SOCIOMETRY 240
Normality and Abnormality
Tuesday & Thursday 4:30-5:50 p.m.
Scott Hall 135 (College Ave. Campus)
Spring 2013

Professor: Deborah Carr
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E-mail: carrds@rutgers.edu
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Discussion Sections:
01 T2 10:05 - 11:00am Scott 106 Murphy
02 T2 10:05 - 11:00am Frelinghuysen A4 Stroffolino
03 T2 10:05 - 11:00am Hardenbergh A2 Kao
04 T2 10:05 - 11:00am Frelinghuysen B3 Meunier
05 T3 11:45am - 12:40pm Frelinghuysen B4 Meunier
06 T4 1:25 - 2:20pm Frelinghuysen B6 Hsu
07 T5 3:05 - 4:00pm Campbell A3 Hsu
08 T7 6:25 - 7:20pm Scott 203 Batson
09 T7 6:25 - 7:20pm Hardenbergh A5 Kushins
10 T8 7:55 - 8:50pm Scott 104 Kushins
11 T8 7:55 - 8:50pm Scott 106 Murphy
12 T8 7:55 - 8:50pm Scott 119 Raileanu
13 T8 7:55 - 8:50pm Scott 203 Batson
14 H8 7:55 - 8:50pm Scott 106 Kao
15 H8 7:55 - 8:50pm Scott 102 Stroffolino
**Description:** Sociology is the scientific study of social life. Sociologists recognize that all human behavior is shaped by social and historical context. As such, the extent to which our beliefs, behaviors, and even appearance are considered “normal” is powerfully shaped by social context. This course will introduce students to the concepts, characteristics, and examples of normality and abnormality. In the first part of the course, we will examine statistical, cultural, and evolutionary perspectives on normality and abnormality. In the second part of the course, we will draw on these perspectives to study topics including physical appearance, body weight, food, mental and physical health, sexuality, the life course, and happiness. In the final part of the course, we will explore the ways that tools such as testing, drugs, and medical enhancements are used to control normality and abnormality. Throughout the semester, we will highlight practical applications, and will discuss the way that sociological research on normality and abnormality can inform social policies and practices to improve individuals’ well-being.

**Required Readings:**

Available at Barnes and Noble (on campus) and New Jersey Books. Students also are required to read the book chapters and articles posted on the Sakai site. Required readings are listed below.

**Class Format:**
Students are required to attend two lectures and one discussion section each week. Active participation is encouraged in lecture and discussion. Lecture outlines will be posted on our class Sakai site within 24 hours prior to each lecture. Assigned readings should be read prior to each lecture. A brief summary of the class lecture will be posted on the Sakai website within 48 hours following each lecture. However, these notes are not a comprehensive summary of all material presented in class. Lectures will be supplemented with video clips, movie selections, and occasional guest lectures. Students are encouraged to visit the professor’s and TA’s office hours to discuss and clarify course material.

**Requirements and Grading:**
**Exams:** There will be two closed-book exams that cover material from lectures, readings, and film clips. The midterm will be held on Thursday March 7 (regular class time) and the final exam will be held on Wednesday May 15 from 4-7 p.m. Each exam is non-cumulative. The exams are only cumulative in the sense that several themes run through this class throughout the semester, and you are responsible for understanding these key themes. A study guide will be posted on Sakai one week prior to each exam; this guide will help you to identify and understand important issues. NO make-up exams will be given unless I receive notification at least three days prior to the exam, and you have a valid and documented reason for missing the scheduled exam. Exams will consist primarily of multiple choice (scantron) but may also include short definitions. Students must bring pencils to all exams for the scantron sheet. Your exam with the higher score
will account for 30% of your grade; your exam with the lower score will account for 20% of your grade.

**Written assignments:** There will be four writing assignments, to be posted on Sakai two weeks prior to the due date. Assignments #1, 2, and 4 are each worth 10% of your grade and Assignment #3 is worth 15%. You must hand your assignment to your TA at the beginning of discussion section during the week of each assignment’s due date.

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<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Week of February 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Week of February 25</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Week of April 29</td>
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**Attendance at discussion section:** Attendance and active participation is required at discussion section, and accounts for 5% of your course grade. You may have up to three unexcused absences from your recitation section; additional absences will result in a penalty.

**Summary of grading procedures:** Course grades are based on the total number of points an individual earns on exams, written assignments, and discussion section, relative to point totals earned by others in the class. No extra credit opportunities are available. Final grades are non-negotiable and will be assigned according to the following scale.

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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**ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION**

**E-mail etiquette and requirements:** The TAs and I will happily and promptly reply to all student email. However, you must follow a few simple rules. First, you must put “Soc 240” in the subject line. If you do not, then I have no way of knowing whether an email message from jrzygrrl@aoh.com or PhatBoy@gmayl.com is a Sociology 240 student with an important inquiry, or a spam mail message from a Viagra vendor. I will delete all email messages from unfamiliar addresses unless “Soc 240” is in the subject line. Second, you should include your name somewhere in the body of the message. Your email addresses often do not tell me who you are.
**Class lunches:** Large lecture classes make it difficult for students to communicate with the professor, and with one another. I will hold several class lunches, as a way for us to become acquainted with one another. Seating is limited to the first six students who sign up for each lunch. Please email me (carrds@rutgers.edu) and tell me which lunch you’d like to attend. We will eat at Neilson Dining Hall on Douglass Campus at noon on the following Tuesday dates: February 12; and March 5; and at 1 p.m. on the following Friday dates: March 29 and April 26. Attendance is completely optional; these lunches simply are an informal way for you to meet with a professor and classmates at Rutgers.

**Sakai site:** The class Sakai site includes our syllabus, course readings, homework assignments, outlines, notes following class, exam study guides, answer keys following exams, supplemental and/or “current event” readings, and other important announcements pertaining to class. Please check the website regularly, to keep updated of class information.

We will also maintain two Sakai discussion options. The first one, Forums, allows you to post factual and conceptual questions about the course material, to be answered by the TAs and/or classmates. The second one, Chat Room, allows you to post your thoughts about the course material, and enables you and your classmates to share ideas. All ideas are welcome, although proper and polite behavior is expected.

**UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES**

**Academic misconduct:** Rutgers University policies state that academic misconduct may involve: cheating; fabrication; facilitating academic dishonesty; plagiarism; denying others access to information or material. Any instances of academic misconduct will be reported to your dean. Plagiarism is using someone else's words without giving the author proper attribution. For further information on plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty see the University's academic integrity policy: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml)

**Class conduct:** The Sociology Department encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe and productive classroom environment. As such, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and courtesy. Behaviors that distract students and faculty is not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, discourteous remarks, and other behaviors specified by the instructor. Courteous expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is, of course, permitted. If a student engages in disruptive behavior, the instructor, following the University Code of Student Conduct, may direct the student to leave class for the remainder of the class period. Serious verbal assaults, harassment, or defamation of the instructor or students can lead to university disciplinary proceedings. The University Code of Student Conduct is at [http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/judaff/ucsc.shtml](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/judaff/ucsc.shtml).

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS**
January 22 (Tu). Welcome and Introduction to Course
Overview of course and requirements.

January 24 (Th). Definitions of Normality and Abnormality
What do we mean by the terms “normality” and “abnormality”? An overview, contrast, and critique of three perspectives on normality and abnormality: statistical, normative, and natural.


January 29 (Tu) and January 31 (Th). How Do We Study Normality? Sociological Research Methods
How do we know what is “normal,” whether from a statistical, normative, or natural perspective? Sociologists have many research strategies and approaches for conducting their work, including surveys, field observations, in-depth interviews, content analysis, and others. We review key research approaches used to study human behavior – both normal and abnormal.


To take the “normal bar” survey, click here:
[http://www.thenormalbar.com/NB_Test/servlet/Page1](http://www.thenormalbar.com/NB_Test/servlet/Page1)

February 5 (Tu) and February 7 (Th). Culture, Fashion and Normality
How do cultural norms influence what we consider to be normal and abnormal? Can people easily change what they think is normal and abnormal? What do your first and last names indicate about what is normal? What about our fashion choices?

(To see how “normal” your first name is, check out: http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/)


(To see how “normal” your last name is among all Americans, check out: http://www.census.gov/genealogy/www/data/2000surnames/index.html.)
(To see how “normal” your last name is among Rutgers students today, check out: http://www.njfuture.org/2011/01/31/college-students-as-a-leading-indicator-of-diversity/)


February 12 (Tu). Evolution and Normality
To what extent does human nature guide what we think of as normal and abnormal? Can norms about normality be universal and not culturally relative? Are many things that we think of as abnormal actually mismatches between human nature and current social environments?


February 14 (Th). Physical Appearance and Body Weight
Are ideals of beauty and physical attractiveness universal or culturally relative? Where do our ideals of beauty/handsomeness, weight, and height come from? How are they different for males and females? What is the social impact of normal and abnormal appearance?


(To calculate your own body mass index, see: http://nhlbisupport.com/bmi/)

**February 19 (Tu). Food and Appetite**

Do you consider a “Big Gulp” soda to be too big, too small, or just right? Your answer may help us understand how we’ve acquired our ideas about what’s normal to eat and drink. What accounts for the steep increase in body weight in recent years? What are eating ‘disorders’?


**February 21 (Th). Mental Health: Sadness and Depression**

What accounts for the high and steadily rising rates of depression in the United States in recent decades? How do we differentiate “normal” sadness from depressive disorders? Under what conditions is it normal to feel sad?


(To calculate your own depressive symptoms, see: http://cesd-r.com/)

**February 26 (Tu). Mental Health: Anxiety and Panic Disorders**
Why are some sources of anxiety considered natural and reasonable, and others pathological? Does fear stem from human nature or from individually and culturally learned processes? Are many of our fears evolutionary mismatches? Are traumatic responses to abnormal situations indicative of mental disorder, or a variety of normality?


(To find out how “normal” your fears are, see: http://psychology.about.com/od/phobias/p/commonphobias.htm)

**February 28 (Th). Mental Health: Hoarding and Compulsive Shopping**

What’s the difference between a collector and a hoarder? Does it matter what we buy and/or collect? Is having too much money pathological? How about too many pets? We will discuss the boundaries between normal consumption and two behaviors considered to be abnormal: hoarding and compulsive buying.

*Guest lectures by Brandon Kramer and Jennifer Hemler*


(To find out how normal your shopping habits are, check out: http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/lifestyle/2012/02/quiz-are-you-a-compulsive-shopper/)

**March 5 (Tu). Mental Health: Grief and Bereavement**
Have you ever attended a funeral, and felt that the mourners weren’t “sad enough?” Or that mourners were inappropriately overwrought by emotion? Why are some types of grief considered natural and reasonable and others pathological? Why do we experience grief? What are its functions? Should normal grief be a time-delimited experience?


**March 7 (Th), Exam #1. Good luck!**

**March 12 (Tu) and March 14 (Th). Sexuality**

Is sexuality biologically determined or culturally produced? How did the Kinsey Report influence conceptions of sexuality? Why and how have conceptions of normal sexuality undergone an enormous change in recent years?


**March 19 (Tu) and March 21 (Th). Have a restful spring break!**

**March 26 (Tu) and March 28 (Th). Normality and the Life Course (or “Acting Your Age”)**
What accounts for changes in conceptions of normal childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age? What is the “new” normal for young adults regarding whom they should live with, when and whether they should marry and/or have children, and what they should do after they have passed college age?

Furstenburg, Frank et al., 2004. “Growing Up is Harder to Do.” Contexts 3: 33-41.


April 2 (Tu). Mate Selection: Finding Mr. or Mrs. “Right”
Which adage best characterizes “normal” romantic couples: “opposites attract,” or “birds of a feather flock together?” What factors besides love guide our romantic preferences? Do men and women differ in what they’re looking for? What cultural, biological, and evolutionary factors shape our partner choices?


Buss, David. 1989. “Sex Differences in Human Mate Preferences: Evolutionary Hypotheses Tested in 37 Cultures.” Behavioral and Brain Sciences 12: 1-49. [Scan only – a difficult article]


April 4 (Th) “Normal” Aging?
What does a “normal” 65-year-old act like and look like? Is old age normally a time of senility and infirmity, or vigor and engagement? We will discuss competing cultural and statistical perspectives on what makes for “normal” and unhealthy aging.


National Institutes of Health. 2006. What’s Your Aging IQ?


(To calculate how long you can expect to live, see: http://gosset.wharton.upenn.edu/~foster/mortality/perl/CalcForm.html)

April 9 (Tu). Happiness: Can We Have Too Much?
Is it normal to be happy? When is it abnormal to be happy? What accounts for the recent emphasis on promoting happiness? Is happiness more valued in some societies than in others?


April 11 (Th). Personality and Personality Testing
Is it possible to develop objective tests that can detect normality and abnormality in one’s personality? How are these tests used? What do they really show?


(The “Big 5” is a widely used personality assessment. You can evaluate yourself here: http://www.outofservice.com/bigfive/)
April 16 (Tu). Health, Medicine and Treatment: What’s Normal?  
How do you know if you’re in “normal” health? How many symptoms must one have to be considered “sick” or “abnormal.” How do culture, science, and evolutionary perspectives dictate who is sick, and why? We will learn about how boundaries between healthy and sick are constructed, conceptualized, and maintained.

Centers for Disease Control. 2010. Healthy People 2010: Executive Summary (scan only).


April 18 (Th) and April 23 (Tu). The Chemical Control of Normality  
Why are some drugs valued and considered to be normal while others are stigmatized and harshly punished? How do these processes change over time? We draw on examples including alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana. How do drug therapies secure conformity to standards of normality? Examples include SSRIs, anti-psychotics, and Ritalin.


April 25 (Th) and April 30 (Tu). Enhancing Normality: The Quest for Human Perfection?
Can enhancement therapies make people “super-normal”? What problems arise when people use enhancements? What counts as “enhancement” in the first place? We will discuss examples of cognitive, physical, and appearance enhancements.


May 2 (Th). The “New Normal”: The Future of Normality
What changes can we expect in future conceptualizations of normality and abnormality? What sorts of things that are currently normal are likely to become abnormal? What kinds of things that are currently abnormal are likely to become normal?


May 15 (W). Final Exam

******** Have a wonderful summer break! ********