

THE SOCIOLOGY OF REALITY TV
CRN 43597/ SOC 090-011
Lehigh University
Fall 2015
Maginnes 110
1:10-2:25 pm T/Th

Professor: Danielle Lindemann
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Office Hours: By Appointment



How does *The Bachelor* shed light on contemporary courtship rituals, and what can *Dance Moms* teach us about the meaning of childhood? Reality television shows may seem like frivolous fun (and they are!), but they are also illuminating social artifacts that reflect contemporary American tastes, cultural norms, and values. In this course—by reading sociological work, paired with episodes of reality shows—we will learn to analyze these forms of contemporary entertainment through a social scientific lens.

This class will have two parts: On Tuesdays, we will discuss a reading illuminating a particular dimension of society—for instance, social class, the family, courtship, gender, or youth. On Thursdays, we will apply that reading to a specific episode of a reality television show.

Grading and Policies:

Your grade will consist of four components:

Response Memos (5 points each/ 50 points total): Where indicated on the syllabus, you will be responsible for writing a 1-2 page memo which should discuss that week's reality show episode in the context of that week's reading. I want to know that you have done the reading, watched the episode, and thought critically about how the television show illuminates and/or problematizes some of the themes brought out in the literature. Does the show exemplify any of the points raised by the author? Does it raise new questions or issues? Eleven response memos are assigned, and I will drop your lowest grade.

Short Final Paper (5 points presentation, 20 points paper/ 25 points total): You will be asked to write a 5-7 page paper—due on the final day of class—that applies one of the sociological theories we have discussed to a reality show *not* assigned for this course. Students will present their papers during the last two class sessions.

Class Participation (15 points): “Class participation” means not only attending class but also doing the reading, watching the shows, and engaging actively and constructively in discussion.

In-Class Presentation (10 points): Each student will “catalyze” one Tuesday class discussion. This entails briefly (less than five minutes) summarizing the main points of the reading assigned for that day and posing 3-5 discussion questions for the class. You should also hand in (*in hard copy form, in class on the day of your presentation*) a 1-2 page sheet with the bullet points of your presentation and the questions you have posed. I will do this in Week 1 to provide you with a model. In some cases, two students (but no more than two) will present on the same day. You are responsible for dividing up the work between yourselves to avoid repetition. Each student should submit his or her own summary sheet; you will be graded separately.

Grading Scale (out of 100 points):

95 to 100 points: A
90 to 94 points: A–
87 to 89 points: B+
84 to 86 points: B
80 to 83 points: B–
77 to 79 points: C+
74 to 76 points: C
70 to 73 points: C–
67 to 69 points: D+
64 to 66 points: D
60 to 63 points: D–
59 or fewer points: F

Grading Policies:

Memos are due **by 5 pm (EST) on Wednesdays** (see syllabus for dates), and final papers are due before the beginning of our last day of class: **1:10 pm (EST) on Thursday, December 4th**. Any time after these points will be considered “late.”

You should submit response memos and final papers via the course site. You will see “submit paper” links at the weeks when these items are due. These links will only remain active until the paper deadlines (*i.e.* submit your papers on time! ☺). If you experience a technical issue, you may email me your assignment *by its deadline* at Danielle.lindemann@lehigh.edu. You are still responsible for turning in your assignment by the deadline if the course site is down.

Class presentation notes should be submitted to me in hard copy form on the day of your presentation.

I will deduct one point for each day an assignment is late. Because grading works on a point system, this amounts to one point off of your final course grade. I will not accept work that is more than three days late.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodations, please contact both your instructor and the Office of Academic Support Services, Williams Hall, Suite 301 ([610-758-4152](tel:610-758-4152)) as early as possible in the semester. You must have documentation from the Academic Support Services office before accommodations can be granted.

The Principles of Our Equitable Community:

Lehigh University endorses The Principles of Our Equitable Community [http://www.lehigh.edu/~inprv/initiatives/PrinciplesEquity_Sheet_v2_032212.pdf]. We expect each member of this class to acknowledge and practice these Principles. Respect for each other and for differing viewpoints is a vital component of the learning environment inside and outside the classroom.

Student Senate Statement on Academic Integrity:

“We, the Lehigh University Student Senate, as the standing representative body of all undergraduates, reaffirm the duty and obligation of students to meet and uphold the highest principles and values of personal, moral and ethical conduct. As partners in our educational community, both students and faculty share the responsibility for promoting and helping to ensure an environment of academic integrity. As such, each student is expected to complete all academic course work in accordance to the standards set forth by the faculty and in compliance with the University's Code of Conduct.”

Readings:

All course readings are available online through the course website (<https://coursesite.lehigh.edu>).

All television show episodes assigned for this course (except for *The Real World*, Season 1) are available for purchase on iTunes. Many are also available on Hulu, Amazon, YouTube, and/or on individual network websites.

SYLLABUS

Week 1 (Introduction): Welcome to the *Real World*: Using the Sociological Imagination

August 25th:

Course introduction and administration. No reading or viewing assigned. Because it is only available on DVD, we will also watch season 1, episode 1 of *The Real World* (MTV, 1992) in class today.

August 27th:

Read for this class:

--Mills, CW. "Chapter One: The Promise" in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959)

--Durkheim, E. "Chapter One: What Is a Social Fact?" in *The Rules of the Sociological Method*, pp. 50-59.

Students will sign up for their presentation slots in class today.

Week 2 (Sociology of Class): "Money Can't Buy You Class": Habitus and *The Real Housewives*

September 1st:

Read for this class:

--Bourdieu, P. Selection from *Distinction* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 99-114.

5 pm EST on Wednesday, September 2nd – Response Memo #1 due

September 3rd:

Watch for this class:

--*The Real Housewives of New York City*, season 3, episode 11: "Housewives Overboard" (Bravo, 2010)

Week 3 (Sociology of Gender): "May the Best Woman Win": Doing Gender in *Rupaul's Drag Race*

September 8th:

Read for this class:

--West, C., and D.H. Zimmerman. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1.2 (1987): 125-151.

--Butler, J. Selection from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999, Routledge), pp. 174-180.

5 pm EST on Wednesday, September 9th – Response Memo #2 due

September 10th:

Watch for this class:

--*Rupaul's Drag Race*, season 3, episode 11: "Jocks in Frocks" (Logo, 2011)

Week 4 (Sociology of Race): Let's Get Intersectional: Black Femininity in *Love & Hip Hop*
September 15th:

Read for this class:

--King, D.K. "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology." *Signs* (1988): pp. 42-72.

--Smith-Shomade, B.E. Selection from *Shaded Lives: African-American Women and Television* (Rutgers University Press, 2002)

5 pm EST on Wednesday, September 16th – Response Memo #3 due

September 17th:

Read for this class:

--Phillip, A. "Why Black America Hates VH1's 'Sorority Sisters.'" *Washington Post* (12/27/14)

Watch for this class:

--*Love & Hip-Hop*, season 1, episode 1: "Love & Hip-Hop" (VH1, 2011)

Week 5 (Sociology of Youth): *Dance Moms* and "Competitive Kid Capital"

September 22nd:

Read for this class:

--Friedman, H.L. "Chapter Three: Cultivating Competitive Kid Capital" in *Playing to Win: Raising Kids in a Competitive Culture*, pp. 81-120.

5 pm EST on Wednesday, September 23rd – Response Memo #4 due

September 24th:

Read for this class:

--Friedman, H.L. "Tiger Teachers: The New Stage Moms Aren't the Moms." *Huffington Post* (6/07/12)

Watch for this class:

--*Dance Moms*, season 2, episode 14: "The Battle Begins" (Lifetime, 2012)

Week 6 (Sociology of Youth, Continued): *16...and on Our Syllabus: Teen Pregnancy*

September 29th:

Read for this class:

--Brückner, H., Martin, A., and P.S. Bearman. "Ambivalence and Pregnancy: Adolescents' Attitudes, Contraceptive Use and Pregnancy." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 36.6 (2004): 248-257.

--Schalet, A. (2006) "Raging Hormones, Regulated Love: Adolescent Sexuality in the United States and the Netherlands" in Skolnick, Arlene and Jerome Skolnick, (Eds). *Family in Transition*. Boston: Allyn Bacon: 129-134

5 pm EST on Wednesday, September 30th – Response Memo #5 due

October 1st:

Watch for this class:

--*16...and Pregnant: "Life After Labor" Finale Special: Hosted by Dr. Drew*, season 2. (MTV, 2010)

Week 7 (Family Sociology): *Keeping Up with Family*

October 6th:

Read for this class:

--Goode, W.J. (2006) "The Theoretical Importance of the Family" in Skolnick, Arlene and Jerome Skolnick, (Eds). *Family in Transition*. Boston: Allyn Bacon: 14-25.

--Baumrind, D. "Authoritarian vs. Authoritative Parental Control." *Adolescence*. 3.11 (1968): 255-272.

5 pm EST on Wednesday, October 7th – Response Memo #6 due

October 8th:

Watch for this class:

--*Keeping Up With the Kardashians*, season 1, episode 1: "I'm Watching You" (E!, 2007)

Week 8: Pace Yourselves...

October 13th:

NO CLASS -- PACING BREAK

October 15th:

A representative from the University library will be in the class to talk about paper writing and citation. We will also discuss the format of your final papers. There is no reading or viewing assigned for today, and there is no memo due this week.

Week 9 (Sociology of Courtship): *The Bachelor* in Historical Perspective

October 20th:

Read for this class:

--Bailey, B. (1989.) "Sex Control" and "The Etiquette of Masculinity and Femininity," in *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in 20th-Century America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press: 77-118 + Notes

5 pm EST on Wednesday, October 21st – Response Memo #7 due

October 22nd:

Watch for this class:

--*The Bachelor*, season 19, episode 2: "1902" (ABC, 2015)

Week 10 (Economic Sociology): Capitalism, Gender, and *The Millionaire Matchmaker*

October 27th:

5 pm EST on Wednesday, October 28th – Response Memo #8 due

Read for this class:

--Hartmann, H.I. "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union." *Capital & Class* 3.2 (1979): 1-33.

October 29th:

Watch for this class:

--*The Millionaire Matchmaker*, season 1, episode 1: “Dave/ Harold” (Bravo, 2008)

Week 11 (Sociology of Deviance): Hoarding as “Spoiled Identity”

November 3rd:

Read for this class:

--Goffman, E. Selection from *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963, Simon & Schuster), pp. 1-19 and 41-51.

5 pm EST on Wednesday, November 4th – Response Memo #9 due

November 5th:

Watch for this class:

--*Hoarding: Buried Alive*, season 1, episode 2: “Beyond Embarrassment” (TLC, 2010)

Week 12 (Urban Sociology): Blood, Sweat, Heels, and the “Metropolitan Type”

November 10th:

Read for this class:

--Simmel, G. “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903) in *On Individuality and Social Forms* (University of Chicago, 1971), pp. 324-339.

5 pm EST on Wednesday, November 11th – Response Memo #10 due

November 12th:

Watch for this class:

--*Blood, Sweat, and Heels*, season 1, episode 1: “Six in the City” (Bravo, 2014)

Week 13 (Sociology of Crime and Punishment): Docile Bodies in Lockdown

November 17th:

Read for this class:

--Foucault, M. Selection from *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995, Random House), pp. 135-169.

5 pm EST on Wednesday, November 18th – Response Memo #11 (last memo) due

November 19th:

Watch for this class:

--*Lockdown*, season 1, episode 2: “Inside Maximum Security” (National Geographic, 2006)

Week 14: Welcome (Back) to the Real World

November 24th:

Today in class, we will watch the first episode of the most recent Real World season (*Real World: Skeletons*, MTV, 2014, episode 1, “Skeleton Keys”). Because it is a holiday week, attendance in this class session is not mandatory. However, all students are responsible for

watching this episode and should be prepared for a critical discussion of its content. Specifically, you should consider any differences between this and the episode from the first season we watched at the beginning of this course. Do these changes seem to reflect any broader historical shifts in American tastes, values, or mores?

November 26th:

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15:

There are no readings, viewings, or memos assigned for this week.

December 1st:

Discussion of *Real World: Skeletons* episode 1, and final paper presentations begin

December 3rd:

Final paper presentations

Final papers are due at the beginning of today's class.

HAVE A GREAT WINTER BREAK! ☺