

## **SOC4966W Tentative Syllabus**

Capstone Experience Seminar: Sociology Major Project  
TTH 9:45-11:00 am, Spring 2020 (1/21-5/4), Blegen Hall 120

### **Teaching Team**

Course Instructor: Professor Yanjie Bian

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Office: 967 Social Sciences Building

Office hours: Tu/Th 1:00 pm - 2:15 pm, or through email communication

Course Co-Instructor: To be given

### **Course Description and Organization**

This course will guide you through the process of writing your senior project paper, a graduation requirement for all Sociology majors. The class will structure your work as you select your topic, write a draft, and polish your paper. In conjunction with Career Services in CLA, the class will also help students to prepare for the job market---thinking through your career goals and career choices, developing resumes, and getting ready for job interviews. Presentations and discussions by students are organized in class to help them learn from each other. This is a writing intensive class with a total of six writing assignments. The class is organized into three parts.

Part One (weeks 1-3) is a recap of sociological knowledge. What is sociology? What are the key elements of a sociological analysis? What are career choices for a sociology major? These three questions are focused in lectures and in-class discussions. The last lecture is a description of three options from which each student chooses for his/her senior project paper.

Part Two (weeks 4-6) is focused on expectations and requirements of your major project. This project should be the capstone expression of your “sociological imagination.” It should show the knowledge, skills, and ethics that are central to the practice of Sociology. Examples of each of the three different kinds of a major project paper are discussed in lectures.

Part Three (weeks 7-14) is designed for the development and finalization of your senior project paper. Each student is required to schedule individual meetings with your chosen Instructor to discuss the issues and challenges that the students encounter during their work progress toward the completion of the senior project paper.

### **Readings and Resources**

- (1) Selected publications and lecture notes in PDF: available from the course Canvas.
- (2) Useful websites:
  - Community Service-Learning Center: [www.servicelearning.umn.edu](http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu)
  - CLA Career & Internship Services: <https://cla.umn.edu/student-services-advising/>
  - Center for Writing: <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/>

## **Graded Work and Points Earned**

- (1) Class attendance, counted 10/11, 10% of total grade
- (2) First four writing assignments, 20%, each for 5%
- (3) Major project paper draft, 40%
- (4) Major project final paper, 30%

Lecture grade conversion: 100-95=A; 94-90=A-, 89-85=B+, 84-80=B, 79-75=B-, 74-70=C+, 69-65=C, 64-60=C- (passing grade), 59-55=D+, 54-50=D; <50=F.

## **Six Writing Assignments and Due Days** (online submission, no late submission, more detailed guidelines to be given in class)

- (1) Reflection of sociology degree, 2-3 pages, **Jan 30 Thursday**

This paper is a description of “my ideas for choosing a sociology major then and my career choices now.” You can start with the description of the event that was key to your choosing a sociology major then. What were your other major options and what was your central ideas of choosing sociology as your major? After the years of time and energy investment, what are your career choices now?

- (2) Outline of major project option, 1-2 pages, **Feb 11 Tuesday**

Among the three options, make a choice for your major project and provide a statement of the main reasons of your choice. Describe how this paper is to be completed.

- (3) Resume for job application, 1 page, **Feb 18 Tuesday**

Name, photo, demographic information, educational experience (major relevant courses taken), college achievements (curriculum and extra-curriculum), work experiences (research and non-research included), leadership roles, awards and honours earned, personal hobbies.

- (4) Job application experience, 2-3 pages, **Feb 27 Thursday**

Provide a list of jobs to which you’ve applied, and among them the jobs on which you’ve worked. Have you ever used social contacts to help with your job applications? Describe these experiences and whether or not these social contacts were helpful at all.

- (5) Major project paper draft, 10-15 pages, **April 7 Tuesday**

Detailed expectations and requirements for each of the three kinds of the major project paper are given on a separate page of this course syllabus.

- (6) Major project final paper, 12-18 pages, **April 30 Thursday**

A revised and final version of the major project paper: a title, name of the author, structured contents, and bibliography.

## **Student Writing Support Services**

This class will not provide instruction about grammar, punctuation, spelling, and similar matters, though they will matter in the evaluation and grading of your papers. Student Writing Support (SWS) offers free writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students at all stages of the writing process. In face-to-face and online collaborative consultations, SWS consultants help students develop productive writing habits and revision strategies.

## Major Project Options

Completing a senior thesis paper is a central requirement for Sociology majors at the University of Minnesota. A thesis is a focused and polished paper based on your own original research, about 12-18 double-spaced pages in length. For this original research, you choose one of the following three options, A-B-C.

**A. Service learning research report.** This is based on your participation or “field research” in a community or an organization. For this report, you apply your sociological understanding to observations of your service learning project site; pick one that speaks to your research or career interests. The paper will be based on a minimum of 30 hours of service work and field notes from your experience which will be submitted regularly. Your final paper will use a sociological perspective to analyze what you see there – including how sociological insights and concepts help you to understand the organization and its goals, and the way it functions, and how people relate to each other there. We will suggest some basic sociological questions to start you off, but the rest is up to your creativity and interests. Please note that students who do not complete at least 25 hours of the service learning obligation will not pass the course. Graded components: Outline (5%), draft paper with field notes (40%), and the final paper (30%).

**B. Service learning action project.** This is also a service-learning based paper. But different from the service learning research project (the first option described above), the final product of this option will be a summary description of the sociology-relevant work tasks you’ve done for your chosen organization, agency, or group. While varying in kinds of work tasks to be completed, the project may involve work on (1) a grant application, (2) a survey project, (3) a data analysis project, (4) an evaluation study, (5) a writing project, or (6) teaching a sociology course. These are only a few examples of a “service learning action project,” which is good as far as it entails sociology-relevant actions. Graded components: Outline (5%), draft paper with appendixes showing the actual products you have produced on this service learning action project (40%), and the final paper (30%).

**C. Professional research paper.** This third option is not tied to a service learning project, but instead it will involve writing a more traditional research paper or extended reflective essay on some aspect of sociology and its relevance for contemporary society. This option is flexible, and topics and issues to be studied in this paper are open. But generally, a professional research paper may be focused on four different kinds of issues: (1) a theoretical paper discussing a conceptual issue; (2) a methodological paper discussing a technical issue; (3) a research paper discussing a substantive issue with a qualitative analysis; and (4) a research paper discussing a substantive issue with a quantitative analysis. In any of these choices, the student will give an extensive effort to library search, literature review, critical thinking of the studied issue, and making innovations or scholarly contributions to the relevant research field. Graded components: Outline (5%), a draft paper (40%), and the final paper (30%).

**A note for students.** Students are encouraged to choose any option with which they are most comfortable. The option for which the students have insights, experience, or confidence is the best option for them. Grading is not favoured to one option over the other options. The best paper is the paper that is an effective write on an issue of sociological significance.

## Tentative Schedule

### PART ONE: Sociological Knowledge Recap

Week 1: 1/21, 23

Tue: Course description

Thu: Lecture #1 by Yanjie: What is sociology? What elements are there in a sociological analysis?

Readings: from course reading list, Mills, Hartmann, Adler.

Link to <https://www.buzzfeed.com/pdjsociologist/60-signs-you-study-sociology> for “60 Signs You Studied Sociology In College”.

Week 2: 9/28, 30

Tue: Guest lecture by Monica Siems McKay (624-6574, siems005@umn.edu), Service Learning Coordinator, to discuss volunteer opportunities in the Twin Cities.

Lecture #2 by TA: Career choices for a sociology major, Readings: ASA publications available from the course reading list.

Thu: In-class group discussion: My ideas for a sociology major then and my career choices now

**First writing assignment due on Thu**: “Reflection”

Week 3: 2/4, 6

Tue: Lecture #3 by Yanjie and TA: Three options for your major project paper

Thu: Individual meeting with instructor to discuss project option, NO CLASS

### PART TWO: Job Career Practice Focused

Week 4: 2/11, 13

Tue: Lecture #4 by Yanjie: Good jobs, bad jobs, and no jobs

**Second writing assignment due on Tue**: “Outline of my major project paper”

Thu: Guest Lecturer by Ms. Katy Hinz (4-7577, [katyh@umn.edu](mailto:katyh@umn.edu)) from CLA Career Development Services, Resources and Job Searching Tips for CLA students

Week 5: 2/18, 20

Tue: Lecture #5 by TA: Library research, website resources, and qualitative study

**Third writing assignment due on Tue**: “Resume”

Thu: Individual meeting with Instructor for project outline follow-up issues, NO CLASS

Week 6: 2/25, 27

Tue: Lecture #6 by Yanjie: Doing sociology as a quantitative researcher

Thu: Student presentation within group: My most memorable job application experiences

**Fourth writing assignment due on Thu**: “My job application experiences”

### **PART THREE: Major Project Paper**

Week 7: 3/3, 5

Tue: Lecture #7 by Yanjie: Expectations of a quality major project paper

Thu: Lecture #8 by TA: My major project paper writing

Week 8: 3/10, 12

**Spring Break**, NO CLASS

Week 9: 3/17, 19

Tue & Thu: Individual meeting with Instructor/TA, NO CLASS

Week 10: 3/24, 26

Tue & Thu: Individual meeting with Instructor/TA, NO CLASS

Week 11: 3/31, 4/2

Tue & Thu: Individual meeting with Instructor/TA, NO CLASS

Week 12: 4/7, 9

Tue: **Fifth writing assignment** “Major project paper draft” due midnight, NO CLASS

Thu: Individual meeting with Instructor/TA, NO CLASS

Week 13: 4/14, 16

Tue & Thu: Individual meeting with Instructor/TA, NO CLASS

Week 14: 4/21, 23

Tue & Thu: Last chance to have individual meeting with Instructor/TA, NO CLASS

Week 15: 4/28, 30

Tue: Individual meeting with Instructor/TA, NO CLASS

Thu: **Sixth writing assignment** “Final major project paper” is due midnight, NO CLASS

## Time Slots for Individual Meetings

Purpose	Instructor	TA
Discuss your project option <b>(required)</b>	To be given	To be given
Project outline follow-up issues <b>(if your outline indicates some issues)</b>	To be given	To be given
Discuss any questions or concerns as you write your rough draft <b>(optional)</b>	To be given	To be given
Discuss your project paper draft and how to polish/finalize it <b>(required)</b>	To be given	To be given

## Readings (available from the course Canvas):

Adler & Adler, "The Promise and Pitfalls of Going into the Field"

ASA, 2009, "Idealists vs. Careerists: Graduate School Choices of Sociology Majors." Co-authored by Spalter-Roth and Van Vooren.

ASA, 2013, "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, or No Ties: What Helped Sociology Majors Find Career-Level Jobs?" Co-authored by Spalter-Roth, Roberta, Nicole Van Vooren, Michael Kisielewski, and Mary Senter.

ASA, 2013. "21st Century Careers with an Undergraduate Major in Sociology."

ASA, 2013. "Going to Graduate School: Multiple Pathways for Sociology Majors."

Burawoy, Michael. 2004. "Public Sociologies: Contradictions, Dilemmas, and Possibilities." *Social Forces*, 82 (4): 1603-1618.

Hartmann, Douglas. 2009. "Re-Claiming the Sociological Imagination: A Brief Overview and Guide." Pp. 25-38 in *Bureaucratic Culture and Basic Social Problems: Advancing the Sociological Imagination*, edited by Bernard Phillips. Paradigm Publishing.

Kimmel, Michael. 2008. "Good Sociology Makes Lousy TV." *Contexts*, 7 (2): 62-64.

Mills, C. Wright, 1959. "The Promise" in *Sociological Imagination*.