

Course Syllabus

SOCI 140 – SOCIOLOGY OF LAW

Fall 2025	Instructor: Kwai Ng
PETER 104	Office (for Student Hrs): SSB 466
Class Time: M/W/F 9:00-9:50	Student Hrs: Fridays 2:30-4:30pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to SOCI 140, Sociology of Law! This course introduces to you how sociologists understand, study, and critique the law. It presents the key theoretical traditions in the sociology of law. The overall goal is to explore sociologically the nature of modern law and develop an understanding of law as a social institution by drawing from various sociological perspectives.

READINGS

All the course readings can be accessed via **e-reserves** (<http://reserves.ucsd.edu/>).

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grade Distribution	Due Date	Percentage
Weekly Collective Quizzes	Every Friday (almost)	25%
Midterm Exam	October 24	25%
Participation		20%
Extra Credit Assignment #1	November 21	2.5%
Extra Credit Assignment #2	December 5	2.5%
Final Exam	December 10	30%

GRADING SCALE

A+ 100 – 97	B+ <90– 87	C+ <80– 77
A <97 – 94	B <87– 84	C <77– 74
A- <94 – 90	B- <84– 80	C- <74– 70

COURSE REQUIREMENTS EXPLAINED

Your grade for the quarter will be calculated on the basis of the following course requirements:

1) Weekly Collective Quizzes (25%)

This assignment is designed to promote understanding through discussion with other students in your group. It also develops 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. There will be short collective quizzes at the beginning of class every Friday starting week 1. Each quiz covers the readings assigned for that day and the previous lecture. 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. The only question you must answer individually is the last question, which will ask you to grade yourself on your contributions to completing the quiz. All digital devices must be put away during the quiz, but you are allowed to bring printed copies of the readings. There will be no quizzes on Week 9 and the quiz for Week 10 will take place on Wednesday (December 3). The collective nature of the quizzes requires your attendance and participation in the quiz. No make-up quizzes will be available. But if you happen to miss a quiz for any reason, you can do one of the extra-credit assignments described below to make up the lost points. (*I'd like to credit Professor Michel Estefan for introducing me to the format of collective quiz*)

2) In-class mid-term exam (25%)

This exam will be held in class on October 24 (Friday). It will consist of multiple-choice questions and short answer questions. The exam will cover both readings and lecture materials that are *not* taken directly from the readings. You may bring whatever notes and readings you wish.

3) In-class final on December 10 (30%)

This exam covering the entire course. *It will consist of multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and long-answer questions.* The exam will cover both readings and lecture materials that are *not* taken directly from the readings. You may bring whatever notes and readings you wish.

4) Participation (20%)

Your participation will be graded based on the following criteria:

- *Posting to the "Introduce Yourself" discussion board. (5pts)*
- *Attending class lectures (15pts)*

EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS

I will finalize the topics of the two extra credit assignments by the end of the second week.

COURSE FORMAT

For most weeks, our schedule will look like this:

- 1) Use the home page link to go to the new week's module. Use the "Next" button at the bottom of each page to progress through the module.
- 2) Start engaging with the content in the Canvas module, which may include readings, videos, and other activities.
- 3) Attend classes on Monday and Wednesday, when we will typically focus on lecture, large group discussion.
- 4) Attend class on Friday, when we will do the group quiz, discussion the questions of the quiz, and additional lecture/instruction.

AI TECHNOLOGY POLICY

While AI is a powerful tool, its use in this class undermines the learning process and can disproportionately disadvantage students less familiar with it. Developing critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills without relying on AI is essential to your academic and career success. Using AI also makes it difficult for me to evaluate your effort and learning progress. Please complete course assignments without using AI. Please respect this policy to ensure a level playing field and to build the skills necessary for your education.

CONTACTING INSTRUCTOR

Please try to send me messages via Canvas rather than through the campus email system. This helps me keep track of all your messages.

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 at an alternative date and time. You can schedule a student hours appointment here:

<https://calendly.com/kwng-ucsd/student-hours-fall-2025>

DIGITAL DEVICE POLICY

To foster an effective learning environment, I do not allow the use of laptops during lectures. Research shows that laptops tend to negatively impact your academic performance. I will make an exception if you require a laptop as part of a documented accommodation. By minimizing digital distractions, I hope to promote comprehension and participation.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

While I strive to adhere to the schedule, adjustments may be made as needed.

Wk 0 Friday, September 26: First Meeting

I will outline the course syllabus and discuss the logistics with you.

Wk 1 September 29, October 1 & 3: Introduction

Kidder, Robert L. 1983 "Law Definitions and Their Consequences" in *Connecting Law and Society*. Prentice-Hall: 11-35.

Marc Galanter. 1966. "The Modernization of Law." in *Modernization*, ed. M. Weiner. (New York: Basic Books), 153-165.

Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen http://www.constitution.org/fr/fr_drm.htm *Links to an external site.*

Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labor in Society*. Pp. 31-52, pp. 68-83. (Sections I and II of "Mechanical Solidarity, or Solidarity by Similarities," and Sections I, II, and III "Solidarity Arising from the Division of Labor, or Organic Solidarity"). New York: Free Press.

Wk 2 October 6, 8, 10: Durkheimian Perspective

As one of the founders of sociology, Durkheim himself displayed considerable interest in the law. He was one of the earliest thinkers who wrote about the criminal process; he also addressed the nature of punishment and the law of contract in the context of modern law.

Durkheim, Emile. 1965. "On the Normality of Crime." Pp. 872-875 in *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory*, Talcott Parsons et al. (eds.). New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

Erikson, Kai T. (1966) *Wayward Puritans* Macmillan Co. 67-71; 137-159.

Wk 3 October 13, 15, 17: Durkheimian Perspective Continued

Pat Lauderdale (1976) "Deviance and Moral Boundaries," *Am. Soc. Rev.* 41:660-676.

David John Frank et al. (2010) Worldwide Trends in the Criminal Regulation of Sex, 1945 to 2005, *Am. Soc. Rev.*

John M. Darley, Kevin M. Carlsmith, and Paul H. Robinson. 2001. "The *Ex Ante* Function of the Criminal Law." *Law and Society Review* 35:165-190. Available on the internet at <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0023-9216%282001%2935%3A1%3C165%3ATEAFOT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-W>

Wk 4 October 20, 22, 24:

Donald Black. 1983. "Crime as Social Control." *American Sociological Review* 48(1): 34-45.

Donald Black. 1999. "Dispute Settlement by the Police," pp. 61-95 in *The Social Organization of Law*, edited by M.L. Baumgartner. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Federico Varese. 2017. *Mafia Life*. Profile Books. Pp. 42-68.

IN-CLASS MIDTERM: October 24 (Friday)

Wk 5 Marx: Law and Social Inequalities October 27, 29, 31:

Marx sees law as an instrument for promoting class inequalities. In the lectures, I will introduce his argument and some well-known studies grounded in the Marxian perspective.

Karl Marx "Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" in *Tucker* 3-6.

Hugh Collins. 1982. *Marxism and Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-16).

Wk 6 Marxian Perspective and Its Modern Applications November 3, 5, 7:

William Chambliss. 1964. "A Sociological Analysis of the Law of Vagrancy," *Social Problems*, 12: 67-77.

James William Coleman. 2006. "Toward an Integrated Theory of White-Collar Crime," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 93, No. 2. (Sep., 1987), pp. 406-439.

Jeffrey Reiman. 2001. "Introduction: Criminal Justice through the Looking Glass, or Winning by Losing," "A Crime by Any Other Name..." Pp. 1-10, 55-102 in *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*. 8th Edition. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Wk7 Marx and Its Critics November 10, 12, 14:

Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow*. 1-19, 95-136

Beckett, Katherine and Bruce Western. 2001. "Governing Social Marginality: Welfare, Incarceration and the Transformation of State Policy." Pp. 35-50 in *Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences*. Sage Publication.

Wk 8 Weber: Why People Obey the Law? November 17, 19, 21

Weber considers the use of law as a modern form of governance. In fact, law exemplifies what he calls legal-rational rationality. I will introduce his perspective and the key questions raised by scholars who approach law from a Weberian institutionalist perspective.

Max Weber. 1978. "Bases of Legitimacy: Tradition, Faith, Enactment," pp. 215-216; "Legal Authority with a Bureaucratic Administrative Staff," pp.217-226 of *Economy and Society Vol. I* (Roth and Wittich, eds). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Max Weber. "Bureaucracy" Pp. 66-80 in *Max Weber on Charisma and Institutional Building*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press.

Wk 9 November 24, 26, 28:

Allen Lind and Tom R. Tyler. 1988. *The Social Psychology of Procedural Justice*. New York: Plenum Press. pp. 61-70

Tom R. Tyler. 1990. *Why People Obey the Law*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 3 and 5 (pp. 19-39; 57-68).

James L Gibson, 2024 "Losing legitimacy: The challenges of the Dobbs ruling to conventional legitimacy theory" *American Journal of Political Science*.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/ajps.12834>

Wk 10 December 1, 3, 5: Fair Game?

Albiston, C., 1999. The Rule of Law and the Litigation Process: The Paradox of Losing by Winning. *Law & Society Review* 33(4), pp.869-910.

Carroll Seron, Gregg Van Ryzin, Martin Frankel and Jean Kovath. 2001. "The Impact of Legal Counsel on Outcomes for Poor Tenants in New York City's Housing Court: Results of a Randomized Experiment." *Law and Society Review* 35(2):419-434.

IN-PERSON FINAL: December 10 (Wednesday), 8:00 – 11:00a