

Syllabus
Carlo Sariego

Introduction to Sociology (SO 101)
(Introductory Level)

Prof. Carlo Sariego
Email: carlo.sariego@quinnipiac.edu
Office hours:
Signup: <https://calendly.com/carlo-sariego-yale/office-hours>

Please allow 24-48 hours for an e-mail response; I do not check e-mail on weekends or after 6 PM on weekdays.

Course Description:

What does it mean to think critically about society? This course is an introduction to sociology with an emphasis on familiarizing students with the power of critical thinking and its relationship to social change. Each week, students will be asked to read sociological works that demonstrate both the possibilities and pitfalls of the social sciences, along with examples of the broader social, political, and economic contexts that produced the field. The course is “intersectional,” meaning that each topic week overlaps with questions of race, class, gender, and citizenship, and the readings are meant to demonstrate the diverse ways sociology has both endured and developed over time.

Due to the introductory nature of the course, readings are not representative of the capacious topics listed for each week, but instead introduce students to some of the approaches sociologists and sociologically aligned scholars have written about their social worlds. Lectures will focus on filling in the historical outline and providing broader examples and contexts to the readings. Students are encouraged to come to office hours for further readings on specific topics.

Students should leave class with a toolbox for thinking, reading, and writing with a critical eye. They will understand what a sociological approach to a question is, as well as the methods and style of sociological research. The phrase “make the familiar strange and the strange familiar” is one of the goals of the course.

Class structure and lectures: This course is structured like a funnel, starting with the biggest and widest social theories, moving on to social institutions, and narrowing into identities, social roles, and inequalities. We start with a few examples of classic social theory in sociology and then move on to tackle the big subfields in the discipline.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Define and use the sociological imagination to critically analyze various social issues and processes
- Identify how institutions expand or limit individual opportunity
- Become familiarized with the central theoretical concepts and debates within the sociological canon
- Understand how sociology compares to other disciplines

Readings: All readings are available on Canvas. Syllabus is subject to change.

Assignments

Students will be graded based on four assignments: one participant observation assignment, two short papers, and a final exam.

Assignment 1: TBD

Assignment 2: TBD

Assignment 3: TBD

Take-home exam: TBD

Assignment 1: Conspicuous Consumption Observation (CANVAS Post).

Sociologist Thorstein Veblen introduced the concept of conspicuous consumption in 1899 to describe the act of buying and using (and displaying) products to make a statement about social standing or status.

STEP 1: Over a two-day period, be on the lookout for examples of conspicuous consumption that you see on display in your own environment (ideally possessed by actual people in real settings, and not on TV or online). Choose one that seems especially expressive or noteworthy.

In a post of at least 200 words, describe this object first in terms of its visual or aesthetic features and then in terms of what it might be thought to symbolize in terms of status. What reasoning has to be entered into to arrive at these meanings? What frames of reference must be shared in order for these qualities and characteristics to be meaningful? What objects might be considered categorically similar but above or below this object in a particular hierarchy? To help your colleagues understand your points and then write up their responses, it might be helpful to find an image of your object (or one identical to it) and to use the text box to paste your images directly into the thread with your first post.

STEP 2: Respond in two separate posts to two classmates (in at least 75 words). Explicitly address their examples and try to extend, complicate, or redirect their points in a substantive, knowledge-demonstrating way. Be sure to cite relevant concepts and key terms from the reading.

Assignment 2: Short Paper on Sociological Research (Canvas Post).

STEP 1: Find a peer-reviewed journal article about a topic in Sociology. Acceptable journals include PLOS ONE, Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Gender and Society, Social Science and Medicine, American Journal of Sociology, The Sociological Review, Journal of Public Health, Health Education Research, American Journal of Public Health, the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, or other similar journals. The study should have been performed within the past 10 years.

Syllabus
Carlo Sariago

STEP 2: In 3-5 pages, summarize the study including the place of research, who conducted it, the type of research method/s employed, the research question, and the findings. Add in your own thoughts about the study. What did you find interesting? Please address the following questions:

What is the main research question?

What are the methods?

What is the theoretical framework?

What are the stakes?

What is the data being used?

What are the conclusions?

Any keywords?

Did the authors make any assumptions?

Questions and critiques?

How does this speak to other readings?

Assignment 3: Movie or TV Show Analysis (Paper due to me).

Images of families or gender relationships are everywhere in media, including in movies and television. What constitutes a family or gender relationships has changed significantly in recent decades, and much of those changes are reflected in the families and relationships we watch on screens. Some of these images reflect our personal experience of family or gender, and some are very different from what we know and have experienced.

STEP 1: Choose either a television show or movie to do some research from a sociological lens. Look for a family or gender relationship that is explored in depth. There should be a strong enough depiction of family members or gender relations and how they interact to be able to explore sociological concepts.

STEP 2: Choose one theoretical view of the family or gender identified in the module through which to analyze your chosen family or gender dynamics.

Reflect on how well your family or gender selections support a theoretical view of family/gender. **Your reflection should be 3-5 pages.** Use your identified families as support for or an argument against the theoretical view of family or gender in society. Consider the following questions:

1. What norms are assumed in this family/gender relations?
2. What roles do family members or different genders have?
3. How are the assumptions and points of view in this family or gender relations understood through your chosen theoretical view?
4. What argument do these families or relationships make about public perceptions of family or gendered behavior and structures?
5. What does this family or gender say about society?

Syllabus
Carlo Sariego

For example, you might decide to write about how the Simpsons reflect a functionalist view of the family in society. You can evaluate each family member on how well they socialize Bart, Lisa, and Maggie, how each member provides emotional and practical support for each other, and how significant changes in their family impact its stability.

Assignment 4: TAKE HOME EXAM.

We will go over the details of the exam in class extensively, so students feel prepared.

Purpose of Assignments

- Develop critical reading skills
- Develop literature review skills
- Develop note taking skills
- Provide you with the basis for any literature search that you may undertake in this regard.
- Provide materials for other courses

Grading Policies and Late Work

Questions about grades, concerns about absences, and all late work should be addressed within one week of the receiving the grade or being absent. After one week, the grade/absence will not be reconsidered. Assignments are always due on Canvas before class on the day the assignment is due. Late assignments may be accepted on a discretionary basis if you communicate with me before the assignment due date. Otherwise, your assignment grade will be reduced by 10% for each day it is late. Late work is not accepted after one week.

Grading Scale (%)

A: 90-100
B: 80-90
C: 70-80
D: 64-70
F: 0-64

Your final grade will be calculated as follows.

Participation: 10%

Attendance: 10%

Assignment 1: 15%

Assignment 2: 15%

Assignment 3: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

Grading

Syllabus

Carlo Sariego

Attendance and Participation—20%. Your active participation in discussion with your peers is essential to the collective functioning of the course. Please come prepared to engage with discussion questions. Participation can look like something different for everyone. If you are not as comfortable speaking up, there will be opportunities to write down your responses to discussion questions and to collaborate in small groups with your peers. If you are concerned about your ability to participate in a way that is legible, come to office hours so we can discuss it! You will also be asked on occasion to participate in mini assignments, these usually consist of Canvas posts that will count towards this final part of your grade.

You will be allowed two unexcused absences. After that, all absences will require notification to your instructor. A word on notification: Members of the disability community sometimes will say, “I’m only working with X number of spoons today,” meaning that I have a limited supply of energy to complete today’s tasks. Notification simply means that you let me know that you’re working only with a limited number of spoons. You can also use this if you need extra time with assignments. ***Please do not come to class if you are sick.*** If you are sick, you simply need to email me and let me know. That will count as an excused absence.

Classroom Etiquette

Cell phones must be turned off and put away during class. I highly encouraged notetaking using pen and paper when possible. The use of headphones during class is strictly prohibited (except if you require learning accommodations). Having private conversations during lecture is also not permitted. Failure to respect classroom etiquette will compromise your participation grade.

Accommodations

If you require disability accommodations to meet any of the course assignments or to participate actively in class, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to work out suitable arrangements. I do not believe in laziness (see this great article on how [Laziness Does Not Exist](#)), and trust and encourage my students to reach out if they are having any difficulty completing assignments. I understand accommodations to mean a wide variety of things, including students with disabilities, students who are first generation or otherwise minoritized, and students with chronic illnesses. However, you do not need to prove your need for an accommodation to receive one. Simply let me know how I can make class more accessible to you.

Academic Honesty and Use of Artificial Intelligence

Quinnipiac places a strong emphasis on academic integrity. As such, this course will maintain a zero-tolerance policy for **plagiarism and cheating**. Cheating or plagiarism will automatically result in a grade of zero on the assignment.

Critical thinking is an essential academic skill. ***This course does not permit the use of ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools to write assignments.*** AI-generated submissions will be treated as plagiarism, and you will receive a zero for the assignment. This includes AI-generated assignments that have been reworded. If I suspect that you have used AI in your essay responses,

Syllabus
Carlo Sariago

I will reach out to you for a one-on-one meeting in which I will ask you a series of questions about your approach to the writing process for that assignment.

Office Hours

Office hours are Thursday afternoons (2-5 PM) by appointment. You can email me or fill out the Calendly link at the top of the syllabus for an appointment.

I hope you will discuss any questions, concerns, or burgeoning ideas you have with me in office hours. If you are anxious about writing or struggling to get words on the page, it would be a very good idea to come to office hours! In addition to feedback on class assignments, feel free to come to office hours to discuss any number of topics. Some things you might want to come to office hours for could include:

- You would like to discuss and get suggestions on your idea for one of the assignments.
- You would like to discuss the feedback you received on one of your assignments.
- You need to let me know about some difficulty that is impacting your participation in the course or in section.
- You had an interesting idea about something.
- You just wanted to check in.
- You have questions about grad school or research.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Foundations in Society

Read: no reading.

Foundations in Society

Read: Chapter 1: Introduction to Sociology

Watch: David Foster Wallace. 2005. "This is Water." (WATCH: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCbGM4mqEVw>)

Due: Mini assignment- introduce yourself on Canvas discussion post.

Sociological Research

Read: Chapter 3: Research Methods

Read: Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," *Social Problems* 33:6 (Dec. 1986).

Culture

Read: Chapter 4: Culture and Social Structure

Culture

Read: Lauren Rivera. 2015. "Beginning the Interview: Finding a Fit." Chapter 6 in *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Chapter 6.

Syllabus
Carlo Sariago

Socialization

Read: Chapter 5: Socialization

Socialization

No reading. No class this week.

Society and Groups

Read: Chapter 2- Social theory

Read: A Bad Writer Bites Back by Judith Butler (New York Times).

Assignment 1 due.

Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

Read: Chapter 6: Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

Read: Kushner, Rachel. "Is prison necessary? Ruth Wilson Gilmore might change your mind." *The New York Times* 17 (2019): 2019.

AND

McHarris, Philip V., and Thenjiwe McHarris. "No more money for the police." *The New York Times* (2020).

Stratification and Inequality

Read: Chapter 7: Social Stratification

Stratification and inequality

No reading.

Race and Ethnicity

Read: Chapter 8: Race and Ethnicity

Assignment 2 due.

Race and Ethnicity

Watch: Chimamanda Adiche's TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story"

Read: Combahee River Collective. 1986. *The Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties*. Albany, NY: Kitchen Table : Women of Color Press.

Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

Read: Chapter 9: Gender Inequality

Watch: Berkeley Professor Judith Butler Explains Gender Theory
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UD9IOIUR4k>

Syllabus
Carlo Sariago

Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

Read: Chu, Andrea Long. 2024. "[Freedom of Sex: The Moral Case for Letting Trans Kids Change their Bodes](#)". Intelligender.com

AND

"[Long-Covid is More Common in Bisexual and Trans People: The Reasons Why Are Complicated.](#)" Them.com by Miles Griffis.

Marriage and the Family

Read: Chapter 10: Marriage and the Family

Read: Tallbear, Kim. 2018. "Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sexualities." in *Making Kin Not Population*. Prickly Paradigm Press.

Religion

Read: Chapter 11: Education and Religion

Religion

No reading. Guest lecture Lukey Ellsberg.

Education

Read: Elena Van Stee. 2022. "Social Class Matters at College. What Happened When Campuses Shut Down?" Work in Progress Blog.

Health and Medicine

Read: Chapter 13

Listen: The Body Mass Index by Maintenance Phase
(<https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/the-body-mass-index/id1535408667?i=1000530850955>)

Assignment 3 due.

Health and Medicine

Listen to: Professor Dorothy Roberts, "The Problem with Race-Based Medicine" NPR Code Switch, "Finding A Perfect Match"

Government and Politics

Read: Chapter 12: Economics and Politics

Government and Politics

Read: Zeynep Tufekci. 2022. "I Was Wrong About Why Protests Work." New York Times.

AND

Matthew Desmond. 2018. "Americans Want to Believe Jobs Are the Solution to Poverty. They're Not." The New York Times

Syllabus
Carlo Sariago

Work and the Economy

Read: Nickel and Dimed by Barbara Ehrenrich.

Movements and Social Change

Read: Chapter 14

Movements and Social Change

Read: Michael Burawoy. 2004. "Public Sociologies: Contradictions, Dilemmas, and Possibilities." Readings for Sociology.

Final take-home exam is handed out.

Last Class!

No Reading! Final exam is turned in at start of class.