

Societies in the World

SYP 3456 – U02

ZEB 120, T/Th, 12:30-1:45 pm

Prof. A. Douglas Kincaid
Office Hours: Tues./Thurs. 2:00-3:15 pm

SIPA 333, Tel. 305 348-6172
E-mail: kincaidd@fiu.edu

Sociology as a science seeks to understand how human beliefs, perceptions, and actions are shaped by the social contexts in which we live, and how in turn those contexts endure or change as the result of social behavior. One such context we commonly call “society,” a daily shorthand for a particular set of cultural and structural features that are shared among a group of people and can serve to demarcate them from other groups. The study of society is the terrain of macro-sociology. But societies themselves also have contexts. This course seeks to deepen our understanding of human societies by examining them within a series of wider, “world” perspectives: historical, environmental, global, and systemic. This course will introduce you to some of the key concepts and ideas underlying a comparative, historical, and ecological perspective on our social world, including:

- How societies evolved and became differentiated from each other each other;
- How and why certain societies prospered while others declined or even disappeared; and
- The prospects and challenges for sustainable societies in the contemporary world.

The course readings and other assignments will introduce you to or broaden your knowledge of a wide variety of societies all over the globe.

Readings

The following books are required for the course and available for purchase in the FIU bookstore:

Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed. Jared Diamond. Penguin Group. New York. 2006.
ISBN 0-143-03655-6

Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies. Jared Diamond. W.W. Norton & Co. New York. 2003.
ISBN 0-393-31755-2

Questioning Collapse: Human Resilience, Ecological Vulnerability, and the Aftermath of Empire.
Patricia McAnany and Normal Yoffee, eds. Cambridge University Press. New York. 2010.
ISBN 978-0-521-73366-3

Other readings may be assigned over the course of the semester.

Requirements

- Final Exam (30% of course grade, 120 points). A list of short essay questions will be posted a week before the exam. The exam will contain selected questions from the list to be answered during the scheduled period.
- Quizzes (25%, 100 points). These will be short answer quizzes taken online and each will be based on the reading assigned for the week of that quiz. There are 10 quizzes in all and the two lowest scores will be dropped from the final calculation.
- Class presentation (20%, 80 points). Each student will participate in a small group presentation in class based on assigned topics and readings.
- Online discussions (15%, 60 points). Discussion topics will be posted on the course website, and each student will be expected to contribute comments or responses to each discussion. Additional postings are encouraged and usually rewarded.
- Class participation (10%, 40 points). This will be based on class attendance and contributions to classroom discussions and activities.

Course Grading Formula

Maximum of 400 points

A=360-400 B=320-359 C=280-319 D=240-279 F= <240

Course Schedule

Week	Topics/Lectures	Readings and Assignments
Week 1 Jan. 8-12	<u>Beginnings</u> Introduction to the Course	Diamond, <i>GGS</i> , Prologue
Week 2 Jan. 15-19	<u>Origins of Society</u> An Evolutionary Perspective Out of Africa	Diamond, <i>GGS</i> , Chapters 1-3
Week 3 Jan. 22-26	<u>The Rise of Food Production</u> Geographical Variations	Diamond, <i>GGS</i> , Chapters 4-7
Week 4 Jan. 29- Feb. 2	<u>Divergent Paths of Development</u> Spread of Food Production Cumulative Advantages	Diamond, <i>GGS</i> , Chapters 8-10
Week 5 Feb. 5-9	<u>Differentiation and Development</u> Communicative Diseases Technology Rules	Diamond, <i>GGS</i> , Chapters 11-14

Week 6 Feb. 12-16	<u>World Histories</u> Asian/Pacific cases Africa	Diamond, <i>GGS</i> , Chapters 15-19
Week 7 Feb. 19-23	<u>Reconsidering Yali's Question</u> Diamond's Take An Anthropological Critique	Diamond, <i>GGS</i> , Epilogue and Afterword; McAnany and Yoffee, Chapter 12
Week 8 Feb. 26- Mar. 2	<u>Revisiting past Civilizations</u> Mesopotamia Peru	McAnany and Yoffee, Chapters 7, 8
Week 9 Mar 5-9	<u>Collapse and Society</u> A Model for Analysis; Montana California	Diamond, <i>Collapse</i> , Prologue, Ch. 1
Week 10 Mar. 12-16	<u>Spring Break</u> ----	-----
Week 11 Mar. 19-23	<u>Successes and Failures</u> New Guinea and Japan Iceland and Polynesia	Diamond, <i>Collapse</i> , Chapters 3, 6, 9
Week 12 Mar. 26-30	<u>Group Presentations (1-2)</u> Easter Island The Anasazi	Diamond, <i>Collapse</i> , Chapters 2, 4; McAnany and Yoffee, Chapters 2, 5
Week 13 Apr.2-6	<u>Group Presentations (3-4)</u> The Mayans Greenland	Diamond, <i>Collapse</i> , Chapters 5, 7, 8; McAnany and Yoffee, Chapters 3, 6
Week 14 Apr. 9-13	<u>Group Presentations (5-6)</u> Rwanda Australia	Diamond, <i>Collapse</i> , Chapters 10, 13; McAnany and Yoffee, Chapters 9, 11
Week 15 Apr. 16-20	<u>Wrapping Up</u> Collapse or no collapse? Course conclusions	Diamond, <i>Collapse</i> , Chapters 14-16; McAnany and Yoffee, Chapters 1, 13
Week 16 TBA	FINAL EXAM -----Bring Blue Books	

The University has a policy statement regarding religious holidays included in the University catalog and the student handbook. I will abide by that statement. Any student may request to be excused from class to observe a religious holy day of his/her faith.

