

# Introduction to Sociology

Course Introduction

# What is Sociology?

- ♦ Sociology is a social science that studies human society and behavior.
- ♦ Sociologists are mainly interested in social interactions – how people relate to one another and how they influence each others decisions.
- ♦ Sociologists focus on the group, rather than the individual.
- ♦ Sociologists examine social phenomena or observable facts or events involving human interaction to make predictions about future trends and behaviors.

# Why Study Sociology?

- ◆ Sociology can give you a new perspective on yourself and the world around you.
- ◆ Its called the sociological perspective.
- ◆ By adopting the sociological perspective you can look beyond commonly held beliefs to determine hidden meanings behind human actions.
- ◆ The sociological perspective helps us understand that peoples behavior is influenced by social factors and learned behaviors from those around us.
- ◆ The sociological perspective can help us view the world through the eyes of others.
- ◆ By developing this perspective we can begin to use the sociological imagination; the ability to see a connection between the larger world and one's personal life.

# Social Sciences

- ♦ Social Sciences are the related disciplines (fields) that study various aspects of human social behavior.
- ♦ The other social sciences include: history, anthropology, psychology, economics and political science.
- ♦ Anthropology: the study of past and present cultures. It's the most similar to sociology. Anthropologists focus / concentrate on the past cultures and present simple cultures or less advanced societies.
- ♦ While sociologists are more interested in group behavior in complex more advanced societies.

# Social Sciences

- ♦ Psychology: deals with the behavior and thinking of organisms. Psychology focuses more on individual behavior. While sociology is focused on group behavior.
- ♦ Economics: is the study of the choices people make in an effort to satisfy their needs and wants. Economists focus on the process in which goods and services are produced, distributed and consumed.
- ♦ Political Science: is the examination of the organization and operation of governments. Some areas of political science and sociology overlap, such as the formation of political parties and with voting patterns.
- ♦ History: is the study of past events. Sociologists are also interested in the past. Like many social historians, sociologists study past events in an effort to explain current social behaviors and attitudes.

# Other Social Sciences

- ◆ Despite the different focus' of the fields they are all related in terms of their study of human beings and their interactions; whether past or present.
- ◆ Many sociologists now borrow freely from the various social sciences in an effort to better understand the social forces that help shape our lives.

# How did Sociology Develop?

- ◆ Throughout history scholars have always been interested in the social life and interactions of people.
- ◆ Despite this Sociology did not develop as a field of study until the 1800's.
- ◆ Several factors led to its development:
  - ◆ 1. The rapid political and social changes that took place in Europe as a result of the Industrial Revolution.
  - ◆ 2. The rapid growth of cities and their problems as a result of Industrial Revolution.
  - ◆ 3. The questioning of traditional beliefs. People across Europe began to question traditional roles and expectations.

# Who were the early Sociologists?

- ◆ Sociology took root in the 1800's primarily in England, France, and Germany. These countries were the most affected by the Industrial Revolution.
- ◆ Like today, the early sociologists believed that through the collection of data, observations and scientific research you could predict future social trends and behaviors to improve society.
- ◆ The early European leaders included; Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber.
- ◆ Some of the early leaders of sociology in the United States included W.E.B. Dubois and Jane Addams.