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 offer an expanding set of courses and 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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Majors

The Major in Sociology

The major in sociology provides students with a rigorous understanding of the ways in which social relations and settings shape a range of individual and group experiences and outcomes, with an emphasis on how various forms of inequality are created and propagated through time. Reflecting the diversity of social settings that motivate sociological inquiry, students will enroll in multiple introductory-level courses. We intend that these first courses will help students develop a sociological lens through which they can better understand the baseline determinants of inequality, social order and change.

Because the discipline draws on diverse theoretical and methodological tools to engage with these core issues, required course work ensures that students develop expertise in classical and contemporary theoretical concepts as well as both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Upper-level seminars provide majors and minors with an opportunity to apply these substantive, theoretical, and methodological foundations to a focused and deep study of specific sociological topics. The major additionally features a capstone experience, enabling students to deploy sociological tools to undertake original work connected with a research project, internship, practicum or honors thesis.

Major Requirements

(a) Introductory requirement (6 credits total): Any two 100- or 200-level sociology courses. (Students may substitute an upper-level sociology course for an introductory course with approval of their major adviser.)
(b) Theory requirement (3 credits): SOC 3001 Social Theory

(c) Methods requirement (6 credits): SOC 3030 Introduction to Research Methods and SOC 3050 Statistics for Sociology. Students may substitute Math 2200, Math 3200, or a disciplinary statistics course from another social science with the approval of their major adviser.

(d) Upper-level sociology electives (15 credits): Any five 300- or 400-level courses

(e) Capstone (1-3 credits)
To be fulfilled in two parts. First, attendance at a minimum of five department-sponsored events (this co-curricular requirement can be fulfilled at any point following a student's initial declaration as a sociology major.) We will maintain a list of qualifying events on our website, and our department administrator will coordinate a sign-in procedure to verify attendance at events. Second, majors will choose one of the following options:

   i. One-unit research paper tied to upper-level seminar (SOC 4900)
   ii. Internship (SOC 4910)
   iii. Honors thesis

Students who opt for internship or thesis options may apply those credits toward requirement (d), meaning that, in addition to their thesis or internship, they would need to complete four additional 300-/400-level courses.

Minors

The Minor in Sociology

Minor Requirements

(a) Introductory requirement (3 credits total): One 100- or 200-level sociology course

(b) Theory requirement (3 credits): SOC 3001 Social Theory

(c) Methods requirement (3 credits): Either SOC 3030 Introduction to Research Methods or SOC 3050 Statistics for Sociology

(d) Additional upper-level sociology electives (6 credits): Any two 300- or 400-level courses

Courses


L40 SOC 2010 The Roots of Ferguson: Understanding Racial Inequality in the Contemporary U.S.
Overview of sociological understandings of race, with a particular focus on race relations in the contemporary United States. We begin by investigating how sociologists understand racial distinctions, asking: What comprises a racial group? What constitutes a "group" in the social sense? We then shift our attention to patterns of racial inequality in the U.S., investigating the intersection of economic, political, and racial stratification. After analyzing national trends in racial stratification, we narrow the focus to particular regions and metropolitan areas, including St. Louis, to shed light on pressing public concerns such as the interrelationships between race and the criminal justice system. The course ends by looking beyond U.S. borders to compare the way that race is understood in other countries. Are there common patterns of racial classification shared by many societies? What makes the U.S. system of racial stratification distinctive? No prerequisites.
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS, SD A&S IQ: SSC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA 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 BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 2030 Social Movements
Social movements are collective efforts to produce political, economic and/or cultural change. This course draws on a range of historical and contemporary case studies to analyze such collective actions by interrogating distinctive aspects of movements and their associated campaigns. Key questions include: When and where do movements occur, who participates and why, how do protest strategies and tactics develop, how do police and other movement targets react to challenges to the status quo, and how can we assess the direct and indirect impacts of contention? Introductory level, no prerequisites.
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS A&S IQ: SSC Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 2110 Social Inequality in America
Americans face different challenges and opportunities that depend on a variety of characteristics, including race, class, gender and sexual orientation. This class examines these intersecting categories from a sociological perspective — not simply as ways to classify people, but as social constructions that help to explain social inequality. We examine these systems in a variety of institutional contexts, such as popular culture, family life, education, the criminal justice system and the labor force. Introductory level, no prerequisites.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, SD EN: S
L40 SOC 2510 Sociological Approaches to American Health Care
Exploration through the sociological lens of how health, illness, and health care delivery in the United States are influenced by the social structure in which they are embedded. With the backdrop of the ongoing crisis of health care in the United States and the controversy surrounding the Affordable Care Act, we focus on the intersection of diversity factors including such as race, social class, gender, sexuality that predict risks in navigating the health care system. Professionals representing a variety of health-oriented settings and serving the needs of a diverse constituency will share their perspectives. No prerequisites.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC BU: BA 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 BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 3030 Introduction to Research Methods
Overview of research methods commonly used to investigate sociological phenomena including experiments, surveys, ethnographic field research, and analysis of existing data. The course explores general issues in sociological research, such as research design, conceptualization and measurement, reliability, validity, sampling and ethical conduct. We also review applications of research methods in specific sociological studies and analyze how research results are communicated. This is a core course in the study of sociology. It has no specific prerequisites but some familiarity with sociological analysis is recommended.
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS A&S IQ: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 3050 Statistics for Sociology
Introduction to descriptive and inferential statistical techniques used in sociological research. Topics addressed include probability distributions, data presentation and visualization, confidence intervals, hypothesis testing, and linear regression. Applications of statistical analysis drawn from sociological research and other social science data sources, such as polling and economic data. Students will use statistical software to complete assignments. Prerequisite: introductory course in sociology or consent of the instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, AN Arch: SSC Art: SSC EN: S

L40 SOC 3212 The Social Construction of Race
Examination of race, ethnicity and racism from a sociological perspective to understand race as a socially constructed phenomenon manifested in a wide range of social institutions. The course focuses on how race and racism impact contemporary social problems and public policy issues including immigration, affirmative action, education, media representation and work. Application of sociological analysis to understand current race-related events. This course has no specific prerequisites but completion of an introductory course in sociology is recommended before enrollment.
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS, SD A&S IQ: SSC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 3310 The New Inequality
Exploration of recent trends of economic inequality in the United States that have reached levels not seen since before the Great Depression. We examine factors that account for the decades-long increase in economic disparities, paying particular attention to patterns in educational attainment, political developments, and the role of technological change. We will also compare recent movements in economic inequality and macroeconomic performance in the U.S. with other advanced industrialized nations. This course has no specific prerequisites but completion of an introductory course in sociology is recommended before enrollment.
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS, SD, WI A&S IQ: SSC, SD, WI Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 3350 Poverty and the New American City
Exploration of structural changes that are transforming the American urban landscape, especially for low-income populations. We begin with a review of classic theories of urban poverty and consider their relevance in the modern context. We then analyze key political, economic, demographic and geographic shifts in how urban poverty is organized and reproduced, including gentrification, immigration, social policy reform and the credit crisis. Special attention will be devoted to exploring the social and political implications of changing urban policy approaches, as well as the “suburbanization” of poverty. We will conclude by discussing how urban poverty interfaces with broader social structures, including law, markets and the state. Prerequisite: an introductory course in sociology or consent of the instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC Arch: SSC Art: SSC EN: S

L40 SOC 3410 Gender in Society
Introduction to the sociological study of gender. The primary focus is U.S. society, but we will also discuss gender in an international context. From the moment of birth, boys and girls are treated differently. Gender structures the experiences of people in all major social institutions, including the family, the workplace and schools. We will explore how gender impacts lives and life chances. The central themes of the course are historical changes in gender beliefs and practices; socialization practices that reproduce gender identities; how race/ethnicity, class and sexuality shape the experience of gender; and the relationship between gender, power and social inequality. Prerequisite: introductory course in sociology or consent of the instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 351 Topics in Sociology
Improving the health of the U.S. population and reducing disparities in health are national priorities. To reach these goals much research has sought to determine the factors that influence health status beyond health care quality and access. This course explores the broad area of study termed the “social determinants of health,” while placing special emphasis on the exploration of health disparities in the United States. We will examine the social conditions that relate to the health of populations with particular
attention to how patterns of health vary by social class, race/ethnicity and gender. We will also consider mechanisms that produce and maintain these differences. In addition to sociology, we will draw upon the work of multiple disciplines including public health, demography, anthropology, public policy, economics and medicine to understand what makes our populations sick and what might make them better. Prerequisite: introductory course in sociology or consent of the instructor.
Credit 3 units.

L40 SOC 3550 Sociology of Work
Sociological understanding of work and, in particular, how work reduces or replicates inequality. Classic and contemporary sociological theories of work; how work in the U.S. has changed over time; and how workers are matched to "good" and "bad" jobs. threaded through the course is the exploration of barriers to racial, gender, and class inclusion and advancement at work. We will explore how organizational structures, policies and practices can increase or decrease those barriers. Prerequisite: introductory course in sociology or consent of the instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 3660 Social Conflict
Comparative and historical examination of conflict between social groups, including groups defined by race, ethnicity and class. Readings combine classical and contemporary perspectives on collective conflict with in-depth analyses of historical and contemporary episodes. We discuss various ways in which conflicts can manifest, including the formation and hardening of divisive attitudes, discriminatory lawmaking and criminal justice practices, riots and collective violence, residential segregation, and sustained social movement activity. Prerequisite: introductory course in sociology or consent of the instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 3710 Sociology of Immigration
A review of theoretical and empirical research on how and why people migrate across international borders, and the consequences of international migration for immigrants and natives in the United States. While immigration is one of the most controversial issues in the contemporary United States, these contentious debates are not new. Americans once voiced the same concerns about the economic and social impact of Southern and Eastern European immigrants that today are aimed at immigrants from Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. In this course we will compare historical (1880-1920) and contemporary (1965-present) waves of immigration to the United States. We will explore why and how people migrate, immigrant integration, the impact of immigration on native-born Americans, and how government policies — at the national state, and local level — shape immigrant assimilation and what it means to be considered truly "American" in a social as well as a legal sense. Prerequisite: completion of an introductory sociology course or consent of the instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 3910 Economic Realities of the American Dream
Exploration of the realities of economic life in the U.S. and how they correspond to the American Dream. Interdisciplinary perspectives from economics, sociology and other areas of social inquiry. Emphasis on the consistency between empirical data and different concepts of the American Dream. Specific topics to include sources of economic growth and changing living standards, unemployment, impact of globalization on U.S. citizens, economic mobility, poverty and inequality, and social justice. Prerequisites: Econ 1011 and Econ 1021, or consent of the instructors.
Same as L11 Econ 348
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS A&S IQ: SSC Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 3950 Culture and Identity: Urban Ethnography in St. Louis
Topics course focusing on instances of identity and culture within the American scope. Varies by semester, refer to Course Listings for description of current semester's offering.
Same as L98 AMCS 390D
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S IQ: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA EN: H

L40 SOC 4610 Seminar in Selected Topics in Learning & Memory: Collective Memory
This course provides an overview and analysis of phenomena of people remembering as part of a group — one's country, one's state, one's university, one's family. Collective memories are critical for one's identity, for knowing who we are and how to interpret the world around us. We will consider narcissistic tendencies of group memories in specific contexts (e.g., the Russian vs. American interpretation of world events; views of Trump supporters vs. Clinton supporters on events in the U.S.). The course will range from humanistic, anthropological, psychological, and sociological perspectives on memory. Prerequisites: Psych 100B and a course on human memory or permission of the instructor.
Same as L33 Psych 461
Credit 3 units.

L40 SOC 4621 Politics of Education
Politics is interpreted broadly to include not just government, but any situation in which people have to solve a problem or come to a decision. This course focuses on schools and the processes through which certain stories, identities and practices are promoted, and others, not.
Same as L12 Educ 462
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS A&S IQ: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 4750 Sociology of Education
This course provides an overview of sociological theory and research on education in contemporary U.S. society. Drawing from sociological perspectives, it covers the implications of schools and schooling for social inequality, mobility and group relations. It examines major theoretical perspectives on the purpose and social organization of mass education in the United States, and topics related to the organization and function of schools, access to educational resources, and group disparities in school experiences and outcomes.
Same as L12 Educ 453B
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS, SD A&S IQ: SSC, SD Arch: SSC BU: BA, ETH

L40 SOC 4900 Research in Sociology
Independent work linked to the material covered by an associated 300- or 400-level class in sociology leading to completion of a research paper. Work is supervised by the faculty member teaching the associated class. Registration may
be concurrent with the associated course or after the course is completed. Successful completion of this paper satisfies the capstone requirement for the sociology major. Students will normally receive 1 credit for this course, but students may register for up to 3 credits with the approval of their faculty supervisor. Open to sociology majors only; register for the section assigned to the faculty supervisor. Prerequisite: approval of faculty supervisor.
Credit variable, maximum 3 units.

L40 SOC 4910 Internship in Sociology
Students may receive up to 3 units of credit for an approved, faculty-sponsored internship that relates to the study and application of sociological material. Credit determined by the number of hours worked. Specific requirements are set by the faculty supervisor in consultation with the supervisor in the organization where the internship work is completed. Students should complete a learning agreement provided by the Career Center. Successful completion of an internship approved by the student's major adviser satisfies the capstone requirement for the sociology major. Open to sociology majors and minors only; register for the section assigned to the faculty supervisor. Prerequisites: completion of the "Learning Agreement" provided by the Career Center and approval of faculty supervisor.
Credit variable, maximum 3 units.

L40 SOC 4920 Teaching Practicum in Sociology
Students may receive up to 3 units of credit for work assisting in course instruction, tutoring and preparation of course materials under the supervision of a faculty member. This course does not fulfill sociology major requirements. Register for the section assigned to the faculty supervisor.
Credit variable, maximum 3 units.

L40 SOC 497 Honors Thesis I
Credit variable, maximum 3 units.