

New Jersey Institute of Technology
Introduction to Sociology (Honors)
STS 221-H02
Spring 2024

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Reibstein
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Contact: sjr25@njit.edu
Office Hours: Fridays 2:30 – 3:30 PM

Course Meeting Time and Location:
Tuesdays and Fridays 4:00 – 5:20 PM
Central King Building 212

Course Website: <https://njit.instructure.com/courses/33298>

Course Description

This course introduces sociology by surveying major theories, topics, scholars, and approaches, while encouraging students to apply a sociological way of thinking to the world around them. The first half of the class presents foundational tools for analyzing social life – the sociological imagination, research methods, groups, interaction, and culture – as well as introducing the core concepts of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. The second half continues with other key social institutions and processes: class and inequality, education, families, criminality, politics, and the environment. Across sections, there is a focus on the processes that create and sustain inequalities and the ways they can be challenged.

Course Objectives:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Explain core sociological perspectives
- Describe how sociologists conduct research
- Identify relationships between the individual and society
- Demonstrate knowledge of key social institutions and processes
- Think through current events from a sociological point of view

Prerequisites: None

Course Requirements and Grading

The course includes a few in- and out- of class components to facilitate student learning. All assignments and any changes to the schedule will be posted on Canvas. Following is a breakdown of how you will be assessed.

1. **Class Attendance (10%):** Students are expected to attend each class session and a record will be kept via a sign-in sheet. Late arrival of more than thirty minutes without prior

notification will be treated as an absence. Each student will be granted two “free absences” during the semester and every subsequent unexcused absence will result in a one-point reduction in the attendance portion of your final grade (i.e., 3 absences = 9/10, 4 absences = 8/10, 5 absences = 7/10, etc.). Missing class for sickness, commitments to a university sports team or university-sponsored travel, or for another valid reason, *if communicated to me ahead of time*, will not factor into your absence count.

2. **Class Participation (10%):** Students are encouraged to engage actively in class. This involves discussions of the readings and lecture materials, as well as working in small groups on activities that may involve research, data analysis, and presenting to the class.
3. **Weekly Take-Home Quizzes (15%):** A short multiple-choice quiz will be posted on Canvas each Friday, which must be completed prior to class time on Tuesday (starting in week 2). The quiz will assess your comprehension of the assigned textbook chapter.
4. **Group Project (15%):** The course has one graded group project. In groups of 2-3 students, you will learn about and present on a sociological research study corresponding with one of the thematic sections of the class. We will use the magazine, *Contexts*, which reports on cutting-edge social research. Students will sign up for articles in weeks 2 and 3 and presentations will begin in week 4 and continue throughout the semester.
5. **Midterm Exam (25%):** The midterm exam will be a combination of multiple-choice and short answer questions covering material from the first seven weeks of the course. You will be asked to recall key terms and to apply concepts analytically and comparatively. The exam will take place in class on March 1.
6. **Final Exam (25%):** The final exam will have the same format as the midterm and will only cover material presented after the midterm. The exam will take place at the time and place determined by the university final exam schedule, between May 3 and May 9.

Final Grading Rubric

90–100 = A
87–89 = B+
80–86 = B
77–79 = C+
70–76 = C
60–69 = D
< 60 = F

Texts

A Sociology Experiment: Spring 2023. Shamus Khan, Patrick Sharkey, and Gwen Sharp.
<https://sociologyexperiment.com/>

Chapters from *A Sociology Experiment*, a modular online textbook, are the primary text for this course. The text is sold by the chapter at the price of \$1 per chapter, or, as a complete set for the price of \$14. You will only need to read the 12 chapters enumerated in the reading schedule below, so it is your choice whether to get them one by one or spend \$2 extra for the convenience of getting all in one go. Either way, you can access the text at the link above, and you will be able to read it via the *Bookshop* web interface or app.

In addition to the textbook chapters, there will be a shorter assigned reading each week (usually a newspaper or magazine piece). These are listed below for the first half of the course and will be added for the second half. PDFs of the readings will be available on Canvas.

Schedule and Readings

Week 1: Introduction

January 16, January 19

- A Sociology Experiment (Introduction Chapter)
- Hurd Anyaso, Hilary. (8/26/15). "Rewriting the History of American Sociology." Northwestern Now. <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2015/08/du-bois-founder-modern-sociology-alton-morris/>

Week 2: Research Methods

January 23, January 26

- Research Methods (A Sociology Experiment)
- Michael Luca. (8/29/14). "Were OkCupid's and Facebook's Experiments Unethical?" Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2014/07/were-okcupids-and-facebooks-experiments-unethical>

Week 3: Social Structure and the Individual

January 30, February 2

- Social Structure and the Individual (A Sociology Experiment)
- Kevin Granville and Ashley Gilbertson. (9/15/17). "In Amish Country, the Future Is Calling." The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/business/amish-technology.html?_r=0

Week 4: Culture

February 6, February 9

- Culture (A Sociology Experiment)
- Helier Cheung. (4/12/19). "Cultural Appropriation: Why is Food Such a Sensitive Subject?" BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-47892747>

Week 5: Race and Ethnicity

February 13, February 16

- Race and Ethnicity (A Sociology Experiment)
- Linda Villarosa. (4/29/20). “‘A Terrible Price’: The Deadly Racial Disparities of Covid-19 in America.” The New York Times Magazine.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/29/magazine/racial-disparities-covid-19.html>

Week 6: Gender and Sexuality

February 20, February 23

- Gender and Sexuality (A Sociology Experiment)
- Masha Gessen. (1/13/21). “We Need to Change the Terms of the Debate on Trans Kids.” The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/we-need-to-change-the-terms-of-the-debate-on-trans-kids>

Week 7: Midterm

February 27 (review), March 1 (exam)

- No reading

Week 8: Social Class, Inequality, and Poverty

March 5, March 8:

- Social Class, Inequality, and Poverty (A Sociology Experiment)

Spring Break**Week 9: Sociology of Education**

March 19, March 22

- Sociology of Education (A Sociology Experiment)

Week 10: Sociology of Families

March 26, April 2 [No class March 29!]

- Sociology of Families (A Sociology Experiment)

Week 11: Deviance, Crime, and Violence

April 5, April 9

- Deviance, Crime, and Violence (A Sociology Experiment)

Week 12: Political Sociology

April 12, April 16

- Political Sociology (A Sociology Experiment)

Week 13: Environmental Sociology

April 19, April 23

- Environmental Sociology (A Sociology Experiment)

Week 14: TBD, final review

April 26, April 30

Policies

University Policy on Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

Technology

You are required to bring a laptop or tablet with you to Friday class sessions. There is no makeup credit if you do not bring such a device and are unable as a result to complete course activities that day.

Accessibility

This class is intended to be fully available to students regardless of health or disability status (whether mental or physical). If you need reasonable accommodations to complete the course because of a disability, you can reach out to the course instructor or to the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (<https://www.njit.edu/accessibility>).

Incompletes

A grade of incomplete is only assigned in the face of extremely extenuating circumstances that are pre-confirmed by the Dean of Students. Students facing such a situation are also encouraged to bring the matter to my attention at the earliest possible opportunity.