This course focuses broadly on processes of order and change, with an emphasis on how individual choice both shapes and is shaped by institutional and societal dynamics. While Sociology is a wide-ranging field, we will not be concerned with introducing all of its distinct substantive areas, but instead with understanding particular key generalizable processes. Our central motivation will be to uncover how systems of power operate to produce sustained inequalities, as well as how individuals and groups confront, and sometimes alter, such institutionalized systems. To this end, we begin by examining how complex social systems emerge from simple patterns of interaction. Armed with this background, we then examine a variety of issues and institutions, touching on race, class, gender, community organizations, schools, informal social spaces, and social movements. We reserve the right to retain some fluidity across our weekly time slots, but many weeks will combine full-group lectures/discussion with periodic "lab" activities. Readings often will serve to supplement and apply what we do during class rather than cover the same ground. A central goal of the semester is not only to have you understand specific concepts and processes from readings and class discussions, but also to introduce new perspectives that enable you to develop fresh insights from the books, films, music, and interactions that surround you everyday.

Office Hours and contact details
David has scheduled office hours on Mondays from 11:30 to 12:30, Wednesdays from 2:00 to 3:00, and other times by appointment. Anna, Luke, Jeanette, and Hayley are all available by appointment as well. Email is generally a good way to contact any of us, and our contact information is listed at the top of this page. We encourage each of you to reach out to discuss problems with the class or any other issues that interest or concern you. We also will generally be available for quick questions immediately after class, and you can also leave messages in David’s mailbox in the Sociology office on the second floor of Seigle Hall. Additionally, if you need to contact David at other times, his phone numbers are included above.

Readings
The materials in this course may be more varied than what you have encountered in most other WU classes. The logic here is that a wide range of essays, stories, films, songs and other audio recordings, newspaper and magazine articles, and web pages – including those that you might typically read, view, or listen to on your own – can serve as a jumping-off point for developing general sociological insights. Many of these sources will be available online; those posted on our
course Blackboard page are referred to as ‘BB’ readings below. Additionally, the following books – each available at the campus bookstore and the usual online outlets – are required for this course:

*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, by Erving Goffman  
*The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, by Malcolm Gladwell  
*Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School*, by Shamus Rahman Khan  
*Doormen*, by Peter Bearman

**Assignments and Grading**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>3 response papers (10% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term take-home project/essays</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final essays</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Response papers**  
Over the course of the semester, you will submit three brief (no more than 3 page) thought papers that each respond to a core reading assignment and its connections to class discussions. Tentative due dates for the three papers, focused respectively on the Goffman and Khan books along with the Alexander and Desmond readings associated with the “inequality from below” module, are listed in the course outline below. Note that, in the event that our schedule changes as the semester progresses, we will provide plenty of advance notice of due-date changes associated with these response papers. We will distribute a detailed set of guidelines for these thought assignments in class, but each response should briefly summarize key concepts from readings and class, and then focus on: 1) how effectively you feel these concepts explain particular real-world phenomena, and 2) any ideas you have about extending these concepts to better explain aspects of social life.

**Mid-term and Final Essays**  
Twice during the semester (in mid-October, and during the final week of classes in December), we will distribute essay questions designed to tie together broad sets of ideas from readings and class discussion. Approximately one week after you receive each set of questions, you will need to submit written responses not exceeding a total of ten double-spaced pages for the midterm and five double-spaced pages for the final.

**Participation**  
Much of the benefit of this class will come through class discussion. It is therefore quite important for each of you to keep up with readings and come to class prepared to discuss issues you found interesting or want clarified. We understand that in-class participation is sometimes difficult in a larger class, and we therefore view the ‘participation’ component of your grade broadly – meaning that participation can include contributing during class, as well as asking questions and/or suggesting ideas, possible topics of discussion, connections between class topics and current events, etc. outside of class (i.e. before or after class, in office hours, or over email). Conversely, we also pay attention to activities that negatively impacts others’ ability to participate in class, such as distracting use of laptops or other devices for non-class tasks – for the sake of all, we ask you to avoid such behaviors. Periodically, we will engage in smaller-group, active “lab” activities, which do provide a fuller opportunity to contribute your ideas, questions, and critiques. Participation is especially important here, and you are expected to be present for, and an active contributor to, each session (please communicate ahead of time with David and/or your TA if you cannot make a meeting). We additionally reserve the right to offer opportunities for extra participation credit related to events or activities relevant to this class.
Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resources at 935-4153. Disability Resources is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for WU students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations. We will accept Disability Resources VISA forms by email and in person. If you have already been approved for accommodations, we request that you provide a copy of your VISA within the first two weeks of the semester.

We are committed as well to offering academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu or 935-8761), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, located on the 4th floor of Seigle Hall. This office provides resources confidentially; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student, so long as doing so does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

Course Outline

Week 1 (29-31 August):
- Introductory business
- Building a macrostructure: Social exchange & social roles

Week 2 (7 September; no class 9/5 – Labor Day):
- Performance, identity, and the presentation of self
  -reading: Goffman, Chs. 1-3

Week 3 (12-14 September):
- Applying Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective
  -readings: Goffman, Ch. 6
    - Richard Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” (BB)
    - Stephen A. Berrey, The Jim Crow Routine (BB)
    - Tom Wolfe, “The Mermaid Blushed” (BB)

First response paper due by class time on 9/14

Week 4 (19-21 September):
- Roles and power: the emergence of status distinctions
  -case study: The Stanford Prison Experiment

Weeks 5-6 (26-28 September):
- Networks, social structure, and the “rules of epidemics”
  -reading: Malcolm Gladwell, The Tipping Point, Chs. 1-5
    - Mark Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties” (BB)
Week 7 (3-5 October):
- Understanding macro-outcomes: Networks, thresholds, and diffusion
  - reading: Mark Granovetter, “Threshold Models of Collective Action” (BB)
  Nicholas A. Christakis & James H. Fowler, Connected (BB)

Midterm take-home essays due 10/7

Weeks 8-9 (10-19 October; no class 10/17 – Fall Break):
- Sociological research lab
  - brief readings TBA
  - class visits: Nicole Fox (University of New Hampshire)
  Christina Simko (Williams College)
  Doug McAdam (Stanford University)

Weeks 10-11 (24 October – 2 November):
- Inequality from above: privilege and status
  - reading: Shamus Rahman Khan, Privilege

Second response paper due by class time on 10/26

Weeks 12-13 (7-16 November):
- Inequality from below
  - readings: Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow (BB)
  Matthew Desmond, Evicted (BB)

Third response paper due by class time on 11/14

Week 14 (21 November; no class 11/23): Spillover and Thanksgiving holiday

Weeks 15-16 (28 November - 7 December):
- Observing social life analytically
  - reading: Peter Bearman: Doormen
- Course wrap-up

Final essay due on 12/11