

# Introduction to Sociology Yale University SOCY S101 Summer 2024

**Class Dates/Times:** July 1-31, 2023 (Session B) | 9:00AM-12:15PM Mon/Wed

**Instructor:** Keitaro Okura, [Keitaro.okura@yale.edu](mailto:Keitaro.okura@yale.edu)

**Teaching Fellows:** TBD

**Office Hours:** TBD by appointment (in person or [Zoom](#)). Please sign up [here](#) in advance. I am also happy to schedule a meeting at other times/days – just send me an email.

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociology is the foundation of the social sciences. It involves the systematic and rigorous study of human social relations, social structures, and social causes and consequences of human behavior. Studying sociology allows students to acquire what C. Wright Mills called the *sociological imagination*: the ability to draw connections between our personal, individual experiences and the larger social forces that shape them. This introductory course provides a broad view of sociology by covering its major theoretical traditions (e.g., Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Du Bois), primary research methods (interviews, ethnography, surveys, experiments, and social network analysis), and select substantive topics (e.g., culture, deviance, health, stratification, education, race, and gender). This course will primarily draw on readings and examples from the United States, though cross-national comparisons will also be incorporated whenever possible.

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, hopefully you will have developed:

1. A broad appreciation of foundational sociological theories and perspectives.
  2. Knowledge of various qualitative and quantitative research methods in the social sciences.
  3. The ability to think about how social institutions and structures shape individual experiences.
  4. An understanding of race, class, and gender inequalities & dynamics in the United States.
  5. Enhanced reading, writing, and presentation skills.
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## COURSE POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

### Attendance:

Class attendance is mandatory. You are expected to be present (and on time) for all scheduled classes. Lectures will not be recorded. It is your responsibility to catch up for any missed class(es).

### Reading Assignments:

The reading assignments for each class are listed in the course schedule. You are expected to complete the readings prior to the class for which the assignment is listed. As a (very broad) rule of thumb, 2/3 of class time will be devoted to lecture, while 1/3 will be reserved for discussions of the readings. During the latter, students will have the opportunity to discuss class readings with their peers. The assigned readings are intended to both overlap with the content covered during lecture

and expand beyond it. I have deliberately selected material that I hope you will find interesting and thought provoking. Showing up to class ready to discuss the readings is crucial to your understanding of course material and, by extension, building an engaging and productive classroom for everyone. You are also expected to post reading responses online (see assignment below).

#### Academic Integrity:

You are expected to follow Yale's policies on academic integrity. For example, plagiarism means not giving due credit for the ideas or research of other people. If you reproduce any text directly from another source or person, you must make use of quotes and state where it came from. Even if you paraphrase, you must cite your source. Please also consult the Poorvu Center's guidelines on using sources. If you have further questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask!

#### Accessibility Statement:

If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or form barriers to your inclusion, please let me know. I encourage you to visit the Student Accessibility office. If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have those met. There are a range of resources on campus including the Writing Center, Residential College Tutors, and Academic Strategies. Please also feel free to reach out to me directly if you would like to request any specific accommodations.

#### Lateness Policy:

There are no makeups for missing classes or reading responses. For your literature review paper, one partial grade will be deducted for each 24 hours of tardiness (e.g., an A- paper would be given a B+). The only exemptions to this policy are for medical/family emergencies or religious observance. Repeated instances of exempted excuses must be properly documented (e.g., a doctor's note).

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## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

### **Class Participation (20%)**

- Your class participation grade will be assessed on two metrics: (1) on being punctual and present in class; (2) on your engagement in class discussions of the assigned readings.

### **Reading Responses (20%)**

- In order to facilitate conversations with your classmates outside of class – and also as a preview to in-class discussions – students must post a “reading response” by 5PM on Canvas before every class. You may either initiate a conversation by expressing a reaction, critique, or question about one or more assigned readings, or you may respond to a classmate's existing post. To the extent possible, please aim to have roughly half of your posts start a new conversation and the other half be a response to another person's prompt. These posts should be clear and concise (aim for 150-250 words and quality > quantity).

### **Discussion Leading (20%)**

- All students will be assigned to be a “Discussion Leader” for one set of class readings. You will have the opportunity to pair up with one or more students. Details are provided below.

### **Literature Review Presentation (20%) and Paper (20%)**

- You will be expected to select a topic or issue of interest to you for a (sociology) literature review. Your task is to (a) prepare a short presentation for the final class, and (b) write a 5-page paper present a synthesis of what sociologists have written on your selected topic. More information on the literature review task is provided at the end of this syllabus.

### On Discussion Leading

For every set of class readings, at least one student will be assigned to be a “Discussion Leader.” This involves coming up with an agenda for the class discussion. As Discussion Leader, you are free to decide what that might look like: You can focus on what you personally found most interesting in the week’s readings. You are also expected to look over the reading responses your classmates posted (see “Reading Response” assignment) and to take into account what questions/topics animated discussions. Overall, your main task as discussion leader is **agenda setting** and **taking a lead in facilitating the class discussion** of the assigned readings. This involves no lecturing.

**Please create presentation slides** to help organize the class discussion. This should not be overly convoluted. For instance, for every modules (there are typically two modules per class) three slides is sufficient: One slide with a list of the assigned reading(s) for a brief recap; a second slide with one key question or discussion prompt; a third slide with another question or discussion prompt. You are encouraged to prepare additional discussion questions/prompts as backups. The most important component to this assignment to articulate **clear and stimulating** discussion prompts. Again, the “Reading Response” assignment should help you with this. If you are paired with other classmates for discussion leading, you are encouraged to meet with them before class.

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## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### Week 1

#### **Session 1 (July 1): What is Sociology?**

- Mills, Wright C. 1959. “The Promise.” *The Sociological Imagination*. (5 pages.)
- Miner, Horace. 1956. “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema.” *American Anthropologist*. (5 pages.)

#### **Session 2 (July 3): Sociological Theory**

- Abend, Gabriel. 2008. “The Meaning of “Theory.”” *Sociological Theory*. (Please skim the first 12 pages.)
- Brekhus, Wayne. 1998. “A Sociology of the Unmarked: Redirecting Our Focus.” *Sociological Theory*. (16 pages.)
- Chambliss, Daniel F. 1989. “Mundanity of Excellence: An Ethnographic Report on Stratification and Olympic Swimmers.” *Sociological Theory*. (17 pages.)

### Week 2

#### **Session 3 (July 8): Sociology as a Science; Causal Inference**

- Pager, Devah. 2003. “The Mark of a Criminal Record.” *American Journal of Sociology*. (32 pages.)

#### **Session 4 (July 10): Qualitative Research; Research Ethics**

- Pascoe, C.J. 2007. “What If a Guy Hits on You?” *Dude, You’re a Fag*. (15 pages.)
- Waters, Mary C. 1999. “Notes on Methodology.” *Black Identities*. (26 page.)

### Week 3

#### **Session 5 (July 15): Culture; Socialization**

##### **On Culture:**

- Patterson, Orlando. 2014. "How Sociologists Made Themselves Irrelevant." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. (Short article.)
- Small, Mario L., David J. Harding, and Michèle Lamont. 2010. "Reconsidering Culture and Poverty." *American Academy of Political and Social Science*. (21 pages.)

**On Socialization:**

- Becker, Howard S. 1953. "Becoming a Marijuana User." *American Journal of Sociology*. (7 pages.)
- Guhin, Jeffrey, Jessica McCrory Calarco, and Cynthia Miller-Idriss. 2021. "Whatever Happened to Socialization?" *Annual Review of Sociology*. (16 pages; please skim)

**Session 6 (July 17): Deviance; Health and Medicine**

**On Deviance:**

- Documentary: <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/videos/road-crime-english-subtitled>

**On Health and Medicine:**

- Cunningham, Solveig A. and colleagues. 2008. "Doctors' Strikes and Mortality: A Review." *Social Science & Medicine*. (5 pages.)
- McKinlay, John B., and Sonja M. McKinlay. 1977. "The Questionable Contribution of Medical Measures to the Decline of Mortality in the United States." *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly. Health and Society*. (22 pages; please skim.)
- Link, Bruce G. and Jo Phalen. 1995. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. (10 pages.)

Week 4

**Session 7 (July 22): Social Stratification; Education**

**On Social Stratification:**

- Davis, Kingsley, and Wilbert E. Moore. 1945. "Some Principles of Stratification." *The Inequality Reader*. (3 pages.)
- Fischer et al. 1996. "Inequality by Design." *The Inequality Reader*. (4 pages.)
- Krueger, Alan B. 2004. "Inequality, Too Much of a Good Thing." *The Inequality Reader*. (8 pages.)

**On Education:**

- Chetty, Raj and colleagues. n.d. "Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility." *The Equality of Opportunity Project*. (4 Pages.)
- Mittleman, Joel. 2022. "Intersecting the Academic Gender Gap: The Education of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual America." *American Sociological Review*. (29 pages; please skim.)
- Reardon, Sean F. 2011. "The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations." *Wither Opportunity?* (21 pages.)

**Session 8 (July 24): Literature Review Presentations**

- Please see Literature Review instructions below on the syllabus. Prepare your presentation slides and send them to me via email.

Week 5

**Session 9 (July 29): Race and Ethnicity; Immigration**

**On Race and Ethnicity:**

- McIntosh, Peggy. 1990. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." (7 pages.)
- Wimmer, Andreas. 2015. "Race-Centrism: A Critique and a Research Agenda." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. (18 pages.)
- Note that some prior readings – Du Bois (1901), Pager (2003) – can be discussed as well.

#### On Immigration:

- Kim, Claire J. 1999. "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans." *Politics & Society*. (Please read the first 12 pages.)
- Waters, Mary C. 1996. "Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?" *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in America*. (5 pages.)

### Session 10 (July 31): Sex, Gender, and Sexuality; Marriage, Family, and Demography

#### On Sex, Gender, and Sexuality:

- Mize, Trenton D., and Bianca Manago. 2018. "Precarious Sexuality: How Men and Women are Differentially Categorized for Similar Sexual Behavior." *American Sociological Review*. (20 pages; please skim.)
- West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society*. (24 pages; please skim.)

#### On Marriage, Family, and Demography

- Lin, Ken-Hou, and Jennifer Lundquist. 2013. "Mate Selection in Cyberspace: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Education." *American Journal of Sociology*. (28 pages; please skim.)
- Lundquist, Jennifer, and Ken-Hou Lin. 2015. "Is Love (Color) Blind? The Economy of Race among Gay and Straight Daters." *Social Forces*. (22 pages; please skim.)

### Literature Review Presentation and Paper

A literature review is a synthesis of the academic sources and arguments related to your research question or topic. In academic research, the literature review is a necessary component of conducting your own research, in which you must situate your own research in dialogue with what has already been written on the same or related area. This assignment will allow you to explore any social issue or phenomenon of your choice. Your topic may be directly related to something we have covered or will cover in class, or you can use this opportunity to explore a different area or question.

For this assignment, please start by visiting the journal [Annual Review of Sociology](#) (ARS). Unlike most sociology journals, which typically publishes findings from empirical research, ARS focuses on publishing comprehensive review articles on various topics within the field of sociology. They have published roughly 15-20 review articles [once per year](#) since 1975. First, take some time to look over examples of review articles published in recent years. For example: [2023](#), [2020](#), and [2015](#). This is useful in order to get a general sense of the breadth of the research published in sociology. You may then use the [search tool](#) to look for reviews on specific topics of interest to you. Make sure that you are searching for a review article in sociology. Ultimately, please select **one** ARS article published in the past two decades (or so) as the initial basis for your literature review. If you are unable to find a review article on a very niche topic, select the closest one you can find (or choose another topic).

Once you select an *ARS* article, read the entire article carefully. Take note of how the author(s) of that article chose to organize their review. For instance, in “[Theories of the Causes of Poverty](#),” sociologist David Brady (2019) presents a review of the literature by categorizing theories of poverty into three types: (a) behavioral, (b) structural, and (c) political. Select **one** such component of your chosen *ARS* article to delve into a more narrow and focused literature review. You should then aim to find and read at least **five empirical sociological studies** on this more specific/narrow angle or subtopic. You may, of course, use citations from your chosen *ARS* article to help you identify these additional readings. However, you should also do searches on Google Scholar to look for supplementary references.

### **For your Literature Review Presentation (20% of grade)**

Prepare a 10-12 minute presentation of your literature review. First, introduce your topic and motivate why it is important/why we should care (1 minute). Second, present a summary of the content covered in the *ARS* article you chose (5 minutes). This should give a broader overview. Finally, present a more detailed literature review on narrower topic of interest within this broader a (5 minutes). We will also reserve time for questions/comments. Separately, through a survey link, every student will provide feedback on all classmates’ presentations. [Note that the expected length of the presentation will vary depending on how many students are enrolled in the course.]

### **For your Literature Review Paper (20% of grade)**

Write a 5 page (double-spaced) synthesis of your selected research topic. The focus of this review should not be the *ARS* article but rather the more specific and focused angle or subtopic you’ve identified. This review paper must have the following structure: (a) a compelling one- or two-paragraph introduction that motivates your topic; (b) a one- or two-sentence thesis that provides a synopsis of the major takeaways (this should be part of your introduction), (c) coherent and well-supported body paragraphs with clear topic sentences, (d) discussion of the limitations of the existing research, and (e) a conclusion that recaps your review and outlines possibilities for future research. You must cite at least 6 sources (the *ARS* article plus at least 5 additional citations).