

Tim Clydesdale, Ph.D.
Social Science Bldg 312, x3153
E-mail: clydesda@tcnj.edu
Office Hours: M 11:00-12:20; 2:00-3:20pm

SOC499-01, 02: SENIOR SEMINAR IN SOCIOLOGY – CAPSTONE

Spring 2015: SSB340

Monday, 3:30-6:20pm & Wednesday, 9-11:50 am

Course Purpose and Description: This seminar is a culminating educational experience for soon-to-graduate sociology majors. As such, it offers a final opportunity to engage both intellectually and as whole persons, and to assist in the application of sociological knowledge and skills to the myriad but very real pathways that lie beyond graduation day. A college diploma provides access to opportunities that much of the world's work force lacks, and bestows on its holders a measure of choice that proportionately few enjoy. At the same time, a college diploma is a diminishing privilege, as graduate school diplomas flood the marketplace and those with only bachelor degrees can find themselves underemployed and under challenged. This seminar addresses both of these realities head-on: recognizing the privileges of a college degree as well as its limits, and challenging students to devise long-term strategies to pursue a meaningful and engaged life despite the Herculean odds against the same.

Consequently, this seminar may seem like a semester-long series of flights in a single-engine propeller airplane, taking off to enjoy lofty sights and wide vistas, yet landing frequently to refuel and gather essential supplies. Perhaps the seminar is bipolar because contemporary American life is too. We cannot underestimate the importance of attending to practical matters; accumulate too much debt, for example, and you might as well handcuff yourself to your local bank and throw away the key. We must manage nitty-gritty realities effectively if we plan to gain traction on our larger dreams and shared ideals.

A century and a half ago, Henry David Thoreau penned this famous statement: “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” Two and a half *millennia* ago, Socrates declared “the unexamined life is not worth living.” Both statements continue to ring true today, and not only that, they are powerfully linked. That is, the majority of humanity prefers to live an *unexamined* life, hiding their desperation behind busyness, debt & consumption, romantic fantasies, and substance use, and keeping their heads in the sand about political change, social injustice, and rampant inequality. That link between unexamined lives and desperation, as culturally-embedded as it may be, however, can be broken by repeated use of a tool you all by now possess: the sociological imagination. This seminar invites you to polish your skill in using that tool, and take it with you as you move to the next chapter in your life journey.

Learning Goals:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Apply the sociological imagination to one's own post-college plans (i.e., understand the link between personal biography and socio-historical forces)
- Demonstrate conference room skills – contributing informally, asking questions, giving presentations, and making relevant connections
- Appreciate the macro-economic and macro-cultural changes that have created emerging adulthood
- Describe emerging adulthood's challenges and opportunities
- Expand and refine skills in qualitative social research
- Or, to put it more formally, this course furthers core components of the college's, school's, and department's student learning outcomes – including written & oral communication, scientific reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, intercultural competence, ethical reasoning and compassion, respect for diversity, preparation for participation in civic life, sociological knowledge, and application of sociological knowledge.

Required Texts:

Christian Smith *et al* (2011). *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*. Oxford University Press.

Rosaline Barbour (2014). *Introducing Qualitative Research, A Student's Guide, Second Edition*. Sage Publications.

Students must also read the following articles:

Richard Arum and Josika Roksa. "College and Emerging Adults," *Aspiring Adults Adrift: Tentative Transitions of College Graduates*. University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Tim Clydesdale, "Holy Grit!" *Liberal Education*, Winter 2014, Vol. 100, No. 1

Aaron Patzer, "Three Principals of Personal Finance: All You Need to Know for Financial Success," Mint.com

Simon Rich, "Your New College Graduate: A Parents' Guide," *The New Yorker*. (May 24, 2010)

Sarah Shanfield, "What It Means to Be 25 Today," *Huffington Post* (June 15, 2012)

The professor also reserves the right to add articles throughout the course (and you have the right to suggest the same), based on the course of our class discussions, student interest, and current events.

Mandatory College-wide Policies and Statements:

This course conforms to all campus-wide course and academic policies. You may view these policies using these links:

- Final Exam-Evaluation-Reading Days Policy:
<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=9136>
- Absence and Attendance Policy:
<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=9134>
- Academic Integrity Policy:
<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=7642>
- Disability Support Services:
<http://differingabilities.pages.tcnj.edu>
- Americans with Disability Act Policy:
<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8082>

E-mail and voice-mail: I check e-mail each morning, and voice mail only on days we have class. Please don't expect me to check my e-mail over the weekends, at night, or during breaks. I never check voice-mail from home. I usually reply within 2 business days to all e-mail messages.

Fourth hour equivalency statement: Although this class meets for three hours each week, it is a 4-credit (1 unit) course that offers a depth of learning with additional learning tasks unfolding in the equivalent of a fourth hour. Students will engage in group or individual learning projects outside of class and/or additional learning experiences occurring multiple times during the semester on or off-campus, including community-engaged learning activities and/or campus-wide events.

Course Policies:

1. Attendance and Participation: Students demonstrate their commitment to learning by regularly attending class, by arriving on time and staying for the full class period, by contributing usefully to class and small group discussions, by doing their part to create an atmosphere of respectful and serious learning, and by reading the assigned material in advance of the class. You will be expected to so express your commitment in this class. You may also expect that I will start class on time, end on time, answer your questions fully and respectfully, return your exams and papers in a timely manner, and be available to meet with you during my office hours.
2. Papers and Examinations: Students demonstrate their academic seriousness by turning in all papers and assignments on time, and by writing with excellence. This includes (but is not limited to) spelling, grammar, style (i.e., use the active voice, avoid wordiness/clutter, write for clarity), documentation, and format (thus, any written assignment should be formatted with double line spacing, 1 inch margins, and a 12 point typeface). Dedicated students for whom this presents a challenge will avail themselves of the college's writing tutors.

- a. All assignments must be turned in on time. Overwork, personal struggles, and the like are important issues, and I encourage you to avail yourselves of your residence staff, student development staff, or the college's counselors for help in these matters. Such issues, however, do not constitute a valid excuse for lateness. Neither do variations on "the computer ate my writing assignment," "I don't know how the file I uploaded didn't have any text in it," or "I e-mailed my paper to you, did you get it?" count as valid excuses. Valid excuses are a death in the immediate family or severe hardship (which I will confirm with the Dean of Students). Late papers are severely penalized (i.e., 5 points for papers not uploaded by the start of class, 10 points for papers uploaded after class, 20 points the following day, etc.). Papers and assignments must be uploaded on time.
- b. Likewise, examinations must be taken at the scheduled time. Only those with official TCNJ activities (e.g., field trips), or the valid reasons specified above, may reschedule their examinations. No make-up exams will be given to students who notify the professor after the exam has taken place, unless they were incapacitated and physically unable to call beforehand (i.e., unconscious in a hospital). Make-up examination format is at my discretion (usually a 20-30 minute oral examination).
- c. Plagiarism/Cheating will not be tolerated, and I will advocate for the fullest penalties possible. Don't be foolish--you don't want me as your adversary. I have respect for the student who accepts the consequences of poor preparation and turns in his/her own work. Do what is honorable and right.
3. *Grading:* Your course grade will be based on the following points:
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|---|-----------|
| Class Preparedness and Participation | 10 |
| Exam | 25 |
| Qualitative Research Project | |
| Paper X: Proposal Question, Rationale, Variables | 10 |
| Paper Y: Revised Paper X + Data/Methods | 15 |
| Paper Z: Revised Paper Y + Pilot Results & Implications | 15 |
| Integrative Oral Presentation | 10 |
| Integrative Written Synthesis | <u>15</u> |
| TOTAL | 100 |
- Grade distribution is as follows: 93-100=A, 90-92=A-, 87-89=B+, 83-86=B, 80-82=B-, 77-79=C+, 73-76=C, 70-72=C-, 60-69=D, less than 60=F.

Course Assignments:

1. *Internship:* This is a core element of the senior seminar, as it provides a great way to learn about an organization and a potential career field. Your internship sites and learning goals must be pre-approved by me, and you must complete at least 90 hours at your internship site and submit a site-supervisor counter-signed certification of those hours. The internship hours should be complete by the last day of classes. The grade for the internship is variously embedded in the assignments that follow; note, however, that you cannot pass this class without completing and my independent verification of your 90 hour internship requirement.
2. *Qualitative Research Project:* Drawing from your SOC302 training and the course text, you will design and pilot a qualitative research project. This project may take two forms: 1) an applied qualitative research project that will serve either your internship site or a student/community organization of which you are a member, or 2) a basic qualitative research project keyed to the course's substantive focus on emerging adulthood. You may pair up with another student to do this project if you wish, but understand that the expectations are higher for a paired project and the same grade will be given to both students. I also reserve the right to break up dysfunctional research pairs and readjust the assignment if necessary. And please, this is a *qualitative* project – don't propose quantitative methods like surveys and questionnaires.
This project comprises 40% of your seminar grade formally, but it will also be embedded in your integrative presentation and synthesis, and will be an important basis of your class participation too – so put your best effort and thinking into this project. You will also see that this project is cumulative – that you will be revising Paper X and adding to it to generate Paper Y, and will revise Paper Y and add to it to generate Paper Z. To reward those whose projects improve over the semester, I backward adjust the project grades. That means a student who earns a C on Paper X and a B on Paper Y will have their Paper X grade raised to a

B as well. The same holds for Paper Z and the preceding grades for X & Y. And don't worry, the reverse does not apply – those whose grades decline will not see higher grades on earlier papers adjust downward.

Paper X: Proposal Question, Rationale, Variables – in this paper, you will identify the proposal's research question (and for paper X only, offer 2 alternative questions); write a rationale for why the question is important and needs to be answered (this will take about 3 paragraphs) – this rationale should begin more broadly then narrow to your specific question; specify the variables and describe their operationalization. Your rationales will include citations of appropriate sources – information from the organization or internship site if you choose an applied project or the course texts if you choose a basic project on emerging adulthood – but you are not required to conduct a literature review for this course assignment.

Paper Y: Revised Paper X + Data/Methods – in this paper, you will thoroughly revise Paper X based on feedback from your professor and classmates, as well as add a detailed description of your proposed methods of data collection. This will include a description of the location(s), site(s), or group(s) from which you intend to collect data, the specific method(s) and timeframe for your data collection, the specific measurement/observation for your variables, your intended methods of data analysis, and a detailed description of your intended pilot (i.e., preliminary or test) study. [Note: do not collect any pilot data until you receive approval from your professor.] Be sure to append any data collection instruments your project will require (e.g., interview questions for semi-structured interviews).

Paper Z: Paper Y + Pilot Results & Implications – in this paper, you will thoroughly revise Paper Y based on feedback from your professor and classmates, as well as report your pilot study results and their 1) implications for revision(s) to your project methods/design, and 2) preliminary implications for your research question (i.e., what answer do these pilot results suggest for your applied or basic research question).

3. *Integrative Oral Presentation & Written Synthesis*: You can think of this as cross between a report and an essay, as it will review your internship site/experience, your qualitative research project/pilot results, and it will present your consideration of the challenges/opportunities of emerging adulthood and their integration with your intended post-college journey.

You will have 8 minutes to present your integrative oral presentation to your classmates and receive their input, as indicated on the course schedule. *Your presentation should be extemporaneous (neither memorized nor read), include supporting (but not distracting or cutesy) A/V aids, and be marked by good eye contact, a clear speaking voice, and a touch of humor or personal warmth.*

Your integrative written synthesis is due to CANVAS by the start time for the course's final exam, and appended to that synthesis should be your internship hour certification. I suspect these syntheses will fall in the 5 to 10 page range.

Course Schedule: (tentative; the professor reserves the right to adjust)

Date:	What's happening:	What's due:
Jan 26/28	Seminar Overview: On emerging adulthood and qualitative research proposals & pilot studies Internships Described	Read: "What it means to be 25 today" and "Your new college graduate: a parents' guide."
Feb 2/4	Introduction to Qualitative Research Perspectives on Emerging Adulthood	Read: Barbour Ch 1,2; Smith, "Introduction"; Henig "What is it about 20-somethings?"
Feb 9/11	Qualitative Research Design & Ethics Scholarly work on Emerging Adults	Read: Barbour Ch 3,4; Smith Ch 1; Arum & Roksa, "College and Emerging Adults"
Feb 16/18	Interviews & Focus Groups Emerging Adults and Consumerism	Read: Barbour Ch 5-6; Smith Ch 2; Patzer, "Three Principles of Personal Finance."
Feb 23/24	Ethnography & Other Qualitative Data Emerging Adults and Intoxication	Read: Barbour Ch 7-8; Smith Ch 3

Date:	What's happening:	What's due:
Mar 2/4	Emerging Adults & Sexual Liberation	Smith Ch 4 Due: Paper X
Mar 9/11	Analyzing & Presenting Qualitative Research	Read: Barbour, Ch 11,13
Mar 16/18	<i>SPRING BREAK</i>	
Mar 23/25	***no seminar meeting***	<i>Meet with professor to review feedback on Paper X and discuss plans for Paper Y</i>
Mar30/Apr1	***no seminar meeting***	Due: Paper Y
Apr 6/8	Emerging Adults Disengaged	Read: Smith Ch 5
Apr 13/15	Emerging Adulthood: Conclusions	Read: Smith "conclusion"; Clydesdale "Holy Grit" <i>Receive Take-Home Exam Questions</i>
Apr 20/22	EXAM	Due: Take Home Exam Answers to CANVAS by start of class time
Apr 27/29	***no seminar meeting***	Due: Paper Z
May 4/6	Final Presentations	<i>Come prepared to ask questions and start conversations with each presenter.</i>
May 8	<i>**last day of classes; not a seminar day**</i>	Internship hours complete and Certification Form submitted to professor
Final exam period	Final Synthesis due to CANVAS at the start of the scheduled exam time	<i>See Final Exam Schedule on-line</i>



"I'm a college professor, Jason. You need to ask someone else if you want advice about the real world."