Sociology
Social Sciences Division

Faculty

Kelly S. Besecke
Assistant Professor
Naadiya Hasan
Visiting Instructor
Allison L. Hurst
Visiting Instructor of Sociology and Legal Studies
Jennifer L. Johnson
Assistant Professor
Marla H. Kohlman
Associate Professor (on leave)
John J. Macionis
Professor and Prentice Hall Distinguished Scholar
George E. McCarthy
Professor (on leave)
Howard L. Sacks
Senior Advisor to the President; Professor
Ric S. Sheffield
Associate Provost; Associate Professor of Sociology and Legal Studies
Anna Sun
Visiting Instructor
Jan E. Thomas
Chair, Associate Professor

Sociology involves the systematic examination of human social activity, from everyday face-to-face encounters to the movements of civilizations throughout history. Unlike disciplines that focus on a single aspect of society, sociology stresses the complex relationships governing all dimensions of social life, including the economy, state, family, religion, science, social inequality, culture, and consciousness. Its inquiry is guided by several theoretical traditions and grounded in the empirical observation of social reality.

The discipline emerged in the nineteenth century as a critical analysis of modern, western society; yet it is informed by philosophers and theorists from earlier centuries. Today, sociologists study ways in which the modern world continues to change, often by making comparisons with societies at other times and in other places. Sociology majors go on to take active roles in corporate boardrooms, law offices, government departments, social service agencies, classrooms, and policy think tanks. In a broader sense, everyone can benefit from sociology’s unique understanding of our common humanity and the diversity of social life.

Beginning Studies in Sociology

Students may begin their study of sociology in any of five introductory foundation courses. Each course combines lecture and discussion and has an enrollment limit of twenty-five students. All of these courses apply the theory and methods of sociology to achieve an understanding of the character of life in modern societies, especially our own. The courses are distinguished by their particular thematic focus and course materials. Look for the ♦ symbol, which designates those courses particularly appropriate for first-year students or upper-class students new to the sociology curriculum.

The Sociology Curriculum

The sociology curriculum places emphasis on four substantive areas of sociological investigation: Institutions and Change studies the forms and dynamics of institutional life, with emphasis on structural, historical, and comparative perspectives. Culture and Identity explores the construction and transformation of cultural and symbolic forms and the development of self within the social process. Social Theory examines the historical development of the discipline, the works of major contributors, and the particular schools of sociological thought. Research Methods investigates the assumptions and tools of sociological research as well as the connection between research and theory in sociological study.

The Sociology Major

Students majoring in sociology must complete a minimum of 5 units of work in the discipline which meet the following requirements:

Introductory foundation course. One course (.5 unit) is required: SOCY 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, or 115. Only one introductory foundation course may be counted toward completion of the major. To take a second introductory course requires permission of the instructor.

Area courses. Eight courses (4 units) are required. At least one course (.5 unit) must be taken in each of the four areas of the sociology curriculum (institutions and change, culture and identity, social theory, research methods) and at least two courses (1 unit) must be taken in three of these areas.

Core courses. Three of the four core courses are required: SOCY 271, 361, 362, and 372. These courses count toward completion of area requirements. Students planning to attend graduate school in sociology or related fields are strongly encouraged to take all four core courses.
Senior Seminar. SOCY 489 (.5 unit) is required and taken in the fall of the senior year.

With departmental approval, students who do not receive sociology credit from off-campus study may count up to 1 unit of work in other disciplines toward the major requirements.

**The Senior Exercise**

The Senior Exercise is designed to provide majors with an opportunity to (1) undertake original scholarship on topics of their own choosing, (2) present the results of this scholarship to students and faculty members in a professional setting, and (3) produce high-quality papers through a process of discussion and rewriting.

Each student submits a paper proposal in September, to which faculty members participating in the exercise respond in writing. The student then prepares the paper in consultation with faculty members. Faculty members provide written comments on the paper to each student. All Senior Exercise participants will present their research and answer questions from peers and faculty. Following these sessions, each student revises the paper in light of faculty and student comments. The final paper is submitted in January.

Faculty members evaluate student work with regard to the quality of the final paper, the clarity and effectiveness of the oral presentation, and the extent and quality of student participation in discussion. Written notification of the results of the evaluation is provided within a month; included is notice of whether or not the student has passed and earned distinction. Students who fail the Senior Exercise are required to take a written or oral comprehensive examination, at the option of the faculty, covering material presented in the major program.

**Honors**

The honors program is designed to facilitate significant independent research by our department’s finest students. Typically, the student will propose a topic for research in consultation with a member of the faculty who agrees to serve as the project advisor. The department will then approve (or decline to approve) the honors research on the basis of the merit of the proposal itself as well as the student’s past classroom performance, motivation to excellence, and demonstration of the organizational skills required for successful completion. In consultation with the project advisor, the student will then build an honors committee consisting of two members of the sociology faculty (including the advisor), one member from another department on campus, and one member from another institution of higher education (chosen by the advisor). The student will then spend the senior year conducting the research and writing an honors thesis. The thesis is finally defended orally before the honors committee, the members of which then determine whether to award no honors, honors, high honors, or highest honors.

Students interested in reading for honors should meet with a faculty member no later than January of the junior year to discuss procedures and develop a proposal. Students approved for participation in the honors program will enroll in two semesters of independent study (SOCY 497, 498) in their senior year.

**Year Course**

**Courses on Research Methods**

**Fieldwork: Rural Life**

SOCY 477Y-478Y (1 unit) Sacks

This course provides an introduction to fieldwork techniques and to the ethical and political issues raised by our purposeful involvement in other people’s lives. Students will spend considerable time conducting original field research throughout Knox County, with the results to be presented publicly. Our research will generally consider the character of rural society, with particular focus on the local food system. Students will explore various components of the food system—farms, dairies, meat processors, auctions—and produce a series of documentary films for presentation to the College and surrounding communities. The results of this research contribute to a major effort to build a sustainable market for food produced in Knox County. This course satisfies the senior seminar requirement in American studies. Prerequisites: permission of instructor.

**First-Semester Courses**

**Introductory Foundation Courses**

**Human Society: An Introduction to Sociology**

- SOCY 110 (.5 unit) MacCormack

This introductory course in sociology explores what is surely the most fascinating of this planet’s life forms, Homo sapiens. Humans stand out in this world as thinking creatures who are, biologically speaking, unfinished at birth. Lacking a genetically fixed “nature,” humans go about completing themselves as they construct societies. Understanding how we
Sociology is based upon the notion that a society is more than just a collection of individuals, just as a song is more than just a collection of notes. The relationships among a society's individuals form the structure of the society; and that structure then channels individual thoughts and actions into particular patterns. A group of people—a society—has its own patterns and its own qualities and its own movement, which are different from the patterns and qualities and movements of the individuals within that society.

In this course, we will examine the ways that patterns of American social life influence, and are influenced by, individual lives. For example: we will ask how individuals' sense of self is influenced by societal expectations. We will ask how our employment systems challenge individuals' ability to maintain a sense of authenticity in their emotional lives. We will ask how race and class structure individuals' economic opportunities. We will ask how systems that we design to improve human life can end up constraining individuals' freedom and humanity in unanticipated ways. You will conduct original research investigating how people's opinions on issues of the day are informed by networks of social symbols. Ultimately, you will take away a taste of what sociology, the study of social groups and their actions, is about.

Social Issues and Cultural Intersections
SOCY 113 (.5 unit)
Haasen

This introductory course will critically examine contemporary social conditions in the United States. Sociological perspectives will be used to investigate the cultural and structural foundations of our society. The social consequences of systems of race, class, and gender will be addressed with reference to major social institutions such as the family, education, and the work force. Students will be expected to exercise their sociological imaginations, develop their critical thinking skills, and demonstrate their ability to actively interpret a variety of information sources. Through class discussion and writing assignments, this course will emphasize the practical uses of sociology in the everyday navigation of our social world, and the sociological tools that can be used to understand the social world around us.

Society in Comparative Perspective
SOCY 115 (.5 unit)
Johnson

From our vantage point in the twenty-first century, we perceive that the nature and fate of American society is increasingly connected to the nature and fate of society in other parts of the world. But what is “society” and how does it change over time? How, exactly, does society shape the human experience and human behavior in the United States and elsewhere? And how can we understand the ties that bind society “here” to society “there”? Sociology crystallized in the nineteenth century to address big questions like these in light of the profound uncertainty and human suffering that accompanied the rise of industrial capitalism, rapid urbanization, and the consolidation of the centralized bureaucratic state.

This course introduces students to the discipline by revisiting the work of early sociologists, then using the analytical tools they developed to examine concrete cases of social change and globalization.

Course on Institutions and Change

SOCY 220 (.5 unit)
Macionis

Why do some issues become “social problems” while others do not? For example, each year auto accidents claim the lives of three times as many people as violent crime, yet it is crime rather than cars or driving that we see as a “problem.” The course begins by explaining how problems emerge as a result of claims-making within the political arena by social movements or interested publics. We then consider what kinds of issues are defined as problems by political conservatives, liberals, and radicals, and what policies are viewed as appropriate responses or solutions. These political dynamics will be illustrated with discussion of a number of issues, including inequality of income and wealth, racial and gender inequality, crime, abortion, the aging of the U.S. population, and the state of the physical environment. The course provides students with an opportunity to prepare an in-depth political analysis of one issue of choice. Prerequisite: introductory foundation course or permission of instructor.

Religion in Modern Society
SOCY 221 (.5 unit)
Besecke

In this course we will examine religion as a phenomenon in modern society, with particular attention to the American scene. Why does religion exist? What is the nature of religious experience? How do we become religious? Under what conditions does personal religious experience become formalized? What is the character of institutionalized religion in contem-
Sociology of Race and Ethnicity

Courses on Culture and Identity

Class Studies

Sociology of Food

Health and Illness

Courses in Social Theory

Special Topic in Sociology

Sociology of Race and Ethnicity

Special Topic in Research Methods

French Social Theory

This course offers a systematic account of French social theory since the end of the nineteenth century, when sociology became an institutionalized academic discipline in France. We analyze the key theo-
sociological texts that have influenced sociologists in France and beyond, examine the methodological debates that have engaged generations of theorists, and discuss several empirical studies that shed light on the ways social theories are connected to empirical inquiry. The course follows the historical trajectory from positivism to anthropological theory during the turn of the twentieth century, and from structuralism to post-structuralism in the post-war era. We focus on the key ideas and concepts in classical theorists such as Mauss and Durkheim, and contemporary theorists such as Lévi-Strauss, Sartre, De Beauvoir, Althusser, Foucault, Kristeva, Bourdieu, and Latour.

This course helps students learn how to read complex theoretical texts, as well as how to think theoretically and critically. It is of value to both sociology majors who are interested in classical and contemporary theory and students who are interested in French social thought. Prerequisite: at least one sociology course or permission of instructor.

**Classical Social Theory**

**SOCY 361 (.5 unit)**

Sun

This course examines the development of classical social theory in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the first part, we will stress the philosophical and intellectual foundations of classical theory. We will examine how social theory integrated modern philosophy, political science (law), and historical political economy in the formation of a new discipline. Distinguishing itself from the other social sciences, classical sociology, for the most part, rejected the Enlightenment view of positivism and natural science as the foundation for social science as it turned instead to German idealism and existentialism for guidance. The second part of the course will examine the classical analysis of the historical origins of Western society in the structures and culture of alienation (Marx), rationalization (Weber), and anomie and division of labor (Durkheim).

Of special interest will be the analysis of the early humanistic works of Marx, his ethical and political writings, and his later critique of political economy; Weber’s historical sociology and theory of Western and non-Western religions and their relation to the development of capitalism; and, finally, the foundations of “positivist” social science in Durkheim’s work on suicide and law, and his later “idealist” sociology in his theory of primitive classifications, religion, and sociology of knowledge. At the methodological level, we will study the three different views of classical “science”: critical science and dialectical method (Marx), interpretive science and historical method of understanding and value relevance (Weber), and positivistic science and method of naturalism and realism (Durkheim). Prerequisite: permission of instructor.

**Courses on Research Methods**

**Qualitative Research Methods**

**SOCY 373 (.5 unit)**

Johnson

This course focuses on learning to use qualitative methods to answer questions about social life. We will discuss individual and group interviews, observational techniques, and content analysis of documents and visual images. Students will practice using these techniques by carrying out a semester-long research project using these methods. We will also discuss the “nuts and bolts” of designing a research project, writing research proposals, collecting data, analyzing data, and writing up qualitative research. Finally, we will contextualize this practical instruction with discussions of research ethics, issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research, the relationship between qualitative methods and theory-building, and the place of qualitative methods in the discipline of sociology. Enrollment limited to fifteen.

**Seminars and Individual Study**

**Individual Study**

**SOCY 293 (.5 unit)**

Staff

This course is for students who wish to do advanced work beyond regular courses or to study topics not included in course offerings. Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

**Individual Study: Intermediate**

**SOCY 393 (.5 unit)**

Staff

This course is for students who wish to do advanced work beyond regular courses or to study topics not included in course offerings. Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

**Senior Seminar**

**SOCY 489 (.5 unit)**

Thomas

This advanced seminar, required of all senior majors, explores fundamental issues regarding the process of sociological inquiry and the promise of the discipline. Faculty forums and student-directed discussions will consider the boundaries and purposes of sociology, the relationship between theory and research, sociological writing, and the planning and execution of scholarly research. Students will apply their understanding of these issues through individual projects on subjects of their own choosing, presenting their work in progress for critical discussion. Prerequisite: This course is limited to senior sociology majors.

**Individual Study: Advanced**

**SOCY 493 (.5 unit)**

Staff

This course is for students who wish to do advanced work beyond regular courses or to study topics not included in course offerings. Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

**Senior Honors**

**SOCY 497 (.5 unit)**

Staff

This course is for students pursuing departmental honors. Prerequisites:
permission of instructor and department chair.

**Second-Semester Courses**

**Introductory Foundation Courses**

**Social Issues and Cultural Intersections**

◆ SOCY 113 (.5 unit)
  Hasan

See first-semester course description.

**Institutions and Inequalities**

◆ SOCY 114 (.5 unit)
  Thomas

This introductory course will focus on an analysis of social structure and its impact on the experiences of individuals. We will look at the ways in which social structures construct and constrain reality for individuals and how society and social institutions shape individual values, attitudes, and behaviors. The course will examine sociological concepts through an analysis of culture, social inequality, social institutions, and social change. The first portion of the class will focus on understanding culture and how we come to be social beings. We will then move on to an examination of social stratification and inequalities, paying particular attention to the impact of race, class, and gender on the lives of individuals in American society. We will look at recent changes in the institutions of economics, politics, and education and the impact these changes have had on individuals and society. We will end the semester by looking at social change within one institution. By the end of the course, you should understand common sociological concepts and perspectives and be able to consider aspects of the social world through the sociological lens.

**Society in Comparative Perspective**

SOCY 115 (.5 unit)
  Johnson

See first-semester course description.

**Courses on Culture and Identity**

**Cultural Sociology: American Culture**

SOCY 245 (.5 unit)
  Bescoke

This course examines the influence of shared meanings and practices on a variety of dimensions of contemporary American social life, including race, class, religion, political participation, close relationships, economics, and social commitment. We will consider the following questions: What is culture? How does culture operate in society? How does culture interact with social institutions and with individuals? How do we study culture sociologically? Fundamentally, cultural sociology is a way of seeing society; the goal of the course is for you to learn to see the structured meanings and practices that order all of our lives, and the possibilities the culture provides for us to influence our society’s future course. Our emphasis is distinctly on the contemporary American cultural mainstream. We will discuss in class the question of whether or not such a “mainstream” exists and if so, how we might understand it. Our starting assumption is that it is essential for Americans to understand the themes of their own culture if we are to be responsible global citizens. Prerequisites: foundation course or permission of instructor.

**Meaning in Modern Society**

SOCY 430 (.5 unit)
  Bescoke

Sociologists consider modern societies to be faced with a “crisis of meaning.” Meanwhile, throughout American society, people seem to be responding to this crisis, using words like “spirituality” and “soul” to talk about a dimension of life that they feel is neglected. This dimension of life has something to do with religion, and yet it is different from what many people think of when they think about religiosity. Often, when people talk about spirituality, they are describing an interest in meaningfulness and a deeper experience of life. Americans’ interest in spirituality can be studied sociologically, and many of our greatest classical and contemporary sociologists have addressed the topic of ultimate meanings. This course is an introduction to the sociological conversation about contemporary spirituality and the search for ultimate meanings in modern society. We will consider the following questions: (1) What is meaning, and what makes a society comparatively meaningful or meaningless? (2) What is it about modern society that makes meaning a problem, and what resources does modern society offer for renewed meaningfulness? (3) What are modern people doing to bring a sense of meaningfulness into life, and how can we understand their efforts sociologically; that is, how do contemporary spiritualities engage with different aspects of modern American society?
Prerequisite: previous coursework in sociology or religious studies, or permission of the instructor. Limited to fifteen students.

Courses on Social Theory

Contemporary Social Theory
SOCY 362 (.5 unit)
Besche

In this core course we will investigate the twentieth century’s major theories concerning the nature of society and the human social process. Most of these sociological theories are American in origin, but some developments in Western European thought will also be included. Specific theories to be discussed include (1) functionalism, (2) symbolic interactionism, (3) sociology of knowledge, (4) critical theory, and (5) intersection theory. The consideration of the intellectual and social contexts in which these theoretical traditions have arisen will be central to our analysis throughout. This course will be of value to students interested in developing a systematic approach to understanding society and should be especially relevant to those concentrating in the social sciences. Prerequisites: introductory foundation course and one additional sociology course or permission of instructor.

Courses on Research Methods

Research Practicum: Doing Social Research
QR SOCY 372 (.5 unit)
Thomas

Ever wonder how sociologists gather the information on which they base their claims? Curious about all those charts and graphs in newspapers and magazines? Thinking about a career in marketing or survey research? This course is designed for students who want to “get their hands dirty” and actively participate in doing and understanding social research.

Students in the course will engage in the design, implementation, and analysis of a sociological research project. Participants will: pose and investigate a research question, gather and analyze data, and prepare their findings for presentation. Students will become acquainted with SPSS for data analysis and learn to construct and interpret tables and other graphical displays. These skills will help prepare them for graduate school, for the job market, and for being more informed consumers of social research. Prerequisites: foundation course and one additional sociology course. SOCY 271 highly recommended.

Special Topic in Research Methods
SOCY 392 (.5 unit)
Staff

This course is for advanced students. Consult the department for further description.

Seminars and Individual Study

Individual Study
SOCY 294 (.5 unit)
Staff

This course is for students who wish to do advanced work beyond regular courses or to study topics not included in course offerings. Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

Individual Study: Intermediate
SOCY 394 (.5 unit)
Staff

This course is for students who wish to do advanced work beyond regular courses or to study topics not included in course offerings. Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

Women of Color in the United States
SOCY 492.01 (.5 unit)
Hasan

This upper-level seminar will focus on the experiences of women of color in the United States as a point of insight into the intersections between the social systems of race and gender. Particular attention will be paid to the impact of structural context and individual agency on the shaping of gendered racial identities. We will also address some of the issues of power, privilege, inequality, and exclusion that can arise out of feminist and anti-racist activism. Active class participation is required, and students will be expected to lead discussions interrogating the cultural and structural implications of American constructions of gender and race on life chances and choices within the United States. Note: This course, also listed as AAAS 490, will serve as the senior seminar for the African and African-American Studies Concentration for 2006-07. Prerequisite: foundation course in sociology and one additional course in sociology, or permission of the instructor. Limited to fourteen students.

Vigilantism and the Law
SOCY 492.02 (.5 unit)
Johnson

Why, and under what historical conditions, have particular groups of American citizens mobilized to take the law into their own hands? From the posses of the Wild West in the nineteenth century to Klan lynchings in the twentieth century, to the emergence of contemporary right-wing patriot and militia movements, American history is replete with instances of extralegal or “self-help” justice administration. This seminar surveys the history of vigilantism in the United States against the backdrop of national state consolidation and the evolution of this country’s criminal justice system. Through analysis of primary texts and monographs covering a broad range of vigilante movements, it explores how the line between public and private administration of penal law has shifted over time and across geographical regions. Topics and cases include anti-horse-thief societies in colonial New England, feuding and local state formation in Appalachia, the concept of popular sovereignty and the peoples courts of Montana, contemporary debates on gun control and the constitutional right to bear arms, and neo-hate crime and movements. Enrollment limited to fifteen.
**Individual Study: Advanced**

**SOCY 494 (0.5 unit)**

Staff

This course is for students who wish to do advanced work beyond regular courses or to study topics not included in course offerings. Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

**Senior Honors**

**SOCY 498 (0.5 unit)**

Staff

This course is for students pursuing departmental honors. Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

### The following courses may be offered in 2007-08:

- **SOCY 110** Human Society
- **SOCY 111** Identity in American Society
- **SOCY 112** Dreamers and Dissenters
- **SOCY 113** Social Issues and Intersections
- **SOCY 114** Institutions and Inequalities
- **SOCY 220** Social Problems and Policies
- **SOCY 224** Health and Illness
- **SOCY 232** Sexual Harassment: Legal Questions and Normative Expectations
- **SOCY 239** Social Movements and Social Change
- **SOCY 271** Logic and Methods of Social Research
- **SOCY 362** Contemporary Social Theory
- **SOCY 372** Research Practicum: Doing Social Research
- **SOCY 461** Modern German Social Theory
- **SOCY 463** Intersection Theory
- **SOCY 477, 478** Fieldwork: Rural Life
- **SOCY 489** Senior Seminar
- **SOCY 492** Women, Health, and Medicine