

## **Introduction to Sociology**

HSS 141, Spring 2023

Syllabus

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Section A & RA: MW 10-11:15AM, Howe 104

Section B & RB: MW 1-2:15PM, Howe 104

Office Hours: T 1-3PM (Office, M316) or by appointment

**Notes:** The syllabus is subject to revision during the semester. In case of revisions, you will be notified and receive an electronic version on Canvas to replace the original.

### **Course Overview**

The objective of this course is to provide you with a general survey of the field of sociology. More importantly, this course also aims at providing you with a way to think about and understand the social world and your place in it. Therefore, the lectures, readings, and assignments will focus on understanding the basic social processes and how you can apply them to everyday events, both small and large, both personal and political.

With this in mind, we will begin the course by focusing on the development of the “self,” identity, and the rules that guide interaction between individuals. Then, we will examine how large-scale social changes and the organization of society affect us as individuals and groups. In the end, we will discuss some sociological issues from a global perspective.

Since this course introduces you to the broad field of sociology, each class focuses on a certain topic, such as the social construction of reality, religion, economy, or education, that is studied by sociologists. The readings and our class discussions should provide you with theoretical perspectives to explain basic social processes. In addition, they provide some arguments of sociologists, which also serve as examples of how sociologists apply theories and methodologies in research. But remember that these arguments are far from being exhaustive, yet they represent some mainstream research in the field, and many of them are widely read in sociology and other social sciences classes.

### **CAL Objectives**

1. Students will demonstrate an awareness of ethical responsibility and the societal impact of their future profession.
2. Students will demonstrate a fuller understanding of the traditional humanities and social sciences through an understanding of their relation to the study of science and/or technology.
3. Students will demonstrate awareness of cultures and societies other than their own.
4. Students will demonstrate writing and/or public speaking skills.
5. Students will demonstrate a love of learning in the liberal arts for its own sake.
6. Students will demonstrate leadership and team skills.

## **Program Outcomes for BA in Social Sciences**

1.Philosophical foundation. The student will understand the underlying theories and methods used in political science, psychology, and sociology and be able to apply them in individual and team directed research.

2.Historical foundation. The student will understand the evolution of the disciplines of the social sciences in concrete cause and effect relationships, and be able to discern schools of interpretation over time.

3.Research. The student will be able to design and conduct research in the social sciences using appropriate theories for the disciplines of political science, psychology and sociology. Quantification techniques as well as theoretical constructs will be employed in doing thesis research and data collection.

4.Tools. The student will be proficient in computing technologies necessary for the specific discipline.

5.Professionalism. The student will achieve a high degree of knowledge, accountability, and where warranted, certification in professional practice.

6.Leadership. The student will be able to develop plans for research projects on a professional level.

7.Teamwork. The student will be able to contribute to research activity as part of working team member, and facilitate cooperation among the members of the team resulting in a successful project.

8.Communication. The student will enhance written and oral presentation skills using a variety of mean to convey significant ideas and proposals.

9.Ethics. The student will understand and abide by professional standards of ethics appropriate to the discipline on a professional level.

10.Social Issues. The student will place into modern social context information derived from research such that the relationship between theory and practice are manifest.

11.Lifetime learning. The student will be treated as a professional with a lifelong investment in one's field of study, and a professional goal of continuing self-assessment and self-improvement.

## **Course Outcomes**

After taking this course, students will be able to

1. understand the three main sociological perspectives and theories, namely, symbolic interactionism, functionalism, and conflict theory (1);
2. apply these theories to contemporary social problems (3);
3. understand and use some sociological methods, including interviews, questionnaires, experiment, analysis of existing data, etc. (3);

4. develop written and verbal skills for exchanging and presenting ideas and research findings to a broader audience (8); and
5. gain insights in critically linking social structures and social forces to individual circumstances (“sociological imagination”) (11)

### **Requirements and Grading**

The course grade will be based on class participation, short written assignments and exams. In fulfilling these requirements, students are expected to adhere to the ***Honor System*** of Stevens Institute of Technology. Honor code violations will be addressed appropriately and could result in an “F” on the assignment or in the course. Specific student responsibilities include: Maintaining honesty and fair play in all aspects of academic life at Stevens; writing and signing the pledge, in full, on all submitted academic work; reporting any suspected violations to an Honor Board member or to the Dean of Student Development; cooperating with the Honor Board during investigations and hearings.

If you require accommodations or if you need individual arrangements, you must inform the office of Student Counseling and Psychological Services and ask that the director inform the instructor as early as possible.

### ***Class Participation (10%)***

Students are expected to arrive on time to class and not to leave early unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. What is more important than attendance is participation in class—class discussions are important and helpful to learning and retention of class materials. Therefore, make sure you do the readings before class and come prepared to discuss. The participation grade will not be based simply on the frequency of comments, but upon the quality of your comments. For example, bringing up a point from the reading that was unclear or critiquing an argument in the reading is more involved (and of better quality) than merely reciting descriptive information in the text, although the latter is also necessary. In other words, think critically of the course materials and reflect on your own experience, when relevant.

There are ***two ways of participating in this class***: real-time class discussions & theme-based discussions outside class on Canvas (choose any two days/topics). You need to finish the readings and get prepared. Try to actively answer questions, raise questions, and provide comments. We will also have small-group discussions, whenever possible, so participate in small-group discussions and share your group’s comments with the rest of the class when the discussion is over. For online discussions, choose any two days (or two topics; one topic per class day). You are welcome to answer discussion questions for more than two days, and extra online discussion could count towards in-class discussion, although it cannot completely replace in-class discussion because they represent different levels of efforts and commitments.

Readings included in this class represent researchers’ findings based on scientific methods, and these findings are oftentimes approved by other researchers through the process known as peer review. Your observations may not confirm some of the findings because the samples of your observation is different from that of the study, the time periods of the research and your observation could be different, and there are also limitations of each particular research and our personal observations. While the findings in the readings are usually representative (to a certain

degree), you do not have to agree with the authors, although I encourage you to use your “sociological imagination” to look at this issue, yet you do need to understand the method, findings, and theoretical implications (and possibly limitations) of the readings.

Full participation in class also means that you may not use your cell phone or other electronic devices that are not relevant to learning in class most of the time. I encourage you to think about what works best for learning and limit use of non-essential electronic devices as much as you can and participate in class as much as you can.

### ***Short Research Paper and Class Discussion (10%)***

To understand how sociological studies are conducted, you are expected to finish a short research paper (3 pages, double spaced) and discuss your findings and how you felt and what you learned when conducting the study.

More detailed instructions will be provided in class ahead of time. As part of your assignment, you will need to submit your paper on Canvas and discuss your findings and your experience of conducting the research in class. The three pages do not include references or cover pages, if any. The write-up will be graded along with your class discussion or presentation (1-2 minutes). Failure of presenting your projects may result in a lower grade.

### ***Group Project on Critical Literature Review (10%)***

In addition to individual research projects, you are also expected to finish a group project. This project critically reviews literature of a topic chosen by the group, and the group is expected to present their findings in class. More detailed instructions will be provided in advance.

### ***Exams (20% each, 40% in total)***

The two exams for this course will be closed-book, closed-notes tests that cover what have been discussed in class since the beginning of the semester (Mid-term) or since the previous exam (Final Exam). The questions will require students to draw on course readings, lectures, and discussions from (and beyond) the class. More details will be provided to you in advance.

### ***Long Research Paper and Class Discussion (20%)***

The long research paper is similar to the first research paper in the format and structure but longer in length (5 pages). This means you will need to provide more thorough and in-depth discussion in this paper. More detailed instructions will be provided to you ahead of time. As part of your assignment, you will need to submit your paper on Canvas and discuss your findings and your experience of conducting research in class. The five pages do not include references or cover pages, if any. The write-up will be graded along with your in-class presentation (1-2 minutes). Failure of presenting your projects may result in a lower grade.

### ***Other Assignments (5% each, 10% in total)***

You also need to finish two short (one-page, double-sided) assignments. More details will be provided in advance.

For papers and exams, make sure you write and sign the Stevens Honor Pledge. For discussion question submission on Canvas, it is optional.

### ***To Improve Your Writing***

You are encouraged to visit the Stevens Writing and Communication Center (WCC) to improve your writing (on site at 210 Morton and/or online). The Center helps students with written and oral assignments and other tasks, such as revising a resume/CV. They also have workshops to help you improve your written and oral communication. In some cases, I may ask you to visit WCC, and a revised version of your assignment is required.

### **Textbooks and Readings**

We use a combination of classic readings and recent publications for our discussion. The following book is *required* and are available at the Stevens bookstore:

Henslin, James M. 2007. Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings. 14th Edition. Free Press / Simon & Schuster. ISBN: 1-4165-3620-5.

This book also has its e-book version (9781439108956). Most readings in the first half of the class will come from this book.

Other readings (\*) are available online on Canvas.

Have each day's readings done *before* class so that you can be prepared for class discussion.

### ***Final Grade Breakdown***

A: 93-100; A-: 90-92;

B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69; D: 60-66

F: 59 or below

### **Undergraduate Honor System**

Enrollment into the undergraduate class of Stevens Institute of Technology signifies a student's commitment to the Honor System. Accordingly, the provisions of the Stevens Honor System apply to all undergraduate students in coursework and Honor Board proceedings. It is the responsibility of each student to become acquainted with and to uphold the ideals set forth in the Honor System Constitution. More information about the Honor System including the constitution, bylaws, investigative procedures, and the penalty matrix can be found online at <http://web.stevens.edu/honor/>.

The following pledge shall be written in full and signed by every student on all submitted work (including, but not limited to, homework, projects, lab reports, code, quizzes and exams) that is assigned by the course instructor. No work shall be graded unless the pledge is written in full and signed.

*"I pledge my honor that I have abided by the Stevens Honor System."*

### ***Reporting Honor System Violations***

Students who believe a violation of the Honor System has been committed should report it within ten business days of the suspected violation. Students have the option to remain anonymous and can report violations online at [www.stevens.edu/honor](http://www.stevens.edu/honor).

## **Learning Accommodations**

Stevens Institute of Technology is dedicated to providing appropriate accommodations to students with documented disabilities. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with undergraduate and graduate students with learning disabilities, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorders, physical disabilities, sensory impairments, psychiatric disorders, and other such disabilities in order to help students achieve their academic and personal potential. They facilitate equal access to the educational programs and opportunities offered at Stevens and coordinate reasonable accommodations for eligible students. These services are designed to encourage independence and self-advocacy with support from the ODS staff. The ODS staff will facilitate the provision of accommodations on a case-by-case basis.

## ***Disability Services Confidentiality Policy***

Student Disability Files are kept separate from academic files and are stored in a secure location within the Office of Disability Services. The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; 34CFR, Part 99) regulates disclosure of disability documentation and records maintained by Stevens Disability Services. According to this act, prior written consent by the student is required before our Disability Services office may release disability documentation or records to anyone. An exception is made in unusual circumstances, such as the case of health and safety emergencies.

For more information about Disability Services and the process to receive accommodations, visit <https://www.stevens.edu/office-disability-services>. If you have any questions please contact: Phillip Gehman, the Director of Disability Services Coordinator at Stevens Institute of Technology at [pgehman@stevens.edu](mailto:pgehman@stevens.edu) or by phone (201) 216-3748.

## **Inclusivity**

### ***Name and Pronoun Usage***

As this course includes group work and in-class discussion, it is vitally important for us to create an educational environment of inclusion and mutual respect. This includes the ability for all students to have their chosen gender pronoun(s) and chosen name affirmed. If the class roster does not align with your name and/or pronouns, please inform the instructor of the necessary changes.

### ***Inclusion Statement***

Stevens Institute of Technology believes that diversity and inclusiveness are essential to excellence in academic discourse and innovation. In this class, the perspective of people of all races, ethnicities, gender expressions and gender identities, religions, sexual orientations, disabilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and nationalities will be respected and viewed as a resource and benefit throughout the semester. Suggestions to further diversify class materials and assignments are encouraged. If any course meetings conflict with your religious events, please do not hesitate to reach out to your instructor to make alternative arrangements.

You are expected to treat your instructor and all other participants in the course with courtesy and respect. Disrespectful conduct and harassing statements will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary actions.

### **Adding and/or Dropping the Course**

Consult the registrar's website (<http://www.stevens.edu/registrar/>) for information regarding add/drop policies.

### **Some Due Dates (All written assignments are due on Canvas; Presentations are done in class in person)**

One-page Reflection (5%)	Jan. 30
Short Research Papers and Class Discussion (10%)	Feb. 22
Mid-Term Exam (20%)	Mar. 8
One-page Answer (5%)	Apr. 5
Group Project (10%)	Apr. 17
Long Research Paper and Class Discussion (20%)	May 1
Final Exam (20%)	TBD

### **Weekly Schedule**

#### **Part I: Society and the Individual: Meaning and Behavior**

- Jan. 18      *Understanding Social Behavior: Introduction & Sociological Imagination*  
C. Wright Mills, The Promise (Henslin, Ch. 3)  
Discussion topic: How do we learn about society? What does “sociological imagination” mean?
- Jan. 23      *Theories and Research Methods*  
J. Henslin, How Sociologists Gather Data (Henslin, Ch. 4)  
Discussion topic: What are pros and cons of various methods? What research project would you like to conduct, if given an opportunity?
- Jan. 25      *Norms, Statuses, and Roles: Behavior and Identity*  
J. Henslin, Eating Your Friends Is the Hardest: The Survivors of F-227 (Henslin, Ch. 24)  
N. Chagnon, Doing Fieldwork among the Yanomamo (Henslin, Ch. 9)  
Discussion topic: Why and how do norms shape our behavior? How are statuses and roles related?
- Jan. 30      No Class  
**Due: one-page reflection (due at 11:59PM)**
- Feb. 1      *The Social Construction of Reality*  
J. Hunt, Police Accounts of Normal Force (Henslin, Ch. 41)  
*Video: Quiet Rage: Stanford Prison Experiment (29 min)*  
Discussion topics: Is the socially constructed reality the only reality? Who contributes to the social construction of reality?

Feb. 6      *Socialization and Gender*  
K. Davis, Extreme Isolation (Henslin, Ch. 13)  
\* Yavorsky, Jill E., Yue Qian, and Amanda C. Sargent. 2021. "The gendered pandemic: The implications of COVID-19 for work and family." *Sociology Compass*. 15(6): e12881.  
Discussion topics: are human beings born to be social beings? Is learning gender another story of social construction of reality? How has COVID affected gender roles and gendered division of labor in society?

Feb. 8      *Culture, Socialization, and Gender*  
Documentary and Discussion: *The Mask You Live In*

## **Part II: Social Structures, Social Practices and Social Institutions**

Feb. 13      *Deviance and Crime*  
\*V. Sacco. *When Crime Waves*. Chapter 1  
Discussion topics: how is the crime wave socially created?

Feb. 15      *Technology and Society*  
\* Ravenelle, Alexandra J. 2019. *Hustle and Gig: Struggling and Surviving in the Sharing Economy*. University of California Press. (Ch 1. Strugglers, Strivers, and Success Stories)  
Discussion topics: how do science and technology affect society and our well-being? Do science and technology contribute to social inequality?

Feb. 20      No class. President's Day

Feb. 22      *In-Class Presentation of Short Research Paper*  
No assigned reading

### **Due: Short research paper (due by class time); Presentation in class**

Feb. 27      *Social Networks and Social Capital*  
\* M Fulkerson, Gregory, Alexander R. Thomas, Michael McCarthy, Elizabeth Seale, Sallie Han, Kirsten Kemmerer, and James Zians. 2022. "Social Capital as Mediating Factor on COVID-19 Induced Psychological Distress: The Case of College Students Living through an Outbreak." *Journal of Community Psychology* 50(3): 1521-1530.  
Discussion topics: are we who we know and who we hang out with? How do social network and social capital affect our well-being?

Mar. 1      *Family and Society*  
\* Lareau, Annette. 2018. "Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life." In K. McGann (ed.) *SAGE Readings for Introductory Sociology* (2nd ed.), pp. 290-300.  
Discussion topics: What does family mean today? How do families and their



impact on us differ in the context of class?

Mar. 6 *Education and Society*

\* Hamilton, Laura, Josipa Roksa, and Kelly Nielsen. 2018. "Providing a "Leg Up": Parental Involvement and Opportunity Hoarding in College." *Sociology of Education*. 91(2): 111-131.

Discussion topics: What does McDonaldization of higher education mean? How does parental involvement affect grade school and college students' opportunities and success?

Mar. 8 **Mid-Term Exam (In Person)**

Mar. 13, 15 No class. Happy Spring Break!

### **Part III: Social Stratification and Social Change**

Mar. 20 *Politics & the Pandemic*

\* Albrecht, Don E. 2021. "COVID-19 in Rural America: Impacts of Politics and Disadvantage." *Rural Sociology*, 1-25.

Discussion topics: How does social media affect political participation? How does the pandemic affect political participation?

Mar. 22 *The Fundamental Principles of Inequality (Self-paced)*

S. Katz, The Importance of Being Beautiful (Henslin, Ch. 29)

Video: "A Class Divided"

Discussion topics: how is inequality generated and maintained?

Mar. 27 *Social Stratification*

\* Muller, Christopher, Robert J. Sampson, and Alix S. Winter. 2018. "Environmental Inequality: The Social Causes and Consequences of Lead Exposure." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 44: 263–282.

Discussion topics: How does poverty and inequality affect our lives? How do they work together to affect our lives?

Mar. 29 *The Nature and Consequences of Inequality: Gender, Race, and Class (I)*

\* Connell, Catherine. 2018. "Doing, Undoing, or Redoing Gender? Learning From the Workplace Experiences of Transpeople." In K. McGann (ed.) *SAGE Readings for Introductory Sociology* (2nd ed.), pp. 188-201.

Discussion topics: how does inequality based on gender, race, or class change over time?

Apr. 3 No Lecture. Self-paced learning: *Documentary and evaluation (10 clips):*

**Code: Debugging the Gender Gap**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qULQCbfqJm8> (What is Coding? Scene 1/10)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kE8qSUcrrmk> (Female Pioneers in Programming. Scene 2/10)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c6nNzrAqs0> (Code for Progress. Scene 3/10)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLH6Fzd2V94> (Coding for Children. Scene 4/10)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDGDWdvLCrM> (Black Girls Code. Scene 5/10)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtprbvdApU4> (You Are Not Your User. Scene 6/10)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EzS68nXwHo> (Origin of Computer Bug. Scene 7/10)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4fHvCvrTjQ> (Stereotype Threat. Scene 8/10)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9w3jysNGqeA> (Bullying in the Industry. Scene 9/10)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lnovJPbLTc> (Legacy & the Future. Scene 10/10)

**Assignment: one-page answer (due on Apr. 5)**

- Apr. 5      *The Nature and Consequences of Inequality: Gender, Race, and Class (II)*  
 D. Pager, Would You Hire an Ex-Convict? (Henslin, Ch. 6)  
 B. Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed (Henslin, Ch. 36)  
Discussion topics: how does inequality based on gender, race, or class change over time?

**Due: One-page answer (due today by 11:59PM)**

- Apr. 10      Group Work on Critical Literature Review (group meetings in class)
- Apr. 12      Group Work on Critical Literature Review (group meetings in class)
- Apr. 17      **Group Presentation of Critical Literature Review (Slides, Notes, etc.)**
- Apr. 19      *The Sociology of Health and Body*  
 \* A. Howson. 2013. The Body in Society: An Introduction. Ch. 4 (“The Body in Consumer Culture”)  
Discussion topics: What does public health tell us about social inequality?  
 How does the body tell us about the consumer culture?
- Apr. 24      *Immigration and The Second Generation*  
 \*A. Portes and M. Zhou. “The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants.” Pp. 658-669 in David B. Grusky (ed.), *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2008.  
Discussion topics: What does assimilation mean? What does segmented assimilation mean?
- Apr. 26      *Social Mobility*  
 \* J. MacLeod, Ain’t No Makin’ It. In David B. Grusky. *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*. (2 readings)  
Discussion topics: If people can’t “make it” (achieving upward social mobility), who or what is to blame?

May. 1	<p><i>Global Population</i></p> <p>* M. Anderson and H. Taylor, <u>Sociology: The Essentials (7e)</u>. Ch. 16. (“Population”).</p> <p><u>Discussion topics:</u> What theory can guide us in understanding the future of global populations?</p> <p><b>Due: Long research paper (due by class time) &amp; in-class presentation</b></p>
May 3	<p><i>Social Change and Social Movements</i></p> <p>*D. Conley, <u>You May Ask Yourself</u>. “Social Movements.”</p> <p><u>Discussion topics:</u> Is social change inevitable? What are some social movements that you have participated in?</p>
TBD	<b>Final Exam</b>