Course overview

Sociology is a scientific discipline concerned with the study of human society. Sociologists are obsessed with context – the way that our lives are shaped by the social situations that we build and maintain, including our relationships with others, our cultural conceptions, and our social institutions. This course is designed to introduce you to the central theories and concepts of the field and to its various themes and areas. Along the way we study social relationships (how they are formed and maintained, how they shape our sense of self), social institutions (religion, family, our political and legal systems) and social change.

This course fulfills the Council on Liberal Education’s (LE) Social Science core. We will examine how sociologists describe and analyze human behavior and we review key theories and bodies of knowledge in the discipline. We address questions that are central to both social scientific knowledge and current societal debates as we explore the interrelationships among individuals, institutions, social structures, events and ideas.

This course also fulfills the Diversity and Social Justice theme. We study diversity of the United States and the complex ways in which diversity can be both an asset
and a source of social tension. The course promotes understanding of how social differences (such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion and sexual orientation) have shaped social, political and cross-cultural relationships in the United States. We also critically investigate issues of power and privilege in economic, political and other institutions.

Lectures, discussions and course materials

The course includes both lecture and lab sections. Both central parts of the class experience and they contribute in different ways to the grade. We will make both as interactive as possible, and we will expect you to contribute, and we expect that you will come prepared and ready to be engaged.

Put phones and other electronic devices away, unless they are directly necessary for course work. Civility and respect for your fellow classmates is expected. Please also wait until the lecture or discussion is over to pack up your belongings. For our part, we will do what we can to begin and end on time.

There are two required books for this course: *You May Ask Yourself* (Norton 4th edition) by Dalton Conley, and *The Cosmopolitan Canopy* by Elijah Anderson. They should be bundled together at the University Bookstores, or you can buy them separately if you can find a better deal.

Handouts, supplemental readings, links and lecture outlines will be available on our class website on the University’s “Moodle” system. Login through your “myU” portal or directly at moodle.umn.edu. We also encourage you to make use of our office hours. Your lab TA should be the first point of contact for most things, but all of us have open hours for your use during the semester. Office locations and office hours are listed above.

Grading policies

This is an introductory class, but there is work involved. As a reminder, the expectation at the U is for 3 hours of work per week per credit for an average student to earn an average grade. For a 4 credit class, that means roughly 8 hours of work outside of class time each week. Please budget enough time each week for both lecture and lab preparation.

Final grades will be assigned by the following scheme, based on course scores: A (93-100%), A- (90-92.9%), B+ (87-89.9%), B (83-86.9%), B- (80-82.9%), C+ (77-79.9%), C (73-76.9%), C- (70-72.9%), D+ (67-69.9%), D (63-66.9%), F (0-62.9%). There are three major components of the course grade:
• Three tests (in class) through the semester will cover reading and lecture material for each segment of the course. Test scores will be reported as percentages; together the three test scores will be weighted as 40% of the course grade.

• Labs will involve four short projects which get you to collect and analyze sociological data. These do not involve a lot of writing but will require time and care to complete; together these will be 30% of course grade.

• Lecture attendance and participation, which involves showing up (1 point) and engaging in class exercises and quiz questions to assess learning that week (usually 4-5 points). Overall points will be added up to award final percentage score (15% of final grade).

• Lab attendance and participation will be scored in much the same way, but will involve significantly more interactive discussion and group work (15% of grade).

Please note that lab assignments may be turned in early, but due to our own extremely busy schedules we cannot accommodate special requests for turning in work late. If you have University related sports schedules, military obligations or the like that will require your absence on critical dates, please let us know as early as possible. Course grades of “incomplete” will only be awarded in truly extraordinary circumstances.

Finally, please note that we take academic integrity very seriously. We are obliged to report all cases of scholastic misconduct (see definitions and discussion below). Cheating or plagiarism in any portion of the course will be grounds for a failing grade in the entire course. If you have any doubts about where we draw the line between, say, collaborative work and cheating, please ask.
Lecture schedule

September 7  Welcome to Sociology
We introduce the course, the syllabus, and our goals for the semester. We explore the idea that sociology is best understood as a perspective rather than a specific topical area, and we think about what that perspective means for how sociologists approach the world.

• Conley, Chapter 1 (emphasis on pp. 3-15, 33-39) and paradox wwwpag.es/px1.
• “Why go to college?” exercise (in class).

September 14  Sociological Thinking: Groups, Culture
Culture, group and social structure are the central concept sociologists use to understand the world. Culture and social structure are ways to talk about the patterning of social life and social groups, but they push us toward different perspectives and different modes of explanation.

• Conley, Chapter 3 (emphasis pp. 73-90).
• Conley, Chapter 5 (emphasis pp. 149-161, 177-181).
• Wallace, “Ticket to the Fair” (on Moodle).

September 21  Social Theory and Social Research
Sociology is a science, so it matters a great deal how we observe the world we are studying. And social science data play a large role in debates over policy and morality, so it’s important to understand social research even if you don’t plan to do it for a living.

• Conley, Chapter 2 and paradox wwwpag.es/px2.

September 28  Creating Social Selves
The most important aspects of social life are those we learn without anyone teaching us. This week we think about the micro-foundations of social order: how we are “socialized” to the expectations of our societies, how we learn to act through social exchanges, and how we learn roles.

• Conley, Chapter 4 and paradox wwwpag.es/px4.
October 5  Social Networks
Social networks are the basic patterns of relations that mediate between micro-level relations and macro-level order. The relations that we have with each other matter for us, but so do the ways that those people we know, like, love, or hate relate to others we may never personally meet.

- Conley, Chapter 5 (emphasis pp. 161-177) and paradox wwwpag.es/px5.
- Test 1 today.

October 12  Stratification 1: Fairness and Social Mobility
Stratification is the first and most obvious case of social division and inequality. It is also a good place to start with understanding the concept of a “social institution” – a complex social arrangement that performs a social function and reproduces itself over time. While stratification may be inevitable and even at some level desirable, it does not follow that any given stratification system is somehow “natural.”

- Conley, Chapter 7 and paradox wwwpag.es/px7.

October 19  Stratification 2: Class, Education, Aspirations
Education is a key element in stratification – it can be a route to greater mobility, but it can also help to cement us in place. Why is it that social class seems to reproduce itself without anyone really wanting it to?

- Conley, Chapter 13 and wwwpag.es/px13.

October 26  Deviance and Social Control
“Deviance” refers to going against social norms and values. But all deviance also reveals its opposite, mechanisms of social control. Crime and punishment are ways to engage the study of deviance and social control, and are major issues of public debate. But there are more extreme examples too.

- Conley, Chapter 6 and wwwpag.es/px6.

November 2  Race and Ethnicity
The concept of racial difference has been with us a long time, but it isn’t as obvious as it seems. We explore how to define the concepts, and how structural and cultural factors play into race relations.

- Conley, Chapter 9 and wwwpag.es/px9.
- Anderson, Cosmopolitan Canopy Chapt 1-4.
November 9  Sex, Gender, Sexuality
As with race, the distinctions that seem natural are often much more complex when
you take a close look. We think about some factors that matter for how sex and gender
are understood, and how social relations across gender lines might be organized, and
why numbers matter for interactions.
   • Conley, Chapter 8 and wwnpag.es/px8.
   • Anderson, Chapters 5–9.
   • Test 2 today.

November 16  Family and Religion
Family and religion are two key institutions in social life which people like to think
of as eternal and unchanging. Strangely, everyone also likes to talk as if they are in
great peril. But are they? Thinking about them from a sociological perspective, it’s
clear that change is really the only constant.
   • Conley, Chapters 12 & 16 and paradox wwnpag.es/px16.

November 23  Thanksgiving!
No class and no labs this week.

Politics and Social Movements

November 30  Power, Authority, States
We begin this last module by exploring the concept of “authority” and its relation to
power and the state. We look at the difference between types of authority on which
political power may rest, and we examine what happens when states no longer hold
legitimate power.
   • Conley, Chapter 15 and paradox wwnpag.es/px15.

December 7  Collective Action and Social Movements
How does social life change? Often, it is not because those in power want it to, but
because lots of other people force it to. Collective action refers to people coming
together to make change happen. Sometimes, social movements emerge – ongoing
and organized efforts to change a system.
   • Conley, Chapter 18 (emphasis pp. 691–717).
   • Episode of Eyes on the Prize, in class.
December 14  Identity, Groups, and Social Change
Final thoughts on social change, uncertainty and the thrills and dangers of living in the modern era.

• Conley, Chapter 18 (emphasis pp. 717-726) and paradox wwwwpag.es/px18.

• Test 3 today!
# Lab schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Outline</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 (Sept. 7)</td>
<td>Introductions; outline of lab meetings; discussion of projects and deadlines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 (Sept. 14)</td>
<td>Theorizing and concepts worksheet in lab.</td>
<td>Read “Ticket to the Fair” (on Moodle).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3 (Sept. 21)</td>
<td>Review; discussion of projects packet and next week assignment, “breeching.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4 (Sept. 28)</td>
<td>Review; discussion of breeching assignment. Discuss and refine networks project.</td>
<td>Breeching experiment and worksheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7 (Oct. 19)</td>
<td>Review; discussion and sharing of interview data and prep for interview report.</td>
<td>Interview worksheet and sound file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8 (Oct. 26)</td>
<td>Review; discussion of interview report and prep for observation project.</td>
<td>Interview project report due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9 (Nov. 2)</td>
<td>Review; discuss article and photos.</td>
<td>Read “The Humiliating Practice of Sex Testing Female Athletes” (on Moodle), post photo of gendered inequality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 10 (Nov. 9)</strong></td>
<td>Discussion of <em>Cosmopolitan Canopy</em>; decide on observation locations; finalize data collection plans</td>
<td>Anderson, ch 1–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 11 (Nov. 16)</strong></td>
<td>Discussion of <em>Cosmopolitan Canopy</em>; discussion of field work and field notes.</td>
<td>Anderson, ch 5–9; field-notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 12 (Nov. 30)</strong></td>
<td>Review; wrap-up of observation project and prep for survey project</td>
<td>Observation project report due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 13 (Dec. 7)</strong></td>
<td>Review; discussion of survey findings</td>
<td>Politics survey worksheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 14 (Dec. 14)</strong></td>
<td>Review; wrap up of course; discussion of survey reports and film.</td>
<td>Survey project report due.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>