“The difficulty, in sociology, is to manage to think in a completely astonished and disconcerted way about things you thought you had always understood.” – Pierre Bourdieu

“Sociology is the science which, as the subject, simultaneously has itself as its object... Sociology consists essentially of the reflection of science upon itself” – Theodor Adorno

“Established sociology has objectified a consciousness of society and social relations that 'knows' them from the standpoint of their ruling and from the standpoint of men who do that ruling” – Dorothy Smith

Course description

This course is designed to introduce you to some of the main themes, concepts, and perspectives of the field of sociology. We will be discussing what it means to have a “sociological imagination”—that is, to think sociologically—and you will have many opportunities to develop this skill through practice. One of the peculiar traits of the discipline of sociology is that its object, society, is something about which each of us already possesses skill and knowledge. It is also unique because you can apply its findings and insights seemingly everywhere. In its essence, sociology employs a method of critical thinking, and the readings and perspectives of the course should challenge you and encourage you to reflect and reexamine your own beliefs and ways of seeing and engaging with the world.

As the study of social relations and society, sociology has an extremely wide breadth of scope, and a multitude of research methodologies. Instead of attempting to cover too many topics, our approach here will be focused on the conceptual and theoretical foundations of sociology (first part of the course), and then on some select topics in inequality. Our readings will be split between “classical” texts in the field, current research papers, and additional secondary and complementary readings. We will explore the types of questions that sociologists ask, and the ways that they go about answering them.

This syllabus is preliminary; I’ll probably need to make changes based upon the interests and needs of course participants.
Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students should:

- be able to articulate concepts, theories, and methods fundamental to the study of sociology
- understand some of the key structures and dynamics of society
- understand the meaning of “theory” and its significance to sociology
- have a richer understanding of their own identities and the ways that they have been shaped by social forces
- be confident using sociological concepts in their everyday life
- be able to compare and contrast different ways of perceiving and engaging with the world
- have improved critical reading, writing, and thinking skills

Student Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are specified at the department level. The relevant outcomes for this course are the following:

- Connect information about historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena.
- Apply sociological and anthropological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena.
- Draw upon your understanding of historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena to engage the world.

Course Materials

There are four required books for the course, which are available at the Carleton bookstore. In addition to these texts, there will also be required readings available on the course website (Moodle).


Approach, expectations, suggestions

The course will be conducted as a discussion-based seminar, although I may lecture from time to time. I view my professorial role to be one of facilitation, rather than knowledge dissemination. My goal is to create a context and structure to help you develop your critical intellectual skills and your knowledge of critical and sociological approaches. The success of the course will depend upon the continued preparation, engagement and participation of all members.
Reading
In many ways, this is a seminar in reading. The reading load will vary, but will often be substantial, and the texts will require significant attention and active engagement. This means annotating the text, making notes, and furthering your understanding by summarizing and questioning the text. You should expect to spend a considerable amount of time reading critically, in preparation for our class meetings. You are not expected to have mastered them on your own before coming to class; we’ll collectively make sense of them in class.

You should always bring the relevant texts to class with you, along with your notes. I strongly discourage using ereaders, as they (in my opinion), make active engagement with the text more difficult. Readings available on Moodle should be printed out and brought to class.

Technology
My approach to teaching and learning is centered around discussion, engagement, community and collaboration. I have found that this approach is best facilitated by keeping technology, for the most part, out of the classroom. I expect all phones and laptops to be turned off and put away before coming into the classroom. If you have a circumstance which merits an exception to this policy, please see me about it.

Attendance
Class attendance is mandatory. If you need to be absent for a legitimate reason, please talk to me ahead of time. You may have one unexcused absence during the term. Any additional unexcused absences will result in deductions from your final grade for the course.

Communication and office hours
I am available for discussion and/or assistance outside of class, and I welcome student feedback, discussion, and questions. If you have any questions or concerns throughout the term, we can chat about them. If you find yourself struggling with the course or some aspect of it, come and see me before it gets too stressful or too late to remedy.

Late work
I don’t accept any late work that I have not authorized prior to its deadline.

Course requirements
Your course grade will be calculated according to the following schema:

- Class participation 15%
- Critical reading questions 15%
- Midterm exam 10%
- Sociological journal 30%
- Critical discourse analysis paper 10%
- Discussion facilitation 10%
- Final exam 10%
**Class participation** Your success in the course (as well as the success of the course as a whole) will depend upon your active and sustained engagement. I expect everyone to participate at a high level; however, we all don't have the same aptitudes and learning styles, so you should think about participation flexibly. While it includes asking questions and participating in discussions, it also includes active listening, having your text open (and reading along), annotating and notetaking, and participation in small-group work.

Active participation also involves making comments that show how you have substantially engaged with the text on your own time, and are making connections between different texts and themes that we've covered, as well as connections to other courses or everyday life.

**Critical reading questions** You will be responsible for posting a critical reading response and question to the appropriate discussion board on Moodle before each class. This requirement is designed to help you practice focusing and articulating your engagement with the text, as well as to develop critical questioning skills.

**Sociological journal** This assignment will take the form of frequent, informal writings, in which you will develop your understanding of course themes and texts. These will be submitted on a weekly or bi-weekly basis during the first six or seven weeks of the course.

**Critical discourse analysis paper** In this short writing assignment, you will employ some of the skills learned in class, and from the Bonilla-Silva text, to analyze a conversation.

**Discussion leadership assignment** You will have the opportunity to lead the class discussion on a day of your choosing. This assignment will be conducted as a small group of about 3.

**Grades**

The following grading scale will be used for assignments and for the course overall:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-66%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>below 60%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Carleton College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Disability Services, Andy Christensen, at 222-4464 or anchrist@carleton.edu, to begin the process. Carleton faculty are strongly encouraged to wait for official notification of accommodations before modifying course requirements for students.
**Academic support**

Carleton has a wealth of resources for students who want to improve their academic skills. Take advantage of them!

**Library research**

Ask a librarian for help with your research in this class. You can drop by the library’s Research/IT desk to ask any question you have, at any point in your process. Librarians help students find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. For more information on hours and librarians, visit the library’s website: [http://go.carleton.edu/library](http://go.carleton.edu/library).

**Public Speaking and Class Presentations**

The Speakeasy is a student-staffed resource designed to assist you with class presentations, comps talks, and other speech-related events. Groups and individuals are welcome at our location in the Libe (room 314). A Speakeasy coach, Chad Stevenson or Diana Fraser, can also meet you at other mutually convenient times. Just email them at stevensonc@carleton.edu or fraserd@carleton.edu. For days and times when the Speakeasy is open, visit [go.carleton.edu/speakeasy](http://go.carleton.edu/speakeasy).

**Time Management, Study Skills, and Test-Prep Strategies**

Chavonna Savage (csavage@carleton.edu), a Hall Director who also works in the Academic Support Center, can work with you to improve your time management and academic skills. Her goals are to heighten your awareness of your personal strengths and skills, and to offer different ways you can approach your academic work so you’re more efficient and effective. Chavonna meets students during her regular drop-in office hours, which are listed on the Academic Skills Coaching website. You can also email her to set up a meeting outside her office hours.

**The Writing Center**

The Writing Center, located in 420 4th Libe, has peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours are listed here: [https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/asc/writingcenter/](https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/asc/writingcenter/). You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their online appointment system: [https://writingcenter.carleton.edu/](https://writingcenter.carleton.edu/). Walk-ins are welcome in 420 4th Libe, though writers with appointments have priority.

**Writing Assistance for Students Whose First Language Is Not English**

If you are a second language writer and believe you might benefit from working individually with a writing consultant on a regular basis this term, email Renata Fitzpatrick, Second-Language Writing Coordinator, call her at x5998, or stop by her office in 420D 4th Libe. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.
Course schedule

Part One: The Historical and Conceptual Foundations of Sociology

Week one: Introduction to the course

Mar 30 Welcome and introductions

Apr 1 Mills, The Sociological Imagination, “The Promise” (pp. 3-24)
Sears and Cairns, A Good Book in Theory, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-30)

Apr 3 TBA

Week two: Society as structure I

Apr 6 Émile Durkheim, Suicide (excerpt); The Rules of Sociological Method (excerpt)

Apr 8 Émile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society (excerpt)
Sears and Cairns, A Good Book In Theory, Chapter 2 (31-59)

Apr 10 Parigi and Henderson, “Social Isolation in America”
TBA

Week three: Society as structure II

Apr 13 Karl Marx, excerpts on class
Sears and Cairns, A Good Book In Theory, Chapter 3, pp. 61-82

Apr 15 Max Weber, excerpts on class
Eric Olin Wright, “Understanding Class”

Apr 17 Annette Lareau, “Invisible Inequality”
Iris Marion Young, “Structure as the Subject of Justice”

Week four: Society as solidarity

Apr 20 Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (excerpts)
Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Civil Society (excerpts)

Apr 22 Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas, “Becoming Less Illegal”
TBA

Apr 24 Nira Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging”
Evelyn Glenn, “Creating a Caring Society”

Week five: Society as creation

Apr 27 G.H. Mead, “The Social Self”
Erving Goffman, excerpts on “Stigma” and “Face-Work”  
Sears and Cairns, A Good Book In Theory, Chapter 4 (pp. 83-111)

Apr 29  Wilkins, “Becoming Black Women”  
De Vries, “Intersectional Identities”

May 1  **Midterm exam**

**Part 2: Inequality, Identity, Critique**

**Week six: Gender and sexuality**

May 4  **Midterm break – no class**

May 6  West and Zimmerman, “Doing Gender”

May 8  Thorne and Luria, “Sexuality and Gender in Children's Daily Worlds”

**Week seven: Gender inequality**

May 11  Ridgeway, Framed by Gender, chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 3-55)

May 13  Ridgeway, Framed by Gender, chapters 3 & 4 (pp. 56-126)

May 15  Ridgeway, Framed by Gender, chapters 6 & 7 (pp. 156-200)

**Week eight: Race and ethnicity**

May 18  Omi and Winant, Racial Formation in the United States (excerpt)  
Smedley, Race in North America (excerpt)  
W.E.B. DuBois, Souls of Black Folk (excerpt)

May 20  Margaret Hunter, “If You're Light You're Alright”  
Shapiro, “The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap”

May 22  Warikoo and Deckman, “Beyond the Numbers: Institutional Influences on Experiences With Diversity on Elite College Campuses”  
Lee and Bean, “Reinventing the Color Line”

**Week nine: Ideology, discourse and racial inequality**

May 25  Bonilla-Silva, Racism without Racists, chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 1-72)

May 27  Bonilla-Silva, Racism without Racists, chapters 3 & 4 (pp. 73-122)  
Pager, Western, and Bonikowski, "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market"
May 29  
Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, chapters 5, 6 & 9 (pp. 123-177; 225-254)

**Week ten: Ethnography of privilege**

Jun 1  
Khan, *Privilege*, Introduction & Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 1-76)

Jun 3  
Khan, *Privilege*, Chapters 3 & 4 & Conclusion (pp. 77-150; 193-200)