

Sociology 1
Introduction to Sociology
Winter 2025
Pepper Canyon Hall 109

Instructor: Kea Saper
Email: ksaper@ucsd.edu

Student Support Hours/Office Hours:
M/W 12-1pm or by appt

Office hours will be held in my office: Social Sciences Building, Room 427

Course Description and Learning Objectives

Sociology can provide “big picture” understandings of our society and the world around us by looking at economic, political, and cultural systems as well as micro-analyses of social interaction. Sociology uses both quantitative methods and descriptive qualitative techniques such as interviews and ethnography. The purpose of this course is 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 this field. Major themes in sociological thinking addressed in this course include the how the individual is shaped by, and in turn shapes and interacts with society, the stable and changing nature of society, and social causes and consequences of inequality.

My first goal is to train you to think critically about issues in society and question taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world around you. We will focus on readings exploring social order, inequality, power, culture and institutions, agency, and social change. We will think critically about issues affecting all of us by investigating how the hidden curriculum functions in US colleges and universities.

My second goal is to give you an introduction to the research process and familiarize you with interpreting, using, and analyzing key arguments and concepts from academic articles. We will do this by first, writing memos on and discussing academic articles. Second, we will take on a mini- research project involving hands-on experience gathering, analyzing, and reporting empirical data you have gathered through interviews.

My third goal is to have you apply your understanding of sociology to your own lives. We will accomplish this through discussions and participatory in-class writing tasks where you think more deeply about course concepts and apply these to aspects of your own lives, or the lives of others around you (including TV show characters, book characters, friends/family and so on).

Asking Questions

Students often share the same questions. Please post any question, comment or feedback related to course content that you are willing to share on the Canvas Discussion Board under “Questions, Answers, and Comments.” If you know the answer to someone else's question, please feel free to respond. I will regularly review this board and answer questions. If you have a question you would not like others to see, please email me or see me during student support hours.

Office Hours

I reserve time to meet with students on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:00-1:00pm. Please feel free to drop by to chat! If this time does not work for you, please email me and we will coordinate a different time. I'm happy to meet in person at my office (SSB 427) or over Zoom, whichever works best for you.

TA Information and Office Hours

Elena De Leo

Sections: A01 and A02

Email: edeleo@ucsd.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays, 10am - 12pm in SSB 421

Sign-up sheet: [link](#)

Soran Artin

Sections: A03 and A04

Email: naahmadi@ucsd.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays, 8:00 - 10:00am in SSB 431

Fan Fu

Sections: A05 and A06

Email: fafu@ucsd.edu

Office hours: Fridays 11:30am - 1:30pm in SSB 428 or via Zoom

Scheduling in advance via email is recommended.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade is based on the following components:

Section participation (25%): *Attendance and engagement with course materials and activities*
Discussion section participation involves faithful completion of the reading assignments, attendance, and completion of any in-class activities. Your TAs will have full discretion over your section grade.

Reading memos (10%): *Writing to show mastery of material*

Students will submit two memos on readings throughout the quarter. One will be due at the end of Week 4, and one at the end of Week 8. Students may choose which reading to write a memo on. For the first reading memo, students may select any reading assigned from Weeks 1-4. For the second reading memo, students may select any reading assigned from Weeks 5-10. Memos will be graded credit/no credit. These memos are purposed to help you learn the skills needed to more easily interpret complex academic arguments in a structured manner.

Hidden Curriculum Project (25%): *Designing a hidden curriculum advertisement, poster, flyer, informational video or brochure accompanied by an explanatory informational handout*

This is an exercise in explaining social norms and important sociological concepts. In this

project, students will learn about the hidden curriculum and design an advertisement or informational video and accompanying handout to ‘teach’ students these taken-for-granted norms present in United States educational institutions.

Interview Project (40%): Investigating college and the American Dream

As an exercise in sociological thinking, students will complete a small interview project. You may choose between two prompts: A) Investigating why people choose to go to college or not to go to college, or B) Exploring the relevance of the following statement, “The American Dream is alive and well.” The final report will be 10-15 double-spaced pages, but different components will be due throughout the quarter, so you won’t be writing the whole report at once. Each student will interview 3-5 interviewees and analyze their responses using supporting evidence from academic articles. These projects may be done alone or with up to 3 team members; all team members will investigate the same research idea and will receive the same grade.

COURSE POLICIES, INFORMATION, AND PARTICIPATION

Laptops and phone use: Please do not use your phone in class. Laptops may be used to take notes and complete various writing activities only. Please do not use your laptops for other purposes, as this distracts from class content.

Classroom ethics: Sociology is the study of society. Society is filled with sensitive issues, and we will not be shying away from these in our investigation of the field. Some topics may appear to be unpleasant or disturbing. In this class, we will be reading, discussing and writing about topics including, but not limited to: violence, racial inequalities/conflict, sex, extreme poverty, cultural differences, religion, and others. If you find some of these topics to be very difficult personally, you may want to avoid this course. Alternatively, you may choose to communicate personal difficulties around such topics to me so that I can work with you to find a solution.

Each of you brings unique experiences and perspectives into this class. I have found that academic material particularly resonates with students when they are able to relate material to their own lives and experiences. As such, I encourage all of you to draw on your own life stories and world-views to discuss class material as much as you are comfortable with. Please be courteous to other students expressing their perspectives. It is my aim to make this class a safe space where disagreements can be resolved with evidence and logic. Personal attacks toward other students or myself will not be tolerated. Try to take into consideration other perspectives that differ from your own. This goes beyond politeness and is important for expanding and/or questioning our assumed world-view. Keep in mind that we can disagree without being disrespectful. Debates and disagreements are particularly valuable as a space for learning about other perspectives.

Academic integrity: Students must submit only their own work unless working on group activities or projects. Attempting to use someone else’s work as your own is plagiarism and will be reported. Using Chat GPT to complete assignments is plagiarism and will be reported.

Students will receive one warning for an occurrence of plagiarism, after which they will automatically receive a failing grade in the course.

AI Policy: Artificial Intelligence Tools Prohibited. Per UC San Diego's Academic Integrity Policy, students are responsible for completing their assigned coursework (assignments, discussions, quizzes, and exams) without unauthorized collaboration or the use of unauthorized aids. In this course, all artificial intelligence tools are considered unauthorized aids and/or collaboration; therefore, the use of artificial intelligence tools in the completion of any part of the coursework is prohibited. Any assignment created with the help of artificial intelligence tools will receive a score of zero and be reported to Student Affairs.

Required texts:

All readings are available as free electronic copies through our course site on Canvas. **Note: Readings may change somewhat from the list as it is now. I will provide syllabus updates throughout the quarter as necessary.

Accommodations:

Please reach out to me early about any personal needs that may affect your ability to participate in class. These may include issues of different ability, but can also include mental health issues, work and family obligations, financial stressors—whatever you feel has potential to affect your participation in this class. I always do my best to be understanding about and accommodate student concerns.

Assignment submissions:

Please submit assignments in a Microsoft word document, Google doc, or PDF format unless otherwise specified. Thank you.

Learning to participate:

In this course, I emphasize **that participating in class is a learned skill**, rather than seeing this as something that 'comes naturally' to some students and 'doesn't come naturally' to others. Participation is a valuable skill that will be very useful in college courses as well as future work opportunities. I welcome all students to practice participating in class by sharing perspectives on various readings and how personal experiences (or real-world experiences from friends, family, book/TV show/movie characters) relate to course material. That said, you do not need to have experienced something related to course content to comment on it. Please feel free to share your thoughts and feelings on various readings/arguments, and above all, please ask questions! If you have questions on a certain argument/concept, chances are others in the class do as well.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introductions, Understanding the Sociological Vision, Basic Concepts for the Field

***Please note, all readings for the first week will take place in class*

1. House, Patrick. 2014. "What People Cured of Blindness See," *The New Yorker*: <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/people-cured-blindness-see>
2. John Skrentny, Sociology 1: "Basic Concepts."
3. Erickson, Bonnie. 2003. "Social Networks: The Value of Variety," *Contexts* 2: 25-31.

Week 2: Why Go to College?

1. Beaver, William. 2009. "A Matter of Degrees," *Contexts* 8: 22-26.
2. Yee, April. 2012. "Degree by Default," *Contexts* 11: 46-50.
3. Hout, Michael. 2012. "Social and Economic Returns to College Education in the United States," *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 379-400.

Optional:

1. Stevens, Mitchell, Armstrong, Elizabeth and Richard Arum. 2008. "Sieve, Incubator, Temple, Hub: Empirical and Theoretical Advances in the Sociology of Higher Education." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34:127-151.

Week 3: The Hidden Curriculum/Inequalities in College

Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday: No Class Monday, January 20

1. Jack, Anthony. 2019. *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges are Failing Disadvantaged Students*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1.
2. Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Laura T. Hamilton. 2015. *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1.

Week 4: Understanding Attraction

1. Goin, Molly. 2014. "Looking for Love in Hookup Culture," *The Society Pages*: <https://thesocietypages.org/clippings/2014/02/10/looking-for-love-in-hookup-culture/>
2. Wade, Lisa. 2013. "American Men's Hidden Crisis: They Need More Friends!" *Salon*: https://www.salon.com/2013/12/08/american_mens_hidden_crisis_they_need_more_friends/
3. Hull, Kathleen E., Meier, Ann and Timothy Ortyl. 2010. "The Changing Landscape of Love and Marriage," *Contexts* 9: 32-37.

****Reading Memo #1 due February 2nd by 11:59pm!**

Week 5: Understanding Fashion / Sociology and the Everyday

1. Aspers, Patrik and Frederic Godart. 2013. "Sociology of Fashion: Order and Change," *Annual Review of Sociology* 39: 171-192.
2. Chi, Janine. 2014. "Consuming Rice, Branding Nation," *Contexts* 13: 50-55.
3. Stewart, Emily. 2021. "Why Do We Buy What We Buy? A Sociologist on Why People Buy Too Many Things," *Vox*: <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22547185/consumerism-competition-history-interview>

Week 6: Understanding Conflict / Inequality, Mobility, and Aspirations

1. Clair, Matthew and Jeffrey S. Denis. 2015. "Sociology of Racism," In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edition, Volume 19, edited by James D. Wright. Elsevier.
2. Legewie, Joscha and Merlin Schaeffer. 2016. "Contested Boundaries: Explaining Where Ethnoracial Diversity Provokes Neighborhood Conflict," *American Journal of Sociology* 122: 125-161.
3. Downey, Douglas B. and Benjamin G. Gibbs. 2010. "How Schools Really Matter," *Contexts* 9: 50-54.
4. Correll, Shelley J. 2004. "Constraints into Preferences: Gender, Status, and Emerging Career Aspirations," *American Sociological Review* 69: 93-113.

****Hidden Curriculum Project due February 16th by 11:59pm!**

Week 7: Inequality in Work

Presidents' Day Holiday: No Class Monday, February 17

1. You're Paid What You're Worth and Other Myths of the Modern Economy ("In Conversation with Jake Rosenfeld") *Washington Center for Equitable Growth*: <https://equitablegrowth.org/in-conversation-with-jake-rosenfeld/>
2. Farrell, Chris. 2018. "The Shortage of Home Care Workers: Worse Than You Think" *Forbes*: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2018/04/18/the-shortage-of-home-care-workers-worse-than-you-think/?sh=42a375733ddd>

Week 8: Understanding Poverty and Societal Causes of/Responses to Unhoused People

1. Edin, Kathryn and Joanna M. Reed. 2005. "Why Don't They Just Get Married? Barriers to Marriage among the Disadvantaged," *The Future of Children* 15: 117-137.
2. Snow, David A. and Leon Anderson. 2003. "Street People," *Contexts* 2: 12-17.

3. Gong, Neil. 2021. "California Gave People the 'Right' to Be Homeless—But Little Help Finding Homes," *Washington Post*:
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/05/20/california-homeless-addiction-drugs/>

****Reading Memo #2 due March 2nd by 11:59pm!**

Week 9: The Nature of Work in the Modern Economy cont.

1. Sharone, Ofer. 2004. "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), pp. 191-218.
2. Antonio García Martínez, "How Mark Zuckerberg Led Facebook's War to Crush Google Plus," *Vanity Fair*, June 3, 2016: <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2016/06/how-mark-zuckerberg-led-facebooks-war-to-crush-google-plus>
3. North, Anna. 2021. "The Death of the Job: What If Paid Work Were No Longer the Centerpiece of American Life?" Vox: <https://www.vox.com/22621892/jobs-work-pandemic-covid-great-resignation-2021>

Week 10: Understanding Big Social Changes: Secularization, Modernization, and Urbanization

1. Berger, Peter L. 2012. "Further Thoughts on Religion and Modernity," *Society* 49: 313-316.
2. Millard, Bill. 2014. "Challenging Motorism in New York City," *Contexts* 13: 32-37.
3. Voas, David and Mark Chaves. 2016. "Is the United States a Counterexample to the Secularization Thesis?" *American Journal of Sociology* 121: 1517:56.

****Final interview project due March 17th by 11:59pm!**