

FYS 100: SOCIOLOGY OF VOCATION

MWF 10-10:50 AM
204 CARSWELL HALL
Fall 2006

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Course Web Page: <http://www.wfu.edu/~yamaned/teaching/vocation/fys100index.htm>

OVERVIEW

This course is a sociological examination of the concept and practice of vocation. Vocation, understood from a Judeo-Christian perspective, is God's call and plan for our lives and our response to that call. As Quakers say, vocation involves "letting your life speak." Although it can be difficult to understand vocation without a religious dimension, we might provisionally say that from a secular perspective vocation is simply our understanding of and answer to the question: "What must I do with my life?"

We will combine reflection on the concept of vocation and our sense of personal vocation with sociological analyses of the constraints we face in American society as we attempt to discern and realize our vocations in domains such as education, work, family, and public life.

We are fortunate that enrollment in this course is limited so we can treat it as a *discussion-based seminar*. As such, I will not lecture. This format distributes the burden of learning equally on all members of the class. How much we learn will be directly related to how much effort each and every one of us dedicates to the course work, particularly reading the primary course materials and coming to class prepared to discuss those materials.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS IN BRIEF

- (1) Class Participation = 20%
- (2) Two Class Presentations (@ 10% each) = 20%
- (3) Six Papers (@ 10% each) = 60%
- (4) Office Visit = -5% for not completing
- (5) Library Instructional Session = -5% for not completing

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Over the course of this semester, I hope we will all make some progress in the following areas:

1. In the ability to understand what a “vocation” is in general, how the term may or may not (yet!) apply to our lives, and the challenges we face now and in the future that may hinder our vocational development.
2. More importantly, in the ability to apply a “sociological imagination” to understanding our own vocations in life. We want to be better able to use sociological studies of contemporary society as a window onto our lives, and to use our lives as a springboard to understanding the possibilities of vocation in contemporary society.
3. In general, we want to cultivate and employ the intellectual habits that are central to scholarship: reading critically, discussing thoughtfully, and writing carefully. These analytical habits are portable from this class to others, and from classes to life and work in general.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following required books are available at the bookstore on campus:

Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996 [paperback], 1985 [hardback]).

Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton, *The Good Society* (New York: Knopf, 1991; Vintage Books Edition, 1992)

William Damon, *Noble Purpose: The Joy of Living a Meaningful Life* (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2003)

Richard Hersh and John Merrow, editors, *Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000).

William Sullivan, *Work and Integrity: The Crisis and Promise of Professionalism in America* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass: 2005)

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner’s, 1958)

In addition, a small course packet will be available for purchase.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are 100 total points which can be earned in this class. They are distributed as follows:

[1] Class Participation (20 points): As in life, you do not get credit in this class just for showing up. In order to earn *any* of these 20 points, you must participate thoughtfully and actively in our class discussions. “Thoughtfully” here means that your participation is based not only on your own experiences but on your careful consideration of the course materials. Reading and thinking about the course materials is a prerequisite of thoughtful participation. “Actively” here does not mean that you are constantly participating, but that you are regularly involved in the course discussions, can be expected to contribute, and do not go mentally AWOL for periods at a time. If you do not participate in the class discussions, you will receive 0 points and then the *maximum* number of points you can earn in this class will be 80, which is a “C+”. And that is only if you achieve perfection on all of your other work. That is how important I think class participation is. If you are not comfortable speaking in group settings, then this is your opportunity to get over that (in the same way that people who do not like to write will have a chance to get over that).

[2] Class Presentations (2 @ 10 points each = 20 points total): Two times during the semester, you will be responsible for making a short (10-15 minute) presentation on the reading(s) for the day you are assigned. The presentations should cover at least the following topics: (a) the main argument of the reading material and how it relates to the course themes; (b) what is interesting and/or important about the selected reading(s); and (c) the questions the reading(s) raise for discussion.

The first two parts will be the core of your presentation and should lead logically to a set of 3-5 questions you will pose to the class for discussion. The questions you pose must be emailed to the class at least 24 hours in advance of our meeting.

In preparing your questions, please keep in mind the distinction between different types of questions. Some questions are what we can call *inauthentic* or “test” questions. These questions have a single or a very limited number of “right” answers. For example, “What is Bellah’s definition of vocation?” They are OK as a starting point for discussion, but they do not in themselves generate much discussion because they limit the range of appropriate responses. Better questions are what we can call *authentic* questions. These questions potentially have an unlimited number of good answers. For example, “How does Bellah’s definition of vocation compare to Damon’s? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?” Because they are more open-ended, authentic questions will be better at generating the kind of discussions we want to have in class.

For each presentation, half of your score will be based on your presentation and half will be based on the quality of your questions. If you do not email the questions at least 24 hours in advance, you will receive no credit for that portion of your presentation grade (i.e., the most you can get on the presentation is 5 out of 10 points). In the worst case scenario, you can distribute copies of your questions prior to your presentation the day of class. If you do not provide questions at all in advance of your presentation, you will receive no credit for the entire presentation grade (i.e., 0 out of 10 points).

[3] Papers (6 @ 10 points each = 60 points total): About every two weeks you will have a 1,000 word (about 3-4 page) paper due. All papers must be printed and double-spaced with one inch margins on all four sides and pages numbered consecutively. You can determine the number of words in your paper in Word as follows: FILE > PROPERTIES then click the STATISTICS tab.

If it is clear from the text what sources you are referring to, you do not need a bibliography. If you use sources beyond the class readings, you should include a bibliography and parenthetical citation in the text or footnotes to give the references for those sources.

- **Paper 1:** Write your own obituary. Assume that you lived to be 75 years of age and reflect back on your ideal life, including consideration of your education, family, career, citizenship, and anything else you feel will be important to do in your life. The paper should be written in the third-person (e.g., “David Yamane, a professor emeritus at Wake Forest University, went to meet his maker recently. He was best known for his first year seminar called Sociology of Vocation, as well as his tennis game.” Etcetera.)
- **Paper 2:** In this paper, you will reflect on the meaning of “vocation.” What does it mean to have a vocation? How do American culture and institutions inhibit the formation and realization of vocation? What is your current sense of your personal vocation, and how do your educational, familial, occupational, and other aspirations fit into it? In this paper, you must draw on David Brooks’ essay, William Damon’s book, and the assigned selections from *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society*.
- **Paper 3:** In this paper, you will reflect on the question, what is college for? What is the relationship between a college education and living a meaningful life? What do you hope to get out of your time at Wake Forest? How do you think a Wake Forest education will change your life? Is any concept of vocation evident in Wake Forest’s educational ideals? How do Wake Forest’s educational ideals compare to its actual curriculum? In this paper, you must draw on *Declining by Degrees*, the assigned selection from *The Good Society*, and the readings about Wake Forest.
- **Paper 4:** In this paper, you will reflect the place of work in your life. What does it mean for work to constitute a “calling” or vocation? Is it possible today for work to be a vocation? Do you aspire to be a “professional”? What does it mean to belong to a “profession”? In this paper, you will conduct library research (i.e., not just surfing the web for information) on the current state of one or more occupations you are interested in and integrate that research into your paper. You must also draw on Weber’s *Protestant Ethic*, Sullivan’s *Work and Integrity*, and the assigned selection from *The Good Society*.
- **Paper 5:** In this paper, you will reflect on your domestic aspirations and how those relate to your broader sense of vocation. What do you want from family life? What is a “good family”? How might you negotiate the competing expectations of work and family life? Do you have role models in your life, either positive or negative, for integrating work and family into a common vocation? In this paper, you must draw on the assigned selection from *Habits of the Heart* and Hochschild’s *The Time Bind*.

- **Paper 6:** In this paper, you will reflect on the relationship between your personal vocation and the larger national and world society we live in. What is a “good society”? What does it mean to be a citizen in a good society? Does your vocation have a meaning and effect beyond your personal life and immediate relationships? In this paper, you must draw on the assigned readings from *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society*
- **Optional Paper 7:** If you choose to write this seventh paper, your final grade will be based on your highest 6 scores out of the 7 papers you submit. NOTE: You cannot use Paper #7 as a substitute for a paper you failed to submit earlier in the semester. That is, you have to submit all of the first 6 papers in order to have this option. In this paper, you will synthesize all of your previous reflections on vocation, education, work, family life, and citizenship by re-writing your obituary. Knowing what you know now from 12 weeks of reading, discussion, reflection, and writing on the ideals and realities of living out a genuine vocation in America today, once again assume that you lived to be 75 years of age and reflect back on your ideal life. As before, the paper should be written in the third-person.

[4] Office Visit (5 point penalty for not completing): By September 1st, you will see me for a 15 minute appointment outside of class so that we can become better acquainted. Failure to see me by September 1st will result in a 5 point deduction from your final grade. We can meet either during my office hours or by separate appointment. To ensure a place, please sign up in advance.

[5] Library Instructional Session (5 point penalty for note completing): On Friday, August 25th, our class will meet in Room 476 of the Wilson Wing of the ZSR Library for an instructional session on using library resources. You are welcome to bring your laptops to this session. If you do not attend, you will receive a 5 point deduction from your final grade.

GRADES

The bulletin of the College specifies letter grades corresponding to levels of achievement:

A = Exceptionally High Achievement
 A-, B+, B = Superior
 B-, C+, C = Satisfactory
 C-, D+, D = Passing But Unsatisfactory
 F = Failure

I place a premium on good writing, especially spelling and grammar. Proofread your papers carefully before turning them in. I heartily recommend that all students make use of the Writing Center, 117 Reynolda Hall (758-5768). Poorly written and proofread papers will be graded down with increasing severity over the course of the semester.

The scale for grades based on the number of points earned over the course of the semester is:

A: 96-100	A-: 92-95	B+: 89-91	B: 86-88	B-: 82-85	C+: 79-81
C: 76-78	C-: 72-75	D+: 69-71	D: 66-68	F: Less than 65	

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT CLASS

1. Mas vale prevenir que lamentar: It is better to *prevent* problems than to lament them once they occur. Similarly, it is easier to *prevent* problems than to *undo* them once they are done. So please be in touch with me early and often and as much as necessary. My door is always open to you.
2. Computers in class: Because students have abused this privilege in the past, computers are *not allowed* at all in this class, unless you are required to use one and can provide documentation to that effect from the Learning Assistance Center.
3. Confidentiality: Given our topic, we may have discussions of highly personal matters. Everything that is said in class of a personal nature, therefore, should be considered confidential. Students who violate the confidentiality of their classmates will be failed.
4. Electronic mail communication: I check my e-mail regularly and you are welcome to contact me by e-mail with questions or comments. However, please be aware that *e-mail is not an appropriate medium for highly personal or confidential correspondence. Finally, because I may not immediately receive or reply to your messages, pressing issues should be handled in person whenever possible.*
5. On handing in assignments: Whenever you hand in an assignment, be sure to *make a hard copy* to keep for yourself in case the assignment you turn in disappears (this is known to happen quite often, unfortunately). Simply keeping a “copy” on a computer disk is *not* a recommended backup (although you should do that *too*), since difficulties frequently arise with magnetic media, especially around the time papers are due!
6. On late assignments: Assignments must be handed in by the *beginning* of class time on the due date. Any assignments submitted after that time will be graded down one full grade (e.g., from A to B, B to C) *per day late*. One second late = one day late, 24 hours + one second late = two days late, etcetera. If you know you will not be in class when the assignment is due, you must turn in the assignment *before* your absence. If you have a medical or other emergency causing you to miss class unexpectedly, you must submit along with your late assignment a signed note to that effect from an appropriate authority. If for some reason you cannot turn an assignment in directly to me, take it to the Sociology Department Office (232 Carswell Hall), have the secretary *sign and date* the assignment, and have her put it in my mailbox. If the assignment is not signed and dated by a secretary, I will assume you turned it in the day I pick it up (which will not necessarily be the same day you turn it in). Under no circumstances should you put assignments under my door. *Most of all, just stay in touch with me about your circumstances (see note #1 above). I cannot run 15 different classes, but I am a pretty reasonable guy.*
7. On disabilities: According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with a physical or mental impairment (“disability”) are entitled to equal access, integration and the provision of reasonable accommodation by federally-supported institutions like Wake Forest. The university is required to make “*academic adjustments*” for qualified disabled persons. These adjustments may include modifications to *academic requirements* as are necessary to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate against a qualified handicapped student. Adjustments may also include modifications to course examinations or other procedures for evaluating students’

academic achievement. If these protections apply to you, or you think that they might apply to you, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) within the first two (2) weeks of the semester.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The follow course schedule is good only for now. The main course schedule will be posted on the class website so that it can be updated as necessary to accommodate changes to the class. Although I will try not to add any work beyond what is specified in the syllabus, I reserve the right to modify the course schedule or content as necessary and appropriate to meet course goals.

NOTE: DIAGONAL LINES INDICATE NO CLASS MEETING. ALSO, NO CLASS WILL BE HELD ON DAYS WHEN PAPERS ARE DUE (THOUGH YOU WILL SUBMIT YOUR PAPER AT THE START OF CLASS TIME IN OUR CLASS ROOM ON THE DUE DATE)

WEEK OF...	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY
	[1] OVERVIEW/ADMINISTRATION		
August 21		Welcome, Administration, Introductions	Library Instructional Session: Room 476 Wilson Wing of ZSR Library. Thinkpads welcome.
	[2] WHAT IS VOCATION?		
August 28	David Brooks, "The Organization Kid"	<u><i>Paper #1 Due: Write your own obituary</i></u>	<u>Read: William Damon, Noble Purpose</u> (all)
	[3] AMERICA'S CULTURAL ALTERNATIVES		
September 4	<u>Read: Robert Bellah, et al., <i>Habits of the Heart</i> (pp. vii-51)</u>	<u>Read: Bellah, <i>Habits</i> (pp. 55-84)</u>	<u>Read: Bellah, <i>Habits</i> (pp. 113-63)</u>
	[4] THE GOOD SOCIETY?		
September 11	<u>Read: Robert Bellah, et al., <i>The Good Society</i> (pp. 3-51)</u>	<u>Read: Bellah, <i>The Good Society</i> (pp. 52-81)</u>	<u><i>Paper #2 Due: Your vocation</i></u>

WEEK OF...	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY
	[5] EDUCATION FOR VOCATION		
September 18	No class. 2 hour movie to be shown from 8pm to 10pm in Carswell Hall.	<u>Read:</u> Bellah, <i>The Good Society</i> (pp. 145-78) <u>Guest:</u> Gregg Levoy, author of <i>Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life</i>	<u>Read:</u> <i>Declining by Degrees</i> (introduction + chapters 6, 7, & 8)
	[6] EDUCATION (CONT.)		
September 25	<u>Read:</u> <i>Declining by Degrees</i> (chapter 9, 11, 15 & afterwords)	<u>Read:</u> Article on "Pro Humanitatae" ideal; Wake Forest Undergraduate Bulletin, 2006-2007 (pp. 6-18, 61-68)	<u>Paper #3 Due:</u> <i>What college is for</i>
	[7] ECONOMIC LIFE		
October 2	<u>Read:</u> Max Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> (Introduction + Part I, chapters 1-3)	<u>Read:</u> Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic</i> (Part II, chapters 4 & 5)	Bellah, <i>The Good Society</i> (pp. 82-110)
	[8] THE PROFESSIONS		
October 9	<u>Read:</u> William Sullivan, <i>Work and Integrity</i> (pp. 1-65)	<u>Read:</u> Sullivan, <i>Work and Integrity</i> (pp. 67-160)	
	[9] CONDUCT LIBRARY RESEARCH		
October 16			
	[10] THE PROFESSIONS (CONT.)		
October 23	<u>Read:</u> Sullivan, <i>Work and Integrity</i> (pp. 161-256, 283-90)	Flex Day	<u>Paper #4 Due:</u> <i>Work as a "calling"</i>
	[11] DOMESTIC LIFE		
October 30	<u>Read:</u> Bellah, <i>Habits of the Heart</i> (pp. 85-112)	<u>Read:</u> Arlie Hochschild, <i>The Time Bind</i> (pp. 3-52)	<u>Read:</u> Hochschild, <i>The Time Bind</i> (pp. 55-114)

WEEK OF...	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY
November 6	[12] DOMESTIC LIFE (CONT.)		
	<u>Read:</u> Hochschild, <i>The Time Bind</i> (pp. 115-93)	<u>Read:</u> Hochschild, <i>The Time Bind</i> (pp. 197-259)	<u>Paper #5 Due:</u> <i>Domestic aspirations and realities</i>
November 13	[13] CITIZENSHIP AND PUBLIC LIFE		
	<u>Read:</u> Bellah, <i>Habits of the Heart</i> (pp. 167-218)	<u>Read:</u> Bellah, <i>Habits of the Heart</i> (pp. 250-96)	<u>Read:</u> Bellah, <i>The Good Society</i> (pp. 111-44)
November 20	[14] THINKING NATIONALLY AND GLOBALLY		
	<u>Read:</u> Bellah, <i>The Good Society</i> (pp. 220-86)		
November 27	[15] FINALE		
	Flex Day	Finale	<u>Paper #6 Due:</u> <i>What is a good citizen and good society</i>

OPTIONAL PAPER #7 DUE: Friday, December 8th