

SOC 1001: Introduction to Sociology

Wednesdays | 5:30 – 8 pm | Anderson Hall 250
4 Credits | Fall 2018

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Course Description

“Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.”

- Clifford Geertz

This course is designed to introduce you to the study of society and what sociologists call the *sociological imagination* -- a way of viewing the events, relationships and social phenomena that shape our individual lives and much of our collective experience. Sociologists investigate the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, and ask how and why people interact within these contexts. This course explores diverse sociological theories and methods that seek to explain the social, political, and economic structures prevailing in our society. We will examine some of society's most pressing issues in detail, including race relations, gender inequality, and religious freedom. Sociology explores the social conditions that enable and constrain the courses of action that any individual can take, meaning it is often at the forefront of identifying and proposing solutions to major forms of inequality and injustice. Throughout the course, you will be asked to consider the ways in which society affects your life, and how you, in turn, affect society. We will examine some of the central concepts and problems that preoccupy sociologists and gain a sense of how the sociological imagination can illuminate the social forces that have a concrete impact on our everyday lives.

Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate recognition that everyday experiences, from minor thoughts and interactions to sweeping social problems, are socially constructed.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of key sociological concepts, terms, theories, and perspectives.
3. Evaluate current events, social policies, and personal experiences using sociological concepts, theories, and perspectives.
4. Critically evaluate written arguments by assessing their evidence, methods, and assumptions.

Council of Liberal Education Requirements

Social Science Core

This course meets the Council on Liberal Education's Social Science core. We will examine how sociologists describe and analyze human behavior and we will review key theories and bodies of knowledge in the discipline. We address questions that are central to both social scientific knowledge and current societal debates as we explore the interrelationships among individuals, institutions, social structures, events and ideas.

Diversity & Social Justice Theme

This course fulfills the CLE Diversity and Social Justice Theme. Understanding the diversity of the United States and the complex ways in which diversity can be both an asset and a source of social tensions is integral to an informed, responsible and ethical citizenry. This course promotes understanding of how multiple forms of social difference (such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion and sexual orientation) have shaped social, political and cross-cultural relationships in the United States. We also critically investigate issues of power and privilege in economic, political and other institutions.

Course Readings

There are no required texts for this course. All readings will be posted on Canvas.

No textbook means that your weekly readings will be more interesting, but it also means that most weeks there will not be a standard textbook chapter to help introduce and define new concepts. Instead, lectures will cover new concepts and topics, and the readings will flesh out those concepts with research studies or analyses of current events. This means that coming to lectures will be especially key to doing well in this class.

If you would like to have a sociology textbook to supplement the readings in the course, check out *Introduction to Sociology 2e* at Openstax.com. This is a free online textbook that you can read online or download the full text at <https://openstax.org/details/introduction-sociology-2e>.

Discussion Sections

This course has two components: lecture and discussion section. **Both lecture and discussions are required and regular attendance in both is important.** Lectures are where new concepts and materials will be presented, and while we will certainly have discussions and activities during lectures, discussion sections are broken into smaller groups so each of you can ask more questions and talk with one another about the things we are learning. Discussion section is in many ways your home base in this course and your discussion leaders are your go-to resource. Discussion leaders were in your position not too long ago, and they have tons of advice to offer about how to succeed in the course. They are also the ones grading a majority of your work and helping the instructor keep track of your progress over the semester. So, get to know your TAs and utilize the discussion sections to solidify your knowledge, bounce ideas off your peers and TAs, and keep up to date in the course.

Section Schedule and Locations

Section 31 with Jean Marie – Wednesdays, 4:25-5:15 pm, Blegen Hall 330

Section 32 with Abigail – Wednesdays, 4:25-5:15 pm, Blegen Hall 125

Section 33 with Nahrissa – Wednesdays, 4:25-5:15 pm, Blegen Hall 430

Section 34 with Jean Marie – Wednesdays, 8:15-9:05 pm, Blegen Hall 430

Expectations

This is an introductory course, but it will require your sustained effort and commitment. Be prepared to read thoroughly and engage with the lectures, discussions, and assignments. Learning about sociology means learning a new perspective with which to understand the world around you. Like learning a new language, this takes work and requires active reading, asking questions, and keeping an open mind.

I want to emphasize that this must remain a safe space for everyone. **Considering and respecting alternative perspectives, beliefs, and cultures is a prerequisite for this course.** We will cover many topics that can and will elicit emotions and can quickly become triggers for you or others in the class. So please be respectful of others in your comments and discussions. Personal attacks, disparaging remarks, or attempts to dominate the conversation will not be tolerated. We will certainly disagree on some things and many of us will learn new information that challenges things we held to be true for a long time – both of which are good things. Learning requires keeping an open mind and reflecting critically on what you know and do not know.

Grading

In-class journals	100 points (10 total, 10 points each)
Participation in Discussion Sections	100 points (10 total, 10 points each)
Exams	300 points (3 total, 100 points each)
There's Research on That!	100 points
Outline	40 points
Final Draft	60 points
Neighborhoods Project	150 points
Part 1	60 points
Part 2	90 points
Total	750 points

Grading Scale

A = 675 – 750 points

B = 600 – 674 points

C = 525 – 599 points

D = 450 – 524 points

EXTRA CREDIT -- Sociology in the News

You can get up to 15 points in extra credit by bringing in two-paragraph summaries of news stories in which sociology or a sociologist is cited. Explain the news stories and the contribution that the sociological perspective gave to the issues covered in the stories. You can do up to three summaries worth 5 points each. To get credit, you need to email your summary and a link to the news story to both the instructor and your TA by 3:00 pm each Wednesday. You can only submit one summary a week. I will ask for volunteers at the start of class to report on what news stories they found each week and the TAs and I will bring in a few of our own as well.

Late Submissions

We will accept late work only when you have obtained permission in advance. We will consider late submissions if you have a legitimate reason for requesting an extension – legitimate reasons include a physical illness, a mental health issue, or a pressing family matter. Unless you've made arrangements with the instructor or TAs, **exams can only be taken in class on the day they are scheduled.** Unexcused missed exams will result in a 0 on the exam.

Attendance

While there is no official attendance grade for this course, the course will be difficult to pass if you miss lecture or discussions. There is no standard textbook for the course, which means a lot of the basic concepts and ideas you'll need to know for the exams will be covered in lecture. **You may not make up in-class participation exercises without a valid university excuse** (see Assignment Descriptions on page 5). If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain class notes from a classmate and/or meet with the instructor or your TA to go over missed materials.

Assignment Descriptions (detailed assignment guidelines will be provided separately)

In-Class Journaling (100 points)

Each week we will engage in a short writing exercise to be completed during lecture. These short in-class writing prompts will often ask you to discuss one or more of the readings and to make connections between your experiences and the things we are learning that week. These journals can only be completed in class and can only be made up with a valid university excuse (physical illness, mental health, family emergency, athletics). There are 11 weeks where you will be asked to journal in class, but you will only be graded for 10 of those weeks. This means that one journal entry can be missed without affecting your grade.

Discussion Section Participation (100 points)

Discussion section participation is an important component of this course, and each week you will be asked to participate in a variety of individual and small-group activities, writing exercises, and discussions in your discussion sections. Your attendance and participation will be noted in each session, either through submitting the results of an activity or by your participation in the class discussion. There will be 10 weeks where participation in discussion section will be graded. Discussion section participation points can only be gained by attending and participating in discussions and can only be made up with a valid university excuse (physical illness, mental health, family emergency, athletics).

Exams (300 points)

There will be three exams in this course. Exams will be short-answer and essay format and will ask you to think across topics and concepts from the course. I am more interested in your ability to use what you are in learning in class to understand the world around you than I am in your ability to memorize vocabulary words and statistics. To facilitate this broader thinking, you can bring one page of notes to the exams (you can write on the front and back). These notes can be typed or hand-written and should be used as your mini-guide through all the readings and lectures. Study guides will be provided one week before each exam.

There's Research on That! Blog Assignment (100 points)

For your first major assignment in the course, you will write a short blog-like article similar to the There's Research on That! pieces found on *The Society Pages*. You will pick a current event or an issue you care about and find sociological research that helps explain that event or issue. You will learn how to find and sort through sociological journals and research and learn how to use sociological methods and theories to better understand the world around you.

Neighborhoods Project (150 points)

For your second major assignment in the course, you will use census data to investigate state, town, and neighborhood-level census data from three different parts of the United States, drawing on course readings about race, class, gender, health, and neighborhood inequalities to analyze the demographics you find in your data. You will learn how to draw on sociological data to make your own observations about the social world and use sociological concepts to understand that data.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Section 1: The Sociological Imagination

Week 1: What is Sociology? Sept. 5

- To read:*
1. Peter Berger. "Sociology as an Individual Pastime."
 2. C. Wright Mills. "Personal Experiences and Public Issues."
 3. Why Study Sociology? *Openstax*

Week 2: Theory and Method in Sociology Sept. 12

- To read:*
1. Approaches to Sociological Research. *Openstax*
 2. Linking Sociological Theory to Research. *The Art and Science of Social Research*
 3. Joel Best. "Telling the Truth about Damned Lies and Statistics."

Week 3: Culture, Socialization, and the Social Construction of Reality Sept. 19

- To read:*
1. Elements of Culture. *Openstax*
 2. Social Constructions of Reality. *Openstax*
 3. Annette Lareau. "Concerted Cultivation and the Accomplishment of Natural Growth."
 4. Howard Becker. "Becoming a Marijuana User."

Film: *The Culture High*

Week 4: Social Stratification, Privilege, and Intersectionality Sept. 26

- To read:*
1. Social Stratification and Mobility. *Openstax*
 2. Peter Kaufman. "Intersectionality for Beginners."
 3. Stephanie Wildman and Adrienne Davis. "Making Systems of Privilege Visible."
 4. Allan Johnson. "Privilege as Paradox."

Week 5: Exam 1 Oct. 3

Exam: Exam 1 in class

Section 2: Intersecting Social Locations

Week 6: Education and Social Class Oct. 10

- To read:*
1. Shamus Khan. "Democratic Inequality and the New Elite."
 2. Todd Beer. "A Path to Mobility? How Universities Maintain the Class Structure."
 3. Richard Zweigenhaft and G. William Domhoff. "Diversity and the New CEOs."

Week 7: Race and Ethnicity Oct. 17

- To read:*
1. Meghan Burke. "Colorblindness vs. Race Consciousness – An American Ambivalence."
 2. George Fredrickson. "Models of American Ethnic Relations: Hierarchy, Assimilation, and Pluralism."
 3. Richard Dyer. "The Matter of Whiteness."
 4. Wendy Roth. "Creating a 'Latino' Race."

Film: *White Like Me*

Due: ***Outline for There's Research on That! assignment due in class at 5:30 pm***

Week 8: Gender and Sexuality Oct. 24

- To read:*
1. Candace West and Don Zimmerman. "Doing Gender."
 2. Michael Messner. "Becoming 100% Straight."
 3. Tristan Bridges and C.J. Pascoe. "Masculinity, Gender (Non)Conformity, and Queer Visibility."

Guest Speakers: UMN Sociology Graduate Students Allison Nobles and Monica Jarvi
To prepare, read: "New Evidence of Genetic Factors Influencing Sexual Orientation in Men: Female Fecundity Increase in the Maternal Line."

Week 9: Religion and Nonreligion Oct. 31

- To read:*
1. Mark Chaves and Dianne Hagaman. "Abiding Faith."
 2. Dan Winchester. "The Feel of Faith."
 3. Sigal Samuel. "Atheists Are Sometimes More Religious Than Christians."

Week 10: Exam 2 Nov. 7

Exam: Exam 2 in class

Due: ***There's Research on That! assignment due in class at 5:30 pm***

Section 3: Physical Locations and Social Outcomes

Week 11: Crime and Punishment Nov. 14

To Read: 1. Kai Erikson. "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance."
2. Sarah Shannon and Chris Uggen. "Visualizing Punishment."
3. César García Hernández. "The Rise of 'Crimmigration'."

Film: 13th

Week 12: Thanksgiving – No Class Nov. 21

Week 13: Neighborhoods and Inequality Nov. 28

To Read: 1. Robert Sampson. "How Neighborhoods Shape Our Lives."
2. Rose Malinowski Weingartner. "7 Things Maps Tells Us About Neighborhoods."
3. Lindsay Fox. "Same Income, Different Neighborhood."
4. Tanvi Misra. "Are Poor Neighborhoods Worse for Boys Than Girls?"

Due: ***Neighborhoods Project Part 1 due in class at 5:30 pm***

Week 14: Health and the Environment Dec. 5

To Read: 1. Robert Sapolsky. "Sick of Poverty."
2. Norah MacKendrick. "Foodscapes."
3. Hollie Nyseth Brehm and David N. Pellow. "Environmental Inequalities."
4. Gillian White. "Natural Disaster Recovery is Harder for the Poor."

Film: *A Place at the Table*

Week 15: Exam 3 Dec. 12

Exam: Exam 3 in class

Due: ***Neighborhoods Project Part 2 due in class at 5:30 pm***

Resources

Disability Services:

Please notify me in the first week of classes if you need any accommodations. I will do everything I can to make sufficient accommodations for students with disabilities. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. mental health, attentional, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), are invited to contact Disability Services to arrange a confidential discussion at 612- 626-1333 (V/TTY) or ds@umn.edu. Students registered with DS, who have a letter requesting accommodations, are encouraged to contact all of their instructors early in the semester to discuss accommodations outlined in their letter. Additional information is available at the DS website <http://diversity.umn.edu/disability>.

Writing Support:

Do not hesitate to seek help with your writing skills. Writing well is an important element of a successful college career (and success beyond college as well). Your TAs and I are happy to work with you on your writing during office hours or at other times by appointment. In addition, the following resources are available on campus:

Student Writing Support: Student Writing Support provides free writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students at all stages of the writing process. In face-to-face and online collaborative consultations, SWS helps students develop productive writing habits and revision strategies. A writing consultation is a conversation between a writer and a consultant. During that conversation, the participants will set an agenda for the session, talk about the work in progress, and work together to meet the writer's goals. In addition to writing consultations, SWS offer a variety of videos, printable handouts, and web resources. Visit the SWS website at <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/> for more information.

Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence: Several forms of academic support are sponsored by this center. See their site for details: <https://diversity.umn.edu/multicultural/>.

Stress Management and Mental Health Support:

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu>.