

University of Colorado  
Department of Sociology

**The Self in Modern Society**  
Spring 2011  
SOCY 3151-001 CLRE 207 TR 3:30 – 4:45

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### **What is this course about?**

Just what *is* “the self?” In 2007, a study conducted at San Diego State University concluded that college students were becoming too *self-centered*.<sup>1</sup> According to media coverage, “the trend could be harmful to personal relationships and American society.” In 2010, the president of Netflix claimed that Americans were too *self-absorbed* to notice that Canadians paid less for movie rentals.<sup>2</sup> Are these criticisms justified? Exactly what is it that people are *centered on* and *absorbed in*? What does it mean to be *too* self-centered or self-absorbed? How would you know when you cross that line? At some point in your lives, most of you have probably asked yourself the question, “Who am I?” Maybe your question has taken the form of “Who is the *real* ‘me’?” or “What do I want out of life?” Is it OK to ask such questions? Who, or what, is doing the asking? What role does society play in shaping who we are?

In this course, you will have the opportunity to explore some of the exciting research on the self. In the process, you will explore the social origins and consequences of the idea of the self. You will come to understand the rise of individual identity in the early modern era and follow it through contemporary times. You will learn how sociologists study the self. You may or may not find out who you are but you will gain the tools to consider the question more thoroughly. You will investigate how culture and individual experiences shape the self by examining ethnicity, sexual preference, and religion. You will also explore the idea of selfhood among animals and find out what the latest findings from neuroscience say about the self.

### **What are the goals of the course?**

This course will enable you to:

- Understand the sociological perspective on the self;
- Apply that perspective to everyday interaction beyond the classroom
- Improve your skills in reading, writing, listening, critical thinking, teamwork, consensus building, and problem solving.

### **What will you be doing in this course?**

The course will combine lecture and discussion of the readings with writing assignments, group and individual activities, and film clips intended to bring theories and concepts to life for you. It

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<sup>1</sup> Study conducted by Dr. Jean Twenge. See <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/02/27/health/main2519593.shtml>  
Accessed 1/4/11.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dailytech.com/UPDATED+Netflix+CEO+Apologizes+to+Americans+For+Calling+Them+SelfAbsorbed/article19715.htm> Accessed 1/4/11.

will not be a “memorize the lecture notes” course, and its success depends largely on your taking an active role in learning. As explained below, you will collaborate to create a learning environment characterized by interdependence and consensus building.

To take charge of your education, you must first be willing to read. I have chosen material that you must read, analyze, and think about between classes. You must obtain the following books:

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2003. *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Note: you may also use the original 1983 edition.) This book is indicated on the reading schedule as *Heart*.

Irvine, Leslie. 2011. *The Self in Society*. San Diego: Cognella (Note: I donate all royalties from the use of this book in my classes to charity.) This book is available through the CU Bookstore and online at <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>. If you purchase online, you will receive a pdf of the first 20% of the book’s content so that you can keep up with the reading until the book arrives. This book is indicated on the reading schedule as *Self*.

I have posted additional required readings on CU Learn. These are marked with an asterisk on the reading schedule.

### **How will you fulfill the goals of this course?**

You will be empowered to develop the major assignments, select one topic area for the class, and determine most of the assessment criteria for the course collaboratively. Your final grade will be based on a total of 500 points. Twenty five percent of your grade will come from two non-negotiable items:

1. Composing and Answering Questions: Throughout the semester, you will be given numerous, short, in-class writing exercises. Sometimes these will involve composing two or three questions about the day’s lesson, which we will then use to review the material. Other times, I will ask you to respond to a question about the material. Most, but not all of these will be collected for credit. This assignment is designed to help you to take responsibility for your own learning and participate as an active learner, even when you are not being graded. We will use these to review material, and I will use them to work with individual students who show lack of mastery and to go back to material when most of the class shows evidence of confusion and misconception. These count for 75 points, or 15 percent of your final grade. When collected, I will grade these on a scale of 0 to 3:

- 0: You did not submit a response
- 1: Your response indicates little understanding of the material
- 2: Your response demonstrates a partial understanding of the material
- 3: Your response demonstrates a competent understanding of the material

I will drop your two lowest grades, which will allow you to miss two exercises without penalty. If you have a documented medical or legal excuse for missing more than two of these exercises, see me for an alternate assignment (and provide documentation).

2. Who am I? Autobiographical Sketch about a Classmate: This assignment will help you practice the essential skills of listening, speaking, and writing. It will also help you explore what kind of information you think should be in an autobiography. As you will discover in the course readings, autobiography was an important development in the history of the self.

Over three consecutive class days, you will have time to interview three different classmates. If you miss one of these classes, you must make alternate arrangements to interview your classmates. I will provide a worksheet to guide your questions. Then, you will use your notes to write a one-page “Who Am I?” autobiography about one of the classmates you interviewed. I will determine which of the three interviews you will turn into the “Who Am I?” autobiography so that all students are included. You will write the autobiography as if you are that classmate. You must complete your first draft by February 22. You will then work with a partner to get feedback on your autobiographical sketch, double-checking your “focus areas” (on worksheet) to make sure you have done a good job on those. You will then write a second draft with your improvements. The final draft will be due on March 1. This counts for 50 points, or 10 percent of your final grade.

In addition to the above requirements, you will:

- develop the major assignments for the course;
- choose one or two topics of interest to incorporate into the class;
- decide how to incorporate this topic (or topics);
- decide how to assess your performance for 75 percent (350 points) of your final grade.

This activity is intended to help you become active, rather than a passive learners, and to become creators of the classroom environment rather than consumers. You will work collaboratively to find creative ways to demonstrate your knowledge. You will begin by doing this independently, using the attached handout. You must bring your completed sheet to class on Thursday, January 13. On that day, you will work in groups to develop a consensus on an assignment list for the semester and choose a topic to include under the “Students’ Choice” section at the end of the course. (I have provided a list of topics on your worksheet.) You will have about 30 minutes to collaborate on course construction. Once the groups have made their decisions, I will ask a representative from each group to write its final assignment list on the board for class discussion. Once the class has agreed on a single set of assignments, I will incorporate that information into a final version of the syllabus and post it on CU Learn. At the start of the third class meeting (January 18), you will have an opportunity to ask any outstanding questions about the assignments. I will collect your assignment planning sheets for the first 5 points toward your final grade.

For informational purposes, the standard CU grading scale is as follows:

**Final Grade Scale**

|            |            |           |                |
|------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| A: 94-100% | B: 84-86%  | C: 73-76% | D: 64-66%      |
| A-: 90-93% | B-: 80-83% | C-: 70-72 | D-: 60-63%     |
| B+: 87-89% | C+: 77-79% | D+: 67-69 | F: 59% or less |

## Course policies

Attend class regularly. I do not take attendance, but you will miss important course content if you miss class. I will not post the notes online. If you must miss a class, first contact a classmate for notes. Once you have copied and reviewed the notes, see me for additional clarification of the material if needed. If you really want to annoy me, ask me if you missed anything important when you were absent.

If you have an event that has been scheduled prior to the start of the semester that will cause you to miss class or a deadline, you must notify me by **January 27** to discuss alternate grading options. I will not consider options for anyone who waits longer than this to contact me.

Keep current with the reading. The readings come from scholarly journals and books, and you will find them more difficult than the textbooks you might be accustomed to reading. They will require more time and attention. Please note that we will not go over each reading in class, but you are responsible for all content assigned. In some cases, we will discuss the material in considerable detail; but most of the time, the reading will provide a platform for considering related issues.

Check CU Learn and your CU email account regularly for announcements relevant to the class. To send me an email, you *must* put SOCY3151 in the subject line of your message. You can follow this with other information (e.g., SOCY3151 paper question) but your message must start with SOCY3151. Messages with blank subject lines go directly into a spam folder. I will read and respond to email Monday through Thursday, 9-5, and Friday, 9-12. Please note that by law, I cannot discuss your grades by email.

Be courteous in class. Arrive on time. Do not text during class. Turn cell phones off and put them away before the start of class. Do not keep phones in your lap or on your desk. Refrain from sleeping, holding conversations, reading newspapers, or doing work for other classes. Respect everyone in the learning environment.

Inform me immediately if you have a health problem or a disability that necessitates leaving the classroom during lectures/discussion.

I do not allow laptops in class. If you are required to use a laptop because of a disability, please provide documentation within the first two weeks of class.

Keep copies of all graded course work until you receive your final, official grade. In the case of an incorrect or missing grade, it is your responsibility to provide graded work to request a change.

## Course Schedule

This part of the syllabus is not only *subject to change*, it *will* change. I have listed the weeks of the course with topics and corresponding readings. Required readings posted on CU Learn are designated with \*. *Self* refers to the course reader, *The Self in Society*. *Heart* refers to Hochschild's book, *The Managed Heart*.

|         | <b>DATE</b> | <b>TOPIC</b>                                    | <b>READING ASSIGNED</b>  |
|---------|-------------|---|--|
| WEEK 1  | T Jan 11    | Introduction to the course                      |  |
|         | R Jan 13    | Assignment planning                             |  |
| WEEK 2  | T Jan 18    | <i>Classic Perspectives on the Self</i>         | <i>Self</i> , 1-16   |
|         | R Jan 20    |   | <i>Self</i> , 17-27  |
| WEEK 3  | T Jan 25    |   | *Hewitt 79-101 (up to <i>Self &amp; Motivation</i> ), 111 to end |
|         | R Jan 27    |   | <i>Self</i> , 29-49  |
| WEEK 4  | T Feb 1     |   | <i>Self</i> , 51-67  |
|         | R Feb 3     | <i>Who Am I? Self and Identity as a Problem</i> | <i>Self</i> , 73-93  |
| WEEK 5  | T Feb 8     |   | *Baumeister  |
|         | R Feb 10    |   | <i>Self</i> , 95-114   |
| WEEK 6  | T Feb 15    |   | <i>Self</i> , 115-141  |
|         | R Feb 17    |   | *Vinitzky-Seroussi & Zussman                                     |
| WEEK 7  | T Feb 22    |   | *Turner  |
|         | R Feb 24    |   | *Gagnon  |
| WEEK 8  | T Mar 1     | <i>Autobiographical Selves</i>                  | *Frank   |
|         | R Mar 3     |   | *Bruner  |
| WEEK 9  | T Mar 8     |   | *Zussman   |
|         | R Mar 10    | <i>Emotions and the Self</i>                    | *Irvine  |
| WEEK 10 | T Mar 15    |   | <i>Heart</i>   |
|         | R Mar 17    |   | <i>Heart</i>   |
| WEEK 11 | T Mar 22    | Spring break                                    |  |
|         | R Mar 24    |   |  |
| WEEK 12 | T Mar 29    |   | <i>Heart</i>   |
|         | R Mar 31    | <i>New Directions in the Study of the Self</i>  | <i>Self</i> , 147-174  |
| WEEK 13 | T Apr 5     |   | <i>Self</i> , 175-199  |
|         | R Apr 7     |   | <i>Self</i> , 201-218  |
| WEEK 14 | T Apr 12    |   | <i>Self</i> , 219-239  |
|         | R Apr 14    |   | <i>Self</i> , 241-250  |
| WEEK 15 | T Apr 19    | <i>Students' Choice</i>                         |  |
|         | R Apr 21    |   |  |
| WEEK 16 | T Apr 26    |   |  |
|         | R Apr 28    |   |  |

## **Relevant CU policies**

### **Academic Integrity and Honor Code**

Plagiarism and cheating will be grounds for receiving a failing grade on the relevant exam or assignment and possibly failing the course. To ensure academic integrity, students in this course *must* observe the Honor Code in all work.

### **Disability Policy**

Students with *documented* disabilities, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, or psychiatric disabilities should see me after class or during my office hours (preferably during the first two weeks of class) to discuss possible reasonable accommodations. For more information, consult the Office of Disability Services, Willard 322 (303-492-8671).

### **Discrimination and Harassment**

The University of Colorado at Boulder policies on Discrimination and Harassment (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html>) Sexual Harassment, and Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. For information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment, see <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>

### **Religious Observances**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or attendance. Please notify me early in the semester if you will need accommodations for religious observance. For more information, see [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html)

## APPENDIX

### **What will your assignments for the semester be?**

The syllabus lists the topics and readings we will cover this semester. We will begin our second class with a small group exercise. During this exercise, you (as a class) will decide the on the topics for “Students’ Choice” and develop most of the assignments for the semester. You will begin this process in small group discussions. We will then bring all the groups together and decide as a class on a final list of graded assignments. I will make necessary adjustments to the syllabus (e.g., add an in-class exam, presentations, etc.). I will put the final version of the syllabus with the graded assignments on CU Learn, and you will approve it and ask any final questions during the third class.

### **How do I begin to prepare for the group exercise on January 13?**

There are steps you should go through to prepare yourself for this activity.

1. Review the topics listed on the syllabus and the table of contents in *The Self in Society* to get a sense of the course topics. You will also find it helpful to skim the additional required readings posted on CU Learn. In addition, look at the list of topics for “Students’ Choice” on the next page. List your top two.
2. Think about what *types* of assignments you would like to have during the semester and make a rough list. Possibilities include exams, quizzes, short papers, graded group exercises, debates, and group presentations.
3. Consider the *content* of these assignments. If you want an exam, do you prefer essay or multiple choice? If you have listed a paper, what will the topic be? How long will the paper be? Will it involve research? *Detail is important for this section of the assignment.*
4. Finally, consider the *timing* of the assignments you have developed. Look at the semester schedule, and think about the due dates for your other classes (midterms, etc.) when you consider due dates for your assignments. Note that your Autobiography draft is due Feb 22, with final version due Mar 1.

### **What criteria should I use to create a list of assignments?**

Instructors typically consider the following goals in developing assignments. Think about which of these is/are most important to you:

1. Comprehension of readings and in-class material.
2. Ability to write and speak about the subject matter presented in class.
3. Multiple types of assignments to demonstrate written and oral comprehension.
4. Multiple types of assignments to address different learning styles.
5. Adequate number of assignments so that poor performance on one does not mean poor performance in the class as a whole.
6. Timing of assignments. It is important for me to be able to give you a sense of your grade before the final deadline to drop the class (Feb 23) and prior to the middle of the term (Week 8).

### **How will we make our final decision on assignments?**

We will use a group process for deciding on the class assignments. Once your groups have met, we will come together as a class and discuss the assignment lists each group has created. I hope that through discussion, we can achieve a consensus on the assignment list. If we cannot reach a consensus, we will take an anonymous vote in class on the various options being considered. The assignment list for the semester will be presented during the third class for your final review and approval.

## Assignment Planning Sheet

Bring the completed sheet to class. It will be collected!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Assignment Choices** (Note that if you choose to have a final exam, the date is R May 5 7:30-10:00 a.m.)

| <b>Assignment Type</b>     | <b>Assignment Content</b>                      | <b>Due Date</b> |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------|
| <i>Example: Final Exam</i> | <i>Mix essay and multiple-choice questions</i> | <i>July 4</i>   |
|                            |  |                 |
|                            |  |                 |
|                            |  |                 |
|                            |  |                 |

### 2. Preferred topics for “Students’ Choice”

- Buddhist notions of the self (*How are we to understand the idea of no self?*)
- Morality and the self (*Does morality matter for our sense of who we are? Is yes, how so?*)
- Creativity and the self (*Where does self-expression come from? What does it mean for the self?*)
- Psychopharmaceuticals and the self (*Is it me or is it Prozac? Or Ritalin? Or [fill in the blank]?*)
- Virtual reality and the self (*What do online identities mean for the self? Can computers have selves?*)

List your top two choices here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Please list the factors you considered in creating the assignment list. You can choose from the criteria listed on p. 1, or identify other factors that influenced your thinking.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_