

Sociology 166  
The Sociology of Knowledge  
Fall 2023

Monday & Wednesday & Friday 8-8:50  
location: Cognitive Science 004

Instructor: Jacob Hellman  
([jhellman@ucsd.edu](mailto:jhellman@ucsd.edu))

Office hours: Wed. 3pm and by  
appointment.



### Course Description

Philosophy often approaches knowledge as the product of individual minds working in isolation from society. This course, in contrast, is designed to explore how what we know is influenced by social conditions: class background, racial and gender identity, or specific historical experiences (e.g. generational identity). The readings have been selected to provide a broad overview of the field. The goal of the course is to provide opportunities to think through how knowledge is socially produced. Assignments are directly related to readings and lecture. All reading material will be available on Canvas.

### Attendance and Reading

- **Lecture attendance is strongly recommended.** Attendance will not be taken in lecture, but unless you are a genius, the quality of your assignments will reflect whether you have been attending and paying attention. In other words, your grades will probably be lower if you don't show up.

- Lectures will be semi-conversational, and **I welcome your participation: ask questions, and offer insights from your reading of the texts and from your life.**
- Complete assigned readings before each class. Readings will demand your serious engagement. The prose may be dense. Read for the main points. **Try highlighting key parts or print out & notate.** Also: re-read, ask questions in class, and approach the instructor for help.

**All readings will be posted on Canvas or linked from this syllabus.**

### Assignments and Grading

1) Weekly written assignments will be **due each Sunday**, based on the previous week's assigned readings:

Write a 300 to 450-word response to the prompt provided on Canvas. **You must draw on the course texts to get credit! But avoid lengthy quotes. Paraphrase instead.** Depending on the question, draw on your own lived experience as well.

2) **Each Wednesday**, you must post two insightful comments / responses on your peers' responses from Sunday on Canvas. There is no specific length, but comments must do more than state agreement or interest.

3) An 8 to 10-page research paper on a topic of your choice will be due **at the time of the course final.**

### **Your final grade will be determined as follows:**

Weekly written assignments: 50%

Weekly peer responses: 10%

Research paper: 40%

### **Late policy:**

Everybody gets two free late periods of one day past deadline. **Do not contact the instructor; just submit as usual.**

After 2 late submissions, work will be **penalized 20% each day past due.** You will still be able to submit assignments on Canvas.

### Anti-Racist Learning Environment.

This course calls on all of us to cultivate an anti-racist classroom environment built on mutual respect. This means honoring (y)our responsibility to ensure the safety and comfort for all peers and instructors so we can collectively confront racism, inequity, and inequality. It is important to examine and bring active

reflection to (y)our privileges, to recognize (y)our biases and make space to listen to and learn from peers and instructors who hold identities and experiences distinct from (y)our own.

### Disability Accommodations.

If you require accommodations for any disability, please contact the instructor early in the quarter so we can arrange ahead of time to accommodate your classroom and/or assignment needs. Students with disabilities must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities.

### Academic Integrity

Complete all assignments by yourself and cite source materials in your papers and assignments. For detailed information on what constitutes cheating and plagiarism, please visit the Academic Integrity Office website. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask us.

## Readings and Assignments

### Week 1

- Durkheim, "What is a Social Fact?"; "Rules for the Classification of Social Facts"
- Whorf, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language"
- McWorter, "The Language Hoax Why the World Looks the Same in Any Language"

### Week 2

- Marx, *The German Ideology* (selections)
- Mannheim, "The Sociology of Knowledge"

### Week 3

- Merton, "The Normative Structure of Science"
- Kuhn, "The Essential Tension: Tradition and Innovation in Scientific Research"

### Week 4

- Shapin, "The Invisible Technician"
- Daston and Galison, "The Image of Objectivity"

### Week 5

- Due: Research project topic and short description.*
- Fourcade, "Cents and Sensibility: Economic Valuation and the Nature of 'Nature'"
  - Latour, "On the instability of the (notion of) nature"

### Week 6

- Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism"
- Collins, "Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment"

### **Week 7**

*Due: Literature review for research paper.*

- Foucault, "Two Lectures" (selections) **and** "Truth and Power" (selections)
- Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, "Political Power beyond the State: problematics of government"

### **Week 8**

- Prakash, "Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography"
- Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses"

### **Week 9**

- Collins, "What is tacit knowledge?"
- Igo, "Subjects of Persuasion: Survey Research as a Solicitous Science"

### **Week 10**

**TBD**