There are two major projects for this course that will have separate instructions (a “sociological autobiography” worth 20% of your final grade and a final group project, also worth 20%). Besides those projects, the required work involves writing blog posts, taking part in the discussion forum, and completing some assignments with your group. Below, is a description of those assignments and the general criteria I’ll be using when assessing the work.

**Blog Posts (30% of your final grade)**

There are two types of individual blog posts: those where I’ve posed a prompt and those that are open-ended, simply asking you to reflect on some material of your own choosing from that module. My goal is to strike a balance between steering you towards things you ought to know and be thinking about, while also leaving plenty of room for you to pursue the things that catch your interest and seem most relevant to you.

Your post may well include explaining or summarizing an idea, concept, or theory from the readings. But it should go beyond that. I’m not looking for you to simply parrot back summaries of readings (“The author said X”). I am looking for you to engage with that material by using it—showing its relevance by applying it to examples and reflecting on its possible significance.

So beyond the basics of being done on time and being the appropriate length, assessment will vary based on the type of response:

- A minimally acceptable post might simply respond to the prompt, drawing upon the reading or material being discussed.
- A more thoughtful and stronger post might go further by adding an example or two that goes beyond the reading to illustrate your understanding of the topic.
- The strongest response will go further still to combine a basic response, plus an example or two, plus some reflection on your part about the significance or relevance of all of this.

The key is to use the idea under consideration to construct something of your own: idea + examples + reflection. This shows you seriously engage with the ideas, giving them some thought and making them meaningful for your own learning.

A couple of bonus characteristics:

- **Use other students’ blog posts.** One reason why everyone is writing in public is that it makes it possible for you to see and learn from each other’s work. The example you use to strengthen your post may well be a point made by another student in their post. That’s great; quote it, create a link back to the original post, and add your contribution.
- **Be creative!** Don’t be afraid to be creative in showing your understanding and illustrating your point. The blog isn’t a sheet of paper; it is a platform that enables you
to use images, videos, and audio as well as text—either of your own creation or linked from the Web. We’ll be doing some of this when we start posting in the “Imagination Gallery” but there’s no reason why you can’t do it in your own blog posts, too.

For assessment I’ll be reviewing your posts and giving you some feedback several times during the course.

Discussion Forum (15% of final grade)
In addition to using your group’s sub-forum for communication, I’ll be posting some questions/topics onto a discussion sub-forum and asking you to discuss. The point here is to give you a chance to consider the thoughts of other students outside of your group and share your ideas with them. Again, engagement with the substance of the discussion is key:

- **Respond substantively.** The responses don’t have to be long but they should take into account any previous posts and move the discussion along by adding something new. “I agree” is not a useful addition. Justify your thoughts with supporting evidence.
- **Incorporate previous posts.** Don’t ignore what came before. Take the time to read and consider them. If appropriate, quote some in your response. Return later to see responses to your thoughts.
- **Be respectful.** People may have different ideas than you and it’s fine to question them. But all of this should be done respectfully and in a civil tone. Avoid snark or sarcastic humor since it can so easily be misinterpreted on the web.

I’ll likely add to these discussions from time to time as they are occurring but I won’t be “grading” each individually. Instead, I’ll pull up your overall record of participation to make an assessment, keeping in mind the sorts of criteria mentioned above.

Learning Groups (15% of final grade)
You’ll have a few assignments that you complete with your group, including:

- assignments that involve collectively producing a blog post to be posted by one of your members. (Google Docs can be very useful in working on these posts together.) In these cases the comments about blog posts above all apply.
- assignments that involve using your “sociological imagination”—applying sociological ideas to material you find on the web—and posting your finding and analysis in the “Imagination Gallery.” (I have more details about this project separately.)

As you probably saw in completing the simple first assignment, the keys to group work include:

- staying in regular and routine contact (preferably checking in every day)
- getting started on a project as early as possible to maximize the chance of success
- being clear about expected contributions from individual members and holding people accountable

I’ve helped set up groups but will step back now, expecting you to keep things moving.

When it comes time to assess groups, there will be a simple peer assessment component where you’ll have the opportunity to note especially strong or weak involvement from members.