SOCIOMETRY

Chair, Professor Neil Gross
Professors Cheryl Townsend Gilkes and Neil Gross; Associate Professors Chriestel Kesler and Damon Mayrl; Assistant Professor Annie Hikido; Visiting Assistant Professor Philip Fang

Sociology is the scientific study of society—of patterns and processes in human social relations and behavior. The Sociology Department at Colby provides students with conceptual frameworks and analytic skills necessary to understand how social forces affect people’s lives and how people shape and transform society. Courses focused on a wide range of issues and problems help students analyze institutions and organizations, social and cultural change, persisting inequalities, and much more. Opportunities for intensive discussion and closely supervised research foster the development of critical and creative thinking. 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 and 271 prior to study abroad. Students may receive credit toward the major for up to two courses taken abroad; preferably those courses should be approved in advance. Students majoring in sociology are urged to seek advanced approval for a range of courses and to be prepared for possible cancellation of an approved course in any program abroad.

Requirements for the Major in Sociology

The sociology major requires 11 courses, including Sociology 131, 215, and 271. Among the eight elective courses, an extra methods course is encouraged. At least one elective must be centrally concerned with inequality, and at least two electives must be 300-level seminars. One course in another social science at the 200 level or above may be substituted for one 200-level sociology elective (but this cannot be used to fulfill the inequality requirement). Two electives may be taken in a study-abroad program with prior approval from the department. Sociology 215 and 271 should be completed before the senior year, preferably during the second year.

Requirements for the Minor in Sociology

Seven courses including Sociology 131, 215, and 271; four electives, at least one at the 300 level or above. One course in another social science at the 200 level or above may be substituted for a 200-level elective. Electives may include an independent study (Sociology 491 or 492) for at least three credits.

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

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.
Creativity occurs everywhere, all the time: aspiring rappers learn to freestyle, elite chefs design new dishes, and artists create pieces for an exhibit. By examining the social dynamics of creative work, we will explore why creativity is inherently collective, the relationship between creativity and constraints, how creativity is judged and experienced, and how "cool" creative jobs can also generate inequality. We will compare research on creativity in various domains - artistic practices, creative industries, ordinary life, and organizations - in sociology and neighboring disciplines (anthropology and psychology) to identify common phenomena and better understand how creativity shapes all our lives. 

Four credit hours.  

S.  

FANG
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.

[SO247] Universal Health Care: Could It Work Here? Why does the United States lack a universal health-care system? What would it take to implement such a system here? We analyze the historical evolution of the patchwork of institutions and organizations that make up American health care. We read recent sociological scholarship that compares the United States to other developed countries in order to understand how different health-care systems function. And we apply concepts from these readings to debate whether universal health care is a viable prospect.  

Four credit hours.  

S.

SO248s Sociology of Culture From the world of Little League baseball to hiring practices at top-tier consulting firms, culture is everywhere and everything. But what exactly is culture? And how can we study it? The Sociology of Culture introduces students to one of the largest subfields within sociology, examining how culture shapes and is shaped by the social world. We first explore elements of culture (e.g., norms, values, beliefs, rituals) and culture at every scale (e.g., groups, organizations, cities, societies, globalization). Then, we focus on questions like: What does it mean to understand culture? How do we assess its structuring forces when it intersects with identities, networks, inequality, politics, and power?  

Four credit hours.  

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[SO249] Life Sciences and Society What is social about the life sciences? We consider what happens when biology, medicine, and social order meet. We will look at cases where individuals and groups draw on ideas from biology to justify ill-conceived and dangerous social reform projects, from eugenics to more recent efforts at using genomics as a tool to identify populations at risk for criminal behavior. We will also explore the role social forces play in shaping science, from profit motive in the market for pharmaceuticals to political activism around medical conditions like HIV/AIDS.  

Four credit hours.  

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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: Anthropology 112 or Sociology 131 or sophomore or higher standing.  

Four credit hours.  

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HIKIDO

[SO262] Comparative Perspectives on Inequality How do social inequalities in contemporary American society compare to inequalities in other contemporary democracies and in American history? We will use a comparative perspective to better understand the causes and consequences of inequality and grapple with questions such as: How high are current levels of income and wealth inequality in the United States? How do gender, race, ethnicity, and the social class into which we are born affect life chances in different societies? What role do families, schools, labor markets, and governments play in generating inequalities? What are the consequences of inequality for economic growth, democratic vitality, health, and well-being?  

Four credit hours.  

S, I.

[SO264] The Art and Science of Data Analysis We have access to more data than ever, but how can we actually use it to help us better understand the social world? Students will learn, through practice, how to find, access, and analyze quantitative data using statistical software. We will carefully study analyses in existing published research. Students will ask and answer research questions of their own and learn how to conduct basic exploratory analysis, especially in visual form, as well as to use more advanced techniques such as linear regression and regression with categorical outcomes.  

Prerequisite: Government 281 or Sociology 271.  

Four credit hours.

SO265f Criminology Why do some people resort to violence to settle disputes? What is the relationship between crime and social deprivation? What explains street gangs and other forms of organized crime? Under what conditions does white collar crime flourish? What are the effects of crime control policy on social inequality? This course surveys sociological approaches to crime, introducing students to current theoretical and methodological debates and to the latest research findings. Previously offered as SO298A (Spring 2021).  

Four credit hours.  

GROSS

[SO266] Gender, Work, and Family Some gender inequalities have changed dramatically over the course of the last half century, while others remain far more persistent. We will explore how gender inequalities take shape in two major intersecting life realms: the family and the workplace. We will pay special attention to how gender, work, and family issues vary by social class and race, and how work-family policies help balance work and caregiving responsibilities.  

Four credit hours.  

S.

[SO268] Social Policy and Inequality How does social policy shape inequalities in income, educational attainment, the job market, health, and housing? How do we assess the effects of such policies? We will consider examples of both small- and large-scale policies that target social inequalities. We will evaluate their effects and also consider the social forces that influence policymaking in the United States and other advanced democracies.  

Four credit hours.  

S.
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.  KESLER

[SO276]  **Sociology of Gender**  Gender shapes our everyday lives - what we decide to wear, how we develop relationships, how we envision our futures, and more. But how does this happen? Why does gender difference result in gender inequality? What does it mean to be "feminine" or "masculine"? What is the relationship between gender and sexuality? How does gender intersect with race, class, and other forms of difference? We will explore these questions by considering theories of gender and case studies that analyze gender at work, home, school, and in popular culture.  **Four credit hours.**  S, U.

[SO322]  **Social Class and Schooling**  Listed as Education 322.  **Four credit hours.**  U.

[SO324]  **Elite Schooling in Global Context**  Listed as Education 324.  **Four credit hours.**  I.

SO343f  **Sociology of Hollywood**  How did Hollywood films transform from entertainment to art? Who are the villains in action movies? How do minority actors and directors "make it" in Hollywood? What role do talent agents play in making movies? Does Hollywood still dominate global film markets? What can Hollywood predict about the future of work? This course examines sociological research on the production, distribution, and reception of Hollywood film and television. We will explore various social forces such as cultural gatekeeping, racial hierarchies, globalization, and censorship, and how these processes affect what Hollywood brings to the big screen.  **Four credit hours.**  FANG

SO345fs  **Current Topics in Sociology**  An advanced reading and discussion class focused on analysis, critique, and application of works published in sociology in the past 18 months. Course is integrated with the department colloquium series; majors and minors who complete two semesters may count the course toward one elective requirement.  **Two credit hours.**  Gross, HIKIDO

SO346s  **China and the World**  Examines contemporary Chinese society in light of globalization, emphasizing both the global influence on China and China's impact on the world. We start with an analysis of the post-1978 economic reform and opening-up, and then explore pressing issues that have since emerged in China's engagement with the world. Primarily taking a sociological perspective, we analyze various topics: new forms of inequality, ethnicity, environment, new youth, media culture and technology, gender and sexuality, migration and urbanization, religion, and civil society. Coupling academic and popular works, the course aims to demystify contemporary Chinese society and provide you with new perspectives to better engage with a country that is shaping the world.  **Four credit hours.**  S, I.  FANG

[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:** Any sociology course or American Studies 276.  **Four credit hours.**  S, U.

[SO359]  **Sociologies of Slavery and Slave Communities in the United States**  A multidisciplinary exploration of the experience of
enslaved African Americans and the impact of that experience on culture and social institutions in the United States. Using the insights of sociology and anthropology, attention is paid to slave communities and the strategies enslaved women and men developed for physical and psychic survival as well as for resistance. Slavery is examined as a social institution and cultural force and as a site for the construction and reproduction of “race” and durable inequalities in the United States. Attention to the varieties of cultural inheritance generated during slavery, especially music, folklore, and religious expression and their persistent impacts on American popular culture and African-American consciousness. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112 or Sociology 131. Four credit hours. S, U.

[SO364] 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.

[SO366] American Class Structure Class and class inequality are central to the American political conversation today. But what is class? How should it be conceptualized and measured? What does the American class structure look like under different conceptualizations? What makes class inequality tick—what are the social processes and dynamics that drive it? And how does class connect up to other forms of inequality? We will read books and articles that offer answers. While our main focus will be the United States, we will also consider the American class structure in comparative perspective. Four credit hours. S.

SO367s Art and Science of Data Analysis How can we use data to help us better understand the social world? In this class, you will learn, through practice, how to find, access, and analyze quantitative data using statistical software, and equally importantly, how to meaningfully interpret your analyses to better understand important topics in the social sciences. We will carefully study analyses in existing published research, and you will ask and answer research questions of your own. You will learn how to conduct basic exploratory analysis, especially in visual form, as well as to use more advanced techniques such as linear regression and regression with categorical outcomes. Prerequisite: Government 281, Sociology 271 or equivalent. Four credit hours. KESLER

SO372f Qualitative Research Methods What can we learn about the social world from people’s everyday lives? Students will learn how to conduct qualitative research through interview and fieldwork methods. We will analyze how personal narratives and the mundane practices of daily life shape and are shaped by broader social patterns. We will also consider who gets to be a social science researcher and why it matters. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing or above. Four credit hours. HIKIDO

SO483f 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