



Identities & Differences

SOC 2690 (CRN: 45729)

Fall 2023: August 28 – December 18, 2022

Online, Asynchronous

Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Amanda Fehlbaum

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Office: DeBartolo Hall 437

Phone: 330-941-2716 (Office) or 330-406-9490 (Google Voice/Text)

Email: afehlbaum@ysu.edu

Preferred Contact Method: Email

Student Support Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 – 2 PM; Wednesdays from 1 to 4 PM.

I am also willing to meet by appointment (virtual or in person) at other times.

Communication Expectations: I typically respond to email within 24 hours on weekdays. I strive to grade assignments within one week.

Catalog Description

A study of personal and social issues that shape the understanding and development of identity.

Gen Ed: Domestic Diversity, Social and Personal Awareness

Course Description

This course explores identities and differences in individuals and in groups and how those aspects are created, maintained, and transcended. For example, how is it that within various identity components – gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, class, sex, bodies – are deemed “normal” and some as “other”? Students will examine their own and others’ identities and how those identities are formed and contested in response to various social institutions such as the family, workplace, education, state, and media. Students will exercise their ability to use sociological critical thinking and creativity, using alternative points of view with attention to the ways that the social environment and macro social factors enable or constrain an individual’s path.

The Social and Personal Awareness General Education knowledge domain goal will be met. With the successful completion of this course, you will demonstrate understanding in domestic diversity. That is, students will demonstrate knowledge of the experiences of different groups within the United States where those groups are defined by class, ethnicity, race, religion, disability, sex, or sexual orientation.

Course Materials

Required Textbook:

Ore, Tracy. 2022. *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality*. 8th ed.

ISBN: 9780197618974

To successfully complete this course, you will need access to a computer with internet and Microsoft Office Suite ([available free](#)). Students are required to have access to [Blackboard](#) as this course takes place online. These are the [computer lab locations](#) on campus.

Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- explain the fundamental theoretical approaches related to identity formation, emphasizing an inclusive understanding of diverse theories.
- illustrate the influences of social positions on individual choices and constraints, adopting a critical eye towards societal norms and an empathetic viewpoint of individual circumstances.
- employ appropriate resources and research methods to scrutinize the dual nature of individuals as unique social actors and products of society.
- discuss the primary ethical issues related to maintaining inequality in society, expressing sensitivity towards its repercussions on marginalized groups.
- construct and convey a narrative that illuminates the real-world impacts of structural factors on social life.

Students will also meet the Social and Personal Awareness: Domestic Diversity General Education Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the experiences of different groups within the United states where those groups are defined by class, ethnicity, race, religion, disability, sex, or sexual orientation.

Design of the Course

Our course “weeks” run from Monday through Sunday. Each week includes readings, lecture, a quiz, discussion, and at least one course project assignment. Students will also complete a syllabus quiz at the beginning of the course and turn in their final course project at the end of the course.

Students should expect to spend a minimum of 9 hours a week on reading and course assignments. Weekly assignments and quizzes must be uploaded no later than 11:59 pm on Sunday nights. Once the week is over, you can no longer go in and complete any assignments from the previous week. New assignments and discussion board questions will become available by 8:01 A.M. on Monday.

Readings

Completing the assigned readings for each class is crucial to your success in this course. Quizzes are based, in part, on the assigned readings. Discussion posts require a comprehension of the readings. Thus, it is to your advantage to keep up with reading assignments.

Lectures

In this class, I provide recorded Power Point presentations as videos. They are accessible through the through Blackboard with a link to Microsoft Stream. You will have access to the presentations throughout the course, but I suggest taking notes while you are viewing the presentations, just like you would in the classroom. Lecture content will be in the quiz.

Quizzes

There are weekly quizzes in this class. Each quiz is 10 questions. In general, the quizzes are available for you to take from 8:01 A.M. on Monday to 11:59 P.M. on Sunday (Example: Quiz 1 opens on September 5 at 8:01 A.M. and closes on September 11 at 11:59 P.M.). Quizzes are formatted to include a combination of multiple choice, true/false, matching, fill-in-the-blank, etc. Quizzes cover all class material, presentations, assigned readings, and videos for that week. Quizzes are closed book and closed note.

In the event there is a technological issue during the quiz, I will reset it for you once. You get one full reset due to technological issues per semester. Note: Blackboard does not always cooperate when quizzes are taken using smart phones. You are encouraged to take your quizzes on a computer. After taking the quiz, [you will receive a confirmation number that your submission was successful.](#)

If you have a problem with a quiz question, such as how it was worded or if you think the answers are incorrect or vague, you need to make an appointment or see me during my Student Support Hours to discuss it. I will not address quiz questions or answers while the quiz is open, over email, or in public.

Quizzes take the place of exams in this course. That is, you will not have a midterm exam or a final exam in the traditional sense.

Syllabus Quiz

In addition to the quizzes given during the course, a quiz worth up to ten points will be given. You have from the first day of class (August 28) to September 10 to take the syllabus quiz. The syllabus quiz grade cannot be dropped. For the quiz, you need to be familiar with the general policies, assignments, and expectations of the course.

Course Project

In this course, you will take on the responsibilities and character of a person unlike yourself and live in their shoes. You will be challenged to see the world through their eyes, react to challenges as they would, and make decisions based not on your experiences, values, or beliefs, but those of your character.

The main objectives of these semester-long assignments are to 1) nurture creativity and 2) promote a central sociological theme. Creativity is a skill that employers and companies are actively searching for in their candidates. The exercise also requires sociological critical thinking,

specifically practicing the skill of using alternative points of view with attention to the ways that the social environment enable or constrain a character's path.

If you have played role playing games (RPGs) before, you know that these are quite different from other games. In RPGs, there are few rules. Instead, the Game Master (your instructor, Dr. Fehlbaum) will direct you in response to the choices you make. The game master (GM) can make things up as the game progresses – but so can you. In place of a standard set of rules, you will create a character and be given a setting. You will then be given a goal and, acting as your character, you will try to attain that goal. **Your character will be able to do anything a person in a similar situation could do in real life.** In the process you may become rich. You might choose to marry, to break the law, to build a business, to become homeless or anything else you can imagine. There is, however **one rule that cannot be broken: your character cannot die.** For the purposes of this game, you are immortal.

Along with your imagination, the game will use information such as census data that reflects what is going on in the real world today. Any figures you see are based on reality.

Throughout game play you will also be given assignments that relate the game to classroom topics. Through these assignments and the game, you will be challenged to develop your sociological imagination and see the world through the eyes of another.

Along the way, **your ultimate in-game goal is to increase your class, status and power.** Note that although wealth affects these, wealth is not your goal. You will not be graded on how well your character manages his or her money. You will be graded on how much you exercise your sociological imagination – how well you see the world through your character's eyes rather than your own.

At the end of the semester, you will have produced a narrative of your character in full, including an exploration of the various pathways they have gone down through game play -- and those they did not go down. In this way, you will write a choose-your-own-adventure story featuring your character. The choices will be socially informed by your character's social location and echo real structural barriers that people face every day.

Although this course is not a writing class, part of your assignment grade includes quality of writing and following directions. It is in your best interest to proofread your assignments for proper grammar and spelling as well as follow formatting directions. Neglect to follow formatting directions will also result in deduction of points.

Submitting Assignments to the Safe Assign Folder on Blackboard

The reason you must submit assignments to the Safe Assign link on Blackboard is so that a plagiarism check can be run on your assignment. If you turn in your assignment early and see that you had a high plagiarism rating in the originality report, you may have the opportunity to see what you did and correct the assignment before it is due. You may contact me to clear your

original so that you can submit an improved version. Plagiarism, regardless of intention, is taken seriously.¹

Please make sure you are submitting to the correct assignment file for the assignment. **If you have problems submitting to the assignment file, you need to e-mail me and let me know well before the assignment is due (e.g., two days, not two minutes).** Assignments should be submitted as .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx, or .pdf files. Other file types will not be accepted. You are responsible for converting your document, if necessary, into an acceptable format. Unless otherwise noted, **do not just copy and paste the assignment into the text box!**

Blackboard has the option of [uploading from Cloud Storage](#) such as Google Docs and Cloud Drive. Submitting just a link to a Google Doc or OneDrive document – [unless you have uploaded on Blackboard using Cloud Storage](#) - will result in a grade of zero because it does not allow for the plagiarism check to take place.

Please take care to ensure that your assignment properly uploaded to Blackboard.² After you submit your file to the Safe Assign folder, [you will receive a confirmation number that your submission was successful.](#)

You may submit a rough draft via email or hard copy one week before an assignment is due. I will give you feedback and tell you if you are headed in the right direction.

Discussion Posts

The Discussion Posts in this class relate the course material to the role-playing game. They are meant to provide opportunities for reflection as well as provide potential decision points for your character to explore.

This course, though asynchronous, is designed to be interactive. Please come to the discussion boards having completed the assigned readings and prepared to actively participate. I encourage vibrant and respectful interaction. Discussion should be directed to the entire class in hopes of having a dynamic discussion that lasts. Discussion forum participation provides an opportunity for members of the class to learn from one another based on the readings, different life experiences, and unique perspectives gained from studying course materials. It also assists you in learning how to effectively communicate ideas to a group in a professional and respectful manner.

Discussion posts are worth 10 points each. You are expected to complete all discussion posts; however, your lowest three discussion post grades will be dropped from final grade calculations.

You must make a post to the discussion board to have the option of responding to classmates' posts. Unless otherwise noted, most responses are optional. Responses, if made for extra

¹ See section on Academic Integrity

² [This video shows you how to upload an assignment](#)

credit, must be more than “I agree.” They should follow the 3CQ format (compliment, connect, comment, question). Please see “About Discussions” located at the top of the Discussion Board page for details.

Extra Credit

One extra credit opportunity throughout the semester involves commenting on a classmate’s discussion post. You can receive up to two extra credit points each week for your comment (not per comment). Comments must follow the 3CQ format described in “About Discussions.”

Additional extra credit opportunities, if available, will be announced on Blackboard.

How to Succeed in This Course

I truly want everyone in this class to succeed not only in this course but throughout their college careers. To succeed in this course, I expect students to attend class regularly, engage with the course, complete the assigned readings for each class, participate in class discussion, complete assignments on time, proofread their assignments, and not plagiarize.

Levels of engagement can vary from above average to below average and may be reflected in your grade.

Above average engagement involves:

- Spirited intellectual engagement with the course readings and the class
- Conscientious and insightful preparation of assignments
- Assignments that make and support sophisticated arguments, are well-written and interesting to read, and are free of errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar
- Active and thoughtful participation in class discussion

Average engagement involves:

- Clear demonstration in papers and in class discussion of understanding the sociological concepts we explore
- Assignments with clear thesis statements and careful research
- Consistent participation in class discussion

Below average engagement involves:

- Work that shows minimal synthesis of concepts or original analysis
- Infrequent participation in discussion
- Assignments that are incomplete or late
- Assignments that are not well-researched or are presented carelessly (not proofread or contain many mechanical errors)

My Student Support Hours (Office Hours) are held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 2 PM, Wednesdays from 1 to 4 PM, and by appointment. Please see me if you have any questions concerning the reading material, quizzes, assignments, study strategies, etc. If you are unable

to meet me during these hours, but need to be seen, you can e-mail me to make an appointment

How to Get Help

YSU is committed to your success. As a student you have access to several resources that may be instrumental in helping you succeed in this course and others. Please do not hesitate to utilize any of these [free support services](#) to support your academic success, physical and mental health, and help you navigate your time as a YSU student.

One such support service is the [Writing Center](#). They provide writing consultations for any discipline as well as basic computer literacy help.

If you are reading this sentence before the end of the second week of class, send me an email with the subject line “Water Bear, Don’t Care,” and include an image of a tardigrade. I will award you 5 points. Thank you for reading the syllabus.

Attendance Expectations

[Youngstown State University’s Attendance Policy](#) reads as follows:

The faculty believes that classroom activities are essential to learning. The student is responsible for knowing and meeting all course requirements, including tests, assignments, and class participation, as indicated by the course instructor.

The responsibility for work missed during absence rests with the student. The instructor has no obligation to give make-up graded coursework or to review other class work missed by a student because of absence apart from absences due to participation in university-sponsored events, government-related activities, religious observances, death of a family member, and documented personal illness.

As this is an asynchronous online course, I will not be taking attendance. You are, however, responsible for completing the content of the course in a timely manner. This means you are expected to regularly log-in to Blackboard to check for messages, complete assignments, and communicate with the class.

Late Work Submission Policy

Late course project assignments are eligible for credit according to the following schedule: one day past due = 70%, three days past due = 50%, one week past due = 20%. Course project assignments cannot be accepted more than one week past the due date.

Your lowest two quiz grades and three lowest discussion grades are dropped from final grade calculations. **Make-up quiz assignments and discussion posts will not be given for any reason.** Quizzes will only be given during the window for the quiz – not before or after. The dropping of the lowest two quiz grades and lowest three discussion post grades are designed to accommodate people who experience unavoidable emergencies or conflicts during the semester (including, but not limited to: work, religious holidays or celebrations, doctor’s appointments, extracurricular events, etc.). If your schedule requires that you must frequently

miss this window, it may be in your best interest to drop this course. You may want to set a calendar reminder or alarm to remember to take the quiz each week.

Please Note

Technological difficulties are not considered a valid excuse for tardiness. Please contact me – email, call, text - well before an assignment (project assignment, quiz, etc.) is due if you are having technical difficulties. I will do my best to work with you to address the situation.

Class Conduct

The American Sociological Association states, [“As sociological scholars and citizens, we have a responsibility to study and speak out regarding all forms of racism and injustice.”](#) I stand in solidarity and support the fight against systemic racism and the oppression of Black folks, Indigenous folks, and other People of Color, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and non-binary individuals.

In this class, we will discuss issues that are highly controversial. We all come from different perspectives on these issues. It is likely that we will disagree with one another. I welcome and encourage lively discussion, as that is necessary for true learning to occur. However, disagreements should not come in the form of personal attack. Mutual respect is required to maximize a healthy and fair learning environment. You may disagree with each other’s ideas and the evidence used in the arguments, but you should respect each other as people.

I show several video clips from a variety of sources as part of the course curriculum and to aid your understanding of concepts that are sometimes abstract or hard to understand. If anyone is ever made to feel uncomfortable or feels something is inappropriate, I request that you talk to me about it to see if the issue can be resolved in a way that allows learning to occur on both of our parts.

A positive learning environment involves commitment of both instructor and students in a course. [Reciprocal Responsibilities for Undergraduate Students and Instructors](#) was developed jointly with the Student Government Association and YSU Academic Senate to outline mutual responsibilities in the classroom, and our class will follow these guidelines.

Communication Issues

Email

I can best be reached by e-mail, but my response may not be immediate. Please indicate which course you are in when emailing me for the first time. You also need to always sign your emails at the end (write your name).

Students are expected to check their e-mail for university announcements or information from instructors, though announcements will typically be cross-posted on Blackboard. It is to your benefit to check your e-mail so that you have the most up-to-date information pertaining to this class. If you use an e-mail address other than your YSU account (in other words, it does not end in “@ysu.edu”), I cannot guarantee that I will receive your e-mail.

Emails that address the professor as Miss, Ms., Mrs., or by first name will not receive a response after an initial warning. Please address me as Dr. Fehlbaum, Professor Fehlbaum, or Prof. Fehlbaum.

Phone

I have a phone in my office; however, I cannot always be relied upon to answer it. The number is 330-941-2716. You may call or text my Google Voice number - 330-406-9490. Regardless whether calling or texting, please identify yourself.

Grading and Grading Scale

Evaluation

A breakdown of the points available in this course is shown below:

Syllabus Quiz	10
Quizzes (13 total, 2 dropped, 20 points each)	220
Discussion (13 total, 3 dropped, 10 points each)	100
Building Your Character + Worksheets	100
Source of Income Assignment	50
Building a Life Assignment	100
Monthly Budget Report 1	30
Time Budget	50
Character Biography	100
Peer Reviews of Character Biography	20
Monthly Budget Report 2	50
First Decision Point Narrative	100
Peer Reviews of First Decision Point Narrative	20
Monthly Budget Report 3	100
Final Choose Your Own Adventure Project	<u>250</u>
	1300 points total

Final Grades

Final letter grades will be assigned as follows:

- A: 1170 - 1300
- B: 1040 - 1169
- C: 910 - 1039
- D: 780 - 909
- F: 0 – 789

YSU's Grading System can be found [here](#).

Final grades will be based on points, not percentage. **Final grades are non-negotiable.**

Honors Contract Language

The honors contract option is not available for this course.

University Policies

[University policies](#) can be found online and provide you guidance on your rights as a student in this course. The links below take you directly to a specific policy. Should you have any questions about a policy, please do not hesitate to contact me using the information at the top of the syllabus.

- [Statement of Non-Discrimination from the University](#)
- [Academic Integrity/Honesty](#)
- [Student Accessibility](#)
- [Incomplete Grade Policy](#)
- [Academic Grievances and Complaints](#)
- [Attendance Policy](#)

Academic Integrity

As outlined in *The Student Code of Conduct*, all forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited at Youngstown State University. This includes plagiarism, the unauthorized use of tools or notes in taking tests or completing assignments, fabrication of data or information used for an assignment, working with others without permission from the instructor, and more. A student who is believed to have violated the [academic integrity policy](#) will meet with the instructor to discuss the allegations. The student may accept responsibility for the violation and any sanctions selected by the instructor, or they have the right to ask for a hearing before a hearing panel. The full Academic Integrity policy can be found in Article III. 1. of *The Student Code of Conduct*, while further information on University procedures for alleged academic integrity violations can be found in Article V.

Note: Not adequately citing your sources, such as only listing sources at the end and not citing them within the assignment, is a violation of academic integrity. If you do this in an assignment, you will receive a zero on your assignment and will be reported for academic dishonesty.

Artificial intelligence (AI) language models, such as ChatGPT, may be used for discussion posts with appropriate citation, but not for your character biography or narrative (Choose Your Own Adventure) project. If you are in doubt as to whether you are using AI language models appropriately in this course, I encourage you to discuss your situation with me. Examples of citing AI language models are available at: libguides.umn.edu/chatgpt. You are responsible for fact checking statements composed by AI language models.

If you are retaking this class to receive a higher/passing grade, you may not submit assignments you previously submitted in the course.

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence, discrimination, and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: Title IX Coordinator (titleix@ysu.edu), Counseling Services (330-941-3737), YSU

Police (330-941-3527), and Rape Crisis & Counseling Center (24-hour crisis line: 330-782-3936). More information can be found at <https://ysu.edu/title-ix/>.

Voluntary/Involuntary Medical Leave or Withdrawal

[Medical leave/withdrawal](#) is available for all students with a documented physical or psychological illness of a serious nature that requires them to leave the university after the last day to withdraw with a grade of “W” without completing their coursework.

University Schedule of Operations

Last Day to Add or Change a Grade Option:	September 5, 2023
Last Day for 100% Refund:	September 10, 2023
Last Day for Withdrawing with a Grade of “W”:	October 29, 2023
No Class (Thanksgiving):	November 22 –24, 2023

Course Schedule

The course schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better learning. For maximum benefit in this course, complete the readings by the assigned date to prepare for class

SCDI = *Social Construction of Difference and Inequality*

B = Reading posted to Blackboard

RPG = Role Playing Game

* = Definite Chaos Card(s) this week

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
Week 1: August 28 – September 3	Introduction to Course	Read Course Project Guide Syllabus Quiz
Authenticity		
Week 2: September 4 - 10	Laying Theoretical Groundwork	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Constructing Differences,” Ore • “Making Systems of Privilege Visible,” Wildman & Davis View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Build Your Character – Part 1 Quiz 1
Week 3: September 11 - 17	Collective and Categorical Forms of Identity	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Racial Formations,” Omi and Winant • “Asset Value of Whiteness,” Traub et al

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
		View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Source of Income RPG: Build Your Character – Part 2 Quiz 2
Week 4: September 18 - 24	Negotiating Authentic Identities	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Social Construction of Gender,” Lorber • “Naming All the Parts,” Bornstein View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Building a Life and Monthly Budget Report* Quiz 3
Week 5: September 25 – October 1	Social Location	B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A Tale of Two Cities,” McKinzie SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Black Men and the Struggle for Work,” Quane, Wilson, & Hwang View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Neighborhoods Quiz 4
Multidimensionality		
Week 6: October 2 - 8	Identities in Social Contexts: Family	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Maintaining Inequalities,” Ore • “Willing to Do Anything for My Kids,” Randles View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Time Budget RPG: Character Biography Quiz 5
Week 7: October 9 - 15	Identities in Social Contexts: Education	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Mind the Gap,” Dorn, et al • “Black Girls and School Discipline,” Annamma, et al. View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Neighborhood School

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
		RPG: Peer Reviews DUE Quiz 6
Week 8: October 16 – 22	Identities in Social Contexts: Work and Economy	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Threat of Poverty Without Misery,” Goldstein • “Jezebel at the Welfare Office,” Masters, Lindhorst & Meyers View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: New Factory RPG: Monthly Budget Report* Quiz 7
Week 9: October 23 - 29	Identities in Social Contexts: The State and Public Policy	B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Future of Coal Country,” Griswold View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Consequences of Policy Quiz 8
Week 10: October 30 – November 5	Identities in Social Contexts: Media, Language, and Culture	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “‘Strong Black Woman’,” Miles • “Digital Reproduction of Inequality,” Hargittai View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: First Decision Point Narratives Quiz 9
Week 11: November 6 - 12	Identities in Social Contexts: Violence and Social Control	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Climate of Fear,” SPLC • “Race, Place, and Effective Policing,” Braga, et al. View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Peer Reviews DUE Quiz 10
Mobility		
Week 12: November 13 - 19	Experiencing Difference and Inequality in Daily Life	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Experiencing Difference and Inequality in Everyday Life,” Ore

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Dying to Be Competent,” Cottom • “Not Poor Enough,” Sheehan • “Gee You Don’t Seem,” Cameron • “You May Know Me,” Ronson View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Work on Narrative (Optional Share for Feedback) RPG: Monthly Budget Report* Quiz 11
Week 13: November 20 - 26	NO CLASS	NO CLASS
Week 14: November 27 – December 3	Experiencing Difference and Inequality in Daily Life	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Two Hate Notes,” Pha • “The Miseducation of the American Boy,” Orenstein • “The Story of My Body,” Cofer View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Work on Narrative (Optional Share for Feedback) Quiz 12
Week 15: December 4 - 10	Resistance, Social Change, and Mobility	SCDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Resistance and Social Change,” Ore • “Toward a New Vision” Collins View Presentation Discussion Board RPG: Work on Narrative (Optional Share for Feedback) Quiz 13
Week 16: December 11 - 17	Finals Week	RPG: Final Narrative Due