

**SOC-S 410: Advanced Topics in Social Organization
Intergroup Conflict (Section 11899)**

Spring 2021

Tuesdays/Thursdays

3:15-4:30 PM EST

Synchronous, Online

Course Information

Professor: Steve Benard

Office: BH 748 (not in use Spring 2021, see below details)

Office Hours: T & R 1:00-2:15pm, EST

Office Phone: 812-856-7418

Email: sbenard@indiana.edu (Please put "S410" first in the subject line)

Course webpage: Available on Canvas (<http://canvas.iu.edu>)

Class Location: Meet synchronously over zoom, see below for details

Final Exam: No final exam, final essay due **Tuesday, 5/4/21 at 5:00 PM EST**

Course Description

Conflict between groups of all kinds is commonplace in our world. From small-scale rivalries between families to centuries-old interethnic violence, intergroup conflict disrupts lives and sometimes threatens the stability of entire regions. Despite widespread recognition of the costs of conflict between groups, many people feel powerless to prevent it. This course will examine how conflict between groups begins, and why intergroup conflict is sometimes resolved peacefully, but spirals out of control at other times. Readings for the course blend social science analysis drawn from books and journal articles in sociology and related fields with journalistic and historical accounts of conflict from a range of places and time periods. Students are expected to actively participate in group discussions, as well as develop their own arguments about group conflict through written essays and case study research.

In this course, we will focus on three perspectives that are often used to make sense of intergroup conflict:

1. Conflicts of interest: groups come into conflict because of disputes over material issues (e.g. money, natural resources, political power)
2. Conflicts of identity: groups come into conflict because the existence or success of another group threatens a group's sense of who they are
3. Conflicts of status: groups come into conflict because of concerns about respect, deference, and their place in a hierarchy or social network

This course fulfills the College of Arts and Sciences Intensive Writing (IW) requirement.

Course Rationale

This course has two goals. The first goal of this course is to help you engage some of the questions raised above about how intergroup conflict starts and why it is (or isn't) resolved. As you may have guessed, these are still open questions – otherwise we would live in a much more peaceful world. For this reason, the class will not consist of me telling you the right answers and you writing them down. Instead, we will examine a range of theories about intergroup conflict, and compare these theories to each other and to the available evidence in an effort to develop our own answers. This will help you learn how social scientists think about social phenomena, how they construct theories to explain them, and how they test those theories.

The second goal of this course is to help you become a more confident and effective writer. To this end, the course emphasizes the importance of writing and revising in stages. You will have the opportunity to revise your work, and in doing so improve your ability to craft and support arguments as well as learn about writing within sociology (and helpful principles for writing in general). Most of the work we will do in this class will support both of these goals at the same time: we will use writing to explore ideas about conflict, and use conflict as a motivation for writing.

In Class

Meeting online

Our class will meet synchronously online from 3:15PM to 4:30PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You can find information about using Zoom at IU here:

<https://kb.iu.edu/d/bfqu>

I will send you a Zoom link to use for our class. For security reasons, we will take the following steps:

- Participants must be logged in to Zoom with their IU credentials.
- I will give you a password to join the class
- The waiting room will be enabled
- Please do not publicly share the course link and/or password

It may take some trial and error to figure out the best way to approximate an in-person discussion. To begin with, please raise your hand (either your real hand or the virtual hand icon in Zoom). on when you would like to speak. If this does not work well, we can experiment with other approaches.

Class discussion

Each class will focus on an in-depth discussion of the issues raised by the readings that week. It is important that everyone read the assigned readings each week and come to class ready to actively participate in the discussion – to ask questions, speak to debates that arise in the literature, challenge what class members (including me) have said, and relate the material to your own projects. The more you participate, the more we will all gain from the class. I expect that everyone will actively participate in discussions; not actively participating may reduce your final grade.

Canvas Page

The course is organized into modules on Canvas. Each module contains everything you need for that week, including any readings for the week, and a place to submit your response paper or essays.

Contact and Office Hours

My email address is sbenard@indiana.edu. Please put "S410" in the subject line of all course-related emails, this will help me prioritize student emails. I will reply as soon as I can, typically within 48 hours.

My office hours are T & R 1:00pm-2:15pm. You can sign up for virtual office hours with me at <https://prof-benard.youcanbook.me>. After you sign up, I will send you a link for a Zoom meeting. If you don't have availability during these times, you can email me to set up another time to meet.

I am also available to respond to questions via email, though for longer questions I can help you more effectively in office hours. I do not check the "inbox" section of Canvas frequently, so it is better to get in touch via email.

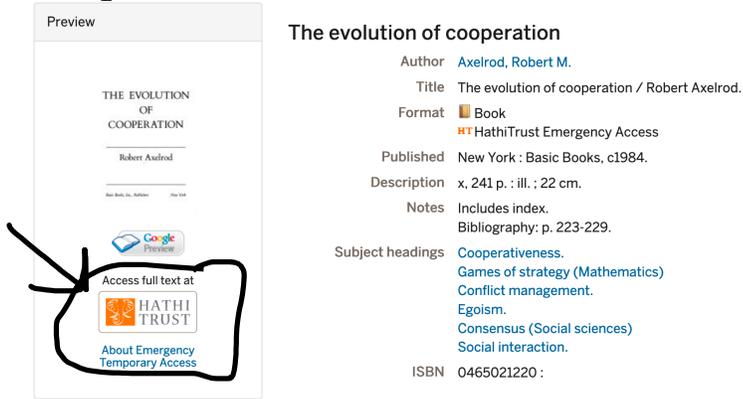
The Campus Writing Program: The Campus Writing Program offers a variety of services to help you with your writing, including a writing tutorial service. My past students have mentioned that they find the writing center very helpful. For more information, please visit: <http://citl.indiana.edu/programs/writing/>

Required Texts

There is one required text, available free online:

- Axelrod, Robert. 2006. *The Evolution of Cooperation, 2nd Edition*. United States of America: Basic Books.
- IU catalog link: <https://iucat.iu.edu/catalog/263604>

Due to the pandemic, you can access the full text free through the IU library (see IU catalog link above). You will need to be logged in with your IU credentials. Click the "Access Full Text through Hathi Trust" link on the left.



Preview

THE EVOLUTION OF COOPERATION
Robert Axelrod

Access full text at
HATHI TRUST
About Emergency Temporary Access

The evolution of cooperation

Author [Axelrod, Robert M.](#)

Title The evolution of cooperation / Robert Axelrod.

Format  Book
[HT HathiTrust Emergency Access](#)

Published New York : Basic Books, c1984.

Description x, 241 p. : ill. ; 22 cm.

Notes Includes index.
Bibliography: p. 223-229.

Subject headings [Cooperativeness.](#)
[Games of strategy \(Mathematics\)](#)
[Conflict management.](#)
[Egoism.](#)
[Consensus \(Social sciences\)](#)
[Social interaction.](#)

ISBN 0465021220 :

If you would like to purchase the text, it is available in the IU bookstore (and also Amazon). All additional readings will be available on the Canvas website (<http://canvas.iu.edu>) in the module for that week.

Grading and Evaluation

This is a senior-level, intensive writing seminar class. You should only take this class if you are prepared to participate in class and devote substantial amounts of time to the reading and writing assignments. The readings and assignments will be challenging, but we will use our time in class to discuss the readings and make sense of the key ideas. Your grade for this course will be based on your written work (~75%) and participation in class (~25%).

Outside writing: You will write three outside essays for this class. This includes two medium length essays (5-7 pages) and one longer research essay (8-10 pages). The two medium length essays will focus on specific perspectives that we will cover in class. The longer research essay will require you to conduct some research outside of class, and will be written in stages: a proposal, a first draft, and a final draft. For turning in all of the essays, please submit an electronic copy through Canvas. You do not need to submit a paper copy. All late papers will be penalized by 10% per day late.

Revision: It has been said that there is no good writing, only good *rewriting*. For this reason, I will allow you to re-write the two medium length essays (re-writing the research essay is included in the assignment). Please note that although you may revise your essays, I expect that your original essays will be high quality papers that reflect substantial time and effort. Revisions will not be allowed if the original paper is late, obviously incomplete (e.g., does not answer all parts of the essay question, is missing introduction, conclusion or references, is substantially under the page requirement, etc). All revisions are due within two weeks after receiving your graded original paper. I encourage you to discuss your revisions with me before completing them.

Class Participation: This is a discussion-based seminar; attendance is crucial for ensuring lively and productive class meetings. Therefore, I expect each of you to be on time and prepared for every class. I also expect you to be respectful of your fellow students and their ideas. Many of the topics we study are open to debate. Members of the class may naturally disagree with one another, but it is important to do this in a courteous and professional manner. There are several components to your class participation grade: response papers, discussion participation, and a final presentation.

Response papers: We will have a total of eight short (2-pages, double-spaced) response papers due over the course of the semester. The purpose of these response papers is to help you think through the readings before class, and help us have a productive discussion. Response papers should address the orienting questions for the reading that day. The orienting questions for each week are listed below in the “Course Overview”. Try your best to answer the orienting questions. If you get stuck, try to write about what concepts you are having trouble understanding and what you think they might mean. This will let me get know which topics we should spend more time on in class. Each response paper is worth 5 points. You will need to complete seven of the eight

response papers to receive full credit (i.e., you can skip one). Please submit an electronic copy through Canvas. You do not need to submit a paper copy.

Discussion Leaders: you are expected to actively participate in discussions. In addition, each person will sign up to be a discussion leader twice during the semester. When you are the discussion leader, it is your responsibility to 1) bring in 2-3 discussion questions about the reading 2) help the class think through your question if they have difficulty with it, and 3) email your questions to me 24 hours before class. We will discuss how to write effective discussion questions in class. Late discussions questions will receive half credit.

Final Presentation: Everyone will present his or her final research project to the class. We will discuss this in more detail later in the semester.

Grading

In this course, you can earn a total of 200 points. Your grade will be based on the percent of points you earn (e.g. 100-94% = A, < 94%-90% = A-, <90-87% = B+, etc.). Because life is unpredictable, especially now, I will spot you up to 10 points for missed or late assignments, up to a maximum score of 200. In other words, if you earn 150 points, your final grade will be 160/200. If you earn 195 points, your final grade will be 200/200. If you use up these additional points and have a health or other issue that requires accommodation, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Point Values for Assignments

| Assignment | Value | Due |
|----------------------------|-----------|--|
| Class Participation | | |
| Response Papers | 35 Points | See course overview below |
| Discussion Leader | 10 Points | Sign up at the beginning of the semester |
| Final Presentation | 10 Points | End of semester (sign up) |
| Outside Writing | | |
| Game Theory Essay | 35 Points | 2/18 |
| Identity Theory Essay | 35 Points | 3/16 |
| Research Essay | 75 Points | 4/6 – Proposal |
| | | 4/20 – First draft |
| | | 5/4 – Final draft |

Course Policies

Academic Integrity: You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to Indiana University's Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct, available here:

<http://studentcode.iu.edu/>

Standards of academic integrity will be strictly enforced. Behaving dishonestly (including plagiarism and other violations of the code) in order to get a better grade is unfair to the vast majority of students who behave honestly. Any violations of the code will result in, at a minimum, a grade of 0 on the assignment and may result in further penalties. Forging any type of documentation or excuse (e.g., letters from doctors or regarding family emergencies) will be severely penalized.

In addition, as required by Indiana University policy, academic misconduct will be reported in writing to the Dean of Students, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the College or School in which you are enrolled.

Respect for others: In the course of class discussion, it is natural that some people will have different perspectives. It is normal for people to disagree, but it is important to do it in a mature and thoughtful manner. You are expected to be polite and respectful to all members of the class at all times.

Bias Reporting: As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to create a positive learning environment for all students. Bias incidents (events or comments that target an individual or group based on age, color, religion, disability, race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status or veteran status) are not appropriate in our classroom or on campus. Bias-based incident reports can be made by students, faculty, and staff. Any act of discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability can be reported through any of the following options: 1) email biasincident@indiana.edu or incident@indiana.edu; 2) call the Dean of Students Office at (812) 855-8188; or 3) use the IU mobile App (m.iu.edu). Reports can be made anonymously.

Disability Services for Students: Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities (e.g. mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision neurological, etc.). You must have established your eligibility for support services through the appropriate office that services students with disabilities. Note that services are confidential, may take time to put into place and are not retroactive; captions and alternate media for print materials may take three or more weeks to get produced. Please contact Disability Services for Students at <http://disabilityservices.indiana.edu> or 812- 855-7578 as soon as possible if accommodations are needed. The office is located on the third floor, west tower, of the Wells Library, Room W302. Walk-ins are welcome 8 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday. You can also locate a variety of campus resources for students and visitors that need assistance at: <http://www.iu.edu/~ada/index.shtml>.

Sexual Misconduct: As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to create a positive learning environment for all students. IU policy prohibits sexual misconduct in any form, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, sexual exploitation, and dating and domestic violence. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help. If you are seeking help and would like to speak to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with the IU Sexual Assault Crisis Services at 812- 855-5711, or contact a Confidential Victim Advocate at 812-856-2469 or cva@indiana.edu.

It is also important that you know that University policy requires me to share certain information brought to my attention about potential sexual misconduct, with the campus Deputy Sexual Misconduct & Title IX Coordinator or the University Sexual Misconduct & Title IX Coordinator. In that event, those individuals will work to ensure that appropriate measures are taken, and resources are made available. Protecting student privacy is of utmost concern, and information will only be shared with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist. I encourage you to visit stopsexualviolence.iu.edu to learn more.

Digital Access: Digital devices (like laptops and cell phones) are becoming increasingly important to success in college. In this course, you may need digital devices to access readings, and complete and submit written assignments.

I recognize that some students are unable to afford the cost of purchasing digital devices and that other students rely on older, more problem-prone devices that frequently break down or become unusable. I also recognize that those technology problems can be a significant source of stress for students. Given those challenges, I encourage students to contact me and/or the teaching assistant if they experience a technology-related problem that interferes with their work in this course. This will enable me to assist students in accessing support.

I also encourage students to be aware of the many technology-related resources that Indiana University provides, including:

- Free on-campus wireless internet (wifi) access through the “IU Secure” network.
- Free software for download and for cloud-based use.
- Free unlimited, secure online storage through OneDrive or Google Drive (a great way to back up files).
- Free 24/7 IU tech support (e.g., email, Canvas, wifi, printing, device setup, etc.).
- Free in-person tech support at the Learning Commons in the Wells Library and in IMU room M089.
- Students can borrow laptops and tablets from the Learning Commons in the Wells Library ([click here for hours](#)).
- Discounts on devices from leading technology companies, including Apple, Dell, and Microsoft.

Student Advocate’s Office: If you experience a personal issue that affects your academic work, and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with your instructors, I encourage you to visit the Student Advocate’s Office.

<https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/student-advocates/>

Formatting

The following formatting elements are expected for all essays:

- Your name and the assignment name or number should be at the top of the first page, or on a title page
- Please type and double space all assignments
- Please use Times New Roman or Cambria, 12 point type, black ink
- Please use 1.25” margins and a 1” header and footer (These are MS Word’s default settings)
- Please cite all sources. You are welcome to use any citation format that you are comfortable with (MLA, APA, ASA, etc.) – it just needs to be consistent. A helpful citation reference is:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

Course Overview

Week 1: Introduction to the course, beginning game theory **Jan. 19-21**

Tuesday 1/19: Introduction to the course

In Class: Introductory exercise, discuss syllabus, semester overview

Thursday 1/21: Introduction to game theory

In Class: This class will introduce you to the basic concepts of game theory. We will begin class by playing the prisoner’s dilemma, the most commonly discussed game. The class discussion will focus on applying game theory concepts.

Reading Due: McCain (pages 1-10 only)

Week 2: The Strategy of Conflict **Jan. 26-28**

Orienting questions: If we are trying to understand human behavior, what is helpful or unhelpful about assuming that people are basically rational? Why are rationality and intelligence *not necessarily* an asset in bargaining situations? Schelling says that “the most successful strike is the one that doesn’t take place.” What does he mean by this – how can something that doesn’t happen be successful? What sorts of things make threats more credible? Do Schelling’s ideas help us understand what is happening in the Karnad article on Kashmir? Is this a conflict about people rationally pursuing their goals using the means available to them? Or do you think this conflict is more about group identity, emotions, or some other factor?

Tuesday 1/26:

In Class: Discussion of Schelling, Karnad, “In Kashmir...”

Reading Due: Schelling

Writing Due: Response paper #1

Thursday 1/28:

In Class: Discussion of Schelling, Karnad

Reading Due: None

Week 3: The Evolution of Cooperation 1 **Feb. 2-4**

Orienting Questions: Describe Axelrod's computer tournament. Who were the players? How did they keep score? Describe the winning strategy. What does Axelrod mean by "the shadow of the future?" Why does the shadow of the future matter for achieving cooperation? Is there a best strategy to use in an indefinitely repeated prisoner's dilemma? If yes, what is the strategy, and why is it the best? If no, why does such a strategy not exist? Why do exploitative ("non-nice") strategies do poorly in the tournament?

Tuesday 2/2:

In Class: Discussion of Axelrod, writing lesson 1

Reading Due: Axelrod, chapters 1-3

Writing Due: Response paper #2

Thursday 2/4:

In Class: Discussion of Axelrod

Week 4: The Evolution of Cooperation 2

Feb. 9-11

Orienting Questions: According to Axelrod, how was trench warfare in WWII similar to a prisoner's dilemma? What made cooperation between the two sides possible under these conditions, and what caused it to collapse? Based on the reading, what suggestions can you give to people who might find themselves in prisoner's dilemma?

Tuesday 2/9:

In Class: Discussion of Axelrod, writing lesson 2

Reading due: Axelrod, chapters 4, 6, 7 (note you can skip Chapter 5)

Writing Due: Response paper #3

Thursday 2/11:

In Class: Discussion of Axelrod 4, 6, 7

Week 5: Game Theory Application and Extensions: "The Square"

Feb. 16-18

Tuesday February 16th - Wellness Day - **No class**

Thursday 2/18:

In Class: "The Square" film discussion

Film due: In this class we will watch a portion of the documentary "The Square", about the 2011 democracy movement in Egypt. **Before class, you should watch the first 35 minutes.**

You can watch the film for free through the library's proxy server:

https://fod-infobase-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=139951

It's also available on Netflix and Amazon Prime.

Writing Due: Game theory essay (due Thursday 2/18)

Week 6: Georg Simmel: A Classic Perspective on Intergroup Conflict Feb. 23-25

Orienting questions: What does Simmel mean by “centralization” and “cohesion”? How does he think both centralization and cohesion are affected by conflict with another group? Simmel thinks that groups can sometimes benefit politically from having enemies (see, e.g., p. 96). Why does he think this? Do you think this argument is plausible?

Tuesday 2/23:

In Class: Discuss Simmel, writing lesson 3

Reading Due: Simmel, “Conflict” chapter 3

Writing Due: Response paper #4

Thursday 2/25:

In Class: Discuss Simmel

Week 7: From Interest to Identity**March. 2-4**

Orienting questions: Sherif argues against assuming that conflict is a “natural” state or drive for human beings. What does he believe is wrong with this argument? According to Sherif, what is the primary factor that determines whether relations between groups will be cooperative or competitive? Describe Sherif’s study (there are three, but they are virtually identical, so you can describe them as if they are a single study). Who are the participants? Where does the study take place? What three stages does the study pass through? An observer might say that the boys in the camp are taking these games too seriously. Why did conflict between the two groups of boys in the camp spiral out of control?

Tuesday 3/2:

In Class: Discuss Sherif, writing lesson 4

Reading Due: Sherif, chapters 3, 5, 8

Writing Due: Response paper #5

Thursday 3/4:

In Class: Discuss Sherif

Week 8: Identity without Interest**Mar. 9-11**

Orienting questions: What do social psychologists mean by “identity”? According to Brewer, does liking our in-group automatically mean disliking an out-group? What is an alternative to thinking this way? What does Brewer mean by “optimal distinctiveness”? What two needs does she argue that people have? Why do some groups move from thinking positively about their own group to actually disliking an out-group? Are these ideas helpful for understanding why some young people are recruited to (or create) extremist organizations, as in the Finnegan article? Or do you think there is a different explanation that does a better job of explaining this (for example, the game theory ideas we discussed in the first part of the course)?

Tuesday 3/9:

In Class: Discussing psychological identity theory

Reading Due: Brewer, “When Does Ingroup Love Become Outgroup Hate?”

Writing Due: Response paper #6

Thursday 3/11:

In Class: Continue psychological identity theory

Reading Due: Finnegan, “The Unwanted”

Week 9: Identity as a Sense of Group Position

Mar. 16-18

Orienting questions: What does Blumer mean by the term “a sense of group position”? Why does he think that this concept is important for understanding racial prejudice? How do groups develop a sense of their social positions? Is a “sense of group position” different from other approaches to identity we’ve talked about? Or is it essentially the same idea?

In the Saslow article about Derek Black, what did you think about the interactions between Derek and his college friends? Does this suggest any pathways for conflict resolution? Under what conditions do you think this approach will be successful or unsuccessful?

Tuesday 3/16:

In Class: Discuss Blumer, writing lesson 5

Reading Due: Blumer, “Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position”

Writing Due: Identity theory essay

Thursday 3/18:

In Class: Discuss

Saslow, “The White Flight of Derek Black”, implications for identity theory and conflict resolution

Reading Due: Saslow, “The White Flight of Derek Black”

Week 10: The Importance of Reputation

Mar. 23-25

Orienting questions: How do Nisbett and Cohen explain why homicide rates are greater in the Southern compared to the Northern US? Why does Southern culture place a greater emphasis on reputation and personal honor than other parts of the US? How do Nisbett and Cohen test their ideas? What do you think about their experiments? According to Anderson, why is reputation important in inner-city Philadelphia? Are there any similarities between the setting Anderson describes and the old South as described by Nisbett and Wilson? Are these fundamentally similar settings, or fundamentally different ones? According to Anderson, why are potential muggers sometimes afraid to rob people who are *not* streetwise?

Tuesday 3/23:

In Class: Discuss Nisbett and Cohen, Anderson, research essay

Reading Due: Nisbett and Cohen, selections from Anderson

Writing Due: Response paper #7

Thursday 3/25: Unofficial extra wellness day, no class.

Week 11: Honor, Revenge, and Conflict

Mar. 30-Apr. 1

Orienting questions: According to Gould, what’s wrong with the logic of the following statement”

“the teachers will go on strike because they will earn a raise by doing so”? Have you seen this kind of argument in any of our other readings? In Gould’s theory, if a person in an honor culture is insulting, should they insist on receiving an apology? What are the likely benefits or costs they might consider? Gould argues that vengeance could function as a tool for *preventing* conflict. How could this be? Hint: it helps to think about the targets of revenge.

Tuesday 3/30:

In Class: Discuss Gould chapters 1 & 3

Reading Due: Gould chapters 1, 3

Writing Due: Response paper #8

Thursday 4/1:

In Class: Discuss Gould chapters 1, 3

Reading Due: None

Week 12: Conflict in Social Networks**Apr. 6-8**

Orienting questions: How do our social networks matter help for things like getting a job, getting promoted, and having influence over other people? How might we draw on our social networks for support when things are difficult? Think about your answers to the questions above. Do these help us understand the tremendous increase in violence in Mexico lately, at least according to Finnegan? From a social network perspective, what causes violence between gangs? Is this explanation similar to or different from other explanations we’ve discussed so far? Does social network analysis suggest any new ways of reducing crime and violence?

Tuesday 4/6:

In Class: Discuss Papachristos, “The Network Structure of Crime”

Reading Due: Papachristos, “The Network Structure of Crime”

Writing Due: Research essay proposal

Thursday 4/8:

In Class: Discuss Finnegan, “Silver or Lead”

Reading Due: Finnegan, “Silver or Lead”

Week 13: Case Study - The Interrupters**Apr. 13-15**

Tuesday 4/14:

Before class: Watch portions (~35 minutes) “The Interrupters” documentary about violence in Chicago

- Watch chapters 1-6 (about 22 minutes)
- Watch chapters 10-13 (about 12 minutes)

You can watch the film for free through the library’s proxy server:

https://fod-infobase-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=131320

Thursday April 22 Wellness Day - No class

Week 14: Research project presentations

Apr. 20-22

Tuesday 4/20 & Thursday 4/22:

In Class: Paper Presentations

Writing Due: Research essay first draft (due Tuesday 4/20)

Week 15: Research project presentations, course wrap-up

Apr. 27-29

Tuesday 4/27 & Thursday 4/28:

In Class: Paper presentations, course wrap-up

Return: Research essay **final draft due Tuesday, 5/4/21 at 5:00 PM**