Introduction to Sociology
01:920:101
Spring 2025

Instructor: Aizada Arystanbek

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Office hours: By appointment

Class location: Asynchronous remote

Note: This syllabus is subject to change throughout the semester

Summary of the course

Sociology 101 is a foundational course that explores the fundamental concepts, theories, and methods of sociology. Throughout this course, students will develop a critical understanding of the social structures and processes that shape our world. Key topics include culture, socialization, deviance, social inequality, and social institutions such as the family, education, and politics. By examining how these factors intersect with categories like gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, students will gain a deeper appreciation for the diverse experiences and perspectives that comprise the human social landscape. Through lectures, discussions, and writing, this course encourages students to apply sociological insights to real-world situations and fosters critical thinking skills essential for understanding and navigating contemporary society.

Course format

This course is **asynchronous remote**. What it means is that you will not be required to attend any class meeting at a specific time and date. In other words, we will not meet over Zoom or in-person. Instead, you will fully participate in the class remotely (i.e. online) and asynchronously (i.e. we don't all need to be in sync). You will complete weekly tasks (watching lectures and completing any work that is specified in the syllabus for each portion of the week) on your own time.

Course objectives

In this course students will:

1. Develop a strong understanding of foundational sociological concepts, theories, and methods, and apply them to real-world situations.
2. Recognize the influence of social structures, culture, and institutions on individual experiences and society at large.
3. Analyze social inequalities, including those based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, and evaluate their impact on various aspects of social life.
4. Critically examine the interconnectedness of social institutions such as family, education, work, and politics, and assess their roles in maintaining or challenging existing social arrangements.
5. Develop critical thinking, research, and communication skills essential for effectively engaging with diverse perspectives and conducting sociological inquiries.

Contacting me

Please note that my office hours are by email appointment only. I encourage you to reach out with any questions or concerns, and I will do my best to accommodate your needs and schedule. **The way to reach me is by email listed above, NOT Canvas.** I check email throughout the week (not on weekends), and I will do my best to respond within 24 hours.

Academic integrity and plagiarism

I take cheating on tests and plagiarism very seriously. I refer all suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism to the Rutgers Office of Student Conduct. Note that paying for essays or using essay generating tools (including AI-based tools) is a form of cheating. You must submit your own original work. All students must review the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy. Refer to: https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/current.pdf.

Deadlines and extensions

I practice flexibility to the best of my ability; especially given the circumstances we all have been struggling with for the past few years. What I ask in return is for you to do your absolute best to turn assignments on time.

My policy is one of **no-extension**, as this is a fast-paced course with a lot of deadlines. However, I ask for your complete transparency in case you are struggling. Please email me as soon as you can when you know that you will not be able to turn an assignment in on time, mentioning a valid reason. Please do not wait for the last minute to reach out about a missed assignment.

Grades

The final grade is based on your total score (out of 100). A final letter grade will be allocated as follows:

A	90-100	C	70-74
B+	85-89	D	60-69
B	80-84	F	59 or less
C+	75-79		

Required readings

For this course we will be using *Sociology: Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life* (12th ed.) by David M. Newman as our textbook. You can find its pdf version on Canvas.

Other **required** readings are indicated in the course schedule and will also be posted on Canvas.

Required lectures and external media

Each week you are assigned a number of lectures pre-recorded by me. **You are required to watch all lectures.**

There will also be YouTube videos (varying from lectures to documentary clips to video essays) assigned for certain weeks **required for you to watch in addition to lectures.**

Course evaluation

1. Weekly Sociological Observations Forum: 20%
2. Short Paper: 20%
3. Midterm Exam: 25%
4. Final Exam: 35%

You are required to submit all assignments. There will be no extra-credit assignments.

Assignments breakdown

Weekly Sociological Observations Forum (due every Friday at 11:59 pm on a Canvas discussion threads)

The assignment is aimed at fostering engagement with course material through weekly reflections and discussions. Each week, you will post an observation applying sociological terms learned that week to your real life. You are encouraged to draw examples from personal experiences, social media, TV, films, books, etc., and analyze the way these examples exhibit, complicate, and/or question the material learned that week. **If there is a YouTube video assigned for that week, you are allowed to use that as a basis for your sociological observations.**

Each entry must be at least **350 words long** and submitted in the Canvas discussion thread. Detailed guidelines and grading criteria will be provided on Canvas.

Midterm Exam

The midterm will consist of multiple-choice questions covering material from Weeks 1-7, including readings, lectures, and external media. More information will be provided on Canvas.

Short Paper (due on April 20th at 11:59 pm)

You will conduct a sociological analysis of a news story of your choice from Democracy Now. Your paper will be **1,000 words long**, applying sociological theories and concepts to analyze a selected story. Detailed guidelines and grading criteria will be provided on Canvas.

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions covering material from Weeks 9-13, including readings, lectures, and external media. More information will be provided on Canvas.

Course schedule

Week 1 (Jan 21-26): Thinking Sociologically

Read: "Making Sense of the World Differently" (2017) by Michael Schwalbe.
Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 2 (Jan 27-Feb 2): What is Sociology?

Read:

1. Chapters 1-2: Core concepts of sociology, the sociological perspective, and thinking sociologically.
2. Chapter 3: How knowledge and reality are socially constructed.

Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 3 (Feb 3-9): Culture

Read: Chapter 4: The role of culture and history in shaping societies.
Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 4 (Feb 10-16): Socialization

Read:

1. Chapter 5: The process of socialization and its impact on individual and group identity.
2. Chapter 6: Understanding self-presentation and identity management in social contexts.

Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 5 (Feb 17-23): Family

Read: Chapter 7: Sociological perspectives on family and intimate relationships.
Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 6 (Feb 24-Mar 1): Work

Read:

1. Giddens et al., Chapter 14: Work and Economic Life (pp.435-474).
2. *The Precariat* (2014) by Guy Standing.

Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 7 (Mar 2-8): Deviance

Read: Chapter 8: The social construction of deviance and its implications.
Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 8 (Mar 10-14): Midterm Exam

Submit: Midterm exam.

Spring Break (Mar 15-23)

Week 9 (Mar 24-30): Social Organizations

Read: Chapter 9: The role of organizations and institutions in shaping society.
Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 10 (Mar 31-Apr 6): Inequality

Read: Chapter 10: Understanding social class and systems of inequality.
Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 11 (Apr 7-13): Racism and Colonialism

Read:

1. Chapter 11: Sociological perspectives on race and ethnicity.

2. *Introducing Settler Colonial Studies* (2011) by Lorenzo Veracini.

Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 12 (Apr 14-20): Gender Inequality

Read: Chapter 12: Gender inequality and its social implications.

Submit: Short paper assignment (due April 20th at 11:59 pm)

Week 13 (Apr 21-27): Social Movements

Read:

1. Chapter 13: Sociological perspectives on social change and the future of society.
2. *Collective Identity in Social Movements: Central Concepts and Debates* (2010) by Cristina Flesher Fominaya.

Submit: Sociological observation forum entry (due on Friday at 11:59 PM).

Week 14 (Apr 28-May 4): Final Exam

Submit: Final exam.

Getting the help you need

In the last few years, we have all been going through a lot, individually and together. It is important to acknowledge that events and circumstances outside of the classroom can impact our ability to be present and engaged at any given moment. At Rutgers, we are focused on the whole student. If, at any point, you experience anything impacting your performance or ability to participate in this class, please reach out to me. Please also see the academic, health, and mental wellness resources on the syllabus as well as others searchable at https://success.rutgers.edu/ for further support.

If you are facing housing insecurity, food insecurity, personal problems, or need access to medical, counseling or psychological services, there are resources to help you. Most these services can be found by consulting the Dean of Students. Note that the Rutgers Student Food Pantry (RSFP) is open to all students and provides non-perishable food and personal care products to members of the Rutgers community. For information about medical services and counseling look here. If you have been affected by violence, contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance and at 848-932-1181.

If you are a student parent, are pregnant, or have significant caregiving responsibilities for a child or relative, please notify me at the beginning of the semester, so I am aware of your situation.

If you are falling behind in your schoolwork because of physical or mental health issues, housing or food insecurity, or overwhelming family or personal responsibilities, you should notify your Dean of Students as soon as possible.

Disabilities

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where they are officially enrolled, participate in an intake meeting, and provide documentation. Refer to: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with me as soon as possible, and, if necessary, discuss the accommodations with me.

Diversity statement

The Rutgers 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 clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.