

SOCIOLOGY 495
CAPSTONE COURSE IN SOCIOLOGY:
UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CHANGE

Don Luidens, Instructor

[My thanks to Dr. Nemeth for sharing his Capstone syllabus with me.
Perhaps not surprisingly, I've borrowed much, but changed it along the way!]

Tuesday and Thursday: 9:30 – 10:50
Science Center 1135



This Capstone course is intended (according to the wonderful bureaucratise of the Hope Catalog) “to enable students and faculty to organize and integrate a variety of interest areas in sociology, thereby culminating the major with a synthesis provided through theoretical perspectives.” (p. 327) In other words, . . . [fill in the blanks].

The result of this widely open-ended description is that each faculty member can design a course which reflects her or his special interests – and drag you students into that (hopefully fascinating!) quagmire. Here's mine. I am overwhelmed with the way that change has become ordinary in our lives. From social change to economic, political, relational, and identity matters, change is pervasive. The world swirls dizzily on its socio-political axis, and we swallow hard and keep our balance the best we can. How do we make sense of this universal reality? How do you make *sociological* sense of it? How do you make *personal* sense of it? What effect does it have on our *history*, and your *personal biography*?



So that's what we'll deal with this semester. Change. **What forms it takes. How can we describe it? How can we comprehend it? How can we accommodate to it? How does the world – more globally – contend with this modern phenomenon (it's never been like this in the history of humanity!)?**



Because change is so widespread and affects us in so many ways, understanding social change is a fundamental concern to sociologists. This is also the primary reason why sociology majors are required to take the Capstone course. During this semester **we will examine cultural and structural explanations** for why our lives, relationships, and the groups to which we belong are constantly being changed and reshaped. To help facilitate the sharing of ideas and perspectives, Capstone has been designed as a seminar course.

Although we will be looking at how human societies have changed since the hunting and gathering era, most of our time will be spent looking at social change going on around us today. This will require keeping up to date on current events; all of us will read the newspaper (or e-newspaper) daily. In particular, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* provide very helpful (free) e-sites to follow world news accounts.

What is a seminar?

A seminar is a small group that regularly meets to discuss topics they are thinking about. Seminar participants are expected to be the principal teachers and to do most of the talking. That means we (yup, I'm one of the seminar group) all will be learning from and teaching each other. Through lively and honest interchanges we will not only learn about other perspectives, but we will learn how to evaluate other perspectives and even incorporate them when they're helpful. For us to have honest and fruitful discussions, it is necessary for all of us to respect other seminar members, even if we disagree.

Class Attendance and Participation

In a seminar, discussion is a major part of each class period. **Regular and intelligent contributions to class discussions will be considered in generating final grades.** Obviously, making regular and intelligent contributions requires us to have read the assigned readings prior to our discussion of them. With fifteen students in our class, your involvement (or lack thereof) will be readily apparent.

Required Texts

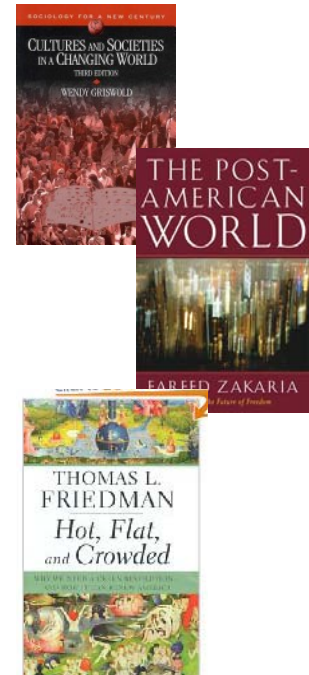
Wendy Griswold. *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. (Third edition). 2008.

Thomas L. Friedman. *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution – and How It Can Renew America*. 2008.

Fareed Zakaria. *The Post-American World*. 2008.

Griswold will provide us with a model to analyze and make sense of social change. This edition (just out) provides an up-dated rendering of her “diamond model” of cultural and structural change.

Friedman and Zakaria are both reporters and social analysts. The former writes for the *New York Times*, the latter for the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* (he was formerly the editor of the international edition of *Newsweek*). They are renowned and astute observers of globalization and of its implications for our lives. As you will see, both of these books are new and both have made a significant impact on American social and political thinking.



One of the most profound changes happening this term has to be the inauguration of President Barak Obama at noon on Tuesday, January 20. Indeed, like no prior candidate, Obama has adopted “Change” as his rallying cry. We will take some time to think through the implications of this momentous event (whatever our political persuasion, we have to acknowledge the sea-change in American politics marked by Obama’s election).

News Reports of Change

In order for us to keep track of some of the changes going on in our world, we will be relying on regular news reports from recognized news sources (no, that does NOT include FOX News!). You will be asked to read the lead articles of a news source – either on-line or in hard copy – regularly (I'd like it to be every day). In order to “facilitate” this effort, you will be expected to turn in 10 one-page “summaries” of news events of the day (double-spaced; about 200-250 words). This assignment will begin on January 15 and will run through April 7 – roughly 20 days of class from which you'll select your 10 days. **THESE PAPERS WILL BE DUE IN MY E-MAILBOX BY 8:30 ON THE DAY OF EACH CLASS.** They will be used as conversation starters during the classes.



CNN.com

MSNBC



In order to start this process, and to encourage you to focus on one (or two) major issues undergoing social change, there will be an initial paper of 2 – 2½ pages (due in class on Thursday) describing a social issue in the news – and of strong concern/interest to you. Describe the current situation and give some sense of where you see it going in the next few months. You will indicate which news source(s) you will be consulting during the semester.

- **ECONOMY**
- **FOREIGN RELATIONS**
- **ECOLOGY**
- **TRADE**
- **INFRA-STRUCTURE**
- **EDUCATION**
- **IRAQ WAR**

As indicated above, we will spend the class session on January 13 (next Tuesday) considering the impending inauguration of Barak Obama. In anticipation of this, you will submit a paper of 2 – 2½ pages summarizing the type(s) of change which Obama seems to be advocating. In addition, you will include a statement of the change(s) you would like to see in the coming four years. How do your desires and Obama's intentions coincide? Are there areas which you would like him to focus on which are not likely to be of importance to him? This paper will be due in class on Tuesday, January 13.

Book Review Essays

As you will see from the schedule, you will write a 3-4 page essay reviewing each of the three books assigned for our course. Detailed information on this assignment will be forthcoming later in the course.

Research Paper and Presentation

The centerpiece of your contribution to this class (in addition to your regular participation in discussions) will be a presentation and paper on a specific area of social change. You will write a research paper (10-12 pages in length) on changes in a social institution, cultural pattern, or social problem during the past decade. You will also make a 20-25 minute class presentation of your findings. Individual meetings with the instructor will be scheduled to help you develop your paper topic. Detailed instructions on this assignment will be forthcoming at a later date.

Career Planning

Planning for life after college can sometimes be scary, especially in a tight job market (one of the constant sources of change). To encourage you to use Hope's Office of Career Services, Dale Austin will visit our class. After that visit, you will be required to have two individual meetings with the Office of Career Services in order to: 1) review your resume, and 2) conduct a mock interview. These sessions with Mr. Austin and his staff will be beneficial to you regardless of your career plans after leaving Hope.



Grading

Each component of the course will contribute to your final grade in the following proportions:

Three Book Review Essays	45% (15% each)
Initial Paper and Obama Paper	20% (10% each)
10 News Summaries	10% (1% each)
Term Paper & Presentation	30%
Class Participation	5%




COURSE SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING ASSIGNMENT</u>
<u>January</u>		
6	Course Introduction	What is social change?
8	Current Events as Change	Paper 1: Initial NEWS Report A major issue of social change in the news you'll follow. Sources you'll use this semester.
13	Obama on Change	Paper 2: Barak's Message What change does he want? What change do you want?
15	The Cultural Diamond	Griswold, Chapters 1 and 2
20	Producing Social Change	Griswold, Chapters 3 and 4
	Attendance at a PANEL DISCUSSION TBA will be required	
22	Problems in Process	Griswold, Chapters 5 and 6
27	A Powerfully Wired World	Griswold, Chapters 7 and 8
29	Griswold Paper Due	
<u>February</u>		
3	Rise of the Rest	Zakaria, Chapters 1 and 2
5	Changes in the Non-West	Zakaria, Chapter 3
10	Winter Break	
12	Challenger to the West	Zakaria, Chapter 4
17	Who's With Us/US?	Zakaria, Chapter 5
19	A Powerful America?	Zakaria, Chapter 6
24	A Purposeful America?	Zakaria, Chapter 7
26	Zakaria Paper Due	

March

3	Where We Are	Friedman, Chapters 1 and 2
5	How We Got Here: I	Friedman, Chapters 3 and 4
10	How We Got Here: II	Friedman, Chapters 5 and 6
12	How We Got Here: III	Friedman, Chapters 7 and 8
24	How We Move Forward: I	Friedman, Chapters 9 and 10
26	How We Move Forward: II	Friedman, Chapters 11 and 12
31	How We Move Forward: III	Friedman, Chapters 13 and 14

April

2	Can Red China Be Green?	Friedman, Chapter 15
7	America and China	Friedman, Chapters 16 and 17
9	Friedman Paper Due Presentation Day 1	
14	Presentation Day 2	
16	Presentation Day 3	
21	Presentation Day 4	
23	Presentation Day 5	
27	Presentation Paper Due by noon	

May 3

4 **Real Life Begins!**

