

**Introduction to Sociology (920:101:07-12)**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**Rutgers University**  
**Spring 2022**

**Professor:** Paul McLean

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**Course Format:** In-person Instruction [except for first two weeks]

**Office Hours:** online drop-in hours Mondays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:00pm, via Zoom. The relevant links are:

M: <https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/99284326371?pwd=dGhiYlRoMytpeloxWUpRNXFIL0tQdz09>

Th: <https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/97241311869?pwd=cDMrajdRODErajIwVE5aTnBKsXduUT09>

**1-on-1 meetings:** contact me via email to set up a meeting via Zoom, Skype, or in-person (including outdoors)

**Learning Management System:** Canvas

**Teaching Assistants:** Anthony Landers [aal160@sociology.rutgers.edu]

Aizada Arystanbek [aa2344@sociology.rutgers.edu]

Welcome to Introduction to Sociology in this time-of-Covid-that-just-won't-end. I am committed to making this course a fulfilling educational experience for you, despite the uncertainty going on around us. We will follow all required protocols, **including masking in all classroom spaces**, but we will also try to ensure they don't interfere with your enjoyment of the course and satisfaction with what it delivers. I encourage all of you to reach out to me for a one-on-one or small group meeting at least once during the semester. Any course, but especially a course in sociology, works better when we get to know each other a little bit.

**What is Sociology?** Different answers can be given to this question. One answer is that it is the systematic, scientific study of the **core structures and processes of social life**, touching on all of its major dimensions—economic, political, familial, criminal, religious, and more. This answer emphasizes **common patterns**. Sociologists investigate social behavior and the organization of social life at the level of grand social and historical change, and at the level of everyday, mundane interactions, as well as levels in between. Sociologists consider individuals, but more importantly, they analyze the informal groups, social networks, formal organizations, and social categories that comprise the social landscape, which bring individuals together and affect their behavior in determinate ways.

However, another compelling answer is that sociologists study the role of **social context**. Because contexts can differ so much, social life is arguably characterized more by **difference** than similarity. According to this view, in order to understand culture (shared beliefs, practices, and values), social organization (e.g., families, social networks, the global economy, or a university), and even our own identities, we must begin with the specific social contexts that produce them. For example, while it is true that violent crime results from an individual's behavior, if we stop with such a decontextualized (we could say, "individualistic") account, we can't hope to explain adequately why crime rates—and even what counts as a crime—vary so widely from place to place and time to time. The question of difference is related to the notion of diversity. You have likely heard the term "diversity" referred to positively (e.g., "we celebrate our diversity," or "our diversity is our strength"). Sociology complicates these rosy clichés. Gender differences, racial differences, or class differences are not simply different categories into which people happily sort themselves. Sociology makes us think about these differences in a foundational way. First, differences are not innate, but **socially constructed**. No one is innately "white" or "straight" or "middle-class" or "disabled." All such social statuses operate differently depending on different contexts. Second, identities are **relational**. Disabled, for example, has no meaning without a relationship to non-disabled. And masculinity has historically been constructed in contrast to femininity. Identities exist within a system of differences. Thirdly, typically such systems of differences (like race, gender, sexuality, class, or national origin) distribute power and opportunity unequally across social categories or positions. They are hierarchical. Diversity is produced, to a profound extent, through socially constructed differences that define and empower different sets of people in different ways. Today, as much or more than any time in the last one hundred years, **social inequalities**, reinforced by the different social contexts we live in, affect different groups' access to basic freedoms, health care, political power, education, housing, financial stability, environmental well-being, and more. We have to address them head on.

## Learning Goals

This course cannot be comprehensive in its coverage of the discipline of sociology, but I want you to achieve a basic understanding of it. I will introduce you to many core concepts for conducting sociological analysis, some fundamental arguments about the constitution of society and the individuals who comprise it, and important substantive topics and problems in a variety of sociological subfields. Students will gain from the course a **“toolkit” of sociological concepts to apply to and enlighten their own experience of social life**—interactions with friends, relationships with family members, membership in religious and political organizations, experience of the job market, and life in an economically advanced but highly stratified society. I want to help you to **discern** and **critically analyze** recurring patterns in our lives with each other. That is because I believe sociological awareness is vital for living in a democratic society in an engaged way. Some of what you will learn may seem commonsensical, because sociological ideas have worked their way into popular culture and into common parlance. But much of what sociologists argue is anything but obviously commonsensical. In fact, sometimes the sociological perspective disrupts unscientific, commonsensical understandings. You should be attentive to that idea. The course will therefore also help you to understand how we formulate **scientifically testable claims** about the causes, consequences, and likelihood of social phenomena.

This course satisfies Rutgers' School of Arts and Sciences' core curriculum requirement of social analysis [SCL]. It may be used to meet the CC requirement for students enrolled at Rutgers-NB prior to Fall 2019. Consult an advisor and the SAS Core requirements webpage [<https://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/degree-requirements/core>] for more details.



## Grading and Class Format

Your grade will be based on the following factors:

- Two tests (midterms) during the semester (20% each)
- One diversity-and-inequality themed writing assignment (10%) around week 10
- A couple of short writing assignments (on the Gladwell and Christine Williams readings), plus a number of recitation-based discussion assignments and/or short exercises sprinkled throughout the semester, that will collectively constitute your recitation and participation grade (30% in total)
- A final test taken during the examination period (20%)

I cannot in advance provide exact information on how point scores translate into letter grades. However, in the recent past, students with 85 or more points out of 100 on these assignments received an A, students with over 80 points received a B+, those with over 70 points received a B, those with 65 to 70 points received a C+, and those with 55 to 65 points received a C. Those who received fewer than 55 points received a D or F.

The **two tests** will include both multiple-choice questions and a short-essays portion, equally weighted. The **final exam** will be only multiple choice. **All of these will all be administered through the Quiz function in Canvas**, and they will be done **synchronously**. That is, they will be scheduled for particular days as stipulated below, and multiple times on those days attentive to the convenience of students. The two tests during the semester are **non-cumulative**. Approximately half of the questions on the final test, during the exam period, will focus on material covered in the last seven modules of the semester. However, **one part of the final test** will be cumulative, focusing on important themes and concepts that recur throughout the course. All the tests will cover material presented in my PowerPoints, the required readings posted on Canvas, and material from your textbook (in that order of priority). As a point of clarification concerning the textbook material, my lectures and the accompanying PowerPoint slide sets will be the primary lens through which to judge which textbook content is most important and which is less so. [Translation: read the textbook, but in preparing for the tests, study my PowerPoints, review the topics and items discussed in recitations, and do the short required readings rather than re-read the book. This way you will have covered virtually all the test material. Consult the textbook and contact me if confusion over concepts persists.]

Instructions for the **take-home writing assignment** will be distributed via Canvas about two-thirds of the way into the course. It will be due around April 14. In brief, that assignment will ask you to analyze how certain widespread social inequalities shape individual and group experiences and perspectives, through the lens of a contemporary issue, event, or experience of your choice. Rather than picking an issue at random, we will encourage you to choose an illustrative case that applies to some extent to your own life, to drive home the importance of sociological analysis for critical awareness of our own circumstances and opportunities. More details will follow in due time.

## Recitations and Responsive Writings

Once a week you will meet in recitation sections to discuss the material for the current modules and engage in some in-class exercises pertaining to the required readings and/or concepts introduced in lecture. In many instances, you will also have to submit a written reaction via the “Assignments” or “Discussions” tab on Canvas. [Last year, because I had to teach this course asynchronously online, I converted what had been spontaneous in-person discussions in real time into more structured online exercises and group discussions, and correspondingly transformed what had been simply a “recitation grade” into a “responsive and interactive assignments” grade. I have kept some of that structure as we have transitioned back to in-person instruction, because I thought it worked well.] **Nota bene: Attendance at recitations and completion of these assignments is required work for this course.** Furthermore, note the following: In the past, I graded many of these submissions on a three-point scale, and the TAs and I may do so again this semester: a '1.5' indicates a perfunctory or barely adequate submission, or a lack of required response to classmates' posts; a '2.25' indicates good work--participating as you are supposed to with satisfactory work; a '3' indicates superior work, either in terms of the quality or creativeness of your submission, or the quality of your responses to others' posts. A '0' indicates 'no submission.' Consistent 2.25's out of 3 *does not mean* you are destined for a C on this portion of the grade, but more like a B. Don't panic about not getting full marks every time; I often reserve full marks for exceptional work. I hope this is clear. In any event, I expect to answer more questions and misgivings about recitation scores as the semester progresses. Don't be afraid to ask.

## Readings

The **textbook** for this course is: Anthony Giddens et al., *Introduction to Sociology*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition (2018) [ISBN: 978-0-393-63945-2]. There is a fancy version of the book, a cheaper version (Seagull edition) with less colorful illustrations that I have ordered at the Rutgers bookstore, and an electronic version. I don't mind which one you get—even an earlier edition if you must. I have used the book often, so there may be copies floating around among RU students. This particular textbook is, in my opinion, readable and reasonably comprehensive. To tell the truth, my primary goal in having you read the textbook is to support and supplement my presentation of information in the lectures, *not* to provide a bunch of material you must memorize. I have also posted a number of **required short readings on Canvas** for you to read, as marked on the syllabus. Some of these are sociology classics; some deal with particular pressing contemporary topics. **Many of them will be used as the basis for the writing and discussion assignments that will comprise a significant portion of your grade. I will also likely ask you to write short essays on one or more of these readings on the synchronously scheduled tests. Overall, my PowerPoints, my lectures, and the short readings will be the primary material on which you are tested, not arcana from the textbook!**

The Department of Sociology encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Behavior that distracts students and faculty is NOT acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, and discourteous remarks. Courteous and lawful expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is of course permitted. If a student engages in disruptive behavior, then your instructor, in compliance with the University Code of Student Conduct, is entitled to direct that student to leave class for the remainder of the class period. Serious verbal assaults, harassment, or defamation of the instructor or other students can lead to university disciplinary proceedings.

**Diversity Statement:** The Sociology department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

**Disabilities Statement:** In accordance with University policy on disabilities, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, please contact me at the beginning of the semester or when given an assignment for which an accommodation is required. Students with disabilities must verify eligibility through the Office of Student Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>).

**Academic Integrity Statement:** Students are expected to comply with the University's policies on academic integrity, found at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>.

## University Masking Policy

In order to protect the health and well-being of all members of the University community, masks must be worn by all persons on campus when in the presence of others (within six feet) and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Masks must be worn during class meetings; any student not wearing a mask will be asked to leave.

Masks should conform to CDC guidelines and should completely cover the nose and mouth. Consult the following url for further guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

This policy may seem draconian, but it's important to follow it until instructed otherwise to ensure a healthy and productive semester for all of us!

### Schedule of Course Modules and Readings

Even though I will be lecturing in person, this course is structured on Canvas using **modules**. Think of a module as the recipe for a class session, built around a lecture. Each module contains an introductory blurb, then links to two decks of PowerPoint slides that I will use as the basis for my in-person lecture. Sometimes those PowerPoint decks end with an invitation to you to jot down some reflections, look up a little data, or do a kind of thought experiment. [That the lecture is in two parts is an artifact of videorecording it in the past.] After that, each module includes links to the assigned (non-textbook) reading(s) for that session, and in some instances, a quiz to complete or a discussion thread in which to participate. Generally, where the invitation to offer your thoughts or write a response is a stand-alone element in the module (a "Discussion" or an "Assignment"), completing it counts towards the "recitation" portion of your grade. As you will come to see, and as noted above, these assignments may involve writing memos about the required reading of the day, posing questions about the readings, reading classmates' reactions to the lecture material, coming up with illustrations of key sociological concepts, categorizing examples of social behavior, or reflecting on your own experiences in light of the material I present. You will be told what is required, module by module.

Here in the syllabus, for each module I provide the date for the lecture, give a little outline of topics and questions we will cover, and tell you which reading(s) to do. All the short readings (i.e., not the textbook readings) may be found in the "Readings" folder under the "Files" tab on Canvas, organized by subfolders labeled by module number and lecture title. All my Power Point decks are under the "Files" tab, too. But as I noted above, links to them are also embedded in the modules themselves. Below, I also identify which graded Discussions and Assignments go with each lecture, although I don't include the exact deadlines for completion. Always let me know if you have questions!

### PART I: FUNDAMENTALS

**Module 0**      **A brief introduction to your instructor (not required, but maybe entertaining and useful)**

**Module 1**      **Beginning to Think Sociologically**

[work through this module on or around January 19]

To consider: What does it mean to "think sociologically?" How does thinking sociologically allow us to re-frame personal troubles as social issues? What are some examples of large-scale forces or institutions that shape our lives, our motivations, and our choices, often unwittingly? How can the context of these forces and institutions fundamentally shape our perspectives and affect our life chances?

Readings:      C. Wright Mills, "The Promise of Sociology" [Canvas]  
Start reading Giddens et al., chapter 1

## Module 2      Four Big Questions

[work through this module on or around January 24]

To consider: What are the key questions Giddens et al. pose that guide us towards sociological thinking? What are the most important ideas or concepts embedded in these questions? How does the social problem of school shootings illustrate the ideas of social construction, the patterned (ordered) quality of social life, and the relevance of individual agency? How does this example illustrate the relationship between small-scale actions and interactions on the one hand (the micro level of social life) and large-scale phenomena (the macro level) on the other? What social contexts produce school shootings, and school shooters? Can you think of informative illustrations of your own for the concepts of social construction, social patterns, and social agency?

Readings:            Giddens et al., chapter 1  
                         Malcolm Gladwell, “Thresholds of Violence: How School Shootings Catch On,” *The New Yorker*, October 19, 2015 [Canvas]

TO DO:                the brief ungraded writing assignment  
                         the Gladwell writing Assignment (due January 28)

## Module 3      The Grand Theoretical Perspectives

[work through this module on or around January 26]

To consider: I invite you to consider what is meant by the term “social fact.” What various meanings can this term have? Mightn’t there be some dispute about what is a “fact” in the social world? How important is subjective experience in assessing what is “factual?” Facts and theories need each other. I will present four grand sociological theories that explain social facts and social order in different ways. I offer an extensive table, by which you can compare and contrast the basic assumptions of these different theoretical perspectives, and identify the concepts stressed by each of them. I will also introduce to you some of the most important early sociological theorists and their most noteworthy ideas.

Readings:            Finish Giddens et al., chapter 1  
                         Emile Durkheim, “What is a Social Fact?” [Canvas]  
                         Georg Simmel, “The Stranger” [Canvas]

TO DO:                the ungraded Grand Theories quiz (try multiple times as a drill)  
                         Discuss “The Stranger” in recitation(?) and upload examples to that Discussion board

## Module 4      Sociology as a Scientific Enterprise

[work through this module on or around January 31]

To consider: What do we mean when we say something is a “science?” What makes sociology in particular a science? What particular difficulties do the social sciences face relative to the physical sciences? What are the ideal steps in the research process, and what can go wrong? Why is it so difficult to make causal claims in the social sciences? What is most exciting about conducting social research?

Readings:            Giddens et al., chapter 2  
                         Joel Best, “Telling the Truth about Damned Lies and Statistics” [Canvas]

## Module 5      The Diverse Sociological Methods

[work through this module on or around February 2]

To consider: Sociologists use a variety of methods to conduct their research. This is because different questions require different methodological approaches, and different kinds of data require different analytical techniques. The variety of methods also arises because some aspects of human social life display patterns

amenable to statistical analysis, whereas others are characterized by a uniqueness that can only be understood through detailed qualitative examination. Often a single topic can be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively, and using only one methodological approach can miss important features. For example, poverty is an economic category into which we can place households to track its uneven distribution and its growth or decline over time. But poverty is also a lived experience, and knowing what it *feels like* to be poor is not so easily studied with statistics. Knowing what to study, what data to collect, how to code and measure it, and what the findings mean: these are far from clear. Clever research design and ingenious data collection are crucial.

Readings: Finish Giddens et al., chapter 2  
Preeti Khanolkar and Paul McLean, “100 Percenting It” [Canvas]  
TO DO: group work in recitation on “What Can We Learn from People’s Garbage”

## **Module 6 The “Culture” Concept and the Social Construction of Reality**

[work through this module on or around February 7]

To consider: What variety of things do social scientists mean by the term “culture?” How does culture constrain our choices and our conception of reality? Culture may be thought of, among other things, as sets of rules, symbols, attitudes, values, and so on, that shape our understanding of the world. Culture is culture only if it is shared; yet nothing shows the social constructedness of the world more than the divergence of cultures, whether between societies, between nations, between classes, between racial groups, between workplaces, and between all kinds of small groups. We make meaning ‘all the way down,’ from macro to micro and back.

Readings: Giddens et al., chapter 3  
Horace Miner, “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” [Canvas]  
TO DO: the ungraded Culture Quiz

## **Module 7 Culture in a Globalizing World**

[work through this module on or around February 9]

To consider: Perhaps we used to think different countries had different cultures. Maybe you still do. But with globalization, there is so much cultural mixing that it’s impossible to find any culture in the world uninfluenced by other cultures. How does globalization affect our changing conception of culture and our understanding of individuals’ relationship to their culture(s)? How do people continually re-purpose their culture and invent new elements?

Readings: Finish Giddens et al., chapter 3  
James L. Watson, “McDonald’s in Hong Kong: Consumerism, Dietary Change, and the Rise of a Children’s Culture” [Canvas]  
TO DO: the Gangnam Style Discussion in recitation, then upload your response

## **Module 8 Socialization as the Master Concept for Understanding Cultural Acquisition**

[work through this module on or around February 14]

To consider: Socialization is the primary means by which humans adapt in different ways to their distinct social contexts. Is socialization evenly distributed across the life course? Where does socialization take place? How is socialization linked to imitation, and how is it linked to sanctions or punishments? What other kinds of mechanisms might be elements of the socialization process? How are roles critical to the landscape of socialization, and how are social roles related to individuality? We also begin to think about gender and race as fundamental categories through which human beings experience the world, and how we are socialized differently into different gender and racial categories.

Readings: Giddens et al., chapter 4  
George Herbert Mead, “The Self” [Canvas]  
TO DO: the Social Roles Discussion, posting your answers to the Discussion on Canvas

## **Module 9 The Social Interaction Order: Norms, Violations, the Unspoken, Impression Management**

[work through this module on or around February 16]

To consider: A great deal of interesting stuff happens when human beings interact. It isn't a place where self-interested people bump into each other, nor do people simply enact their roles. The Interaction Order, as Erving Goffman called it, has rules and characteristics of its own that modify how people behave, and the properties of this order can be analyzed in their own right. Furthermore, group boundaries don't simply exist; they are established and/or maintained in an ongoing way through talk and gesture. Interacting with diverse others can affect one's construction of identity and selfhood. People can get carried away in social interaction, but in many cases they also put a great deal of self-conscious effort into interaction. All of these features are worthy of study and reflection.

Readings: Giddens et al., chapter 5  
Erving Goffman, “The Presentation of Self” [Canvas]  
TO DO: the Impression Management Discussion on Canvas  
NOTE: recitation work this week may be more focused on midterm prep

## **Module 10 Social Structure as a Foundational Sociological Concept**

[work through this module on or around February 21]

To consider: “Society” can be thought of as being composed of many independent individuals, or as a unitary thing in itself. But in between society as a whole and individuals (who themselves are hardly unitary entities) are myriad kinds of social formations—groups, classes, age cohorts, formal organizations, network structures, and so on—that together reveal that social life is *structured*. Social structure(s) can affect our lives, not only as the bearers of culture and socialization processes, but also by virtue of their size, the distribution of groups within them, the connections out of which they are forged, and the pattern of flow of resources through them. In this module, we focus on small group dynamics, and on the “network” as a fundamental concept for understanding important patterns in social life.

Readings: Giddens et al., chapter 6  
Georg Simmel, “The Triad” [Canvas]

## **Module 11 Formal Organizations as a Special Class of Social Structure**

[work through this module on or around February 23]

To consider: Formal organizations, which have only surged to global prominence in the last one hundred and fifty years, create stable linkages among groups to accomplish massive tasks—whether those tasks be productive, administrative, regulatory, educational, or anything else. But the propensity for organization runs very deep. Ancient societies that organized the production of food, or collection of water, or provision of transportation, or practice of warfare, quickly gained an advantage vis à vis their neighbors. Organization is *power*. What are the consequences of the fact that we live in a world thickly populated with formal organizations? How do these organizations affect the conduct of our lives? How can we keep in mind that *they*, and not simply the people who supposedly run them, wield power? To what extent are they functionally necessary, and to what extent do they use their power to hold onto it and expand it? How might we think about weakening that organizational power for our own good?

Readings: Finish Giddens et al., chapter 6  
Michel Foucault, “Panopticism” [Canvas]

**February 27/28/March 1**

**FIRST MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

Nota bene: I intend to schedule three **synchronous** sessions for administering the first midterm. One will be during normal class time on February 28. The others will be on contiguous days, decided as the date approaches.

**PART II: INEQUALITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

**Module 12      Deviant Behavior, and Theories of Crime**

[work through this module on or around March 2]

To consider: What kinds of acts are regarded as deviant and why? Is it possible to provide a general definition of deviance or crime? How can we distinguish deviance from crime? Are crimes generally committed by ‘typical’ sorts of people? What various theories purport to explain when and why crime occurs? How does society punish crime, and what is the aim of punishment? What links exist between the punishment of deviants, and the socialization of non-deviant persons? How can we apply grand sociological theories to account specifically for the way we conceptualize and explain crime and deviant behavior?

Readings:            Giddens et al., chapter 7  
                          William Chambliss, “The Saints and the Roughnecks” [Canvas]  
TO DO:                the “Distinguishing Crime and Deviance” Discussion in recitation

**Module 13      The Varieties of Crime in America**

[work through this module on or around March 7]

To consider: What challenges arise when we try to measure the extent of crime? To what extent and in what respects are crime and punishment defining features of American society? How are different kinds of crime punished, and why? How is ‘criminality’ perceived differently by different people or different groups? What are some of the various strategies available for crime prevention? Why do we punish some crimes severely though they cause little turmoil, while we hardly punish at all some crimes that wreak widespread havoc? How are crime patterns changing, and how is the perception of change related (or unrelated) to political ideologies?

Readings:            Finish Giddens et al., chapter 7  
                          Elijah Anderson, “The Code of the Streets” [Canvas]

**Module 14      The Pervasiveness of Social Inequality: Systems and Theories of Stratification**

[work through this module on or around March 9]

To consider: Stratification—the tendency for society to become layered according to the relative status of different groups—is one of sociology's key concepts and most important areas of inquiry. What accounts for this widespread tendency towards inequality? What criteria are important for determining status, and how do they differ across societies? How can we judge whether or not people are able to change their status? What are the consequences of occupying a particular status for one's tastes, interests, and opportunities? What social and political consequences arise from the existence of significant inequality?

Readings:            Giddens et al, chapter 8  
                          Herbert J. Gans, “The Uses of Poverty: The Poor Pay All” [Canvas]

**SPRING BREAK – ENJOY!**

## **Module 15      Wealth and Poverty in America**

[work through this module on or around March 21]

To consider: From the early 1980s through to the present, economic inequality has grown in America, reaching historic levels comparable to what was seen in the 1920s. The late 1980s also witnessed a dramatic growth in concentrated poverty—that is, the concentration of poor people who are disadvantaged on many dimensions in particularly blighted urban areas, where they have been isolated from mainstream America. Middle-class Americans today often feel they and their children are more likely to suffer downward mobility than economic improvement. People of color in America are disadvantaged on virtually every indicator of social well-being. What explains these phenomena, and what might the future hold?

Readings:            Finish Giddens et al., chapter 8  
                         Lisa Dodson, “Employing Parents Who Can’t Make a Living” [Canvas]  
TO DO:                the “Low-Wage Workplaces” Discussion or another wealth/poverty-related exercise

## **Module 16      Globalization and Inequality**

[work through this module on or around March 23]

To consider: Despite the hopes of some developmental economists, and notwithstanding the improved economic performance of some developing nations, inequalities remain profound at the global level today. Different theories of economic development incline us to believe that global inequality is a structural phenomenon, and thus unlikely to wither away.

Reading for Module 16:    Giddens et al., chapter 9

## **Module 17      The Pervasiveness of Gender Inequality**

[work through this module on or around March 28]

To consider: Regardless of the presence or absence of other kinds of social inequality (e.g., based on wealth or social status), social groups are very often internally stratified by gender. The traditional family is a highly patriarchal social formation. The difference between being male and being female is one of the core factors in shaping how we are socialized and determining the opportunities we are given. At many levels of the class structure, women continue to be paid less for their work than comparably trained and identically positioned men. Why is this so? How does our culture produce and reproduce images of gender difference, how do these images change, and with what results? How does gender intersect with other kinds of inequalities either to worsen or improve a particular group’s fate?

Readings:            Giddens et al., chapter 10  
                         Christine L. Williams, “Inequality in the Toy Store” [Canvas]  
TO DO:                the Williams “Inequality” Discussion

## **Module 18      Race and Ethnicity as Quintessentially Socially Constructed Identities**

[work through this module on or around March 30]

To consider: In 1903, W. E. B. Dubois famously referred to America’s greatest problem as “the problem of the color-line.” Racial prejudice, segregation, and inequality remain major problems in contemporary America. The recent protests after the killing of George Floyd highlight racial injustices in America, and more generally the fact that black Americans and white Americans (as well as Americans of other racial backgrounds) experience America in fundamentally different ways. What distinguishes the African-American experience from that of other racial and ethnic groups? Is racism, in your view, more of an economic structural problem,

or a cultural/attitudinal problem? What might happen to the notion of race as more and more people identify themselves as biracial?

Readings: Giddens et al., chapter 11  
Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, chapter 1 [Canvas]  
Bradley Zopf, “A Different Kind of Brown” [Canvas]

## **Module 19 Demands for Social Justice**

[work through this module on or around April 4]

To consider: Despite America’s philosophical commitment to freedom and equality, it remains the case that significant racial and gender inequalities persist. These disparities have prompted repeated calls for greater social and economic justice—rarely more insistent than they are in our own time. How can America live up to its ideals? What kinds of structural changes might be required to move towards significantly more equality and justice?

Readings: Finish Giddens et al., chapter 11  
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

**April 5/6/7**

## **SECOND MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

Nota bene: I intend to schedule three **synchronous** sessions for administering the second midterm. One will be during normal class time on April 6. The others will be on contiguous days, decided as the date approaches.

## **PART III: MAJOR DOMAINS OF SOCIAL LIFE**

### **Module 20 Political Sociology: Power and the Concept of the State**

[work through this module on or around April 11]

To consider: One of the most important lenses through which to understand society is power. While power evidently operates in many places—the workplace, the family, the religious institution—it is a specific feature of modernity that political power has evolved into its own autonomous domain. The single most distinctive institution in this development is the modern (nation-)state. Is the state an instrument of coercion, a device of legitimate domination, and/or the embodiment of the collective consciousness? Alongside the powerful modern state, we have also witnessed a spread of democracy and a spread of political consciousness in the form of nationalism. Where do feelings of political identity come from? How and why is political consciousness so divided in America today? What difference can an election make?

Readings: Giddens et al., first half of chapter 13  
C. Wright Mills, “The Power Elite” [Canvas]

### **Module 21 Social Movements as Agents of Change**

[work through this module on or around April 13]

To consider: At the same time that we have seen a massive build-up in the mechanisms of state power, as discussed a few modules ago, there has also been a huge growth in ordinary people’s capacity for public protest. What motivates people to join public demonstrations, or participate in other kinds of politically motivated activities that could be considered high-risk? What are people upset about? What kinds of connections do we see among movements all over the world? What might explain when protests can succeed and when they are likely to fail?

Readings: Giddens et al., second half of chapter 13  
Possibly an additional short reading TBD, perhaps on BLM  
TO DO: the Diversity writing assignment will be due around this time

## **Module 22 The Importance of Religion in Contemporary Social Life**

[work through this module on or around April 18]

To consider: Although we imagine religious belief to be a deeply private experience, there are important social determinants shaping the nature and extent of religious belief in a given society. What is the function of religious belief? How, when, and why do ideas about religion spread? How do religious beliefs imprint themselves on the conduct of life in the marketplace and other non-religious gatherings? Why has there been a remarkable resurgence of religion globally in recent decades?

Readings: Giddens et al., chapter 17  
Rhys Williams, "Politicized Evangelicalism and Secular Elites" [Canvas]

## **Module 23 Work and Economic Life**

[work through this module on or around April 20]

To consider: Most of us will spend a great deal of our lives in workplaces and/or doing work from home for which we are remunerated. The workplace is a social setting: a venue for social interaction, and a place where power dynamics play out. Further, economic production has been the number one locus for efforts at exploitation and social engineering on a global scale. How is economic production organized in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Who controls that production and how? How does life at work intersect with family life and family decisions?

Readings: Giddens et al., chapter 14  
Guy Standing, "The Precariat" [Canvas]  
TO DO: the "Work and Covid" Discussion

## **Module 24 The Changing Function, Form, and Significance of the Family**

[work through this module on or around April 25]

To consider: We take family as a fundamental social grouping for granted, but its meaning has changed dramatically over time. Furthermore, what it means and who it includes varies considerably in the present day. Its meaning and value can also be quite different for its different members. How and why has the meaning and organization of family changed? How do gender roles affect the practice and interpretation of the interactions occurring between spouses, or the treatment of male versus female children? How are alternative forms of family challenging or reinforcing 'family values'?

Readings: Giddens et al., chapter 15  
Jessie Bernard, "The Future of Marriage" [Canvas]  
David Brooks, "The Nuclear Family was a Mistake," *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 2020)  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/03/the-nuclear-family-was-a-mistake/605536/>

## **Module 25      How Family Intersects with Politics and Economic Life**

[work through this module on or around April 27]

Readings:      finish Giddens et al., chapter 15  
                      Sharmila Rudrappa, “India's Reproductive Assembly Line” [Canvas]  
TO DO:            the “Reproductive Assembly Line” Debate and Discussion

## **Module 26      Health, Illness, and a Little on Sexuality**

[work through this module on or around May 2]

To consider: There is a growing literature on the sociology of the body today. Clearly questions of body image raise sociological issues related to gender and mass marketing. Furthermore, while it might seem that physical sensations of pain and pleasure are physiologically determined, in fact what is painful or pleasurable is strongly determined by cultural norms. Traits we might consider to be genetically determined may be activated or deactivated by certain social experiences. Sexual behavior is also strongly culturally determined. From a more macro perspective, as Covid-19f has shown, health and access to health care are quite unequally distributed, much as other kinds of social goods are. Can anything be done to address that inequality?

Readings:      Giddens et al., chapter 18  
                      Armstrong, Hamilton and England, “Is Hooking Up Bad for Young Women?”  
                      [Canvas]

**FINAL EXAMINATION DATE AND TIME TBD**