

Sociology 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Fall 2025
SOLIS 107
Tuesday/Thursday 2-3:20 PM

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SSB 490
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Office Hours: Tues.3:30-4:30; Thurs 3:30-4:30 PM
or by appointment

Sociology is the broadest and most inclusive social science. It can provide “big picture” understandings of economic, political, and cultural systems, and also micro-analyses of social interaction. Sociology uses both the most advanced quantitative methods and also rich, qualitative techniques involving interviews and ethnography. This course is designed to introduce students to the field of sociology, and to use contemporary social issues and everyday life to explore key concepts and questions that are central to the sociological project: social order, inequality, power, culture and institutions, agency, and social change.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The basis of your grade:

Two in-class exams (mix of very short and longer answers/essays): Exam 1 is worth 25% of the grade, and Exam 2 worth 30% of the grade. Do not take this course if you will have to miss the exams. Make-up exams will only be given in extreme and unusual circumstances that must be documented in a verifiable way before the exam.

Class participation (faithful completion of the reading assignments, and regular and informed participation in discussion sections) is 15% of the final grade. Class participation is your chance to clarify issues, explore them more deeply, develop skills of oral expression. Though there will be ample opportunity for participation in lecture, most of the participation grade will be determined by regular attendance and informed participation in *sections*. Attendance will only be taken in sections, and participation graded there. Students who miss three or more sections lose all credit for participation. Doctor's note needed for exceptions.

We will not take attendance in lectures. Please come only if you want to learn the most that you can. Lectures will go over readings and also contextualize them and add new material. I believe in connecting with the class through interaction and discussion, and you may be called on to share your views in lecture on a particular topic.

Interview project: As an exercise in sociological thinking, students will do a small interview project on why people go to college. The final report will be 10-15 double-spaced pages, but different parts will be due throughout the quarter, so you won't be writing the whole report at once. These projects may be done alone or with up to 4 team members (with more interviews for larger teams); all team members will receive the same grade. 30% of the final grade.

Laptops and phone use: Everyone knows that taking a call in a class would be disruptive and should never be done. But few realize that laptops and smart phones can also be distracting when used for anything other than note taking. To those of you who need to use these devices, I ask that you please sit in the back rows of the room so as not to disrupt the concentration of others. I am more likely to call on people who are conspicuously on their phones... or sleeping.

Classroom ethics: Sociology is the study of society, and we will discuss many sensitive issues. Some topics may appear to be unpleasant, ugly, or disturbing. In this class, we will be reading, discussing and writing about topics including, but not limited to: violence, racial conflict, sex, extreme poverty, cultural differences, religion, and others. I encourage you to challenge yourself in dealing with these, but if you find some topics to be very difficult personally, you may want to avoid this course.

In classroom discussion, I encourage all of you to draw on your own unique perspective on issues, though this may be uncomfortable for many. Disagreements in classroom discussions are to be resolved with evidence or logic, and not personal attacks. A lack of courtesy will get you dismissed from the day's class or more. This is a serious issue.

Academic integrity: Students must submit only their own work unless working in authorized teams. Attempting to use someone else's work as your own is cheating. If you are caught cheating, all university procedures will be used to protect the integrity of the class and the university—and your own education.

Required texts:

All readings are available as free electronic copies available through the course site on Canvas. *Readings may change somewhat from the list below.*

COURSE SCHEDULE

Sept. 25, 30: Understanding the sociological vision; Concepts for making the social world intelligible

- 1) Sociology 1: "Basic Concepts"
- 2) Bonnie Erickson, "Social Networks: The Value of Variety," *Contexts* 2(2003): 25-31

Oct. 2, Oct. 7: Why go to college?

- 1) William Beaver, "A Matter of Degrees," *Contexts* 8(2009): 22-26
- 2) April Yee, "Degree by Default," *Contexts* 11(2012): 46-50
- 3) David B. Monaghan, "Why Do People Go to College? The Institutional Environment and the Educational Dispositions of Community College Students," *Theory and Research in Education* 22(2024): 45-70

Oct. 9: The practice of sociological research: The interview assignment

Oct. 14, 16: Understanding attraction and conflict

- 1) Stephanie Coontz, "The Origins of Modern Divorce," *Family Process* 46(2006): 7-16
- 2) Debra Umberson, Zhiyong Lin, and Hyungmin Cha, "Gender and Social Isolation across the Life Course," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 63(2022): 319-335
- 4) Matthew Clair and Jeffrey S. Denis, "Sociology of Racism," In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edition, Volume 19, edited by James D. Wright. Elsevier.
- 5) Bart Bonikowski, "Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment," *British Journal of Sociology*, 68 (2017): 181-213

Oct. 21, 23: Sociology and everyday life: How fashion works and how to be "cool"

- 1) Kimberly Elliot, "What Makes Someone Cool? A New Study Offers Clues," *New York Times*, June 30, 2025
- 2) Patrik Aspers and Frédéric Godart, "Sociology of Fashion: Order and Change," *Annual Review of Sociology* 39(2013): 171-192

October 28: EXAM 1

October 30, Nov. 4: Inequality, mobility, and aspirations

- 1) Douglas B. Downey and Benjamin G. Gibbs, "How Schools Really Matter," *Contexts* 9(2010): 50-54
- 2) "You're Paid What You're Worth and Other Myths of the Modern Economy (In Conversation with Jake Rosenfeld)" *Washington Center for Equitable Growth*
- 3) Chris Farrell, "The Shortage of Home Care Workers: Worse Than You Think" *Forbes* April 18, 2018
- 4) Melinda Erdmann et al. "The Impact of Guidance Counselling on Gender Segregation: Major Choice and Persistence in Higher Education," *Frontiers in Sociology* 8(2023)

November 6, 11: Understanding poverty and homelessness

- 1) David A. Snow and Leon Anderson, "Street People," *Contexts* 2(2003): 12-17
- 2) Matthew Desmond, "Eviction and the Reproduction of Urban Poverty," *American Journal of Sociology* 118(2012): 88-133
- 3) Kathryn Edin and Joanna M. Reed, "Why Don't They Just Get Married? Barriers to Marriage among the Disadvantaged," *The Future of Children* 15(2005): 117-137

November 13, 18: The nature of work in the modern economy

- 1) Ofer Sharone, "Engineering Overwork: Bell-Curve Management at a High-Tech Firm," in Cynthia Fuchs Epstein and Arne L. Kalleberg, eds., *Fighting for Time: Shifting Boundaries of Work and Social Life* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), pp. 191-218
- 2) Antonio Garcia Martinez, "How Mark Zuckerberg Led Facebook's War to Crush Google Plus," *Vanity Fair*, June 3, 2016
- 3) Steven Melendez, "Will AI Improve or Eliminate Jobs? It Depends on Who You Ask," *Harvard Business Review* June 6, 2025

Project final report due November 18

Nov. 20, (No class Nov. 25 and 27; Thanksgiving) Dec. 2, 4: Understanding big social changes: modernization, secularization, decline in mental health

- 1) Peter L. Berger, "Further Thoughts on Religion and Modernity," *Society* 49(2012): 313-316
- 2) Liam Farrell (interviewing Phil Cohen), "6 Reasons to Drop the Generation Labels," *Maryland Today*, Nov. 10, 2021
- 3) David Voas and Mark Chaves, "Is the United States a Counterexample to the Secularization Thesis?" *American Journal of Sociology* 121(2016): 1517-56
- 4) Miranda Dixon-Luinenburg, "A survey on global mental well-being shows that the kids are not all right," *Vox.com*, April 7, 2022
- 5) Christina Caron, "Global Issues Are Taking a Major Toll on Young People's Mental Health," *New York Times*, August 13, 2024

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 3-4:30 PM