Faculty

Marla H. Kohlman
Assistant Professor

John J. Macionis
Professor

George E. McCarthy
National Endowment for the Humanities Distinguished Teaching Professor

Howard L. Sacks
Professor

Ric S. Sheffield
Chair, Associate Professor of Sociology and Legal Studies

Jan E. Thomas
Visiting Assistant 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 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 Major

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

Foundation course. One course (1/2 unit) is required: SOCY 110, 111, 112, 113, or 114. Only one foundation course may be counted toward completion of the major.

Area courses. Eight courses (4 units) are required. At least one course (1/2 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 the area requirement. Students planning to attend graduate school in sociology or related fields are strongly encouraged to take all four core courses.

Senior Seminar. SOCY 489 (1/2 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 October, to which faculty members participating in the exercise respond in writing. The student then prepares the paper, in consultation with faculty members, to be submitted in January. All participating students read each paper, posting comments via computer prior to the paper's scheduled presentation. Faculty members provide written comments on the paper to each student. All Senior Exercise participants meet in February for student presentations and discussion of their work. Following these sessions, each student revises the paper in light of faculty and student comments, submitting a final paper by March 1.

Faculty members evaluate student work with regard to the quality of the final paper (50 percent), the clarity and effectiveness of the oral presenta-
tion (25 percent), and the extent and quality of student participation in discussion (25 percent). Written notification of the results of the evaluation is provided by March 25; 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.

Reading for 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.

The Sociology Minor

The department offers a limited number of structured minors. All minors require a minimum of 2 1/2 units of coursework, including one foundation course. Additional courses are specified for each particular program of study. Minors are currently offered in the following subjects: Sociological Perspective, Sex and Gender, Race and Ethnicity, Social Class, Law and Society, and Social Theory. Students should meet with any member of the faculty to learn more about minoring in sociology.

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.

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Program in Sociology: A special series of courses will be offered in the department of sociology this year by NEH Professor McCarthy on the topic of “Democracy and Social Justice: Ancient and Modern.” For more information, see course descriptions for SOCY 242 and SOCY 243. The purpose of these courses is to integrate the ancient and modern perspectives on ethics and social justice and ecology and science.

First-Semester Courses

Foundation Courses

Human Society: An Introduction to Sociology

- SOCY 110 (1/2 unit)
- Macionis

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 constructing themselves as they construct societies. Understanding how we accomplish this task is the focus of this course.

The course begins by describing the perspective and methods of sociology and then applies these tools to the exploration of human societies. Discussions raise issues such as how and why cultures differ and how people are socialized into their particular way of life; and explore the experience of confronting cultural practices that violate one's own standards. Additional concerns include a comparison of traditional and modern social organization, with particular emphasis on the expansion of bureaucracy and changing patterns of social inequality. The course helps to develop student writing skills and highlights applications of sociological research and theory to various occupations.

Identity and American Society

- SOCY 111 (1/2 unit)
- Sacks

This introductory course in social psychology explores the collective foundations of individual identity within the American society, paying particular attention to rural life. In what sense is the self fundamentally social? How are changes in identity
attributable to the organization of experience throughout life. What are the effects of gender, race, and social class on consciousness? How have changes in American industrial capitalism shaped the search for self-worth? In what ways have science and technology altered our relationship to nature? What challenges to identity are posed by events in American history, including immigration and the African diaspora? How has the very advent of modernity precipitated our preoccupation with the question “Who am I?” Students will conduct group research projects to connect our ideas to everyday life.

Institutions and Inequalities

SOCY 114 (1/2 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 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.

Courses on Institutions and Change

Religion in Modern Society
SOCY 221 (1/2 unit)
Sacks

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 contemporary society? Historically, what relationships has religion had with the economy, politics, and other social institutions? What is the significance of contemporary religious expressions including fundamentalism and new-age spiritualism? Readings will include selections from William James, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx, as well as from Peter Berger and other contemporary sociologists of religion. Prerequisite: foundation course or permission of instructor.

Health and Illness
SOCY 224 (1/2 unit)
Thomas

Critics of the health-care system charge that the current system delivers “sick” care, not “health” care; and that the trends toward nongovernment interference of the 1980s have left us with skyrocketing medical costs, increasingly unequal access to health care, little public accountability, and increasing rates of chronic illness. This class will examine these charges by first discussing the social context of health and illness: who gets sick, who gets help, and the medicalization of social problems. We will then look at the health care system (historical development, medical education, institutional settings). We also will explore the interaction between people and their health care providers with respect to language, information exchange, and power relationships. We will then look at the advent of managed care and how it has changed health-care delivery in the United States. Several administrators and providers from the community will share their perspectives on these trends. The course will close with a discussion of reform and change within the medical institution and a brief look at health-care systems in other countries. Prerequisite: foundation course or permission of instructor.

Courses on Culture and Identity

Ethics and Social Justice
SOCY 243 (1/2 unit)
Royal W. Rhodes, professor of religious studies; McCarthy

This course will examine the development of theories of ethics and social justice, from the ancient Hebrew tradition of Torah and the prophets, the New Testament writers Luke and Matthew, the Greek drama of Aeschylus, and the political philosophy of Aristotle, to modern discussions about social, political, and economic justice. We will explore how modern social theory has employed ancient Hebrew and Greek teachings as the basis for social ethics. Questions of justice, freedom, economic development, individualism, and alienation will be major themes in this study of liberalism, Christianity, and Marxism. Special emphasis will be on contemporary debates about the ethics of democratic capitalism, including conservative theology and philosophy and radical liberation theology. Readings will be from the Bible, Aeschylus, Aristotle, Pope John Paul II, M. Friedman, E. Fromm, R. Pirsig, E.F. Schumacher, and N. Wolf. Prerequisite: permission of the instructor. This course is cross-listed as RELN 380.

Race, Ethnicity, and American Law
SOCY 244 (1/2 unit)
Sheffield

This course is designed to be a mid-level course that focuses on the American legal system’s effect on racial, ethnic, and minority groups in the United States as well as on the
manner in which such groups have influenced the state of the “law” in this country. It is intended to stimulate critical and systematic thinking about the relationships among American legal institutions and selected racial, ethnic, and minority populations.

The class will examine various social and cultural conditions, as well as historical and political events, that were influenced in large part by the minority status of the participants. These conditions will be studied to determine in what ways, if any, the American legal system has advanced, accommodated, or frustrated the interests of these groups. Through exposure to the legislative process and legal policy making, students should gain an appreciation for the complexity of the issues and far-reaching impact that legal institutions have on the social, political, and economic condition of racial, ethnic, and minority groups in America. The primary requirement of this course is completion of a comprehensive research project. Prerequisite: foundation course or permission of instructor. Enrollment limited to fifteen students. This course may be counted toward the Law and Society Concentration.

Courses in Social Theory
Classical Sociological Thought
SOCY 361 (1/2 unit)
McCarthy

This course examines the development of classical social theory in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the first part of the course, we will stress the philosophical and intellectual foundations of classical theory in the works of Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Kant, and Hegel. 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. It also rejected the Enlightenment view of liberal individualism and economics, and in the process united the ancient ideals of ethics and politics (Aristotle) with the modern (neo-Kantian) concern for empirical and historical research.

The second part of the course will examine classical analysis of 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 their relation to Greek philosophy, and his later critique of political economy; Weber’s historical sociology, modern economic history, 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 explanatory method of naturalism and realism (Durkheim).

Note: This course will not be offered in 2002-2003. Prerequisite: permission of instructor.

Senior Seminars and Independent Study
Individual Study
SOCY 494 (1/2 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 (1/2 unit)
Staff

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

Second-Semester Courses
Foundation Courses
Human Society
◆ SOCY 110 (1/2 unit)
Macionis

See first-semester course description.
Institutions and Inequalities
◆ SOCY 114 (1/2 unit)
Thomas

See first-semester course description.
Courses on Institutions and Change

Sociology of Law
SOCY 226 (1/2 unit)
Sheffield

This mid-level course is intended to examine the interrelationship between jurisprudence and legal sociology. The class will employ a seminar format. Students will examine the theoretical approaches of selected legal sociologists and scholars of jurisprudence. Contrasting Pound’s sociological jurisprudence with Weber’s Austrian view of the nature of law or Durkheim’s examination of law and social solidarity, the class will explore diverse approaches to the sociological study of law in society, both classical and contemporary. Students will encounter questions about the collaboration between lawyers and sociologists for utilitarian purposes (i.e., research to guide legal and social policy) versus the pursuit of a so-called “pure” sociology of law which refrains from making value judgments or evaluations in favor of explanatory and descriptive purposes. The class will seek to explore the intersection of legal theory and sociological method and its implications for the field of legal sociology. There will also be special attention given to the American critical legal studies, feminist jurisprudence, and critical race theoretical movements. This course is cross-listed in the Law and Society Concentration. Prerequisites: foundation course or permission of instructor. Enrollment limited to fifteen students.

Social Problems and Policy
SOCY 220 (1/2 unit)
Macionis

Social Problems investigates how and why certain issues come to be defined as “problems” that demand a public response. The course explains what sorts of issues are seen as problematic by liberals and conservatives. Issues discussed may include crime, abortion, the aging of U.S. society, family violence, the performance of U.S. schools, the challenges of health and health care, population growth and environmental issues, the state of today’s cities, wealth and poverty, homelessness, gender, and racial inequality. The course provides the opportunity for students to improve their writing skills. Prerequisite: foundation course or permission of instructor.

SOCY 242 (1/2 unit)
McCarthy

The first part of this mid-level course will examine the underlying philosophical and sociological foundations of modern science and rationality. It will begin by analyzing the differences between the ancient Greek and medieval view of physics, causality, movement, and organic nature, and the modern world view of natural science in Galileo, Descartes, and Newton. We will then turn to study the debates within the philosophy of science (Burtt, Popper, Kuhn, Quine, Feyerabend, and Rorty) and the sociology of science (Scheler, Ellul, Leiss, Marcuse, and Habermas) about the nature of scientific inquiry and the social/political meaning of scientific discoveries. Does science investigate the essential reality of nature or is it more influenced by the wider social relations and practical activity of modern industrial life? Does science reflect objective reality and universal truth or is it a social construct reflecting the particular needs and functional interests of society?

The course then turns to examine the applied relationship between science and society. We will deal with the full range of the rationalization of modern society: the application of science and technological rationality (efficiency, productivity, and functionality) to economic (workplace), political (state), and social (cultural legitimation) institutions. We will examine the process of modernization and rationalization in science, labor, politics, the academy, nature, and ecology. Finally, we will discuss the debates within the environmental movement between the deep ecologists and the social ecologists. Of particular importance is the latter’s return to the Greek polis and Aristotelian physics for insights into the crisis of Western reason and Enlightenment science and its vision of small-scale technology, local communities, and participatory democracy. Readings will be from Aristotle, T. Kuhn, M. Berman, H. Braverman, E. A. Burtt, M. Horkheimer, S. Harding, F. Capra, W. McKittrick, and M. Bookchin. Prerequisite: permission of instructor.

Courses on Culture and Identity

Sociology of Gender
SOCY 241 (1/2 unit)
Kohlmann

Sociology has long recognized the different roles of men and women in society, but the systematic, sociological analysis of how and why these roles have been developed and maintained is relatively new. This mid-level course will analyze the social construction of gender and its salience in our everyday lives. Using sociological theory and the context of gender, we will link the private experiences of individuals to the structure of social institutions. The course will begin with the familiar world of socialization and move to the more abstract level of institutions of social control and sex-based inequalities within social institutions including the economy and family. We will conclude by discussing the sociological possibilities for change in our social constructions of gender and sex roles. Prerequisite: foundation course or permission of instructor.

Blackface: The American Minstrel Show
SOCY 440 (1/2 unit)
Sacks

The most popular form of stage entertainment in the nineteenth century, the minstrel show continues to have profound effects on American culture. In this advanced seminar, we
Courses on Research Methods
Research Practicum:
Doing Social Research
QR SOCY 372 (1/2 unit)
Kohlman, Thomas

Ever wonder how sociologists gather the information on which they base their claims? Curious about all those charts and graphs you see printed 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 this 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 students for graduate school, the job market, and for being a more informed consumer of social research. Note: This course will not be offered in 2003-2004. Prerequisites: foundation course and one additional sociology course or permission of instructor. SOCY 271 highly recommended.

Senior Seminars and Independent Study
Individual Study
SOCY 494 (1/2 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 (1/2 unit)
Staff

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

The following courses may be offered in 2002-03:

SOCY 110 Human Society
SOCY 111 Identity in American Society
SOCY 113 Contemporary Applications of Sociological Theory
SOCY 114 Institutions and Inequalities
SOCY 224 Health and Illness
SOCY 225 Marriage and the Family
SOCY 239 Social Movements and Social Change
SOCY 244 Race, Ethnicity and American Law
SOCY 271 Logic and Methods of Social Research
SOCY 362 Contemporary Social Theory
SOCY 372 Research Practicum: Doing Social Research
SOCY 392 Gender and Technology
SOCY 461 Modern German Social Theory
SOCY 477, 478 Fieldwork: Rural Life
SOCY 489 Senior Seminar
SOCY 492 Issues of Gender and Power