Sociology

The Department of Sociology strives to understand the origins and reproduction of social inequality, especially as it relates to issues of pressing public concern. Our particular areas of focus include race/ethnicity, gender, the sociology of work and the workplace, immigration, social movements and economic inequality.

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

Re-established in 2015 after a hiatus of more than two decades, the department offers undergraduate major and minor programs with wide-ranging course offerings every semester. The curriculum provides students with research tools to examine critical social issues and to apply their understanding of sociology to activities outside the university.

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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 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 perspectives 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 or honors thesis.
Requirements:

The major requires the successful completion of 10 courses, distributed as specified below. Courses that satisfy major requirements must be completed with a letter grade of C- or better. (Courses taken on a pass/fail basis do not satisfy requirements.)

a. **Introductory requirement** (6 credits total): Any two 200-level sociology courses (Students may substitute an upper-level sociology course for one of their two introductory courses with the written 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. Because SOC 3050 draws on specific sociological applications of statistical analyses, we strongly encourage students to enroll in our department's Sociological Statistics course. However, with the written approval of their major adviser, students may substitute Math 2200, Math 3200, or a disciplinary statistics course from another social science for SOC 3050. Majors who receive approval to fulfill this requirement with a course from another department or university are required to take an additional upper-level sociology course in lieu of SOC 3050.

d. **Upper-level sociology electives** (15 credits): Any five 300- or 400-level seminar courses. An independent learning course (i.e., independent research or an internship) can fulfill one of these five elective course requirements.

e. **Sociology in action** (non-credit bearing): All majors are required to attend a minimum of five department-sponsored events. (This cocurricular 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.

f. **Capstone:** Majors will choose any one of the following options:

i. **Capstone paper tied to an upper-level course** (1 credit): Students electing this option may align the research paper with any upper-level sociology course taken during or prior to the semester in which they undertake this accompanying capstone paper. Capstone research papers typically are 10 to 15 pages in length and represent some application of course content to a related topic developed by the student in consultation with the instructor. Students interested in this option should register for the section of SOC 4900 Capstone Paper for Sociology Majors assigned to the relevant instructor, who will then do the following: (1) approve the capstone paper topic at the outset of the semester; (2) be available for consultation at all stages of the project; (3) assign a final grade for this 1-credit course; and (4) upon completion of the paper, certify the final product as fulfilling the capstone requirement. Students should schedule a meeting with the relevant instructor at the start of the semester (i.e., prior to the end of the add/drop period) to obtain the required approval for enrollment in SOC 4900 and to discuss the paper.

ii. **Internship** (2 credits): Students electing to complete a field internship are able, in consultation with their internship adviser, to identify and select a position with an organization of their choosing. For help identifying options in St. Louis, we recommend that students reference the Gephardt Center's internship opportunities listings ([https://gephardtinstitute.wustl.edu/](https://gephardtinstitute.wustl.edu/) for-students) as well as the Career Center's CAREERlink database ([https://careercenter.wustl.edu/tools/careerlink/Pages/Students.aspx](https://careercenter.wustl.edu/tools/careerlink/Pages/Students.aspx)). Over time, our department website will also provide resources for connecting with local organizations in need of student interns with a background in sociology. Capstone internships are intended to integrate and apply the knowledge gained in the classroom to community and organizational settings. As such, students are required to identify a faculty adviser of their choosing to approve and oversee the experience in consultation with the on-site internship manager. (Note that the internship adviser need not be the same as the student's major adviser.) To receive credit for the internship, students should first obtain approval for the proposed experience in advance of the internship start date from their preferred internship adviser, who will then provide the required permission to enroll in the adviser's assigned section of SOC 4910 Internship in Sociology. Students should complete and file an Internship Learning Agreement ([PDF](https://wustl.box.com/s/em9gi5qc8arvoel37jiqfwapak42tyk)) with the department no later than two weeks after the first day of the internship. The university stipulates 45 hours of work for each academic credit earned, so students will need to complete at least 135 internship hours — along with a series of reflective assignments arranged in consultation with their adviser — to fulfill the capstone requirement.

iii. **Honors thesis** (6 credits): Students who choose the thesis capstone option can apply 3 of their thesis credits toward their major elective requirement (part d in the list above). This means that, in addition to their thesis project, they would need to complete four (rather than five) additional 300- or 400-level seminar courses. To be eligible for Latin honors in Sociology, students must complete an Honors thesis. For more
information about honors work in the department, please visit our Undergraduate FAQ & Policies page (https://sociology.wustl.edu/undergraduate-faq-policies).

Minors

The Minor in Sociology

Requirements:

a. Introductory requirement (3 credits total): One 100- or 200-level sociology course
b. Theory requirement (3 credits): SOC 3001 Social Theory (offered every year)
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 IQ: SSC, SC, SD Arch: SSC Art: 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 IQ: SSC, SC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 2050 Inequality By Design: Understanding Racial/ Ethnic Health Disparities
This course critically examines health status and health care disparities among racial/ethnic minority groups in the United States. The course will utilize sociological, demographic, epidemiological, and psychological concepts to introduce students to racial/ethnic health disparities research. Students will have exposure to the descriptive demography and epidemiology of health indicators across population groups as well as to the theories used to understand and explain racial/ethnic health disparities. In particular, the course will examine the ways in which multiple forms of interpersonal and institutional discrimination, neighborhood and community factors, and inequalities in socioeconomic status influence health behaviors, access to health care services, and health status outcomes across racial/ethnic groups. Concepts such as acculturation, patient preferences, provider congruence, and cultural
competence will also be explored in this course. Finally, students will be challenged to use the theories and frameworks introduced in this course to develop and present policy approaches to address racial/ethnic disparities in health and health care in the United States.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, SC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 2580 Families and Social Inequality
Families have changed dramatically in recent decades in the United States. Dual-earner families, single parents, cohabiting families, and blended families are now common in the contemporary family landscape. The prevalence of increasingly diverse and complex family configurations varies substantially by social class, race and ethnicity, and gender. Men's and women's work and family lives have also become more similar over time, but gender inequalities in child care remain significant. Drawing on insights from sociology, demography, and economics, this course aims to understand the causes and consequences of social inequalities in family life. We focus primarily on the contemporary U.S. context, but we will also explore historical and cross-national variations in families. The course also considers the role of social policy in affecting inequalities.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, SC BU: BA

L40 SOC 2710 First-Year Seminar: Beyond the Melting Pot: Life in Immigrant America
This course uses a sociological lens to explore contemporary immigration to the United States. The more than 43 million immigrants living in the United States today come from across the globe. Their reasons for migrating to the United States are complex, as are the laws, policies, and social structures they must navigate before and after their arrival. During the first half of the course, we will get to know Mexican immigrants who split their lives between Brooklyn and their small hometown in Mexico; fourth-generation Chinese Americans who are still asked, “Where are you from?”; and West Indian immigrants forced to confront a U.S. racial order in which they are defined by their Blackness. During the second half of the course, we will learn about Iranian-American youth navigating life in post-9/11 America and the challenges of becoming a young adult when you learn you lack any legal status. Who are these immigrants? Why and how did they come here? How well are they and their children integrating into American society? Reading will be drawn from sociological research that opens windows into the lives of immigrants in America. Students will also conduct their own hands-on research to better understand life in immigrant America.

Credit 3 units. A&S: FYS A&S IQ: LCD, SSC, SC EN: S

L40 SOC 2910 Alternative Facts: An Introduction to the Social Construction of Reality
Introduction to the concept of social construction — the idea that our “objective” reality is shaped by our social positions and through social interactions. Recent political events and social conflicts highlight deep divisions in American society, raising critical questions about the media and objectivity (e.g., alternative facts and “fake” news), networks and segregation (e.g., who talks to whom), who gets to decide what is viewed as “truth,” and the role of researchers and academia in combating (or contributing to) misinformation. This course explores these questions with a sociological lens. We will use foundational sociological theories to learn how to recognize the existence of multiple realities, and consider the implications of social constructionism for key domains of everyday life, American politics, and the production of knowledge. We will also discuss the ways that cutting-edge technological innovations and academic research can — or cannot — help us distinguish facts from “alternative” facts. Introductory level, no prerequisites.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC Arch: SSC Art: 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 IQ: SSC, SC, SD BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 301B Individual and Community
Same as L98 AMCS 301B
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, SD BU: BA, ETH, IS 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 IQ: SSC Arch: SSC Art: 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: NSM, Arch: NSM Art: NSM

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 IQ: SSC, SC, 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 IQ: SSC, SC, 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, SC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA 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, SC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L40 SOC 3510 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 3520 Topics in Sociology: Growing Up Poor Across America — An Application of Sociological Reasoning to Data
Advanced seminar on poverty in America, with a special focus on exploring relevant data. The American Dream is built around the idea that anyone, regardless of his or her origins, can have a fair start in life. Yet recent research shows that the promise of the American Dream is uneven across the nation. Poor children growing up in San Jose, CA are three times more likely to escape poverty than those in Charlotte, NC. What might be driving these geographic differences in opportunities for low-income youth? We will investigate factors that might drive these differences by working with interesting data. We will explore cutting-edge research on poverty and mobility in America to develop our own research questions. We will also develop the computational and statistical skills to put our ideas into practice by learning to manipulate data and make graphs that communicate our findings effectively. The ultimate goal of this course is to learn to connect sociological reasoning and understanding of poverty and inequality with data analysis. Prerequisite: introductory course in sociology or consent of the instructor; Introduction to Research Methods (SOC 3030) and/or an introductory statistics course (SOC 3050 or equivalent) are encouraged. Credit 3 units. BU: BA

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, SC, SD Arch: SSC Art: 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, SC, 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
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 IQ: SSC, SC, SD 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 330D Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: CPSC, HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

L40 SOC 4289 Neighborhoods, Schools, and Social Inequality
A major purpose of the course is to study the research and policy literature related to neighborhoods, schools and the corresponding opportunity structure in urban America. The course will be informed by theoretical models drawn from economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, education and law. A major focus is to gain greater understanding of the experiences and opportunity structure(s) of urban dwellers, in general, and urban youth, in particular. While major emphasis will be placed on data derived from the interface of urban environments and the corresponding institutions within them, the generational experiences of various ethnic groups will complement the course focus. Same as L12 Educ 4289 Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC, SC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

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 IQ: SSC, SC, SD Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: SSC EN: S

L40 SOC 4810 Global Structures and Problems
This course examines social problems around the world and their relationship to globalization — that is, the increasing connectedness of social and economic life across borders. We will look at a range of problems — such as environmental degradation, labor exploitation, human rights abuses, ethnic conflict, poverty, and inequality — and their links to both personal experiences and larger social structures. The course is premised on the idea that to understand current global social problems, we have to understand the evolution of markets, states, civil society and social movements, gender hierarchies, ethnic categories, and global governance over the past century. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, SSC Arch: SSC Art: SSC, SSP BU: IS EN: S

L40 SOC 4900 Capstone Paper for Sociology Majors
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 4901 Sociology Honors Thesis
Independent work linked to the sociology honors thesis. Successful completion of the thesis paper satisfies the capstone requirement for the sociology major. Open to sociology majors only; register for the section assigned to the faculty supervisor. Prerequisite: 3 credits of Sociology 4900 in the prior semester.
with approval by the faculty supervisor to advance the thesis project. 
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: SSC EN: S

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 4950 Research in Sociology
Independent research on a sociological topic directed by a 
faculty member from the Department of Sociology. The student 
and the supervising professor will agree in writing on the 
course goals, requirements, readings, assignments, meeting 
schedule, and evaluation criteria. The written agreement must 
be submitted to the department undergraduate administrator 
before registration will be authorized. Credit variable; maximum 
3 units. May be repeated one time for credit with the approval of 
the supervising professor. 
Credit variable, maximum 3 units.