

Sociology 3452 — Education & Society — Fall 2018

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There are two writing assignments (besides those that make up the community-engaged learning component of the course).

1. *Beginning of Semester Statement of Beliefs*

Write an essay that responds to the questions listed below. This essay should be about **2,000 words**. Use reasonable formatting and font sizes. Bring 3 printed copies of the essay to class on Thursday, September 13. Then, after receiving feedback from your peers on that day, revise the essay and turn it in via Canvas by Thursday, September 20.

This essay should reflect your true experiences, beliefs, and feelings ... not what you think anybody else might *want* to hear. The essay will *not* be graded based on *what* you say ... it will be graded based on whether you took it seriously and answered the questions coherently, completely, and to the best of your ability.

Questions:

a. What kind of education did you experience from when you were born until today?

Consider all the schools you have ever attended, the teachers you have ever had, and other educational influences in your life (e.g., churches, family, coaches). What kinds of schools did you have? What kind of teachers did you have?

b. Did you have more opportunities than most people in the United States ... or fewer?

Did you have better quality schools and teachers ... or worse? In what ways did you have better opportunities, teachers, schools, etc.? In what ways did you have worse?

c. How were your educational opportunities and experiences influenced by:

1. Where you happened to live (i.e., what city, suburb, or neighborhood you lived in, whether you lived in a rural, suburban, or urban area, etc.) when you were growing up?
2. How much money your family had while you were growing up?
3. Your racial or ethnic background and your country of birth?
4. Your gender?
5. Your sexual orientation?

d. Why have you been successful in your education?

To what extent have your educational successes — you've all made it to college, so you're all successful to some extent! — been because of:

1. Your own merits (e.g., your own hard work, intelligence, and perseverance)?
2. Having certain personal attributes (e.g., being female, being gay, being Latina, being disabled)?
3. Luck or chance (e.g., being in the right place at the right time, being born to the right family)?

e. Can anybody succeed in their education in America if they just try hard enough?

Many people argue that anybody—regardless of their gender or race/ethnicity or other attributes and regardless of the family they were born to—can succeed in America’s schools and education system if they just work hard and persevere. What do you think? Can anybody succeed in America’s schools and education system? Explain.

The essay is worth **12** points. Only the final version that you turn in by Thursday, September 20 will be graded. It will be graded based on how completely and thoughtfully you address the questions above. You will not be directly penalized for poor writing (e.g., grammatical or spelling errors, run-on sentences) but your score may suffer indirectly if your writing is not clear. Essays turned in up to one week late will receive no more than half credit; those turned in more than a week late will be read and will receive feedback but will get 0 points.

2. End of Semester Statement of Beliefs

Write an essay that responds to the same questions above—but *after* you have completed Sociology 3452. This essay should be about **2,500 words**. Use reasonable formatting and font sizes. Bring 3 printed copies of the essay to class on Thursday, December 6. Then, after receiving feedback from your peers on that day, revise the essay and turn it in via Canvas by Thursday, December 20.

In this essay, focus on how course materials, in-class discussions, and your CEL work changed your answers to the questions above. If your answers to the questions above changed because of SOC 3452, what specific things (e.g., readings, discussions, CEL experiences) caused them to change? If they did not change, how do you respond to arguments or evidence from course materials that contradict your thinking and beliefs? I recommend that you start by re-reading your “Beginning of Semester Statement of Beliefs” and then writing about how and why your answers changed.

The essay is worth **18** points. Only the final version that you turn in by Thursday, December 20 will be graded. It will be graded based on how completely and thoughtfully you address the questions above. You will not be directly penalized for poor writing (e.g., grammatical or spelling errors, run-on sentences) but your score may suffer indirectly if your writing is not clear. Essays turned in up to one week late will receive no more than half credit; those turned in more than a week late will be read and will receive feedback but will get 0 points.