SOCILOGY

Chair, Professor Cheryl Townsend Gilkes
Professor Cheryl Townsend Gilkes; Assistant Professor Matthew Archibald; Visiting Assistant Professors Pamela A. Blake, Karen E. Macke, and Daniel Sherwood

Sociology is the scientific study of society and people in society. Sociology is also the study of patterns and processes of human social relations and human behavior. Whether it is the study of small social groups or of populations and organizations involving thousands, sociologists assume that where there are two or more people, what goes on between and among these people should be studied. The sociology program at Colby provides students with conceptual frameworks and analytic skills necessary to understand how social forces shape people’s lives and how people shape and transform society. Students acquire expertise in qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to assess data and interpret published research. Courses focused on a wide range of issues, problems, and organizations show how sociological theory enables us to analyze institutions, social and cultural change, and persisting inequalities relating to race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Opportunities for intensive discussions, closely supervised research, and community-based learning foster the development of critical and creative thinking. Seminar requirements for sociology majors foster analytical and communication skills. Sociology students are prepared to participate in the private and public sectors of a diverse democracy and world.

A note on course prerequisites: Students who feel they have satisfied a prerequisite in an alternative way are strongly encouraged to consult the instructor to obtain authorization to enroll.

Study Abroad

The department prefers that students majoring in sociology complete Sociology 215, 271, 274 and at least one of the other required courses (except Sociology 493) prior to study abroad. Generally, students will receive credit toward the major for one course per semester taken abroad; preferably that course should be approved in advance. Students majoring in sociology are urged to seek approval for a range of courses, in advance, to be prepared for possible cancellation of an approved course in any program abroad. Exceptions to the one-semester and core-course credit rules may be granted for students qualified to study abroad in the year-long sociology program at the London School of Economics.

Requirements for the Major in Sociology

Eleven courses including Sociology 131, 215, 271, 274, 493, and either 252 or 276. Among the five additional elective courses, an additional methods course (212 or 272) is strongly encouraged and at least one elective must be a 300-level seminar. One course in another social science at the 200 level or above may be substituted for one 200-level sociology elective. One elective may be taken in a study-abroad program. Sociology 215, 271, and 274 should be completed before the senior year, preferably during the second year.

Requirements for the Minor in Sociology

Seven courses including Sociology 131, 215 or 218, 271 or 272, 274; one elective at the 200 level or above; and two electives at the 300 level or above. One course in another social science at the 200-level or above may be substituted for the 200-level elective. Electives may include an independent study (Sociology 491 or 492) for at least three credits. Although the Senior Seminar (493) is not required, students pursuing the minor are welcome to enroll.

Note: Sociology 271 fulfills the quantitative reasoning (Q) requirement.

Honors in Sociology

The Honors Program in Sociology (Sociology 483, 484) provides a special opportunity for independent sociological research. Seniors majoring in sociology may apply for the honors program by securing a faculty sponsor in the department, a secondary faculty reader, and approval of the department as a whole. To apply, a student must have a 3.25 overall grade point average and a 3.6 grade point average in the major. Exceptions require a petition for approval of the department. Students may apply for the program at the end of the term prior to the semester in which they would begin honors work and no later than the second week of the term during which honors work begins. A maximum of six credits may be received, none of which may count toward the required elective credits in the major. Enrollment options include spring semester; spring semester and Jan Plan; fall semester; fall semester and Jan Plan; fall; Jan Plan, and spring semesters. The final product is expected to be an extensive research paper of exceptional quality. With permission of the department, a thesis in the area of sociology, completed as part of the Senior Scholars Program, may be substituted for the honors thesis.

Distinction in the Major

Distinction in the major upon graduation requires a 3.75 grade point average in the major and a 3.5 overall grade point average.
Course Offerings

[SO118J] Individuality and World Traveling What does it mean to live in a world that many have characterized as postmodern? What does postmodernity imply in terms of attitude toward selfhood, toward interpretation and knowledge gathering, toward crossing boundaries of cultural differences and, finally, toward envisioning social justice? A mixture of scholarly texts, fiction, and film will be employed to explore these questions. Emphasis on cultivating students' skills of critical thinking and expression. 

Three credit hours. S.

SO131fs Introduction to Sociology Sociologists study processes by which people create, maintain, and change their social and cultural worlds. They investigate contemporary social issues and strive to explain relationships between what happens in peoples' lives and the societies in which they live. Sociology's research methods and theories apply to the full range of human behavior, from individual acts to global environmental, political, and economic change. An introduction to how and why sociologists study social and cultural phenomena such as inequality, race and ethnicity, gender, power, politics, the family, religion, social and cultural change, crime, and globalization.

Four credit hours. S, U. ARCHIBALD, MACKE, SHERWOOD

SO212f Introduction to GIS and Spatial Analysis Listed as Environmental Studies 214. 

Four credit hours. GIMOND

SO212Jj Introduction to GIS and Spatial Analysis Listed as Environmental Studies 214J.

Three credit hours. GIMOND

SO213s Schools and Society Listed as Education 213.

Four credit hours. U. HOWARD

SO214j African-American Elites and Middle Classes Classical and contemporary sociological theories of stratification and race relations are used to explore the intersection of class and race-ethnicity in the social origins and historical roles of elites and middle classes in the African-American experience. Particular attention to the writings of Du Bois, Frazier, Cox, and Wilson. Biographical and autobiographical perspectives provide rich description of socialization, family contexts, work, politics, ideologies, and the impacts of racism and social change. Includes additional evening meetings for film showings and special events.

Three credit hours. S, U. GILKES

SO215f Classical Sociological Theory The history of sociology, and a critical survey of the systems of thought about society, centered on major schools of sociological thought and their representatives. The place of theory in social research as presented in works of foundational social theorists, including, but not limited to, Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Du Bois, Simmel, and Mead.

Prerequisite: Sociology 131. 

Four credit hours. GROSS

[SO218] Contemporary Sociological Theory Introduces social theories that have had a significant impact on contemporary sociological scholarship. Students learn how to analyze and compare different theoretical paradigms, preparing them to use theory to better understand how social life is both patterned and dynamic. Students explore how these theories, like other cultural products, both reflect and affect the historical moment in which they were produced. Because much of this work engages with Enlightenment thought and institutions, the students develop a critical understanding of some of the central ideas and practices that shaped modern Western society. Prerequisite: Sociology 131. 

Four credit hours.

[SO219] Self and Society in the Digital Age We will explore how digital technologies change the ways that we work, play, and interact, and use contemporary social theories to identify and assess the opportunities and challenges afforded by new communication technologies. Using sociological techniques we will investigate how these technologies are reshaping not only how we communicate but the content of the information we share. Finally, we will discuss the implications of these changes for ourselves as individuals and as citizens of a large democracy. Previously offered as Sociology 197 (2012) and 119 (2013). 

Three credit hours. S.

[SO226] Sociology of Martin Luther King Jr. Martin Luther King Jr., a sociology major, represents a social movement (civil rights) that changed America and also changed theories and practices in American sociology. Through an exploration of King's life, work, and writings (books, sermons, and speeches), an overview of the civil rights movement, the origins and practices of the Southern system of segregation (Jim Crow), and aspects of the history of American sociology. Particular attention to social movements theory, race relations and social change, and organizations and mobilizations within and by African-American communities. Includes additional evening meetings for film showings and special events.

Three credit hours. S, U.

SO231s Contemporary Social Problems Analysis of selected controversial issues and public problems in the contemporary United States. General theoretical frameworks in the sociology of social problems used to analyze issues from one or more perspectives; areas include alienation, economic and political freedom, the politics of morality, poverty, women's roles, and social inequality.

Four credit hours. S, U. SHERWOOD

SO252f Race, Ethnicity, and Society An examination of the roles of race and ethnicity in organizing complex stratified societies, in
structuring systems of durable inequalities, and in organizing and shaping communities and enclaves within stratified societies. Using multiple sociological perspectives on race, ethnicity, minority groups, prejudice, discrimination, and institutional racism, special attention is paid to the United States with reference to immigration, slavery, conquest, annexation, colonialism, internal migration, social conflict, social movements, labor, citizenship, transnational adaptation, law, and public policy. Prerequisite: Sociology 131 or 231 or American Studies 276 or Anthropology 112. Four credit hours. GILKES

[SO253] Sociology of Sport Focuses on sport as a social institution and cultural phenomenon. Drawing on classical and contemporary theories, students explore how broader social forces shape personal and collective experiences of sport through contexts of family, education, identity, the body, fandom, economy, war, and nation. Students work independently and in groups to examine the structural and symbolic dimensions of sport across micro-, meso-, macro-, and global levels of sociological analysis. Readings address how meanings of sport are variably shaped at the shifting intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and citizenship within particular relations of power and inequality. Prerequisite: Sociology 131. Four credit hours.

SO255f Urban Sociology An examination of urban social and cultural life in a historical and cross-cultural comparative perspective, with special emphasis on the United States. Explored are social, psychological, political, ethnic, and economic issues pertaining to urbanization and to urban social problems as well as to such topics as urban architecture, urban planning, urban renewal, and neighborhood life in national and global contexts. Students participate in a community-based service learning project as part of the course requirement. Prerequisite: Sociology 131. Four credit hours. SHERWOOD

[SO256] Global Health Uses a sociological perspective to focus on the social, political, and economic conditions underlying health and healthcare across world societies. Research in the field explores questions related to mortality and morbidity, population disease burden, health inequalities, poverty, reproductive health, the diffusion of infectious diseases, nutrition, environmental health, health policies and priorities, war and violence, and prevention, among other issues. Students will explore these topics through response papers, discussion, in-class exercises, and examinations, to achieve an informed understanding of the methodologies and modes of thought used to address key conceptual and practical problems in the field. Four credit hours.

[SO257] Sociology of Mental Health and Mental Disorders Explores meanings of and factors in mental illness; developments in categories and treatments; impacts of social inequalities on incidence, diagnosis, and treatment; effects on family and support systems; and social policy issues. Considers the contributions of social science, biology, and medicine. Studies sociological conceptualizations of mental disorder, particularly social constructionism, labeling, and stress theories. Draws upon an array of scholarship and applies understandings to select memoirs and autobiographies. Hones close-reading, critical-analysis, and communication skills. Prerequisite: Sociology 131. Four credit hours.

[SO258] Health and Medicine Applies sociological principles to health, illness, and health care. Situates the latter in a variety of institutional domains linked by social inequality: markets, politics, science, religion, and culture. Topics include medicalization and the social construction of health and illness, racial and ethnic health disparities, women's health, social justice and medicine, epidemiology, ethnography and biostatistics, the phenomenology of health and illness, and contemporary U.S. healthcare reform. Students gain the theoretical knowledge necessary to begin advanced work and a comprehensive understanding of the practical significance of the field. Previously offered as Sociology 297. Prerequisite: Sociology 131. Four credit hours.

[SO259] Activism and Social Movements An examination of the goals, ideologies, leadership, and development of reformist and revolutionary mobilization efforts both within and beyond the boundaries of the United States. Prerequisite: A 100-level sociology course or American Studies 271. Four credit hours.

[SO261] Sociology of Organizations Provides an introduction to the central authors and themes in the sociology of organizations. We will use a loose historical framework to examine various research paradigms detailing core topics associated with the study of organizations such as: bureaucracy, power, conflict, rationality, authority, work, technology. Through lectures, papers and exams, and observation of college-community partner organizations, students develop a theoretical and practical understanding of this unique sociological perspective as it applies to organizations as diverse as the Center for Disease Control, Barclays, the Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter, and Al-Qaeda.

Four credit hours. ARCHIBALD

SO271s Introduction to Sociological Research Methods Provides sociology majors with basic intellectual tools for understanding, evaluating, and conducting social science research. Specific objectives include: (1) developing rudimentary statistical skills, (2) linking theoretical problems to hypothesis testing and statistical inference, (3) exploring major types of empirical research and their implications for problem solving (e.g., experiments, surveys, participant observation), (4) applying and refining knowledge of sociological methods through diverse readings in both the sociological literature (e.g., American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, Social Forces, Sociological Methodology) and in non-academic publications (e.g., The Economist, The Atlantic, The New York Times). Prerequisite: Sociology 131 and sociology major. Four credit hours. Q. ARCHIBALD
SO272f  Qualitative Research Methods and Methodology  The theory, methodology, and methods of qualitative research. Using readings, discussions, and various research activities, students examine the interrelationships of methodological theory and its development, data collection, analysis, and report writing.  Prerequisite: Sociology 131 and sociology major.  Four credit hours.  MACHE

[S0273] Sociology of Families  Central issues in the social study of the family, predominantly the historical and contemporary American family. Emphasis is on the family as a primary group and a unit of intense interpersonal relationships structured along gender and generational lines and on the family as a major social institution. The changing structures, functions, and dynamics of the family are explored.  Prerequisite: Sociology 131 preferred, but not required.  Four credit hours.  S.

SO274f  Social Inequality and Power  Students will assess different arguments about why life chances are so unequal despite a founding commitment to equality within the United States and other democracies. We will follow Charles Tilly’s advice that, in order to understand contemporary inequalities, we must first step back and put these processes into historical perspective. In addition to studying global, macro-level processes driving changes in the national economy, we will also look at how face-to-face interactions and local institutions shape people’s abilities to navigate the changing economic landscape and to secure new economic and social opportunities.  Prerequisite: Sociology 131.  Four credit hours.  S.

SO276s  Sociology of Gender  Gender involves a cluster of human social practices that deploy human bodies’ capacities to engender, to give and receive pleasure, and to give birth. Students will explore what is social about gender and how it affects our personal life experiences as well as the operation of large institutions. They will explore why gender relations are historically specific and how they are also shaped by other axes of inequality such as race/ethnicity, social class, and nationality. They will learn how to use sociological tools to design and to assess what is at stake in contemporary projects to shape gender relations.  Prerequisite: Sociology 131.  Four credit hours.  S, U.

SO297f  College in Crisis?  Some say America’s colleges and universities are doing just fine: students are flocking to them at a record rate. Others claim the system has reached a breaking point. Critics point to what they see as signs of crisis: exorbitant tuition fees, questions about how much learning is taking place in the classroom, an out of control party culture, the rise of exploitative for-profit schools, a mismatch between the curriculum and the job market for graduates, political acrimony on campus, and more. Do these charges have merit? Is the system actually in dire straits? And what can be done to fix it? We will take up these questions and others as we make our way through some of the best recent books on higher education by sociologists, political scientists, and journalists.  Four credit hours.  S.

[S0315] Dramas of Power and Politics in America  Great risk shift, entrepreneurial society, submerged state—what do these terms mean and what can they tell us about changes in American society at the turn of the century? Why are so few people aware of them, and how can we expect them to impact our lives as citizens, employees, and family members? How were these changes realized, and how do they affect democratic participation? Presents sociological tools to analyze contemporary political contests and the effects of new policies on the lives of ordinary citizens. Students will write both academic papers and blog entries designed for a wider public audience.  Prerequisite: American Studies 171 or Sociology 131.  Four credit hours.

SO322s  Social Class and Schooling  Listed as Education 322.  Four credit hours.  U.

SO324f  Elite Schooling in Global Context  Listed as Education 324.  Four credit hours.  I.

SO332s  Nonprofit Organizations and Philanthropy  An academically-grounded, community-based educational experience exploring the meaning of philanthropy and the nature of nonprofit organizations. Students will volunteer in Waterville area nonprofit organizations, working with them as assistant grant writers. The class, operating like the board of a granting foundation, will review organizations’ grant applications, make funding decisions, and allocate one or more grants totaling $10,000. The Learning by Giving Foundation, founded by Doris Buffett, generously provides funding for these grants.  Prerequisite: Sociology 131 or equivalent introductory course in the social sciences.  Four credit hours.  ARCHIBALD

[S0334] Deviance and Conformity  An investigation of classical and contemporary sociological and social psychological perspectives on deviant behavior. Focuses on race, class, and gender as they relate to social definitions of deviant behavior and the consequences of valued and dis-valued identities for self, community, and society.  Prerequisite: Sociology 131.  Four credit hours.

[S0342] Embodiment and Disability  Examines the social construction of disability in the United States as a cultural and political phenomenon. With a focus on embodiment, students consider how normalcy and difference are marked on bodies, and how notions of diversity, inclusion, and accessibility play out in the arenas of education, employment, reproduction, immigration, aging, sports, and the military. Class readings, discussions, and assignments address how disability intersects with other categorizations of difference through
interactions, cultural and media representations, family and educational policies, and activism for sexual and reproductive justice.  
Prerequisite: Sociology 131.  Four credit hours.

SO344s  Sociology of Sexualities  Sociological investigation and consideration of the historical and contemporary constructions of human sexualities and the structures, institutions, and symbols that shape them. Theoretical frameworks include constructionist, feminist, poststructuralist, and queer theory. Students examine pressing social issues concerning sexual desire and attraction, sexual behaviors and practices, and the relations of sexuality to other categorizations, including race, social class, gender, and (dis)ability. Students examine non-normative sexual identities and expressions and the structures and symbols shaping their popular and political understandings. Issues are examined within the contexts of both historical developments and contemporary social movements for the full rights of people of every sexuality. Previously offered as Sociology 237. Prerequisite: Sociology 131.  Four credit hours.  MACHE

[SO355]  African-American Women and Social Change  Sociological analysis and historical overview of African-American women and their families, work lives, and community (especially religious and political) experience. A focus on the contradictions between lived experience and cultural expectations surrounding gender and on the distinctive experiences of African-American women as a force for social change. Prerequisite: An introductory social science course or American Studies 276.  Four credit hours.  U.

[SO357]  Civil Rights, Black Power, and Social Change  A seminar examining the impact of the civil rights and black power movements on sociological concepts, theories, and perspectives on race relations, racial stratification, social change, and ethnicity. The PBS series Eyes on the Prize I and II are used to introduce readings and discussions of sociological and ideological texts influenced or produced by activists and activities of the civil rights or black power movements. The connections among civil rights and black power movements and other social movements in the United States and other societies. Prerequisite: An introductory anthropology, sociology, government, history, or American studies course.  Four credit hours.  S, U.

[SO358]  The Sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois  Intensive survey of the life and work of W.E.B. Du Bois, prolific scholar, activist, and founder of one of the oldest sociology departments and research centers. Sociology was Du Bois's chosen discipline at the same time he contributed to history, literature, and cultural studies and formed a foundation for African-American studies. This exploration of his sociological imagination assesses the importance of his work for understanding racial-ethnic relations and conflict in the United States and the world. Readings include The Souls of Black Folk, The Philadelphia Negro, selected topics from the Atlanta University studies, The Gift of Black Folk, appropriate biographical/autobiographical texts, and critical studies. Prerequisite: A 100-level sociology course or American Studies 276.  Four credit hours.  S, U.

SO361j  Special Topics in Health and Medicine: Substance Use and Abuse  Using a sociological framework, we examine a number of perspectives in the study of substance use and abuse (e.g., social-psychological, economic, pharmacological, political, historical/legal). Key topics include the nature of addiction, substance abuse and the brain, drug markets, the treatment industry, prohibition and temperance movements, decriminalization, adolescent drug and alcohol use, and dysfunctional family systems. Students will demonstrate understanding through in-class exercises (individual and group problem solving), participation in general discussion, and weekly response papers. Previously offered as SO397. Prerequisite: A lower-level social science course.  Three credit hours.  ARCHIBALD

[SO375]  Contemporary Family Relations: Mothers and Daughters  An advanced seminar exploring the Western mother-daughter relationship through sociological case studies, ethnographies, and survey research. Draws upon myth, memoir, fiction, and poetry. Systemically considers racial and ethnic variations, looking at social science materials and literature representing the experiences and insights of Euro-American, African-American, Asian-American, Latina, Native American, and recent immigrant women and children. Considers alternative family arrangements such as single-parent mothers and lesbian mothers. Examines issues of development and stresses on families and relationships. Prerequisite: A 200-level anthropology, psychology, sociology, or women's, gender, and sexuality studies course.  Four credit hours.  S.

SO398As  Policing the American City  Few weeks go by, it seems, without the release of a new video showing an American police officer mistreating or brutalizing someone. While defenders point out that in any large occupation there will inevitably be some bad apples, and that policing is dangerous work in which situations can easily spin out of control, critics see more sinister forces at play, including an effort to control and subordinate minority populations. We will discuss and debate these and many other issues as we read some of the best social science research on police and American cities. What exactly is the social role of the police? What factors shape police behavior? And how might relations be improved?  Four credit hours.  S.  GROSS

SO398Bs  Red and Blue America  Are you a Republican or a Democrat? Conservative or liberal? Libertarian? Democratic Socialist? By many measures, the American electorate is more divided today than it has been in decades. So are politicians, causing what many see as a crisis of governance. What are the roots of American political polarization? What are its consequences—not just for the political system, but also for everyday life, as "blue" states get bluer and "red" states redder? What, if anything, might be done to reverse the trend? We will take a look at cutting-edge research by political scientists, sociologists, economists, and others that speaks to these vital questions for our
democracy.

SO483jf  Honors Project  Prerequisite: Senior standing, admission to the honors program, and permission of the supervising faculty member.  Two to four credit hours.  FACULTY

SO491f, 492s  Independent Study  Individual topics in areas where the student has demonstrated the interest and competence necessary for independent work.  Prerequisite: Junior or senior standing and permission of the department.  Two to four credit hours.  FACULTY

SO493f  Senior Seminar: Social Theories and American Sociology  A capstone seminar that integrates theoretical and methodological perspectives with a variety of sociological topics. The substantive focus varies and has included mental health, social movements, education, race relations, social change, urbanization, globalization, gender, poverty, social problems, inequality, and other advanced topics. Most recently the focus has been on contemporary American society, utilizing the diverse array of sociological approaches to organizations, social problems, institutions, and social change in the United States. Special emphasis will be placed on exploring the conceptual and empirical linkages between topics and the most recent and distinguished sociological scholarship.  Prerequisite: Senior standing in sociology, and Sociology 131, 215, 218, 271, and 272.  Four credit hours.  ARCHIBALD