**Genius Hour**

The general premise behind Genius Hour: 1) For the rest of the semester, 20% of your time in class will be spent working on something you want to work on (45 minutes a week). 2) It has to be some type of learning about one of our units of study, and you have to document it (blog). 3) You’ll present your accomplishments to the class. 4) That’s it. Have fun. Find your passion. Explore it. Enjoy learning what you want.

**Part I. Pick a Topic and Create a Research Question.** The topic and question that you pick should be…

* Related to one of the units that we will be studying this semester (gender and sexuality, socialization, race and ethnicity, deviance and the prison system, culture, or social stratification). These are VERY broad topics and can encompass most topics that interest you. If you are interested in a topic that does not relate to one above, let me know and we can discuss this.
* Problem-solution based. Instead of simply researching hurricanes, you might examine how hurricanes impact people of various socioeconomic statuses and how this problem can be solved.
* Narrow. For instance, at the beginning you might choose to do your research on poverty and its causes; however, as the semester goes on, you might decide to focus your research on food deserts. At the beginning of the process, your guiding research question might be “What causes poverty?”; however, as you do more research, your guiding research question might be “How do food deserts aid in the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty?” When developing your research question, think about Peter Berger’s *Invitation to Sociology.*
	+ When developing research questions, you should be thinking about bigger picture causes and significances (e.g. Why does the problem occur? What is the effect/significance of the problem?). In addition, you should be looking to ask questions from the point of view of AT LEAST one of the perspectives (functionalist, social conflict, or symbolic interactionist). These will be discussed next week.

**Part II. Research.** The research on your broad topic (e.g. causes of poverty) will help you get to your narrowed down, specific topic (e.g. food deserts). Your research can and should come from any number of reliable sources including: newspaper and magazine articles, books (yes...like an actual book), and peer reviewed journals (think JSTOR). However, as I am asking you to think outside the box for your project, you should also be thinking outside of the box in terms of your research as well. You should think of using resources such as documentaries and movies, ethnographies (we will learn about these later this semester), interviews with professionals in the field, Twitter/Facebook/social media, radio (e.g. NPR stories), podcasts, museum exhibits (in person and digitized), interviews, government documents, etc. Make sure to keep a running bibliography of all the sources that you use. When researching you should begin thinking of the following questions:

* How does the problem affect the community in which you live and/or society as a whole?
* Why does the problem occur? (There are most likely multiple causes to your problem. While narrowing down your topic, you might consider refining your research to one of the causes)
* Why is this problem significant? What are the long term effects? (It will be useful to utilize both anecdotal and statistical evidence)

**Part III. Develop a Solution:** One of the goals of the project is to develop a solution to the problem you have been researching. It is important that you narrow down your topic at the beginning so you can develop a manageable solution. You will most likely not fix racism, sexism, poverty, etc. in the course of a year; however, your solution should attempt to take meaningful steps towards fixing the problem. To develop your solution, you should take a look at the causes of these problems and try to target one or two of these causes. First semester will be dedicated to developing your research question/topic and completing research. You do not need to worry about your solution until second semester.

**Part IV. Presentation of Your Final Product.** At the end of the semester, each student/group will give a 10-minute presentation to the class. The purpose of the presentation is to educate the class on the problem you have chosen to research – What is the problem? What are the causes? Why should we care about it? The presentation can be in the form of a TED-Talk, documentary, performance, or any medium that you think is creative and appropriate.

**Genius Hour Blog Calendar**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Due Date** | **Tasks** |
| 9/17 | **Initial Direction:** Discuss the general direction that you would like to go with your project. Think about the kinds of topics/stories/issues that interest you. What sociological questions do you have about these topics/stories/issues? |
| 9/24 | **Topic Proposal:** Develop and explain a narrowed down sociological question (or questions) that will drive your analysis; give an explanation of why you are interested in the topic; will you work by yourself or in a partner/group? |
| 10/15 | **Source/Annotated Bib Check-in for 5 Sources:** Develop a bibliography with 5 sources. For each source you should have a 4-5 sentence annotation that explains how this source can/will be helpful in answering your sociological question. In addition, you should have a paragraph that explains how these sources further guide your project and research? Finally, you should include a reflection  |
| 11/5 | **Source/Annotated Bib Check-in for 10 Sources:** Develop a bibliography with 10 sources. For each source you should have a 4-5 sentence annotation that explains how this source can/will be helpful in answering your sociological question. In addition, you should have a paragraph that explains how these sources further guide your project and research? What sociological questions do they spur? |
| 12/3 | **Source/Annotated Bib Check-in for 15 Sources:** Develop a bibliography with 15 sources. For each source you should have a 4-5 sentence annotation that explains how this source can/will be helpful in answering your sociological question. In addition, you should have a paragraph that explains how these sources further guide your project and research? What sociological questions do they spur? |
| N/A | **Newspaper/Magazine:** Find a source from a newspaper or magazine (either print or online) that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| N/A | **Book/Book Excerpt:** Find a source from a book (either an entire book or excerpt from a book) that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| N/A | **Documentary or Podcast:** Find a source from a documentary or podcast that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| N/A | **Government Document:** Find a government published document that will help you begin to answer your sociological question.  |
| N/A | **Peer Reviewed Journal:** Find a source from a peer reviewed journal (JSTOR would be a good place to start looking for one – check the class website for the link) that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| N/A | **Expert**: Interview an “expert” (can be a professor, someone who works in the field that you are studying, etc.) that will help you begin to answer your sociological question. |
| 12/10 | **Reflection on Project - Explanation of Cause:** Provide an explanation as to WHY your problem occurs. What are bigger picture societal/sociological causes of this problem?  |
| 12/17 | **Reflection on Project - Explanation of Significance:** Provide an explanation of the SIGNIFICANCE of this problem. This could be the significance on a community, city, nation, world, etc. Why is this something we should care about? |