Sociology

Sociology explores the processes that create and transform structures within social systems. Teaching and research in the Washington University Department of Sociology address central questions about how modern U.S. and global societies operate and evolve.

The department was re-established in 2015 after a hiatus of more than two decades. In the initial years of the new program, we will have a rapidly expanding set of activities that explore a variety of critical social issues. Examples include inequality across race, gender and economic class, as well as the sources and consequences of social conflict.

Sociological analysis begins from theoretical perspectives that explain how the structures that organize and govern social systems emerge and change. Our curriculum and research also emphasize an understanding of social processes that is well grounded in empirical data on how societies actually function. The evolving program will give students the research tools to develop their own perspectives on social function. We also seek to engage with social policies and formal and informal social institutions to better understand the world in which we live and to help guide social change.

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Professors

David Cunningham
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Bert A. and Jeanette L. Lynch Distinguished Professor
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Mark Rank
Herbert S. Hadley Professor of Social Welfare
PhD, University of Wisconsin

Jake Rosenfeld
Associate Professor
PhD, Princeton University

Adia Harvey Wingfield
Professor
PhD, Johns Hopkins University

Undergraduate students interested in specializing in sociology should contact the department office for information on how to use the rapidly evolving curriculum to support their educational objectives.

Minors

The Department of Sociology was re-established in 2015, and its first courses will be offered in the fall semester of 2015. The department does not yet have a major or minor program. Undergraduate students interested in specializing in sociology should contact the department office for information on how to use the rapidly evolving curriculum to support their educational objectives.

Courses

Visit https://courses.wustl.edu to view semester offerings for L40 SOC.

L40 SOC 2010 Sociology of Race and Ethnicity
An overview of sociological understandings of race and ethnicity, with a particular focus on race and ethnic relations in the contemporary United States. We begin by investigating how sociologists understand racial and ethnic distinctions, asking: What comprises a racial or ethnic group? We then shift our attention to patterns of racial and ethnic inequality in the U.S., investigating the intersection of economic and racial/ethnic stratification. After analyzing national trends in race and ethnic stratification, we narrow our focus to particular regions and metropolitan areas, including St. Louis, to shed light on pressing public concerns such as the interrelationships between race/ethnicity and the criminal justice system. The course also looks beyond U.S. borders and asks: How is race/ethnicity understood in other countries? What makes our own system of racial and ethnic stratification distinctive? Are there common patterns of racial and ethnic classification shared by many societies? Credit 3 units. A&S: SS, SD A&S IQ: SSC, SD EN: S

L40 SOC 2020 Order and Change in Society
Identification and analysis of processes that create social order and forces that generate social change. What kinds of structures make social life coherent so that we all can navigate a wide range of social settings? How do societies sometimes mobilize to alter the status quo, and what kinds of barriers limit those efforts to change social systems? This course engages with such core issues through a sociological lens. Specific topics include: the emergence of social roles and status systems; how social networks matter in communities, schools and other groups; and the performance, reproduction and subversion of privilege and inequality. No prerequisites. Credit 3 units. A&S: SS A&S IQ: SSC EN: S

L40 SOC 3001 Social Theory
Overview of major theoretical frameworks used by sociologists to understand social behavior and group patterns. Explores classical theories, including those developed by Marx, Weber, and Durkheim along with contemporary perspectives such as exchange and feminist theories. Class discussions and writing assignments emphasize application of theory to understand current social experiences and structures. The course has no specific prerequisites, but students should be prepared for
intensive study of challenging ideas and the application of these ideas in new contexts relevant to modern society. Credit 3 units. A&S: SS A&S IQ: SSC EN: S