

New Jersey Institute of Technology

STS 221-002: Introduction to Sociology

Spring 2025

Instructor: Lauren Manley, MSW, MS

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Office Hours: Tuesdays from 12-1 pm at Cullimore 315; if you are not available during this time, please email me to set up a Zoom meeting.

Course Meeting Time and Location:

Tuesdays/Fridays from 1:00-2:20 PM at KUPF 203

Course Description:

This course introduces sociology through familiarization with major sociological theories, topics, and approaches, while encouraging students to apply a sociological way of thinking to the world around them. Across all class sections, there is a focus on power, the processes that create and sustain inequalities, and the ways inequalities can be challenged.

Course Objectives:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Explain major sociological theories, topics, and approaches
- Identify relationships between the individual and society
- Understand and examine current events and social issues from a sociological perspective

Prerequisites: None

Course Grading: This course includes both in- and out- of class components to facilitate learning. All assignments and any changes to the schedule will be posted on Canvas. The following is a breakdown of how you will be assessed.

- Class Attendance (5% of course grade):** Students are expected to attend each class session and a record will be kept via a sign-in sheet. Late arrival of more than 15 minutes without prior notification may be counted as an absence, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Students may have two unexcused absences without it impacting their course grade. Starting with the third unexcused absence, every unexcused absence past that 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. If you forget to sign-in to a particular class period, you will be counted as absent for that day.
- Class Participation (5% of course grade):** Our class time is the opportunity to actively engage with the material we are exploring; thus, participation during class is crucial because it is an important avenue for learning. I encourage you to be active in every class session through discussion, group activities, and asking questions. However, I understand that we all have different levels of comfort regarding speaking in class. Participation will thus be counted as speaking to the whole group, in smaller groups, and completing in-class activities. If you are fully engaged in at least two of those three activities, you will earn full points. Your class participation grade will not be a surprise to you; if I have concerns about your participation, I will reach out to you. If you have concerns about class participation, please contact me.
- Weekly Quizzes (10 quizzes, worth a total of 20% of course grade):** A short weekly quiz will be available on Canvas on select weeks (indicated in the course schedule below). These quizzes will open on Friday at noon and close on the following Tuesday at noon; the quizzes must be taken during this time frame. If you cannot access the quiz during this time frame for a valid reason, please let me know. The quizzes will be open-book and will assess your comprehension of class material from the last week. Please do not share answers on the quizzes or complete them as a group. Quizzes will be graded in a timely manner, and you will also be provided with your current overall quiz grade by **April 7** (university add/drop date). Your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

- *Weekly Quiz Resubmissions*: If you do not perform well on a weekly quiz, you have the option to resubmit it and raise your grade up to 90%. To resubmit, email me a Word document that includes the questions you missed, along with a brief explanation of the correct answers. Please use the subject line "Week X Quiz Resubmission" in your email. Quiz resubmissions for weeks 1 through 7 must be submitted by the midterm exam. For weeks 8 through 14, resubmissions must be sent by the start of our last class period of the semester (May 7).
- *Late Quiz Resubmissions*: I will close the quiz on Canvas when it is due. I will not accept late quiz submissions. However, if you forget or fail to do a particular quiz, you are welcome to submit a quiz resubmission (see above).
- **Midterm Exam (20% of grade)**: You will take an in-person, closed book midterm exam during class on March 11th; the exam will include material from Weeks 1 through 7. 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. I will provide a mid-term study guide prior to the exam, and encourage you to know this material well. The midterm exam will include several extra-credit questions based on the extra-reading assignments for each week.
- **Final Exam (20% of grade)**: You will be taking an in-person final exam that covers any new material covered since the midterm exam; the exam will be a combination of multiple-choice and short answer. The exam date/time/location will align with the university's official final exam schedule.
- **Reflection Essay (20%)**: You will write an essay (minimum 1000 words) explaining a sociological concept/theory you found interesting and describing one way in which you can apply it to your everyday life or intended career. Please cite all your sources in the format that aligns with your major. The essay will be due on May 7th (last day of classes); I will not extend the due date for this particular assignment, unless under extenuating circumstances (such as sickness or family emergency). This assignment must be submitted on Canvas.
- **Reflection Presentation (10%)**: You will present a 5-10 minute presentation summarizing your reflection essay to the class. Your presentation date will either be on

April 29th, May 2nd, or May 7th, depending on your presentation slot. Your presentation (if using slides/audio/videos/etc.) must be submitted on Canvas by 9 am on April 28th. Late submissions/presentations will have points deducted. It is fine to use video clips or media to help illustrate your chosen sociological concept; however, these video clips must be relevant and not be the majority of your presentation. If you miss your presentation slot, you may be given time a chance to present after everyone else has presented, depending on the time available.

- **Extra credit (extra 5% of course grade):** There will be an *optional* extra-credit essay assignment due on the last day of class (May 7th), worth up to 20 points. These points will be applied to your lowest exam grade (either the midterm or the final exam) and can potentially bring your total exam grade above 100%. This extra-credit assignment can contribute up to 5% to your overall class grade, making it a valuable opportunity for those whose final grade is on the borderline between two letter grades. I encourage everyone who is concerned about their class grades to complete this assignment.

For this assignment, please watch one of the following documentaries (listed below) and write an 800-1000 word essay 1) describing the documentary's main points in sociological terms and 2) reflecting on what you learned. Once finished, please submit the essay on Canvas. The documentary options are:

- Disclosure (documentary) – available on Netflix – analysis of Hollywood’s impact on the trans community
- Century of the Self – available on YouTube or Prime Video – analysis of how the rise of psychoanalysis could be used as a means of persuasion for governments and corporations (there are 4 episodes total, but you must watch at least 2 for full credit)\
- Mardi Gras made in China – available on Apple TV – explores how toxic products impact both the people who make and consume them, using Mardi Gras beads as an example
- Requiem for the American Dream – available on YouTube or Prime Video – explores economic inequality in the US

Grading Scale:

A = 90-100
B+ = 87-90
B = 80-87
C+ = 77-80
C = 70-77
D = 60-70
F = <60

Textbook: Introduction to Sociology 3e by OpenStax

(<https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-sociology-3e>). Please note that a free PDF version of the textbook and audiobook recordings of all chapters are available from the “Student Resources” section of OpenStax. The PDF of the textbook is also available on canvas.

Course Schedule and Readings:

Week 1 (Jan 21 and 24) - Introduction and Syllabus; Chap 1: An Introduction to Sociology

- No pre-class readings or assignments
- **Introduction quiz assigned**

Week 2 (Jan 28 and 31) - Chap 2: Research, and research literacy

- *Note – January 27th is the last day for add/drop class*
- Extra reading:
 - **Garlington, T., Ryan, V. M., Nolt, C., Ilagan, H., & Kunicki, Z. J. (2020). Bringing Social Justice into the Statistics Classroom. Teaching of Psychology. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0098628320979879>**
 - Dickie, G. 2020. Why polls were mostly wrong. Scientific American. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-polls-were-mostly-wrong/>
 - Pew Research Center. (2024). Voters broadly positive about how elections were conducted, in sharp contrast to 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/12/04/voters-broadly-positive-about-how-elections-were-conducted-in-sharp-contrast-to-2020/>
- **Quiz 2 assigned**

Week 3 (Feb 4 and 7) - Chap 3: Culture; Chap 4: Society and Social Interaction

- Extra reading: McCluney, C. L., Robotham, K., Lee, S., Smith, R., & Durkee, M. (2019). *The costs of code-switching*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2019/11/the-costs-of-codeswitching>

- Quiz 3 assigned

Week 4 (Feb 11 and 14) - Chap 5: Socialization & Chap. 6: Groups and Organizations

- Extra reading: UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). (2023, June 12). *2023 Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI): Breaking down gender biases: Shifting social norms towards gender equality*. <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2023-gender-social-norms-index-gsni#/indicies/GSNI>

- Quiz 4 assigned

Week 5 (Feb 18 and 21) - Chap 7: Deviance and Social Control

- Extra reading:
 - Innocence Project (n.d.). *DNA Exonerations in the United States (1989 – 2020)*. <http://www.innocenceproject.org/free-innocent/improve-the-law/fact-sheets/dna-exonerations-nationwide>
 - Innocence Project. (n.d.). *Race and wrongful convictions*. <https://innocenceproject.org/race-and-wrongful-conviction/>

- Quiz 5 assigned

Week 6 (Feb 25 and 28) - Chap 8: Media and Technology; Chap 9: Social Stratification

- Extra reading: Brown, M.A., Nagler, J., Bisbee, J., & Tucker, J.A. (2022, October 12). *Echo chambers, rabbit holes, and ideological bias: How YouTube recommends content to real users*. Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/echo-chambers-rabbit-holes-and-ideological-bias-how-youtube-recommends-content-to-real-users/>
- Extra reading: Fuhrer, J. (2023, October, 10). The myth of meritocracy runs deep in American history. The MIT Press. <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/the-myth-of-meritocracy-runs-deep-in-american-history/>

- Quiz 6 assigned

Week 7 (Mar 4 and 7) - Chap 11: Race and Ethnicity; Chap 12: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

- Extra reading: Davies, D. (2023, March 28). *How poverty and racism 'weather' the body, accelerating aging and disease*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2023/03/28/1166404485/weathering-arline-geronimus-poverty-racism-stress-health>

Week 8 (Mar 11 and 14) - Midterm; Chap 13: Aging and the Elderly

- Quiz resubmissions for Quiz 1 through 5 due March 11
- Midterm during class on March 11

Week 9 (Mar 18 and 21) - Spring Break, nothing assigned or due

Week 10 (Mar 25 and 28) - Chap 14: Relationships, Marriage, and Family; Chap 15: Religion

- Extra reading: Sternheimer, K. (2019). *Sociology and religion*. Everyday Sociology Blog. <https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2019/08/sociology-and-religion.html>
- Quiz 7 assigned

Week 11 (Apr 1 and 4) - Chap 16: Education; Chap 17: Government and Politics

- Extra reading: American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Education and socioeconomic Status. <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/education>
- Quiz 8 assigned

Week 12 (Apr 8 and 11) - Chap 18: Work and the Economy; Chap 19: Health and Medicine

- Note – Apr 7th last day to withdraw from class
- Extra reading:
 - Skim the article: Braveman, P., & Gottlieb, L. (2014). The social determinants of health: it's time to consider the causes of the causes. *Public health reports (Washington, D.C. : 1974)*, 129 Suppl 2(Suppl 2), 19–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00333549141291S206>
- Quiz 9 assigned

Week 13 (Apr 15 and 18) - Chap 20: Population and Environment

- Note - No class on April 18th
- Extra material:
 - DW Documentary. Nature's response to urban sprawl. Youtube. https://youtu.be/ZmjK_4Ci4OQ?si=-ZLvh7_HTmnd8po8
- Quiz 10 assigned

Week 14 (Apr 22 and 25) - Chap. 10 Global Inequality; Chap. 21: Social Movements and Social Change

Week 15 (Apr 29 and May 2) - Individual Presentations

- Upload your reflection presentation by Apr 28

Week 16 (May 7) - Last Class - Individual Presentations

- Optional extra-credit assignment due
- Quiz resubmissions from quiz 6 to 10 due
- Reflection essay due
- Final exam will be scheduled in line with the university's final exam schedule; TBD

Policies:

Class Communication: I will often send emails to the class through Canvas, and may post assignment clarifications and other important information on the Canvas “announcements” tab. Please make sure that you are checking this regularly. Additionally, I typically devote the first few minutes of class to discuss logistical notes (upcoming assignment due dates, what information to study for the exam, etc.). These notes will generally not be included on the class PowerPoints available on Canvas, so I encourage you to attend class on time.

Attendance: Attendance is required on lecture days; a sign-in sheet will be available for the first 15 minutes of each class. Please communicate with me *ahead of time* if you will be missing class for a valid reason.

Make-Up Assignments and Exams: If you miss a quiz submission, you have the option of submitting a quiz resubmission. Unless there are valid extenuating circumstances, I will not allow make-assignments for anything due on the last day of class (optional extra-credit essay or reflection paper). If you miss an exam for a valid reason, please contact me to schedule a make-up exam through the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences.

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: NJIT Academic Integrity Code.

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

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

Use of Generative AI: Student use of artificial intelligence (AI) is permitted in this course for certain assignments and activities. It is not permitted to be used in the midterm and final exams, as doing so would undermine student learning and achievement of course learning outcomes: understanding and examining current events and social issues from a sociological perspective.

Additionally, when students use AI in this course, the AI must be cited as is shown within the NJIT Library AI citation page for AI. I encourage you to use AI to inspire new ideas and perspectives and build on the knowledge you are learning in class. However, do not directly copy and paste text from AI (ex: using it to write your essays), and do not forget that you need to analyze and evaluate all AI-generated information for accuracy, reliability, and relevance, given that generated information is often imperfect. If you have any questions or concerns about AI technology use in this class, please reach out to me prior to submitting any assignments.

Questions? Please let me know.