

Sociology 70:

General Sociology for Pre-Medical Students

Professor Lewis

Winter 2026
Tues/Thurs 8-9:20am
Coalition 130

Office hours:
Tues 10-11am, Thurs 1-2pm
(sign up on Canvas)

For the first time, the MCAT in 2015 included a new section on Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior. In other words, the MCAT now recognizes what sociologists have long taken for granted: that socio-cultural factors are tremendously important determinants of health outcomes and that pre-medical students who have some minimal background in sociological concepts and research will be better prepared to serve their future patients. Consequently, this course is meant to provide an introduction to sociology that is tailored specifically for pre-medical students. This means that breadth will be prioritized over depth; applications focus on the medical realm; and special attention will be paid to inequality and social influences on health and wellbeing.

Please note that use of electronics (specifically, cell phones and laptops) during class is prohibited (unless you have a university accommodation). This is to ensure a learning environment that is free from distractions; the educational benefits of longhand have also been experimentally demonstrated.*

Evaluation

- Section discussion forum participation (25% of course grade)
- 5 short journal assignments (5% each, for a total 25% of course grade)
- Final exam (50% of course grade)

Details for all aspects of course evaluation will be discussed at length in lecture. *All assignments, including the final, will be take-home and asynchronous.* In other words, there is no “in-class” final and you do *not* need to be available at the time that is listed for our final on the Schedule of Classes.

Importantly—given that you are all (presumably) independently motivated to learn the course material and lectures are at a time that many college-age humans find challenging to attend—there will be an option to essentially “exchange” sufficiently good class attendance for a considerably shorter and lower-stakes final. Details, again, will be discussed during the first lecture (so if you miss this lecture, please make sure to speak with a classmate).

* Mueller, Pam A. and Daniel M. Oppenheimer. 2014. “The pen is mightier than the keyboard: Advantages of longhand over laptop note taking.” *Psychological Science* 25:1159-1168.

Materials

All course materials except the book (below) will be available through the course website on Canvas. These materials consist of the syllabus (which you have already successfully located—great job!), a cumulative outline of all lectures, and assigned readings. You will also use the course website to submit journal entries and your final exam and participate in your section discussion forum.

Discussion section

You have all signed up for a discussion section at a specific time and with a specific TA, identified below. To be very clear: the date/time you signed up for will be *voluntary open office hours* with your TA, beginning *Week 2*; and your section participation grade will instead be based on your contributions to the online discussion forum for your section. *Additional information will be discussed during the first lecture and posted in the forum instructions.*

Section A01 (Wed 1- 1:50pm): Yunpeng Chen (yuc176@ucsd.edu)
Section A02 (Wed 2- 2:50pm): Yunpeng Chen (yuc176@ucsd.edu)
Section A03 (Wed 6- 6:50pm): Soran Artin (naahmadi@ucsd.edu)
Section A04 (Wed 7- 7:50pm): Soran Artin (naahmadi@ucsd.edu)

Required book

Gawande, Atul. 2014. *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. New York: Picador.

We will ultimately read Gawande’s book in its entirety, and it should be cheaply available online in various formats. All other readings will be posted electronically to the course website.

Communication

I aspire to be available to you this term in multiple ways. Questions during lecture are always welcome and encouraged. To communicate with me asynchronously, you can message me privately (via email at lewis@ucsd.edu or via Canvas) or post a question to the “Virtual Office Hours” discussion forum (enabling other students to benefit from my response). To meet synchronously, you can use the Canvas “Calendar” function to sign up for an office hours appointment (see instructions in my first Canvas announcement). If these times conflict with your schedule, please email me and I’ll be happy to coordinate a different time to meet with you (either in person or via Zoom).

Schedule

Assigned readings for each week are available on the course website under the appropriate Module. All readings should ideally be read *during* the week they are assigned—it doesn't matter what day—or at your earliest convenience. Below is a general overview of the topics we will cover.

Week 1: Classical theory

Week 2: Identity and socialization

Week 3: Interaction

Week 4: Groups, networks, and organizations

Week 5: Family, religion, and government

Week 6: Education and health

Week 7: Inequality I

Week 8: Inequality II

Week 9: Culture and deviance

Week 10: Social change