Reaction Paper 1: February 22. Select ONE of the following readings and answer the questions relating to it. The paper should be approximately 3 double-spaced pages using a standard 12-point font and 1-inch margins.

Berger
Why is this article titled “An Invitation to Sociology”? Who is invited? Berger starts by taking about the scientific nature of sociology, but then goes on to talk about plain old curiosity. Why is it important to be “scientific” about our curiosity? Describe a time when you were exposed to a new or different perspective on something that was once familiar to you. How did you feel? Given Berger’s discussion of the type of person that is drawn to sociology, do you think you would make a good sociologist? Why or why not?

Ritzer
Select an experience you have had working for or interacting with an organization and compare that organization with the characteristics of McDonalds that Ritzer describes. Do you think McDonaldization is a positive trend? Please explain why or why not, give examples. What are formal rationality and the “iron cage of rationality”? Is Weber correct in his assessment that formal rationality has created an iron cage of rationality, or is he over-reacting? Explain your answer. Are there any modern organizations that are not McDonaldized? Give examples. In your assessment, what will the future of organizations look like?
Reaction Paper 2: April 19. Select ONE of the following readings and answer the questions relating to it. The paper should be approximately 3 double-spaced pages using a standard 12-point font and 1-inch margins.

**Gans**
Gans discusses the function of poverty. Do you “buy” that all of the things he lists are positive functions of poverty? Why or why not? Do you think average individuals recognize these functions or are oblivious to them? Give examples. Do you think politicians recognize them? Gans also discusses alternatives functions. Do these seem like reasonable alternatives that we, as a society, could pursue? Which alternative seem least reasonable, why? Which alternative seems most reasonable and why?

**Skolnick & Skolnick**
Compared to the so-called “golden age” of family life, what are the major changes that have taken place? Fifty years from now, what aspect of the modern family of 2004 will we wish still existed? Explain why. How do you think the family will change in the future? Think about demographic, economic and psychological forces. In your assessment, is the family doomed to failure? Why or why not? Are any of the recent changes positive changes? Explain.

**Ayella and Guest Lecturer Alexandra Stein**
Both Ayella and our guest lecturer, Alexandra Steain describe the recruiting process and activities of cults. From their own experiences they point out the elements that attract individuals to religious cults. Ayella claims that joiners of cults are essentially normal. Considering the various practices of cults, why would you accept/reject this claim? Explain. Considering your own socialization, culture, education and beliefs, would it be possible to recruit you into a cult? Why or why not? If normal people join cults, why do you think cults are so mysterious to the masses?