

# SOCIONEWS

FALL 2012

Welcome fellow Sociology majors and otherwise inclined readers to Socio News, the revived newsletter written and produced by TCNJ members of Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD), the Sociology Honors society. What can you expect to find within these metaphorical pages?: A number of things relating to the field of Sociology and more specifically information helpful and interesting to a TCNJ Sociology major, included but not limited to interviews with our faculty, updates on what is happening in the department, requirements for AKD membership,

student stories about internships, study abroad experiences and overviews of core courses and unique electives. We hope you will find our newsletter both informative and entertaining.

Christopher Golden

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# How to Succeed in Socio-Cultural Theory

(Advice for Students of SOC 301)

Welcome back for the new school year or if this is your first semester, welcome to TCNJ and the Sociology department! As a senior, I knew that I could not part ways with this school without sharing some advice on one of the core courses within the major: Development of Socio-Cultural Theory (SOC301). So what comes to mind when thinking about this class, could it be abstract ideas, the concept of capitalism, and too many theories and theorist to count? That would not be incorrect if any of these aforementioned thoughts crossed your mind. Socio-Cultural Theory is a course that attempts to explain how our society functions based on research and observations. These ideas reinforced by ground-

Theory does a great job of explaining why societies function the way they do.

breaking theorist such as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. Theory does a great job of explaining why societies function the way they do, how people can organize themselves around issues that affect their livelihood and how universally the pursuit of accumulating more money can negatively affect individuals or groups. A lot of information right? Not to worry though, no matter which professor is teaching the course, it is still manageable with a few suggestions.

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First suggestion, stay on top of the readings! I'm sure that you will hear this from all of your professors but it is true. Along with the readings, take good notes, especially since the concepts that will be discussed in class are so dense, this will really help in understanding the material. Keeping up with the readings is easier said than done, especially once the semester gets underway but it is important to dedicate time for this class. Also know that it is OK to not understand the material right away, there will be a lot of themes deconstructed during the semester. Be sure to ask the professor to clarify anything that does not make sense, it demonstrates that you are serious about succeeding in the class.

Second suggestion would be to make friends with your classmates. This might be awkward at first, especially at the beginning of the semester, but you will be glad you did! Something that has been beneficial for me is study groups, which is a great way to review sections of the course that were more difficult to understand. Also, working in groups allows you to hear different interpretations of the class material. Your peers might understand the concepts differently and hearing their perspective could potentially help in understanding confusing sections from the course.

My third and final suggestion is to take the theories and principles that you will learn and apply it to your everyday life. This should help in turning the various abstract concepts that will be introduced throughout the course into something tangible. Once you have mastered that, studying for the exams and/or writing a paper for the class will be much easier! Again, I cannot stress enough to ask the professor for help if what you're learning does not make sense, there is nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed of.

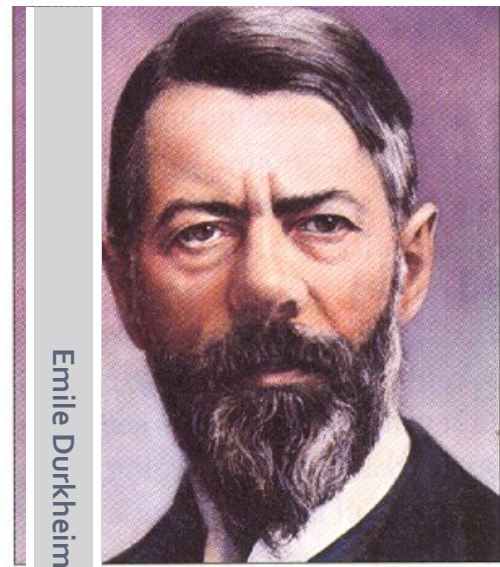


Image: faculty.upi.pitt.edu/~santoro/emile\_durkheim.jpg

Well now you have the scoop on how to succeed in SOC 301, I wish you all the best not only for Socio-Cultural Theory but for your entire time at TCNJ!

## Kyle Hogan

# Secrets from the Lab

(Advice for Students of SOC 302)

I have a secret... I really enjoyed Quantitative Research Methods. Sure, the assignments were daunting, and SPSS, the program we were required to use, kept crashing at the most inopportune times, but despite all the frustration and confusion that inundated me, a lot of positive outcomes resulted from SOC302.

First, I met a lot of cool people down in the computer lab. We had shared a bond because we were, in a sense, “all in this together.” However, this sense of camaraderie, or...dare I say, community, was all new to me. Most of the time my study habits included working in solitude and asking for help from professors directly, and abhorring any unnecessary contact with classmates because of my shy nature. Not so with 302. My classmate,

Jenna Murphy ‘12, confirms that working with others is paramount to doing well in Quantitative Research Methods:

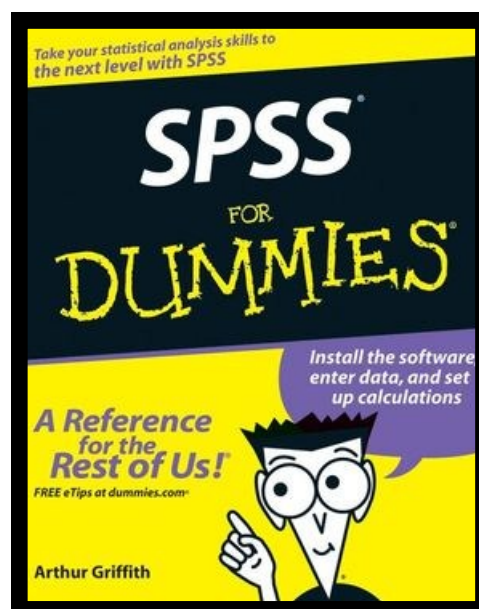
“Initially you think you can read the book and do the assignments on your own, but the biggest way study habits change is group work. You have to do your work in the computer lab with other classmates, [and] if I had to do it on my own I never would have been able to. Working on assignments with classmates is definitely the way to get the assignments done in the class.”

—Jenna Murphy, ‘12

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Second, the class requires students do work similar in nature to most researchers'. This means that we went through similar motions that most researchers do at their jobs, like compiling a literature review (Paper A), putting what we want to measure in quantifiable (numerical) variables and look for relationships between them (Paper B), and putting them together in a neat and logical fashion (Paper C). Finally, the last assignment, Paper D, requires students to design their own research study with realistic hurdles, such as time limits and financial restraints. Lastly, students used the same software the professionals use, SPSS, and the General Social Survey. Although arduous, Jenna Benjamin '14, feels that:

Looking through the research questions available to us on the General Social Survey database was an enlightening experience. I was able to see where a lot of people stand on certain issues. In addition to this, I was given a better understanding of what the requirements of a strong survey are. I also learned how to read tables and graphs in a more efficient way.  
—Jenna Benjamin, '14



[http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1974456.SPSS\\_For\\_Dummies\\_For\\_Dummies](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1974456.SPSS_For_Dummies_For_Dummies)

According to the professors of Post-Graduate Planning, or HSS201, these assignments, and early interaction with SPSS, can distinguish TCNJ Sociology majors from majors of other schools, as we have experience. Jenna is an example of how TCNJ students are more prepared for the research positions available because of SOC302.

Because of Research Methods, I have made new friends and have gained experience in research. We are presently in the Information Age, where research jobs and data literacy are growing in importance. Not only do I feel that SOC302 has prepared me well for the road ahead, but I have friends now who are on that road with me too.

Christian Mercado



# Meet our Peer Mentor, Nicole Matyas

**What is your major?**

Sociology

**Do you have any minors?**

Psychology and Spanish

**What campus organizations are you involved in?**

"I play women's club lacrosse, I'm one of the captains and the treasurer. I am also a Spanish conversation hour leader."

**How about volunteering?**

"I volunteer at a pediatric occupational therapy facility."

**What would you like to do after you graduate?**

"I would like to go to graduate school for a master's degree in occupational therapy at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia."

**What was your favorite sociology class?**

"My favorite sociology class was definitely SOC 333: Body Image, Culture and Society, with Dr. Brodsky. I was able to apply the information to my own life experience and the class discussions came naturally because of the interesting topics."

**Which sociology class was the most difficult for you?**

"SOC 301: Socio-Cultural Theory and SOC 302: Quantitative Research Methods were the most difficult for me."

**How did you manage those difficult classes?**

"I went to my professors' office hours and made sure to stay on track and really comprehend the readings about sociological theory."

**What do you do as the peer mentor?**

"I help students, especially new students, to get acclimated to the new college environment. I serve as a role model to them and use my own experiences to help answer their questions."

**Do you have any words of advice?**

"My words of advice are: time management. If you manage your time well you can have time for fun and relaxation. Doing this will help keep your stress levels down."



[http://farm5.static.flickr.com/4130/5082483495\\_63f4d8ef42.jpg](http://farm5.static.flickr.com/4130/5082483495_63f4d8ef42.jpg)

## Jessica Scardino

# A Peek at Self and Society

A Student's Look at the New "Prison Course" offered by the Department

As a fourth year Sociology major in the school of Humanities & Social Sciences at The College of New Jersey, I am always looking for new and unique opportunities that will enhance my academic experience. Upon receiving an email regarding courses being offered this Fall, a class called "Self and Society" intrigued me. I was eager to learn more about it. The email ex-

plained that SOC 370, Self and Society, would be taught by Dr. Rebecca Li. The course would examine the interactions between self identity and modern society from both the micro and macro perspectives. Interestingly, this course would be taught at Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility in Bordentown, New Jersey along side inmates.

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Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility

Image: <http://www.prisonprofiler.com/node/6>

This is not the first time that The College has offered students an opportunity like this. Similar outreach programs are available through organizations around campus, which have set up prison tutoring programs where some students I know have participated. A close friend of mine recently used her Spanish language skills that she developed while studying abroad in Costa Rica to teach English to a group of inmates. TCNJ obviously has experience with safely bringing students into prisons. I imagined enrolling in this course would be a once in a lifetime opportunity that I had to jump on. Although the countless waiver forms and informational worksheets that accommodated admission to the course seemed daunting, I chalked my anxieties up as excitement and accepted my place in the course with reckless abandon.

Once I was convinced that taking a college course alongside inmates at a local prison was not a bad idea after all, it was time to convince my parents the same. Naturally, they had their concerns, which I combated like a true saleswoman. Ultimately my parents understood that this was my choice. They simply hoped that I made a responsible and thoughtful decision regarding my own education.

As the Fall 2012 semester began, I was overcome with anticipation for the course. Many questions continued to come to my mind like, what will the prison classroom look like? Will the inmates and the TCNJ students be ex-

I chalked my anxieties up as excitement and accepted my place in the course with reckless abandon.

pected to complete the same assignments? How will I manage interacting with inmates? The answers to these questions became clear once I begin the course.

So far I have been to the prison twice and I am pleasantly surprised about the experience. Although the process of actually getting signed into the prison is a bit intimidating, my new classmates seem to be invested in the course just like other TCNJ students. The atmosphere in the classroom is lighter than most in part due to the subject matter. We have been focusing on the idea of self identity and ethnic identity. The beauty of the course is that you only have to be an expert about yourself in order to have an understanding of the material. As the semester progresses I look forward to learning more about myself through the context of the literature and the diverse experiences of the Wagner inmates.

Megan Fixter



# Abroad and Beyond



As someone who studied in Spain last Fall, I highly recommend that others take the chance to do so, should the opportunity arise. During the Fall of 2011, I studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain with ISA ( International Studies Abroad). The first week I cried every day because I missed home and thought I would never adjust. However, staying was the best decision I could have ever made.

I decided to study abroad because I was one of those people who did not deal with change very well, thus I wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone to become a stronger individual. I took four classes abroad: *Urban Approach: The case of Spain and Europe*, *Politics, War & Globalization*, *Culture without States: The Case of Catalonia*, and *Inequality, Poverty & Globalization*. Each of the classes fit into either a Sociology or Anthropology requirement. I had classes with other Americans, but also with people from China, Brazil, and Germany.

I came back a stronger  
and matured person.

The *Urban Approach* class was about the development of European cities, and the urban life cycle of each. We used Barcelona as our classroom in a way because we would go to the parts of the city that applied to whatever stage or topic of the urban life cycle we were covering that week. *Culture without States: The Case of Catalonia* was a class about the Catalan culture and nationalism in Spain. *Inequality, Poverty and Globalization* class was more of an economic approach on inequality, poverty and the effects of globalization. My favorite class, *Politics, War and Globalization*, was what I called a historical Sociology course. This course, aside from being taught by an awesome professor, had a great mix of students. The discussions were interesting, informative, and intense because they revolved around politics, war, and globalization. I decided to talk about the courses first because people often talk about all the activities and traveling and omit how awesome the classes are as well. One of the things that stood out the most for me was the fact that I got to learn about topics in a more global sense and from another (non-American) perspective.

Aside from the classes, the traveling was an experience all within itself. It was awesome being with others my own age in a new place for three-and-a-half months. I met so many people from the United States and from all over the globe, with whom I still stay in contact with. We planned trips to other countries which included: Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Portugal. With ISA, we visited different cities in Spain, and even did a week long stay in the African country of Morocco; we spent two nights in the Sahara Desert and rode camels for 45 minutes.

I fell in love with a new city and with my experience. I came back a stronger and matured person. I know it seems like everyone says the same thing, but trust me once you explore a different culture and a different way of life you can not help it but become a more open minded and insightful individual.



### Images

First page: Flag of Spain.

From: [spain-info.com/Spain-Flag-Large.html](http://spain-info.com/Spain-Flag-Large.html)

Second page, top: La Sagrada Familia

From: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Passion\\_fa%C3%A7ade\\_%28April\\_2012%29.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Passion_fa%C3%A7ade_%28April_2012%29.jpg)

# Loribel Mulero



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