

SYP 4714: The Sociology of Youth
Florida Atlantic University, Fall 2011
Thursdays 4:00-6:50 PM, SO 170 (Boca campus)
3.0 Credits

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1-4 PM, or by appointment, in CS 259

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REQUIRED BOOKS

- Katherine Newman et al., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*. Basic Books, 2004.
- Juliet Schor, *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*. Scribner, 2005.
- Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled, and More Miserable Than Ever Before*. Free Press, 2006.
- Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines how young people's lives are shaped by social forces such as media, schooling, and peer culture, and it also traces the history of how youth have made an impact on their society, especially through music, subcultures, and student movements. Specifically, we will focus on these sociological dimensions of youth:

- Youth as social problem, especially in activities of sex, drugs, and violence, and the way that authorities have reacted and attempted to control these activities.
- Youth as consumer market, whom corporations and media have identified as increasingly valuable and thus subjected to intense marketing and advertising campaigns.
- Youth as subculture, in which young people have created their own cultures and social movements through music, style, and symbolic resistance.
- Youth as a catalyst and a symbol of social change in areas of social life including religion, sexuality, work, mental health, and politics.

We will begin with school shootings as an extreme case of social problems among young people that leads us into more commonplace issues, like the hierarchical and exclusive nature of peer culture, the institution of schooling, and the connection between masculinity and violence. We then proceed to examine how youth has become a coveted consumer market and how young people have created subcultures through their consumption and production of music and fashion. In examining "Generation Me" we are confronted with the increasing individualism and narcissism of so many young people today, and then we consider the winding road from the late teens through the early twenties that Jeffrey Jensen Arnett calls "emerging adulthood."

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In accordance with C. Wright Mills' definition of the "sociological imagination" as the intersection between individual biographies and social structure, the primary objective of this course is to challenge students to understand the larger social forces that have shaped their generation as well as previous generations of youth. Toward this end, our class will pursue the following objectives:

- Read and review the various concepts and theories that sociologists have employed in an attempt to make sense of young people and the social problems surrounding them.
- Write essays of varying length that synthesize sociological concepts for the study of youth and apply them to concrete issues like school shootings, the commercialization of youth, and the formation of youth cultures.
- Apply the theories and insights of sociologists in the analysis of some aspect of contemporary youth culture of the student's choosing and participate in class discussions focused on sociological questions raised by the assigned readings or documentaries screened in class.

EXAMS, PAPERS, AND EVALUATION

2 in-class exams: 25 points each=50%

3 short (2-3 pages) papers: 5 points each=15%

Final exam: 25 points=25%

Attendance: 10 points=10%

The two in-class exams are scheduled for September 22 and October 27. They consist of a mixture of multiple-choice, true/false, short answer, and essay questions, and draw equally from lectures and assigned readings. A review/study guide is posted on Blackboard and discussed in class the week before the exam. Make-ups will be scheduled only if the student has arranged one with the professor **beforehand**. Like the other exams, the final (scheduled for December 6) will involve a mixture of multiple-choice, true/false, short answer, and essay questions, but it is cumulative and involves a somewhat larger written portion.

The short writing assignments will ask students to respond to required readings and are intended to facilitate class discussions. These assignments will be due September 8, October 13, and November 10.

Sign-in sheets for attendance will be distributed twice during every class session, once at the beginning of class and once at the end. The first three halves of class missed do not affect the student's grade, with one point deducted for each half of a class missed thereafter. Grades are posted on the Gradebook section of Blackboard and it is the student's responsibility to check their grade and notify me if there are any mistakes or discrepancies.

GRADING SCALE

A	93-100 points	C	73-76.5
A-	90-92.5	C-	70-72.5
B+	87-89.5	D+	67-69.5
B	83-86.5	D	63-66.5
B-	80-82.5	D-	60-62.5
C+	77-79.5	F	is 59.5 or below

CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the University mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see the Code of Academic Integrity in the University Regulations at http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Code_of_Academic_Integrity.pdf.

DISABILITY POLICY STATEMENT

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodation due to a disability to properly execute course work must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) -- in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880) – and follow all OSD procedures.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

University policy on the use of electronic devices states: “In order to enhance and maintain a productive atmosphere for education, personal communication devices, such as cellular telephones and pagers, are to be disabled in class sessions.” Over the past few years in colleges all over the U.S., we have seen a disturbing increase in the number of students who use laptops to be on the internet or play video games and effectively check out of the classroom. In many instances, however, they may be taking notes and therefore “multi-tasking,” but recent studies have shown that when students are not allowed to use laptops they generally do better in class because they can’t multi-task quite as well as they think they can. For generations college students have taken notes with paper and pen, and most of them turned out OK. The use of phones for text messaging can be even more distracting and downright disrespectful to the professor and the other students in the class. Of course, the use of phones is harder to police, so all I can ask from you is your consideration and cooperation. The bottom line is that I want to teach you, I want you to learn something, and that other stuff gets in the way.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND LECTURES

****Readings should be completed on or before the date under which they are listed****

I. August 25: Introduction: Youth as Social Problem, Consumer Market, and Subculture

II. September 1: Youth as Social Problem--Sex and Drugs
Newman et al., *Rampage*, chapters 1-4.

III. September 8: Youth as Social Problem--Violence and School Shootings
Newman et al., *Rampage*, chapters 5-8

IV. September 15: Schooling, Social Control, and Youth Culture
Newman et al., *Rampage*, chapters 9-11 and epilogue

V. September 22: ****Exam #1 in class****

VI. September 29: Consumerism, Media, and Youth Culture
Schor, *Born to Buy*, chapters 1-5

VII. October 6: Branding and the Commercialization of Youth
Schor, *Born to Buy*, chapters 6-10

VIII. October 13: Subcultures, Style, and Music
Twenge, *Generation Me*, introduction and chapters 1-3

IX. October 20: Individualism and "Generation Me"
Twenge, *Generation Me*, chapters 4-6

X. October 27: ****Exam #2 in class****

XI. November 3: Mental Health, Sex, and Politics in "Generation Me"
Twenge, *Generation Me*, chapters 7-8
Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chapters 1-2

XII. November 10: Love, Sex, College.
Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chapters 3-6

XIII. November 17: Work, Religion and the meaning of "Adulthood"
Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chapters 7-10

XIV: November 24: No Class Due to Thanksgiving Holiday

Final Exam Due: Thursday, December 1