between paragraphs, label with just your name and the date in the top left corner of the first page, and staple. Failure to follow these directions may result in a loss of points.

**Grading Rubric:**

**A:** Demonstrates an accurate understanding of the materials for the relevant weeks, provides an

engaged reaction to at least **2** assigned readings, meets the deadline for submission, **AND** meets the minimum length requirement (two full pages) and format (see above).

**B**: Demonstrates a mostly but not entirely accurate understanding of the materials for the

relevant weeks, provides an engaged reaction to at least **2** assigned readings, meets the deadline for submission, **BUT** is not of appropriate length and/or format.

**C**: Demonstrates serious errors in the student’s understanding of the materials **AND/OR** does not

provide an engaged reaction to at least **2** readings, regardless of length, format, or

timeliness of submission.

**Late paper policy**: For each 24 hours late, the journal entry will have 10 points deducted from

the final grade. Any journal entries not submitted once 72 hours have elapsed from the

original due date/time will not be accepted and result in a zero (except where prior

permission has been given).

**Breaching Experiment Instructions**

Microsociology – Seeley – Summer 2018

“You can’t be truly rude until you understand good manners” – Rita Mae Brown

**Due Dates:** June 26

\*\* Submit hard copy at **start** of class.

This assignment is worth **30%** of your grade.

Mundane behaviors are the lifeblood of society. Social life is an on-going accomplishment structured by an endless string of small interactions and acts; most of these are so banal as to escape our conscious notice. By not paying attention to these acts or the norms that govern them, we begin to believe they are natural and disregard their social origins. One of the easiest ways to be reminded that there are a definite set of socially constructed norms governing our behaviors and interactions is by breaking those norms and seeing the reactions of others. For this assignment you will do exactly that and then write a short paper detailing your breaching experiment and what you learned from it.

**Instructions**:

Over a period of 3 days, break the same norm in front of different groups of family, friends, and/or strangers. **Do not engage in any act which is illegal or possibly harmful to yourself or others. Doing so will result in failing the assignment and possibly the class as a whole**. Suggestions include ordering dessert first at a restaurant, bringing your own food to a restaurant, treating casual acquaintances like intimates (or vice versa), wearing inappropriate clothing, initiating conversations with strangers, sitting next to strangers when there are other seats available, standing backwards in an elevator, or performing random acts of kindness. Pay careful attention to your reactions and bystanders’ reactions and/or attempts at social control.

After you have conducted your breaching experiment, you will write up your results in a **3-4 page** paper. Your paper should address the following topics:

* What your deviant act was and what the normative behavior should have been
* A detailed discussion of each of the three attempts at your breaching experiment, including what you did and the situations in which the breaches occurred
* How other people responded to your deviant behavior, including verbal, non-verbal, and/or physical sanctions
* How it felt to be deviant and how it felt to receive any sanctions
* What others’ reactions reveal about the mundane (re)production of social reality as discussed in this class

**Caveats for this Assignment**:

* **Do not engage in any act which is illegal or possibly harmful to yourself or others.**
* You must perform your breaching experiments alone (i.e., without any confederates)
* **Do not engage in any act which is illegal or possibly harmful to yourself or others.**

**Formatting**: Typed, double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman font, no cover page, no binders or folders (just staple in the top left corner), and label the paper with just your name and the date. Failure to follow these directions may result in a loss of points.

**Grading Rubric:**

**A**: Demonstrates that the student engaged in three different attempts of the same breaching

experiment with different audiences, addresses all of the topics listed above in a thoughtful and thorough way, demonstrates that the student correctly understands the core concepts of this class, meets the deadline for submission, **AND** meets the minimum length requirement (three full pages) and format (see above).

**B**: Demonstrates that the student engaged in three different attempts of the same breaching

experiment with different audiences, meets the deadline for submission, **AND** meets the minimum length requirement (three full pages) and format (see above), **BUT** only superficially addresses the topics listed above **AND/OR** demonstrates that the student has a mostly but not entirely accurate understanding of the core concepts of this class.

**C**: Does not demonstrate that the student engaged in three different attempts of the same

breaching experiment with different audiences, does not address all of the topics listed above, **AND/OR** shows that the student has a largely inaccurate understanding of the core concepts of this class, regardless of length, format, or timeliness of submission.

**ZERO: Student engaged in an act which is illegal or was possibly harmful to the student or**

**others (regardless of whether or not someone was harmed).**