New Jersey Institute of Technology

STS 221-001: Introduction to Sociology

Fall 2025

Instructor: Lauren Manley, MSW, MS

Contact: lm553@njit.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 10-11 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 8:30-9:50 AM at CKB 222

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 two 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 Reflections (9 reflections, worth a total of 20% of course grade):** A short weekly reflection will be available on Canvas on select weeks (indicated in the course schedule below). These reflections will open on Friday after class and close on the following Tuesday before class; the reflections should be completed during this time frame for full credit. However, they will remain open until the next exam (i.e., if a reflection is assigned in the first half of the semester, it must be completed before the midterm) for partial credit (8/10 points max). If you cannot access the quiz for a valid reason, please let me know. The reflection will be open-book and will utilize a lockdown browser. Please do not share answers on the reflections, utilize AI in your responses, or

complete them as a group. Reflections will be graded in a timely manner, and you will also be provided with your current overall reflection grade by September 8 (university add/drop date). Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

- *Resubmissions*: If you do not perform well on a weekly reflection, you have the option to resubmit it and raise your grade up to 80%. 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. Resubmissions for weeks 1 through 7 must be submitted by the midterm exam. For weeks 8 through 14, resubmissions must be sent by December 9.

- **Midterm Exam (20% of grade)**: You will take an in-person, closed book midterm exam during class on Oct 21; 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.

- **Short Topic presentation (10%):** The first few minutes of each class period will consist of short topic presentations, where students will be assigned to identify and present on a news article that is related to class material covered the period beforehand. Students must explain the topic and use their sociological imagination to connect it to a larger sociological idea or framework; the presentation must last at least 5 minutes, not including questions. Grading will be based on both the presentation and the student's ability to answer questions from their peers.

- **Reflection Presentation (20%):** You will present a 5-10 minute presentation 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 within the presentation. AI cannot be used for this assignment. Your presentation must be submitted on Canvas by 9 am on Dec 4. 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 (Dec 9th), 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 (Sep 2 and 5) - Introduction and Syllabus; Chap 1: An Introduction to Sociology

- No pre-class readings or assignments
- Introduction reflection assigned

Week 2 (Sep 9 and 12) - Chap 2: Research, and research literacy

- *Note – **September 8th** is the last day for add/drop class*
- Extra reading:
  - **Garlington, T., Ryan, V. M., Nolty, 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/
- Reflection 2 assigned

Week 3 (Sep 16 and 19) - 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

- Reflection 3 assigned

Week 4 (Sep 23 and 26) - 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

- Reflection 4 assigned

Week 5 (Sep 30 and Oct 3) - Chap 7: Deviance and Social Control

- Extra reading:

  o 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

  o Innocence Project. (n.d.). *Race and wrongful convictions*. https://innocenceproject.org/race-and-wrongful-conviction/

- Reflection 5 assigned

Week 6 (Oct 7 and 10) - 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/

- Reflection 6 assigned

Week 7 (Oct 14 and 17) - 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 (Oct 21 and 24) - Midterm; Chap 13: Aging and the Elderly

- Resubmissions for Reflection 1 through 6 due October 20
- Midterm during class on October 21

Week 9 (October 28 and 31) - Chap 14: Relationships, Marriage, and Family; Sociology of Halloween activity

Week 10 (Nov 4 and 7) - Chap 15: Religion; Chap 16: Education;

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

Week 11 (Nov 11 and 14) - Chap 17: Government and Politics; Chap 18: Work and the Economy;

- *Note – **November 10th** is the last day to withdraw*
- Extra reading: American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Education and socioeconomic Status. https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/education
- Reflection 8 assigned

Week 12 (November 18 and 21) - Chap 19: Health and Medicine; Chap 20: Population and Environment

- 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
- Extra material:
  - DW Documentary. Nature's response to urban sprawl. Youtube. https://youtu.be/ZmjK_4Ci4OQ?si=-ZLvh7_HTmnd8po8
- Reflection 9 assigned

Week 13 (Nov 26) - Chap. 10: Global Inequality

- *Note - No class on November 28*

<u>Week 14 (Dec 2 and 5)</u> - Chap. 21: Social Movements and Social Change and Individual Presentations

- Everyone must upload their reflection presentation by Dec 4

<u>Week 15 (Dec 9)</u> - Individual Presentations

- Optional extra-credit assignment due

- Reflection 1-9 resubmissions due

- Final exam will be scheduled in line with the university's final exam schedule; TBD

Policies:

<u>Class Communication:</u> 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.

<u>Attendance:</u> 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.

<u>Make-Up Assignments and Exams:</u> 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.

<u>University Policy on Academic Integrity:</u> 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.

Version 1

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 reflection assignments or 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 (including Grammarly) 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 for any assignment, 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.