

## **SOC. 335 – INTERACTION AND SOCIAL ORDER**

Instructor: Brandon Olszewski  
bolszews@uoregon.edu  
806 PLC – 346-5063

240C MCK, Tu/Th 4 – 5:20 pm  
Office Hrs: Tu, 1:00-4:00 p.m.  
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### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

‘Interaction and Social order’ is an introductory course Sociology 435, Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis. These disciplines study how people organize their everyday activities, i.e. how the orderliness of ordinary settings is achieved and maintained by participants acting in concert with each other. Particular attention is paid to the local details of how people produce a social world understood in common.

While many schools of Sociology are concerned with social order (either maintaining or disrupting it), the field of Ethnomethodology is unique in regards to its concerns with the details and contingencies associated with a – and not *any* – particular social occurrence. In short, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis are NOT interested in generalizing or explaining things in terms of macro-level theories. While most social science looks for big ideas that can help us predict what will happen in the future, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis are interested in describing what is actually happening in the present. By examining these “little” things going on, we get hints at how “social structures” are actually created and maintained.

Two final notes should be made about this course. First, the reading is difficult. Selections are usually fairly short because of this, and students will not only have to read EVERYTHING assigned, but read some of it twice. Be ready to work your brains and improve your ability to concentrate and focus; if you have nervous habits or attention “problems”, this may be a good opportunity to do some real personal growth. Secondly, by far the bulk of this course involves actually *doing* sociology. Many of your other courses require you to do research papers of some sort that involve a lot of reviewing other people’s work. This class is different. Students, armed with an audio or video recording device, will gather data from the real world about phenomenon that are ordinary and not spectacular in any standard sense of the term. To do well in the course, students will have to make good sense of the readings (coming to class is essential to this end) and apply that newfound not-so-common sense to their observations of everyday activities. Again, this course will stretch your brain: if it does not, it will show in your work and you cannot expect a good grade out of it. Moral of the story: be prepared to work hard but also have fun – the projects for this course will probably be the funnest of your career as a sociology major.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

One hundred points can be earned as follows:

- Project 1 – Reciprocity of perspectives (10 pts)
- Project 2 – Turn-taking in a conversation (20 pts)
- Project 3 – Use of rules in a game (25 points)
- Project 4 – Scavenger hunt (25 pts)

Midterm (20 pts)

*Total = 100 points*

Late papers will receive one point off per day late, *no exceptions*.

The class follows the standard University grading rubric:

|    |            |    |            |    |            |
|----|------------|----|------------|----|------------|
| A+ | 97.5-100   | B  | 82.5-87.49 | C- | 70-72.49   |
| A  | 92.5-97.49 | B- | 80-82.49   | D+ | 67.5-69.99 |
| A- | 90-92.49   | C+ | 77.5-79.99 | D  | 60-67.49   |
| B+ | 87.5-89.99 | C  | 72.5-77.49 | F  | 0-59.99    |

There is no curving or extra credit.

### COURSE PROJECTS

There are four course projects that are designed to give students hands-on experience in investigating the local orderliness of social phenomena. These properties are, for all practical purposes, unavailable to anyone reading written texts. Therefore, the bulk of your learning for this class will come from hands-on, empirical sociological projects that involve actual data collection and analysis.

Each project paper must be 3-5 pages in length, typed and **formatted correctly** (*with pagination, 1" page margins, double-spaced, correct spelling and grammar, and 12-point standard black font*). Points WILL be deducted, at the sole discretion of the instructor, for papers formatted incorrectly. The most important point to remember about the projects is that they need to be empirical investigations. That is, they must be done, observed, and *only then* described by the students. They are not to be recollected or remembered events from the student's past life. They must be observed currently and for the purposes of this class. Further, students should avoid applying ideas from other classes (including sociology classes) to these projects. Students should follow the project descriptions very closely and do what the assignment asks. Aim to make your explanations as straightforward as possible while being attuned to the readings and topics of the course.

There are **two really important things** to note about the projects too:

First, for projects 2, 3 and 4, **students must cite the times of events described in the body of the text.** For instance, in a discussion of conversation analysis you might write:

*"Then, at 12:16, Sue figures out what Joe meant from their previous discussion (5:00-6:00)."*

If you don't cite the times, your papers will be marked down severely – proper citation is NECESSARY for the papers to be evaluated.

Second, for projects 3 and 4, **students must turn in a DVD of their footage along with their paper.** To shoot the video, you can check out and use a DV (digital video) camera from the Center for Media and Educational Technologies (CMET) in the basement of Knight Library. You will have to buy a DV tape (a DVC, or "Digital Video Cassette" – looks like a small VHS tape) for the camera yourself: these can be purchased at the UO Bookstore. The CMET has a room where you can transfer the footage from your DVC to a blank DVD (DVD-R is best, but a DVD+R can work too; you will have to purchase this yourself too). The staff at the CMET will help you set up and copy the footage. Plan on the transfer taking up to two hours. Generally, all you need is one hour of footage for each of your papers: turning in a DVD with more than one

hour of footage is totally acceptable too. To get this all done in a timely manner, **PLAN ACCORDINGLY** – that means taping the game playing/scavenger hunt **far in advance** of the project's due date, then coordinating your team members in a way that gets the DVD burned prior to the respective project workshops. **YOU WILL NEED YOUR DVD TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT WORKSHOPS**, and attending the project workshops will be part of the points you earn for each project. The instructor will **NOT** grant extensions regarding project due dates because of technical difficulties associated with the taping of the activities or the transfer of footage to DVD's – no exceptions. Finally (and just to be clear) students/groups must arrange checkout of recorders and schedules for footage transfer themselves: the instructor will not help you with these tasks. To that end, it is recommended that you go over to the CMET the first week of class to get familiar with where it is, and video tape the footage for your projects as early as possible: this is totally feasible because all you have to do is video tape a new game being played (project 3) and design and tape a scavenger hunt (project 4), which are things all of us know how to do already.

### *Project 1: Reciprocity of perspectives*

In most mundane social interaction, parties presume that the world as defined and understood by one party is defined and understood in essentially the same way by the other party. Differences in perspective are accepted to be relatively minor, and each party is willing to grant that if they were to stand in the shoes of the other they would see things essentially the same way and that any differences would be inconsequential. This (we will call it instance a) may actually be the case. However, in a majority of instances (instance b) parties **DO NOT RECOGNIZE** that beneath agreement on the surface of their talk-in-interaction lie some radical differences that are not fully appreciated or even acknowledged. That is, adequate or 'real' communication is more rare than people think. Thirdly, it sometimes happens that people think they have a disagreement when in fact they actually **DO** agree with each other and are viewing matters in essentially the same way (instance c); in such an instance, it may only be the "surface structure" of the talk that leads parties to disputes that are merely semantic and "technical" rather than actual. Finally, parties can be wholly in disagreement, or in a situation of miscommunication, and acknowledge the difficulties frankly (instance d); in these instances such acknowledgement will be publicly evident in the talk-in-interaction. (Please refer to the short reading by Alfred Schutz, "The Reciprocity of Perspectives.")

Students are to observe themselves or another person in interaction with others and collect one illustration of any three of these four listed possibilities. Only **AFTER** these illustrations are collected, the student should write a short paper (3-5pp) describing each of them. Remember, these cases should not be "imagined," **NOR** should they be "rememberings" of appropriate occasions that may have occurred previous to the assignment; you must actually go out and observe your or another's actual, live conversation. The four illustrations collected must be fresh, new occasions. Tip: get started right away.

### ***Project 2 – Turn-taking a in a conversation***

The study of how parties use the details of their talk in conversation to organize the social interaction and to get what they want out of it is a sub-discipline of ethnomethodological studies. In this exercise students are to (1) tape record a ten-minute conversation and then listen to the conversation for occasions when the parties are competing for a turn to speak; (2) about two minutes of talk that contains such turn-taking activity are to be transcribed, and this transcription is to be typed; (3) the student should read the typed transcript several times while listening to the tape recording of the conversation *at the same time*; (4) the student is then to write a short paper describing the competition for the turn to speak and how one party (the student or another) was ultimately successful in securing a turn, identifying in the talk's details just-how that party achieved a turn. The transcript is to be turned in with the student's paper – using conversation analysis notation for your transcript will help your project and grade. Tip: keep reading the typed transcript while you listen to the conversation a dozen times or more.

### ***Project 3 – Use of rules in a game***

For this project, students are to organize into teams of FIVE persons and play any new and/or unfamiliar board game. Select a board game that has been invented and marketed within the last few years or one that none of the members of the team have played – it is critical that all players are unfamiliar with the game. A video recording must be made of the game's play.

Students should identify the local practices by which a competent and ORDERLY game was played, discuss the role performed by the game's rules and how it guided play, and describe the ways that the success of the play depended upon interpretation, reinterpretation, negotiation, extension, revision, etc. of these rules. What was the work of doing such interpretation, and the rest? What role did "the etc. principle," accounts and accountability, and other topics discussed in the readings play. Emphasis should not be placed upon the inadequacy of the rules; instead, emphasis should be given to the proficiency and skill of rule interpretation and implementation. Each team is to turn in one paper and a DVD of the games' play, for which each member of the team will receive credit. Tip: try to include or invite a recently arrived international student (or a young child) to play, as this will require everyone to verbalize the rules of play more frequently, so that the practical activities of understanding the rules will be captured on your tape.

### ***Project 4 – Scavenger hunt***

Students will complete this project in groups of FIVE persons. One of the team members will arrange a scavenger hunt for the other four members by hiding objects at a minimum of three places. This person will also draw a crude map to guide the team engaged in the finding of the objects, and will NOT participate in the actual scavenger hunt. Armed only with the map drawn by their peer, the remaining team members will videotape their hunt for the objects. The architect of the hunt should do his/her best to make the map barely sufficient for the purpose of finding the objects: the more vague it is, and the less information it has, the more the team will have to work out, as-they-hunt, how the journey should go. To this end, avoid too much text in the map making – avoiding the use of text completely will produce good results on camera. Choose reliable team members! Once again, each team will turn in one paper and a DVD of the

scavenger hunt's wayfinding for which all members will get credit. Good papers should describe the work of how team members apply the map to what is encountered in actual life, how sense is made of the map, and how that sense informs the journey.

#### FINAL NOTES ABOUT THE COURSE

**Blackboard and class materials:** Instructional materials not available in the reading packet will be made available on Blackboard. Blackboard will also be used to communicate class announcements. It is solely the student's responsibility to make sure that his/her Blackboard account is set up correctly. If it is not, the student should contact Scholarly Communications and Instructional Support at <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/scis/> or at 541-346-1942; do NOT email your instructor about it. Grades are not posted on Blackboard. Students will have to keep track of their grades themselves and the instructor will not email students their grades during the term. Students should come to the instructor's office during scheduled office hours regarding grade-related questions. Finally, if you miss class, please get notes from another student and check Blackboard to obtain lecture slides for that day. Do not ask your instructor or your GTF for lecture notes because they will not give them to you.

**Cell Phones and Laptops:** Please turn off and put away all cell phones, laptops, PDAs, and other such devices before entering the classroom. Do not use any of them during class.

**Academic Assistance:** If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible. Please bring a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your approved accommodations.

**Statement on Academic Dishonesty:** All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. In addition, cheating on examinations will not be tolerated – such actions will merit the student a “0” for the course immediately. For the consequences of academic dishonesty, refer to the Schedule of Classes published quarterly. Violations will be taken seriously and are noted on student disciplinary records. If students are not entirely clear on what academic dishonesty is, they should review UO policies and documents on the matter. These can be found at the following addresses:

[http://www.uoregon.edu/~stl/programs/student\\_judi\\_affairs/academic-dishonesty.htm](http://www.uoregon.edu/~stl/programs/student_judi_affairs/academic-dishonesty.htm)

[http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/student\\_judi\\_affairs/](http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/student_judi_affairs/)

<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>

**A final note on the syllabus and schedule:** A syllabus is a contract between a teacher and students that specifies what responsibilities enrollment in the course entails. In any circumstance, the instructor reserves the right to consult the syllabus regarding resolution of a question or dispute and this word should be considered final. With that said, there are usually contingencies that merit slight revisions to the syllabus or (more often) the course schedule during the academic term. If possible, such changes will be subject to student input, but may also be exclusively the right of the instructor to change at his discretion. In short, by taking this course, each student agrees to what the syllabus has outlined. However, the instructor may change any aspect of the syllabus or schedule if he deems it necessary.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Tu, 4/1 #1 – Introduction to the course

Th, 4/3 #2 – Conversation and perspectives, and “reality”  
Livingston, “Conversational Practice”  
Schutz, “The Reciprocity of Perspectives”

Tu, 4/7 #3 – Conversation analysis  
Reading: Heritage, “Conversation Analysis”

Th, 4/9 #4 – Conversation analysis, continued; project 2 discussion  
Reading: Finish Heritage, “Conversation Analysis”  
***Project 1 due***

Tu, 4/14 #5 – Gratuitous concurrence and conversational ambiguity  
Reading: Liberman, “Ambiguity and gratuitous concurrence”

Th, 4/16 #6 – Workshop on project 2  
Reading: none

Tu, 4/21 #7 – Social order and rules  
Reading: Douglas

Th, 4/23 #8 – Social order and rules, continued  
Reading: Douglas  
***Project 2 due***

Tu, 4/28 #9 – Introduction to Ethnomethodology  
Reading: Garfinkel, “What is Ethnomethodology?”

Th, 4/30 #10 – Accounts and accountings  
Reading: Heritage, “Accounts and accountings”

Tu, 5/5 #11 – Games: rules in motion; project 3 discussion  
Reading: Garfinkel,

Th, 5/7 #12 – Workshop on project 3

Tu, 5/12 #13 – Workshop on project 3

Th, 5/14 #14 – Rules matter: a case study of jurors  
Reading: Garfinkel, “The Rules of Jurors”  
***Project 3 due***

Tu, 5/19 #15 – *Exam*

Reading: none

Th, 5/21 #16 – Instructed actions; project 4 discussion

Reading: Garfinkel, “Instructions and instructed actions”

Tu, 5/26 #17 – Workshop on project 4

Th, 5/28 #18 – Workshop on project 4

Tu, 6/2 #19 – Instructed actions, continued

Reading: Finish Garfinkel, “Instructions and instructed actions”

***Project 4 due***

Th, 6/4 #20 – Course conclusion

#### **COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Douglas, Jack D. 1971. “Constructing Meanings of Social Rules.” Pp. 171-243 in *American Social Order: Social Rules in a Pluralistic Society*. New York: The Free Press.

Garfinkel, Harold. 2001. “Instructions and Instructed Actions.” Pp. 197-218 in *Ethnomethodology’s Program: Working out Durkheim’s Aphorism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Garfinkel, Harold. 1967. “Some Rules of Correct Decisions that Jurors Respect.” Pp. 1-34 in *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Garfinkel, Harold. 1967. “What is Ethnomethodology?” Pp. 1-34 in *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Heritage, John. 1984. “Accounts and Accountings.” Pp. 135-178 in *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Heritage, John. 1984. “Conversation Analysis.” Pp. 232-292 in *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Liberman, Kenneth. 1980. “Ambiguity and Gratuitous Concurrence.” *Human Studies* 3: 65-85.

Livingston, Eric. 1987. “Conversational Practice.” Pp. 65-73 in *Making Sense of Ethnomethodology*. London: Routledge.