

SOC 1101
Introduction to Sociology
SPRING 2025

Instructor: Dan Hirschman

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Lecture Time: 11:15am-12:05pm, Mondays & Wednesdays

Lecture Location: Uris Hall G01

Office Hours:

TAs:

Section Information:

All sections meet on Fridays beginning with the first Friday of the term (1/24) and ending with the last Friday of the term (5/2).

- DIS201: 11:15am - 12:05pm,
- DIS202: 10:10am - 11:00am,
- DIS203: 11:15am - 12:05pm,
- DIS204: 1:25pm - 2:15pm,
- DIS205: 11:15am - 12:05pm,
- DIS206: 12:20pm - 1:10pm,
- DIS207: 2:30pm - 3:20pm,
- DIS208: 10:10am - 11:00am,
- DIS209: 10:10am - 11:00am,
- DIS210: 12:20pm - 1:10pm,
- DIS211: 9:05am - 9:55am,
- DIS212: 2:30pm - 3:20pm,

Overview

Soc 1101 offers an introduction to the field of sociology. Sociology is often defined as “the science of society” but this definition doesn’t really explain very much. Sociology is a messy field. Sociology is not defined by a single object of study nor a single methodology. Sociologists study the past and the present, rich countries and poor countries, political revolutions and small group interactions, solidarity and discrimination, and the relationships between all of the above. To do so, sociologists make use of varied kinds of data: censuses and household surveys, online experiments, historical archives, ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews, and more.

In Soc 1101, we will focus on three topics or themes that sociologists are especially interested in understanding, and that together roughly constitute the boundaries of the field: *social*

construction, social inequality, and social change. In each unit, we will focus on a few specific sites to understand these dynamics.

In the first unit of the course, on social construction, we'll ask: What is society made of? Why does society have the kinds of people, organizations, institutions, and governments that it does? How else might society be organized? In this unit, we'll look at the construction of gender & sexuality, and race.

In the second unit of the course, on social inequality, we'll ask: Who benefits? How does the construction of society — the kinds of people, organizations, institutions, and governments that we have — shape who gets what? What are the hierarchies and how far apart are the haves and have-nots? What kinds of people get slotted where? In this unit, we'll focus primarily on race, racism and class inequality in the contemporary United States, examining these topics in the contexts of criminal justice, higher education, and employment.

In the third and final unit of the course, on social change, we'll ask: How do all of these aspects of society sometimes change? Why do they usually stay the same? Here, we'll look at the relationship between workplaces and new technologies in the context of the surveillance and automation of commercial truck driving in the United States, as well as collective mobilization for (or against) social change in the form of anti-racist and white supremacist social movements.

In place of an overview textbook or a survey of classic readings, the class will emphasize scholarship by contemporary sociologists. The primary work of the class will be reading and discussing six full-length books, two for each unit. Lecture will provide additional context and background for the readings, as well as explaining key concepts from the readings in greater detail. Section will provide an opportunity to discuss the readings and clarify your own understanding of the texts and assessment of their arguments. You will need to read each book carefully to fully participate in the course. We will also read shorter articles to complement each major text.

Together, these readings offer a wide-ranging, if not complete, introduction to sociology. We hope that by reading and discussing them, you will learn new ways to understand and contextualize aspects of your own life and of the social worlds you inhabit.

Class Format

Each week of class will consist of four components:

1. In-person lectures.
2. Course readings, listed on the syllabus below.
3. Response memos on Canvas. We will provide short prompts for each week after the first and ask that you respond to the week's prompt by Thursday evening at 6pm.
4. Discussion sections led by your TA. These discussions will be informed by the questions and comments you posted on Canvas.

Additionally, the class will have three in-class prelim exams (one for each unit of the course) that will cover the readings, lectures, and discussions in section, and one short reflection essay assignment.

Requirements

Respect: There are many ways to interpret the course readings in class and many competing views on the topics we will discuss, and I hope we will debate many contrasting viewpoints. We will be covering issues relevant to current contentious debates. To facilitate good discussion, please keep in mind that we are debating theories and evidence rather than each other as individuals. Please keep the difference in mind so that we can engage in useful and respectful discussion. We aim to treat all students with respect, and ask that you treat us and each other with respect as well.

Respect for each other is not the same thing as treating all viewpoints as equally valid. Sociology is an empirical subject, and some ideas and views are inconsistent with the collective body of evidence gathered and analyzed by the discipline. For example, as we will discuss in our unit on social inequality, overwhelming evidence documents the continued role of racism in producing disparities in health, education, employment, policing, and incarceration. The view that racism no longer exists is inconsistent with that evidence.

That said, although there are many points of consensus in sociology, there are also large zones of disagreement. For example, scholars disagree about what kinds of racism matter most (individual, organizational, institutional, systemic), about how much racism operates separately from other systems like patriarchy and capitalism, and about how racism has changed over the past centuries, with scholars mobilizing evidence to argue for contrasting positions. Sociology is a messy, heterogeneous field and even within areas of broad consensus, there are multiple opinions and competing perspectives. The teaching team will do our best to make it clear when we are presenting the consensus of the field and when we are presenting one of many perspectives and understandings that emphasize different aspects of what we know about how society works.

We all come to this class with different life experiences and are starting from different places. Sociology is a social science and we will approach our discussions through that lens. In doing so, we will combine respect for each other as human beings with discussions of ideas and arguments rooted in social scientific theories and evidence.

Readings: Each week is associated with a collection of readings. We expect you to complete the readings before the Friday section associated with that week. The lectures and readings will reinforce each other, and you may find you prefer to complete the readings before or after the associated lectures. We will discuss tips and tricks for reading academic sources early in the semester.

Attendance: Attendance at discussion section is required. That said, we recognize that this semester will likely bring with it many disruptions. As such, each student may miss up to three sections without affecting their grade. (These are absences in addition to excused absences, that is, an absence where a student has documentation of an inability to partic-

ipate in class such as a doctor's note.) Each unexcused absence after the third will lower your section attendance grade by one point. For all questions regarding attendance, please communicate with your TA.

Response Memos: For each week after the first, you will have the opportunity to write a short paragraph about the week's readings following a prompt that we provide. Your response memo should include a few sentences summarizing or analyzing some aspect of the reading and then conclude with one or two sentences that identify specific topics you would like to discuss in section or specific questions you have about the course readings or lectures. These responses will be graded simply "satisfactory" (meaning you substantively responded to the prompt) or "not". You will be graded on your 10 best responses (that is, each satisfactory memo earns 1 point of the 10 possible for this category). We encourage you to complete more of the prompts if you find them useful to you, but doing so will not affect your final grade.

Prelim Exams: The course will have three in-class exams, one at the conclusion of each unit. These exams will consist entirely of multiple choice questions. The questions will cover content discussed in the readings, lectures, and sections.

Reflection Essay: The course requires one short essay where you will have the opportunity to reflect on an aspect of the class of your choosing. We will discuss the details of this assignment later in the term. The essay assignment will be available after Spring Break and is due Sunday 5/4.

Deadlines and Late Work: The response memos must be turned in by 6pm (Eastern time) on the Thursday before the associated section in order to give the teaching team time to incorporate your memos into our plan for the discussion section. There is an automatic one-hour extension; memos turned in between 6pm-7pm will be graded as if they were submitted on time. After 7pm, submissions on Canvas will close and no further memos will be accepted.

Grading

The grade breakdown is as follows:

- Section Attendance: 10%
- Response Memos: 10%
- Exam 1: 25%
- Exam 2: 25%
- Exam 3: 25%
- Reflection Essay: 5%

As a reminder, you are required to turn in ten satisfactory response memos to get full credit and to attend all but three sections.

We will translate your final score into grades following the usual system (A+ = 99-100, A = 93-98, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, Below 60 = F).

If you feel that an *error* has been made in the grading process, you may appeal your grade to me within *one week* of receiving your grade. To appeal your grade, you must provide a written explanation of the error you believe has been made and then I will re-grade the assignment in consultation with your TA. Please be advised that there is no guarantee that I will raise your grade.

Administrative Issues & Support for Learning

Academic Integrity: Students in the course are encouraged to discuss course material and assignments with each other. However, anything you submit for credit should represent your own work. Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable. Information on the University's academic code is available [here](#). Any student who plagiarizes will fail the course and may face other sanctions imposed by the University. Students agree that by taking this course, all required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.¹

To ensure development and mastery of the foundational concepts and skills, the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT is prohibited in this course. If you are unsure of any policy or any assignment-specific directions — including whether or not a particular tool is considered generative AI — please consult your TA prior to using the technology or completing your assignment.²

Accommodations for Learning: Cornell University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform your TA early in the term if you have a disability or other condition that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with your TA after class, by email, or during office hours. For more information, please contact [Student Disability Services](#) (phone: 607-254-4545, email: sds_cu@cornell.edu).

Academic and Personal Support: Cornell has many resources available to support you. These include the [Dean of Students](#) (your best starting place if you are not sure where to turn), and the [Learning Strategies Center](#). Additional support is available via the Counseling and Psychological Services (“CAPS”) office. Information about CAPS is available [here](#). CAPS is typically very fast and usually has meetings available within one day.

Email Policy: Please include “SOC 1101” in the subject line of any email regarding the course. Doing so makes it easier for us to recognize course emails and process them quickly. Please direct all email communications to your TA (unless you need to discuss a sensitive issue with the professor). We will try to respond to email within 24 hours during the week. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, please send a follow-up email. Emails sent on Friday or during the weekend may be answered on the following Monday or Tuesday. We

¹This paragraph adopts language from Erin York Cornwell's Soc 5010 syllabus, as well as language provided by Cornell for discussing Turnitin.

²This paragraph adopts language from Cornell's [guidance](#) on the use of Generative AI in courses.

expect emails to be respectful.

Writing Expectations: The University has many resources to help you with your writing, starting with the [Writing Centers](#). Our grading in this course will not emphasize writing quality, but it can be hard to separate writing quality from the quality of the underlying ideas and arguments. We will discuss writing expectations in more detail before the first paper.

Hidden Curriculum: Sociologists who study education have identified a “hidden curriculum” that exists alongside the formal, explicit rules and requirements at each level of education. Professor Jessica Calarco [offers](#) one definition of this hidden curriculum as “the knowledge and skills that matter for student success but aren’t explicitly taught.” For example, many students do not know that office hours are a place to make connections with instructors and find out about research opportunities, in addition to being a place to ask for help with the course material. Although all students have to learn the hidden curriculum to succeed, students from more highly-educated families often have an easier time picking up this curriculum at each level of education, and thus the hidden curriculum works to reinforce social inequality.

We will do our best to make our policies as clear, transparent, and fair as possible in order to minimize this process within the course. We are also happy to discuss topics beyond the narrow confines of the course, especially in office hours or via email. Because these processes work to disadvantage students who don’t even know what they don’t know, you may also want to check out formal resources that try to make some of this hidden curriculum explicit, such as David Johnson and Jennifer Price’s book, [Will This Be on the Test?: What Your Professors Really Want You to Know about Succeeding in College](#). The book discusses topics ranging from unwritten classroom expectations, to building relationships with faculty, asking for letters of recommendation (required for most graduate and professional programs), and more generally understanding how colleges work.

Cell Phones and Laptops: Students using laptops, tablets, or cellphones for purposes other than notetaking will be asked to leave and be counted as absent for the class. Research shows that using a laptop during class can impede both your own learning *and* the learning of students around you (see, e.g., [Sana et al. 2013](#), and [Dynarski 2017](#)). We encourage you to take notes by hand, or to take notes on a laptop or tablet while taking care not to check other sites or use other programs during class.

Required Texts

The main requirement of the course is to read carefully the six books listed below. These books are available from the Cornell Academic Materials Program, and are also all available as relatively affordable print books and ebooks. The books are listed in the order that you will need them. Additional readings are available as pdfs on the Course Canvas site. I may recommend additional (optional) short articles from newspapers, magazines, etc. to complement the more scholarly texts on the syllabus and showcase their relevance to contemporary events.

- Meadow, Tey. 2018. *Trans Kids: Being Gendered in the Twenty-First Century*.
- Mora, G. Cristina. 2014. *Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New American*.
- Van Cleve, Nicole Gonzalez. 2016. *Crook County: Racism and Injustice in America's Largest Criminal Court*.
- Jack, Anthony Abraham. 2019. *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students*.
- Levy, Karen. 2023. *Data Driven: Truckers, Technology, and the New Workplace Surveillance*.
- Blee, Kathleen, Robert Futrell, and Pete Simi. 2024. *Out of Hiding: Extremist White Supremacy and How It Can Be Stopped*.

Course Outline

Unit 1: Social Construction

Week 1: Course Overview & Intro to Social Construction

Lecture on 1/22, section on 1/24.

- Read the syllabus!
- McMillan Cottom, Tressie. 2019. "In the Name of Beauty." From *Thick*.

Week 2: Social Construction (Sex & Gender Part 1)

Lectures on 1/27 & 1/29, section on 1/31.

- Gansen, Heidi M. 2017. "Reproducing (and Disrupting) Heteronormativity: Gendered Sexual Socialization in Preschool Classrooms." *Sociology of Education* 90(3):255-72.
- Meadow, Tey. 2018. *Trans Kids: Being Gendered in the Twenty-First Century*. (Chapters 1-2 and Appendix A, especially chapter 2.)

Week 3: Social Construction (Sex & Gender Part 2)

Lectures on 2/3 & 2/5, section on 2/7.

- Meadow, Tey. 2018. *Trans Kids: Being Gendered in the Twenty-First Century*. (Chapters 3-7, especially 4-6.)
- Meadow, Tey. 2023. "Transgender Youth Are Under Attack: The Work of Response." *Sociological Forum* 38(4):1486-93.

Week 4: Social Construction (Race & Racism Part 1)

Lectures on 2/10 & 2/12, section on 2/14.

- Hirschman, Charles. 2004. “The Origins and Demise of the Concept of Race.” *Population and Development Review* 30(3):385-415. (Read only pages 385-399.)
- Roth, Wendy. 2016. “The Multiple Dimensions of Race.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39(8):1310-38.
- Mora, G. Cristina. 2014. *Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New American*. Preface & Introduction.

Note: No lecture on 2/17 for February Break!

Week 5: Social Construction (Race & Racism Part 2)

Lecture on 2/19, section on 2/21.

- Mora, G. Cristina. 2014. *Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New American*. Chapters 1-5 and Conclusion.

Exam 1 on 2/24!

Unit 2: Social Inequality

Week 6: Social Inequality (Inequality by the Numbers)

Lecture on 2/26, section on 2/28.

- Pager, Devah. 2004. “The Mark of a Criminal Record.” *Focus* 23(2):44-46.
- Pfeffer, Fabian T., and Alexandra Killewald. 2019. “Intergenerational Wealth Mobility and Racial Inequality.” *Socius*. Make sure to look at the animations [here](#) and [here](#)!
- Laurison, Daniel, Dawn Dow, and Carolyn Chernoff. 2020. “Class Mobility and Reproduction for Black and White Adults in the United States: A Visualization.” *Socius* 6:1-3.

Week 7: Social Inequality (Racism and Criminal Justice Part 1)

Lectures on 3/3 & 3/5 section on 3/7.

- Van Cleve, Nicole Gonzalez. 2016. *Crook County: Racism and Injustice in America's Largest Criminal Court*. (Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-2.)

Week 8: Social Inequality (Racism and Criminal Justice Part 2)

Lectures on 3/10 & 3/12, section on 3/14.

- Van Cleve, Nicole Gonzalez. 2016. *Crook County: Racism and Injustice in America's Largest Criminal Court*. (Chapter 3-5, Conclusion, Appendix.)

Week 9: Social Inequality (Class and Higher Ed)

Lectures on 3/17 & 3/19, section on 3/21.

- Jack, Anthony Abraham. 2019. *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students*. (Entire book.)

Week 10: Social Inequality (From Higher Ed to the Labor Market)

Lecture on 3/24. Exam on 3/26. Note: Section is canceled 3/28!

- Rivera, Lauren. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77(6):999-1022.
- Streib, Jessi. 2023. "America's Hidden Equalizing Machine." *Contexts* 22(2):12-17.

Exam 2 on 3/26!

Spring Break! No section on 3/28, no class the following week.

Unit 3: Social Change

Week 11: Social Change (Technology and Work Part 1)

Lectures on 4/7 & 4/9, section on 4/11.

- Kalleberg, Arne L. 2009. "Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition." *American Sociological Review* 74(1):1-22.
- Levy, Karen. 2022. *Data Driven*. Introduction & Chapters 1-2.

Week 12: Social Change (Technology and Work Part 2)

Lectures on 4/14 & 4/16, section on 4/18.

- Levy, Karen. 2022. *Data Driven*. Chapters 3-8 and Appendices.

Week 13: Social Change (Social Movements Part 1)

Lectures on 4/21 & 4/23, section on 4/25.

- Morris, Aldon. 2021. "From Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter." *Scientific American*. Available [here](#).
- Blee, Kathleen, Robert Futrell, and Pete Simi. 2024. *Out of Hiding: Extremist White Supremacy and How It Can Be Stopped*. Chapter 1.

Week 14: Social Change (Social Movements Part 2)

Lectures on 4/28 & 4/30, section on 5/2.

- Blee, Kathleen, Robert Futrell, and Pete Simi. 2024. *Out of Hiding: Extremist White Supremacy and How It Can Be Stopped*. Chapters 2-6 & Data Appendix.

Reflection Essay Due 5/4!

Week 15: Exam 3

Exam 3 on 5/5!