
Sociology 2011: Contemporary Social Issues and Human Values

with Benjamin Lamb-Books (Graduate Part-Time Instructor)

Fall 2011 COURSE SYLLABUS

Class Location and Time:	Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:45 PM, RAMY N1B23
Office:	Ketchum 35
Office Hours:	Thurs 2:00-4:30 or by appointment
Email:	Benjamin.Lamb@colorado.edu

Course Description:

This class is about global social issues and the human values that frame them and evaluate them. Sociologists use the term ‘values’ to describe how groups of people relate to *what is most important to them*. Values are a peculiar type of cultural object that can influence the way we act and the way institutions are organized, much like norms, beliefs and interests can. Talk about “values” has exploded beyond sociology in recent decades. According to the Culture Wars thesis, values are divisive—they cause hothead politics disruptive of democracy. Sociologists have averred, however, that behind the pictures of polarization in politics and the media, there are more complex cultural and moral dynamics at work, some of which we will unpack in this course. Do residents of the U.S. share a common value system? Are the values of every generation, region, minority, and subculture at odds with each other? Does it even matter if we all share the same values or not? While some sociologists in the past have indeed claimed that every society needs a set of shared values, this view is increasingly rare after the impact of counter-culture, new social movements, and increased global mobility and pluralism. Some of the most contested social issues in recent news are about the perceived conflict between solidarity and pluralism, as well as the conflict between national and global value-commitments. As one might suspect, there is still much disagreement about the role of values in social life and, perhaps, more disagreement over how values infiltrate or can be used in the social sciences, for what counts as a “social issue” depends on what cultural values are at stake!

For these reasons, this course demands a conversation between many different perspectives, including yours, and after the course, you will be able to examine the cultural and institutional aspects of your own values with sharper focus. We start locally, with American values, through empirical questions about the shared values and cultural diversity of the United States. Situated in this context, we will explore issues and conundrums in the emerging field of “global ethics.” We will bring the concepts we learn from the first half of the class to bear on the most alarming social issues facing the globe today, topics that occupy us for the rest of the class. Our approach will be both empirical and ethical in nature, and include issues such as war and peace, terrorism, human rights, climate change, economic inequality and global migration and more.

Textbooks:

- 1) Thomson, Irene Taviss. *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas*.
- 2) Hutchings, Kimberly. *Global Ethics: An Introduction*.

3) Wuthnow, Robert. *Be Very Afraid: The Cultural Response to Terror, Pandemics, Environmental Devastation, Nuclear Annihilation, and Other Threats*.

These three textbooks can all be purchased at the CU Bookstore. For a cheaper price, the Thomson and the Wuthnow book can be bought as e-books from Amazon or Google, etc, if interested.

Additional article reading assignments will be posted on CULearn by the author's last name, as indicated in the reading calendar below.

Course Format:

Classes will consist of lecture and discussion. When we come to the Global Social Issues section in the course, it is especially critical that you participate in class discussion and shared your informed thoughts on the matter at hand. Professional respect and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and nationalities. I will do my very best to create a safe learning environment where everyone's comments are welcome and appreciated. Violations of this classroom ethic will not be tolerated and will be subject to academic discipline.

Your final grade will be based on the following evaluations and assignments:

1) 40% - *Exams*: There are two exams, a mid-term and a final (each worth 20%). They will be multiple-choice and short answer. The mid-term will have an essay take-home component that I will hand out the week beforehand.

2) 25% - *Reading Homework*: To focus your attention on key points and important concepts in the assigned texts, there will be daily reading homework (per each day of class). These assignments will be available and submitted online through CULearn. They will consist of 3-5 fairly easy short-answer questions about the reading. You get two freebies for the semester—you can choose between not doing two of the assignments or your lowest two scores will be dropped at the end of the semester. For full credit, **homework must be submitted online by noon the day of class**.

3) 35% - *Final Paper Project*: For your final paper, you will choose a *Tanner Lecture on Human Values* and write a report about it (6 pages, double-spaced).

“The purpose of the Tanner Lectures is to advance and reflect upon the scholarly and scientific learning relating to human values. This intention embraces the entire range of values pertinent to the human condition, interest, behavior, and aspiration” (2011, see link below).

The Lecture Library can be found online at: <http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/atoz.html>
This link is also posted on CULearn. The lectures range from 30 to 100 pages in length and can be found on nearly any topic from gender, class, race to animal rights, food politics, social justice, etc, so pick whatever you are most interested in! On CULearn, you can find a list of the lectures that I would recommend since they are given by sociologists or social philosophers and are more relevant to this course. I will hand out more in-depth instructions for this assignment later.

4) *Attendance* (see below, *course policies*)

Calendar of Assignments:

Date:	Topic:	Reading Assignments:
Tues Aug 23	Introduction	
Thurs Aug 25	Values and Culture	Thomson 1-23; Gecas
<i>Traditions and Values</i>		
Tues Aug 30	Culture Wars	Thomson 26-30, 58-83
Thurs Sep 1	American Value Systems	Thomson 84-109
Tues Sep 6	Trends	Thomson 167-187
Thurs Sep 8	Value Systems II	Thomson 31-57; Bellah
Tues Sep 13	Subcultures and Value Conflict	Thomson 110-120; Anderson; Haenfler
Thurs Sep 15	Civil Society	Thomson 187-197; 206-216
Tues Sep 20	U.S. in Global Context	Inglehart; Keohane & Nye
Thurs Sep 22	U.S. in Global Context II	Hutchings 1-16; Parekh
<i>Value Construction/Dialogue</i>		
Tues Sep 27	Ethics/Morality I	Hutchings 28-38; Wilkens
Thurs Sep 29	Ethics/Morality II	Hutchings 38-50; Alexander
Tues Oct 4	Feminist and Virtue Approaches	Hutchings 54-73
Thurs Oct 6	Non-Western	Rose; Chakrabarty
Tues Oct 11	MIDTERM EXAM	
<i>Global Social Issues</i>		
Thurs Oct 13	Cultures of Peril	Wuthnow 1-23; Glassner
Tues Oct 18	Nuclear Power: War & Energy	Wuthnow 24-46
Thurs Oct 20	War II	Wuthnow 47-67; Hutchings 137-150
Tues Oct 25	Terrorism	Wuthnow 68-89; Hutchings 150-162
Thurs Oct 27	Technological Risks	Wuthnow 90-130
Tues Nov 1	Inequality, Immigration	Hutchings 111-133; Yates
Thurs Nov 3	Development	Hutchings 83-98
Tues Nov 8	Climate Change I	Wuthnow 151-183; Hutchings 99-105
Thurs Nov 10	Climate Change II	Wuthnow 184-204
Tues Nov 15	Preparedness/Management	Wuthnow 139-150; 205-224; Lakoff
Thurs Nov 17	Trust, Privacy	Etzioni; Paxton

Calendar of Assignments (continued):

Modern Moral Order

Tues	Nov 29	Human Rights	Hutchings 198-218; Turner
Thurs	Dec 1	Cultural Rights and Pluralism	Thomson 121-144
Tues	Dec 6	Civil Society II	O'Byrne & Kiely; Wright; FINAL PAPER DUE
Thurs	Dec 8	Values and Science	Feagin; Abend
Tues	Dec 13	FINAL EXAM: 4:30-7:00 PM	

Course Policies:

Registration: Unfortunately, class size is not under my control and I cannot guarantee anybody on the wait-list a spot. However, if students do not attend the first two days of class, they will be dropped to make room for students on the waiting list who have attended.

Attendance: Since much of the content of this course will be communicated through lectures and discussion, your attendance is vital. Additional absences above three (the equivalent of two weeks of class!) will each result in an automatic 10-point grade deduction from your final grade.

Laptop usage is not permitted during class (the only exception is if you have a documented disability and need one for note-taking; if so, please see me after class). Please keep your laptops packed and your cell phones turned off. Violators will be asked to leave, or if during exam, charged with cheating.

E-mails and CULearn: You are responsible for knowing the information in any e-mails I send out to the class. I also recommend getting acquainted with CULearn since you will be using it a fair bit for this course.

Academic Integrity: All incidents of academic misconduct—plagiarism, cheating, bribery/threats, etc.—shall be reported to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion).

Disability Statement: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services to the instructor within the first two weeks of class. It is your responsibility to contact Disability Services and arrange for a letter to be provided to you.

Sexual Harassment Policy: The University of Colorado Policy on Sexual Harassment applies to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been sexually harassed should contact the Office of Sexual Harassment (OSH). Information about the OSH and the campus resources available to assist individuals who believe they have been sexually harassed can be obtained at: <http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment/>

Religious Holidays: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. If you need to miss class for a religious holiday please submit a letter to the instructor within the first two weeks of class.