

Sociology 140J: Sociology of Social Justice¹

Spring 2026

Tuesdays and Thursdays in CENTR 109

Class Hours: 9:30-10:50am

Professor: Michel Estefan

Email: mestefan@ucsd.edu

Office: 487 Social Sciences Building

Student Hours via Zoom:

Fridays from 9-11am

Sign up for student hours here:

<https://calendly.com/mestefan/studenthours>

Teaching Assistant

Jesús Ayala-Candia

jayalacandia@ucsd.edu

Student Hours: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to SOCI 140J, sociology of social justice! This course examines concrete historical attempts to build more free and equal societies and institutions. From racial equality to environmental justice, we will study the challenges and consequences of real efforts to dismantle power, distribute economic and political resources fairly, and provide everyone with the opportunity to flourish as individuals. By analyzing these efforts through a sociological lens, the course provides a framework for thinking critically and empirically about social justice, the challenges to achieve it and the legacies its projects have left us.

We begin the course by studying power. All social justice projects are an attempt to question, resist, or dismantle the concentration of power in one form or another, so it's important to ask what is power and how does it work. This will be more of a theoretical discussion about the nature of power. Each subsequent unit is organized around one specific form of power and

¹ This syllabus outlines the planned structure for our course. However, to ensure the most responsive and effective learning environment, I may adjust the schedule or content as necessary. Any changes will be communicated promptly, with the aim of supporting your academic success.

historical attempts to dismantle it and establish a more just society. Specifically, we will look at white supremacy and racial justice, capitalism and socialism, environmental justice, education and representation, and student protests and divestment.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Describe how different forms of power work and explain why they are so difficult to upend.
- Identify concrete methods of collective action that hold promise for achieving social justice.
- Analyze how different forms of power or powerlessness have affected your life experience and trajectory.
- Apply the lessons learned in this course about power and justice to imagine how you can contribute to a more just society.

Land Acknowledgement

“UCSD was built on the unceded territory of the Kumeyaay Nation. Today the Kumeyaay people continue to maintain their political sovereignty and cultural traditions as vital members of the San Diego community. We are honored to share this space with them and thank them for their stewardship of Mat Kulaaxuuy (statement borrowed with thanks from the Association of Native American Medical Students at UCSD). [Please note land acknowledgements do not absolve settlers of the responsibility of decolonization and returning stolen land to indigenous people.]”²

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grade Distribution	Due Date	Percentage
Weekly Collective Quizzes	Every Thursday starting week 2	25%
Midterm Exam 1	Thursday, April 30	15%
Midterm Exam 2	Thursday, May 21	15%
Participation		20%
Final exam	Tuesday, June 9 from 8-11am	25%

Grading Scale

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	60-69
A	94-96	B	84-86	C	74-76	F	0-59
A-	90-93	B-	80-83	C-	70-73		

² I’d like to credit Dr. Saiba Varma for writing this land acknowledgement and kindly sharing it with me.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Collective Quizzes (25%)

This assignment is designed to promote a sense of community by having you work together to answer questions about the reading material. The assignment makes it so that you depend on each other for this portion of your grade. It is also intended to help you remember the material better and understand it with more depth.

There will be short collective quizzes **at the beginning of class every Thursday starting week 2.**

Each quiz consists of questions that you will have to answer by consensus with your small group. This means you **cannot select an answer on your own.**

All digital devices must be put away during the quiz, but you are allowed to bring printed copies of the readings.

I will provide further, detailed instructions about the quiz mechanics in class just before you take your first quiz.

The collective nature of the quizzes requires your attendance and participation in the quiz. As a result, no make-up quizzes will be available.

Midterm Exam 1 (15%)

This exam will be taken individually. Check table above for date.

Midterm Exam 2 (15%)

This is a collective exam that will be taken in small groups. Check table above for date.

Participation (20%)

Your participation will be graded based on the following criteria:

1. Posting to the "Introduce Yourself" discussion board. (2pts)
2. Filling out the SET for this course. (6pts)
3. Attending class lectures (12pts)

***When you fill-out the SET, please take a screenshot of your submission confirmation and post it on the corresponding Canvas tab.** This will allow me to give you credit for this portion of your participation grade while preserving your anonymity in the survey.

Final Exam (25%)

This is a hybrid exam. You will first take the exam individually. Then, you will take the same exam in small groups. Your individual final grade for the exam will be the weighted average of these two exams. Check table above for exam date and time.

Structured Flexibility

I know that life can be unpredictable, and I want to create a classroom where you feel supported rather than pressured to justify every bump in the road. At the same time, creating, arranging, and grading make-up work requires additional time and energy from me and your TAs, and it can pull you out of sync with your classmates as they move on with the course material while you're still engaged with topics already covered. To balance these realities, I've built flexibility into the course from the start:

- You'll note no single assignment weighs more than 25% of your final grade and most assignments carry such little weight (like each individual quiz or attendance) that receiving a low grade or an outright zero on any one of them or even a few in no way jeopardizes your ability to do well in the course.
- I'll include extra credit questions on the exams that will give you an opportunity to make up lost points.

This way, you already have a built-in cushion if something unexpected comes up. If you find yourself facing extraordinary circumstances beyond that, please reach out. In those cases, I may consider an in-person make-up oral quiz (closed book), but these will be considered individually. My goal is to support you while balancing the many responsibilities and ethical commitments I have to you and the rest of your classmates.

COURSE MATERIALS

All readings for this course are available electronically on Canvas. Each reading will be linked under the day they are due.

COURSE VALUES AND POLICIES

Care and Support

Many of us are facing or may face unexpected challenges during this quarter. Please know that I and your TA are here to support you. I sincerely hope you reach out to us should you need any type of support to succeed in this class.

Food Support for Students

If you are skipping and stretching meals, or having difficulties affording or accessing food, you may be eligible for CalFresh, California's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, that can

provide up to \$292 a month in free money on a debit card to buy food. Students can apply at benefitscal.com/r/ucsandiegocalfresh

The [Hub Basic Needs Center](https://basicneeds.ucsd.edu) empowers all students by connecting them to resources for food, stable housing and financial literacy. Visit their site at basicneeds.ucsd.edu. Most importantly, please know that you are not alone in dealing with these issues.

Building a Welcoming Environment Together

I am personally committed to making sure this classroom supports diversity of thought and experiences such that everyone feels welcome and comfortable expressing their views. Many of you may have deeply personal experiences regarding the topics we are covering in this class. While I expect us to have rigorous discussions and even disagreements, I ask that you engage each other with care and empathy and that we support each other as we make our way through conversations about difficult topics. In exchange for your efforts in this regard, I will work to ensure a classroom environment that supports you and the intellectual and emotional risks your participation may entail. Should you ever feel excluded in our classroom or unable to fully participate, please let me know so that I can take steps to correct the situation.

This is a Child-Friendly Class³

All student-parents are welcome to bring their children to class. You do not have to decide between coming to class or taking care of your child. I would suggest bringing something—perhaps a toy—for your child to do during class, but if you can't, rest assured we'll work together to keep them entertained while making our class a productive learning experience for everyone.

Digital Device Policy

To foster a focused and engaging learning environment, the use of digital devices during lectures is not permitted. Research shows that digital devices tend to distract both users and those around them, negatively impacting your academic performance. I will make an exception if you require a device as part of a documented accommodation. By minimizing digital distractions, I hope to enhance comprehension, participation, and your overall educational experience.

Privacy Statement

To maintain a respectful and trusting learning environment, and in accordance with UC San Diego's policies, unauthorized recording of class lectures, discussions, or activities is strictly prohibited. This includes audio, video, and photographic recordings. Such recordings may infringe upon the intellectual property rights of the instructor and compromise the privacy of all participants. Students requiring recordings as an approved accommodation should present documentation from the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) to arrange appropriate

³ I'd like to credit Dr. Kristen Barber from Southern Illinois University for introducing me to the meaningful potential of including a syllabi policy statement geared toward making my courses welcoming for student-parents.

provisions. By adhering to this policy, we ensure a safe space where everyone feels comfortable engaging in open and honest discussions.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. It consists in representing the work of others or work produced by artificial intelligence as your own. This includes using Internet resources or copying the ideas, sentences, paragraphs of another without proper acknowledgement. For more information on plagiarism and the steps you can take to avoid it, consult this site:

<https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>

The following guidelines are useful for avoiding plagiarism in your written work:⁴

- Try to use your own words most of the time.
- When you do use another person's words, use quotation marks, and give credit to the source.
- Don't make slight variations in the language and then fail to give credit to the source. If the expression is essentially the same, the author still deserves credit.
- Even if you aren't directly quoting the material, you should still document information and ideas that you use in your work whenever they are new to you (e.g., something that you discovered in your research).
- If you're unsure, add the citation. It is better to be extra cautious than fail to give credit when you should.

AI Technology

While AI can be useful in certain contexts, its use in this class undermines the learning process and can disproportionately disadvantage historically marginalized students. Developing critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills without relying on AI is essential to your academic and career success. Using AI also compromises fairness in evaluations. As a result, I'd like you to complete the assignments for this course without using AI.

Please respect this policy to ensure a level playing field and to build the skills necessary for long-term growth and equity in your education.

Asking Questions and Email Policy

Please send me all messages concerning this class through Canvas rather than regular email. This helps me keep better track of your messages and allows me to respond faster.

Student Hours

I encourage you to visit me during my student hours as often as you want or need to. This is a time for us to discuss your interests or concerns with the course content in more depth. If you cannot make it to the scheduled student hours, send me an email and we will arrange to meet

⁴ Adapted with slight variations in language from Hendrickson, Raymond, *The Research Paper* (New York: Henry Holt and Company), xiii.

at an alternative date and time. You can schedule a student hours appointment here: <https://calendly.com/mestefan/studenthours>

Students with Disabilities

If you anticipate requiring academic accommodations for a disability, please contact the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#). In an effort to make all learning experiences in this course accessible, you are also welcome to privately discuss options with me and the TA as soon as possible to establish any necessary accommodations in a timely fashion. I am committed to creating a course that is inclusive and equitable.

Religious Accommodations

University policy grants students justified absences from class or other organized activities in observance of religious holydays unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship. Please notify me by the end of the second week of classes if you have any religious commitments that may require you to be absent from class.

Title IX / Gender Violence

Gender violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, class, age, appearance, gender identity, or sexual orientation. UCSD is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination based on sex or gender, including sexual misconduct, sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center ([https://care.ucsd.edu/Links to an external site.](https://care.ucsd.edu/Links%20to%20an%20external%20site)) provides programs and resources to help promote healthy relationships, teach non-violence and equality, and foster a respectful and safe environment for all members of the UCSD community. All services are confidential and free of charge. For assistance during business hours, call (858) 534-5793. After hours, please call the On-Call Help Line at 858-534-5793.

Additional Well-Being Resources

UCSD provides numerous resources to support your health and well-being. Below are some options available to you if needed. Please don't hesitate to use them and feel free to reach out if you would like me to help you access any of them. 😊

[Togetherall](#) is a safe, free, online mental health support community where students may anonymously connect with others who understand what they're going through – 24/7.

[Triton2Triton](#) is a supportive, online connection space where students may connect via chat with trained peers who understand what they're going through and can help navigate resources.

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) provides no-cost, integrative, student-centered services that are designed to support UC San Diego students' academic success, personal development, and holistic well-being.

[The Hub Basic Needs Center](#) provides resource referrals and services concerning food, stable housing, and financial wellness resources.

[Student Health Services](#) provides on-campus, holistic, preventive care, as well as treatment for illness, injuries, and medical conditions.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Introduction to the Course

Tuesday, March 31: Introduction to the Course

No Reading

Power

Thursday, April 2: How Power Works

Lukes, Steven. 2005. "Introduction." Pp. 1–13 in *Power: A Radical View*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

White Supremacy and Racial Justice

Tuesday, April 7: The Reproduction of Racism I

Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press. Ch 1: "The Rebirth of Caste" (Pp.20-40).

Thursday, April 9: The Reproduction of Racism II

Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press. Ch 1: "The Rebirth of Caste" (Pp.40-57).

Tuesday, April 14: How Social Movements Succeed

Ciccariello-Maher, George. 2015. "Riots Work: Wolf Blitzer and the Washington Post Completely Missed the Real Lesson from Baltimore." *Salon*. Retrieved March 28, 2021.

Morris, Aldon. 2021. "From Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter." *Scientific American*, February 3.

Capitalism and Socialism

Thursday, April 16: The Developmental Tendencies of Capitalism

Marx, Karl. [1859] 1978. "Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy." Pp.3-6 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Tuesday, April 21: Extending Liberty While Intensifying Domination

Marcuse, Herbert. 2012. "One Dimensional Man." Pp. 478-486 in *Classical Sociological Theory*, edited by Craig Calhoun et al. 3d ed. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Thursday, April 23: Making Civic Organizations Resilient

Mitchell, Maurice. 2022. "Building Resilient Organizations." *The Forge*.

Tuesday, April 28: No Class

Thursday, April 30: In-Class Midterm Exam #1

Environmental Justice

Tuesday, May 5: Standing Rock and the Dakota Access Pipeline I

Estes, Nick. 2019. *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*. Illustrated edition. London ; New York: Verso. (Pp.1-3, 8-10, 14-16, 18-21, 25-29, 33-34)

Thursday, May 7: Standing Rock and the Dakota Access Pipeline II

Estes, Nick. 2019. *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*. Illustrated edition. London ; New York: Verso. (Pp.40-41, 43-48, 54-65)

Education and Representation

Tuesday, May 12: Revolution at San Francisco State College I

Rojas, Fabio. 2010. "Revolution at San Francisco State College." Pp. 45–92 in *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Read only Pp. 45-68 for this class)

Thursday, May 14: Revolution at San Francisco State College II

Rojas, Fabio. 2010. "Revolution at San Francisco State College." Pp. 45–92 in *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Read only Pp. 69-92 for this class)

Tuesday, May 19: The Life and Death of Black Studies Programs I

Rojas, Fabio. 2010. "The Life and Death of Black Studies Programs." Pp. 93–105 in *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Thursday, May 21: In-Class Midterm Exam #2

Tuesday, May 26: The Life and Death of Black Studies Programs II

Rojas, Fabio. 2010. "The Life and Death of Black Studies Programs." Pp. 106–129 in *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Student Protests and Divestment

Thursday, May 28: Failed Efforts and their Consequences

Bala, Mytili G., and Annie Rios. 2025. "Disciplinary Proceedings of Arrested UCSD Students."

Kelchen, Robert, and Marc Novicoff. 2024. "Are Gaza Protests Happening Mostly at Elite Colleges?" *Washington Monthly*, June 23.

Tufekci, Zeynep. 2024. "How the Powerful Outmaneuvered the American Protest Movement." *The New York Times*, September 21.

Mueller, Lisa. 2024. "Most Protests Fail. What Are Activists Doing Right When They Win?" *Psyche*, September 30.

Tuesday, June 2: American Universities at the Fault Lines of a Global Polycrisis

Tooze, Adam. 2025. "Defend Columbia. But from What? A Globalized University Caught in the Crosshairs of Polycrisis." *Chartbook*, March 27, 365.

Thursday, June 4: Review of the Course

No Reading

Final Exam is on Tuesday, June 9 from 8-11am in person in CENTR 109
