

# TWO TO TANGO: THE SOCIOLOGY OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

[2021 MINECRAFT EDITION]

Department of Sociology

University of Texas at Austin

Spring 2021

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Seminar: T 12:30-2PM/TH 12:30-1PM

Minecraft: TH 1-2PM

Office Hours: By Appointment

Zoom:

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This signature course explores important social relationships we form and nurture at different stages of our lives. The topics of this course range from friendship, family, romantic relationship, marriage, and parenting to professional relationships such as collaboration and teamwork. We will explore how these relationships have changed over time and vary across different social contexts. This course consists of seminar, discussion session, individual and group projects. The expected weekly effort for this course is between 12 and 15 hours.

This course is part of the Difficult Dialogues catalog. You are expected to express your honest thoughts in discussion and essays. You are also expected to open yourself to understand those of other students. Minority opinions are always welcome in this class, as they help us see how people view the issues differently.

Normally, students in this course join the UT tango club and dance tango with each other. This is not a normal time. Instead, we will be playing Minecraft together.

## OBJECTIVES

This signature course aims to help students develop the following skills. Critical Thinking: By reading and discussing materials from sociology, history, psychology, and anthropology, students will gain abilities to view how their relationships are embedded in specific historical and social contexts. Students are also required to apply the concepts they learn to analyze how they form and manage their own relationships. Communication: Healthy relationships are maintained

through successful communication. Students improve their written, oral, and nonverbal communication skills through writing, discussion, and partner dancing. Teamwork: The Minecraft component of this class will provide students the opportunity to work with others and learn how to build and manage a successful relationship.

#### ETHICS STATEMENT

All acts of academic dishonesty constitute academic misconduct. This includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, misinterpretation, and abetment of all of the above, would not be tolerated. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own work and provide proper citations wherever applicable (using words or ideas borrowed from others within written assignments). Any student suspected of academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students in accordance with the University of Texas honor code ([http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint\\_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)). This is simply a warning, and I trust it won't be an issue for you.

The instructor also expects students to respect classmates during discussions. Students are requested to make their best effort to not take provocative social issues and classmates' arguments personally. An effort should be made to base arguments on supporting evidences either from textbook/readings, or from other legitimate sources, and avoid anecdotal evidence.

#### COMMUNICATION

Students are required to join the course discord server (<https://discord.gg/axCGNX7khU>) where I will make announcement related to the class. Please use your full name and EID as part of your user name in the server. Interaction and discussion on the server is encouraged.

Students are encouraged to set up appointments with me to discuss course material and/or anything of their interest/concern, at least once this semester. The class deals with challenging concepts and theories, and it may be difficult to adequately address problems and/or provide advice via email. Because of this, students may find office hours visits more useful in this course. If students cannot come to office hours due to their schedule, an appointment other than regular office hours can be made. Beyond the course content, the instructor enjoys getting to know students, so, feel free to come by and talk about lives (generally) as well!

In case anyone prefers email communication, the instructor will do his best to respond to the emails within 48 hours of their receipt, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm. It is not possible to respond to emails the night before due dates. Plan ahead!

#### SPECIAL NEEDS

Any student with a documented disability (learning, physical, or psychiatric, etc.) needing academic accommodations should see the instructor and provide the appropriate academic forms immediately, and no later than the end of the second week of classes. Contact the University's Services for Students with Disabilities (<http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/>) to get the help you need.

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT

ITS provides fast and reliable technical support (<http://www.utexas.edu/its/helpdesk/>). The instructor does not! An extensive list of the tech support options can be found in the footer of the course website and ITS website.

## WHAT I EXPECT OF YOU

- ✓ Attend the class regularly, **ON TIME**. Coming to class late distracts both the instructor and classmates. (See the attendance policy for details)
- ✓ Turn your camera on during Zoom meetings regularly. If there are reasons you can't do so, please let me know ahead of the time.
- ✓ Check your email inbox and the Canvas page regularly and respond to emails in a timely manner.
- ✓ Do the readings before class. Be prepared to discuss them thoughtfully in class. You may be randomly called upon at any time during a discussion day to reflect on the readings.
- ✓ Turn in the assignments on time.
- ✓ If student(s) are having trouble in the class, or do not understand something, please do not hesitate to talk to the instructor about it during office hours.
- ✓ Good writing and analytical skills are important in this class. Asking for help from the Undergraduate Writing Center (<http://uwc.utexas.edu/>) is highly encouraged.
- ✓ Feel free to share your notes with other students in the class but do not share or sell your notes outside of the class without permission.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students will be granted two missed classes. The two freebies can be used for any kind of excuses. Absences with legitimate documents will not count for the two freebies. If you miss more than two classes, each additional class will cost **two points** on the final grade.

### LEGITIMATE EXCUSES

Examples of legitimate excuses include a death in the family, court appearances, travel under University auspices, religious observance, and illness. Students must inform the instructor at least a week in advance, if there is an anticipated legitimate excuse that will cause them to miss a class or an exam. For all excuses, legitimate documents will be required. For example, in the case of illness, verification by a healthcare professional is required and in the case of a death in the family, any kind of documents such as obituary with the family name on it is required.

## GRADING POLICY AND SCALES

A maximum of **110 points** can be earned in the course.

The final grade will be based on the mastery of each of the required tasks in the class. The grading scale for the final course grade is as follows: 110-94=A; 90-93=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 80-82-B-; 77-79=C+; 73-76=C; 70-72=C-; 67-69=D+; 63-66=D; 60-62=D-; 59 & below=F.

I do not give incompletes and will not change the final grade for whatever reason. You have plenty of opportunities to do well in this class. Use them. **All assignments should be submitted on Canvas.**

**Not everyone will earn an A in this class.** To earn a high grade, you should actively engage in various course activities, including Zoom and Canvas discussion, as well as Minecraft collaboration. Higher scores will be given to students who enhance the experiences of other students. While I understand some students are more introvert but communicating with others is an important aspect of this course.

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#### ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION 25 PTS

A high level of participation is expected throughout the semester in seminars and Minecraft/Film Club sessions. You are encouraged to express your thoughts and share your personal experiences when they are relevant to the topics of interest.

In each seminar, one or several articles will be discussed. Make sure you finish reading them **before class.**

**Pop quizzes about the readings** may be assigned for the class participation grade. Intelligent and thought-provoking questions and comments during lectures would also count.

As addressed above, you have two free absences in the entire semester. However, it is highly recommended that these be used only for emergencies. More than two absences will affect the class attendance grades negatively.

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#### SIX (6) SHORT ESSAYS 30 PTS (5 PTS FOR EACH POST)

Throughout the semester, you are expected to write 6 short essays and post them on the Discussions page on Canvas. Each essay needs to be at least 400 words. There are no specific deadlines for these essays. However, 3 of them need to be posted by the end of March and all 6 essays need to be posted by the end of April. 3 of these essays should be about the assigned readings, 1 of these essays should be about the assigned movies, and 2 of these essays should be about what you learn about social relationship when playing Minecraft. **For the students who opt-out of Minecraft, they will have to write a total of 9 essays**, with 3 of them about the readings and 6 of them about the movies. See the section Short Essays Guideline for the specific instruction for each type of essays.

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#### FOUR (4) RESPONDING ESSAYS 10 PTS (2.5 PTS FOR EACH POST)

You are expected to read the short essays written by other students and write at least 4 responding essays. Each essay needs to be at least 100 words. The response should be constructive, sympathetic, and thoughtful. There are no specific deadlines for these responses. However, 2 of them need to be posted by the end of 4/7 and all 4 need to be posted by 5/7.

Please avoid writing response similar to the example below:

College discussion board:

Jim:  $2+2=4$

Me: Wow Jim I totally agree. I like how you added the 2's together and got 4, very insightful.

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#### MINECRAFT (OR FILM CLUB) 20 PTS

Part of your final grade depends on your participation in MINECRAFT. All UT students have free access to Minecraft Education Edition (<https://education.minecraft.net/>). Please download the game right away and see if you can play it on your computer. Contact me or the tech support if you have any problems.

Students will be assigned into different teams. Each team will build a city together throughout the semester, while competing a different mission each week. **The Minecraft session takes place every Thursday from 1-2PM and every Saturday from 2-4PM for additional play time. We may adjust the play time due to technical limitation and accessibility.**

The grade will be based on whether you join the session regularly and whether you collaborate with your team members in productive and creative ways.

One can choose to opt-out of Minecraft if they have technical difficulties. This is an option only for those who cannot play Minecraft for clear reasons. These students will join a film club meeting during the Minecraft session and watch 5 movies about personal relations for the semester. They will also write a report (>400 words) for each and submit them by the end of March. In the second half of the semester, these students will collaborate to make a short movie on Zoom or do another group project depending on how many students there are.

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#### FINAL PAPER 15 PTS

You are required to submit a term paper at the end of the semester. In this paper you will pick a theme covered and analyze one or more personal relationship you have had and situate this relationship in broader social contexts. These could be your relationship with your parents, friends, siblings, or romantic partners. You are expected to apply the concepts discussed in class, describe the difficulties, and consider how these relationships can or could have been improved. The final paper is expected to be at least 1,000 words. The first draft (5 PTS) should be submitted by noon on **5/6**. The revised version (10 PTS) should be submitted by noon **5/13**.

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#### EXTRA CREDIT: ADDITIONAL ESSAYS 6 PTS (2 PT EACH)

You can submit up to three additional essays to earn extra credit. The essays could be about either the movies we watch or your Minecraft experience. All additional need to be submitted by **5/6**.

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#### EXTRA CREDIT: MINECRAFT/FILM CLUB MASTER 4 PTS

Outstanding Minecraft players and film club members who enhance the learning experiences of other students will be awarded extra credit.

#### SHORT ESSAYS GUIDELINE

I understand that writing could be challenging for first-year students. Below are some guidelines for each type of short essays. You do not have to follow them if you know what you want to write about. However, I do expect your essays to be succinct, clear, and thoughtful without much spelling or grammatical error. All essays need to be at least 400 words.

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#### ESSAY ABOUT READINGS

You should specify which article you are writing about at the beginning of your essay. The first paragraph of the essay discusses, in your opinion, the most important insight/concept in the article. The second paragraph explains why this insight/concept speaks to you or is applicable to your personal experiences. The last paragraph discusses how the reading changes your ideas about certain social relationships.

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#### ESSAY ABOUT MOVIES

Several movies are assigned for discussion. You can pick 1 of them to write about. The first paragraph of the essay describes the most memorable role or part of this movie. The second paragraph explains why this role or scene speaks to you or is applicable to your personal experiences. The last paragraph discusses how the movie changes your ideas about certain social relationships.

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#### ESSAY ABOUT MINECRAFT

The first paragraph describes a challenge you face when collaborating with your team members. The second paragraph discusses how the concepts discussed in the classroom can be used to help you understand this challenge. The last paragraph considers how you plan to overcome this challenge.

#### BOOKS & MOVIES

Assigned Book:

Coontz, Stephanie. 2016. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. Basic Books.

Curington, Lundquist, and Lin. 2021. *The Dating Divide: Race and Desire in the Era of Online Romance*. University of California Press. (Published in February)

Most movies are at the UT library, either as DVDs or through streaming or both. If you would like to stream the movies through the UT library, make sure your computer is connected to the UT internet. You're also free to rent it on any platform. **The assigned movies should be watched before the discussion.**

Assigned Movies:

- BILLY ELLIOT (2000)
- THE INTOUCHABLES (2011)
- CAPTAIN FANTASTIC (2016)
- THE LOVING STORY (2011)
- A SUN (2019)

Film Club Movies:

- A Separation (2011)
- Stories We Tell (2012)
- The Lobster (2015)
- Toni Erdmann (2016)
- Ali: Fear Eats the Soul (1974)

COURSE SCHEDULE

W1 Introduction	
1/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• <a href="#">Minecraft Installation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Minecraft Survey</a></li> </ul>
1/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renstrom, J. 2015. "<a href="#">How to Talk to a Professor—Explained by a Professor.</a>"</li> <li>• Connect to Ken's Class Minecraft Server</li> <li>• Get to know your Team members and explore the world</li> </ul>
W2 Gender I	
1/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West, C. and D. H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." Gender &amp; Society 1(2):125-51</li> </ul>
1/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BILLY ELLIOT (2000)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W3 Gender II	
2/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schrock D. and M. Schwalbe. 2009. "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts." Annual Review of Sociology 35(1):277-95</li> </ul>
2/4	<p><b>Attention:</b></p> <p>A librarian will introduce you to some useful UT resources. Please use the alternative Zoom link provided in the Canvas announcement. We will not have a Minecraft session this Thursday.</p>
W4 Class I	
2/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farkas, G., 2003. Cognitive skills and noncognitive traits and behaviors in stratification processes. Annual review of sociology, 29(1):541-562.</li> </ul>
2/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kraus, M.W., Park, J.W. and Tan, J.J., 2017. Signs of social class: The experience of economic inequality in everyday life. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 12(3):422-435.</li> <li>• Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W5 Class II	
2/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calarco JM. 2011. "I Need Help!" Social Class and Children's Help-Seeking in Elementary School. American Sociological Review. 76(6):862-882.</li> </ul>
2/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THE INTOUCHABLES (2011)</li> <li>• Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W6 Friendship	
2/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giordano, P.C., 2003. Relationships in adolescence. Annual review of sociology, 29(1):257-281.</li> </ul>
2/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McCabe, J. 2016. "Friends with Academic Benefits." Context 15(3):22-29</li> <li>• Way, N. 2013. "The Hearts of Boys." Context 12(1):14-23</li> <li>• Rupp, L. J., and V. Taylor. 2010. "Straight Girls Kissing." Context 9(3):28-32</li> <li>• Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W7 Family I	



3/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Way We Never Were. Chapter 2</li> </ul>
3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Way We Never Were. Chapter 3</li> <li>Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W8 Family II	
3/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Way We Never Were. Chapter 5</li> </ul>
3/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Way We Never Were. Chapter 6</li> <li>Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W9 Spring Break	
3/16	
3/18	
W10 Family III	
3/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Way We Never Were. Chapter 7</li> <li>Moore, M. and Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, M. 2013. "LGBT Sexuality and Families at the Start of the Twenty-First Century." Annual Review of Sociology 39: 491-507.</li> </ul>
3/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CAPTAIN FANTASTIC (2016)</li> <li>Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W11 Romantic Relationship I	
3/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tillman, K.H., Brewster, K.L. and Holway, G.V., 2019. Sexual and Romantic Relationships in Young Adulthood. Annual Review of Sociology, 45:133-153.</li> <li>Hull, Kathleen E., Ann Meier, and Timothy Orty. 2010. "The Changing Landscape of Love and Marriage." Context 9(2):32-37</li> </ul>
4/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armstrong, Elizabeth A., Laura Hamilton, and Paula England. 2010. "Is Hooking Up Bad for Young Women?" Context 9(3):22-27</li> <li>Wade, Lisa. 2017. "What's So Cultural about Hookup Culture?" Context 16(1):66-8</li> <li>Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>

W12 Romantic Relationship II	
4/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Dating Divide. Introduction-Chapter 3</li> </ul>
4/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Dating Divide. Chapter 4</li> <li>Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W13 Romantic Relationship III	
4/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Dating Divide. Chapter 5-6</li> </ul>
4/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Dating Divide. Chapter 7-8</li> <li>Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W14 Romantic Relationship III	
4/20	<p><b>Attention:</b></p> <p>There will not be a meeting for today. Instead, you will join the University Lecture Series:</p> <p>Personal Responsibility vs. Public Health During COVID-19 on April 21, 8-9 p.m. (<a href="https://ugs.utexas.edu/uls">https://ugs.utexas.edu/uls</a>) A link will be announced before the lecture.</p>
4/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quiz about the University Lecture</li> <li>THE LOVING STORY (2011)</li> <li>Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W15 Parenting I	
4/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doucet, A. 2004. "It's Almost Like I Have a Job, But I Don't Get Paid.': Fathers at Home Reconfiguring Work, Care, and Masculinity." <i>Fathering</i> 2:3, 277-303</li> <li>Coontz, S. 2016. <i>The Way We Never Were</i>. Ch. 9</li> </ul>
4/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A SUN (2019)</li> <li>Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>
W16 Parenting II	
5/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schalet, A. 2010. "Sex, Love and Autonomy in the Teenage Sleepover." <i>Context</i> 9(3):16-21</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elliott, Sinikka and Megan Reid. 2016. "The Superstrong Black Mothe" Context 15(1):48-53</li> <li>• Emma Mishel and Mónica L. Caudillo. 2017. "Google searches show more worry over gay men and boys than over gay women and girls."</li> </ul>
5/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusion</li> <li>• Minecraft Session/Film Club</li> </ul>