

SOCIOLOGY

Department of Sociology

The Sociology department strives to help its students develop insights about the workings of the social world and the influence of social structure. Its goal involves not just understanding the world, but working to change it. The departmental curriculum aims to help students uncover root causes of social problems and refine their personal understanding of social responsibility and economic justice. The Sociology department embraces the goals of personal, community, and global citizenship. Ultimately, the department strives to provide guidance and teaching designed to help students live better lives in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

As a department engaged in public sociology, faculty strive to teach in ways that stress critical thinking joined with action, to advise and mentor students to prepare for lifelong learning and meaningful careers, to encourage students and faculty to collaborate with peers and partners in the community and contribute to the field, and to engage in service to prepare Sociology majors to act in complex settings at home and at work, in their communities and the world. The department encourages majors and minors to participate in study away/study abroad activities.

Admission Requirements

Admission to the Sociology major is based on maintaining acceptable grades in the general foundation requirements and interest in the field of Sociology. Interested persons may contact the Chair of the Sociology department for further information. Upon admission, each major is assigned an advisor and receives an orientation in Sociology.

- 4+1 Bachelor of Science in Sociology/Masters in Non-Profit Management
- Sociology Major
- Sociology Minor

Alex Briesacher, Associate Professor (2015), B.S., Illinois State University; M.A., Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; Ph.D., Kent State University

Siri J. Colom, Assistant Professor (2019), B.A., Tufts University; M.A., University of Massachusetts; Ph.D., University of California Berkeley

Michelle Corbin-Izaurrealde, Professor (2011), B.S., Western Michigan University; M.S., Eastern Michigan University; Ph.D., University of Maryland

Francisco Vivoni, Department Chair, Associate Professor (2013), B.A., Universidad Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras; Ph.D., University of Illinois, Urbana

Courses

SO-100 Introduction to Sociology

LASC Categories: HBS, ICW

The nature of group behavior and social interaction viewed through analysis of structure, norms, and values.

3 Credits

SO-110 Cultural Anthropology

Cross-cultural analysis of the human capacity for adaptation and technological and ideological development. Significant field studies will be examined.

3 Credits

SO-190 Sport and Society

LASC Categories: HBS, USW, DAC, DIV

Analysis of sport as a social system. The implication of sport within interrelational contexts of other social systems.

Every year. 3 Credits

SO-193 First Year Seminar Sociology

LASC Categories: FYS

Introductory level course covering topics of special interest to first year students. Offered only as a First Year Seminar.

3 Credits

SO-199 Special Topics in Sociology

Foundations in a selected sub-field of sociology ; announcement made at pre-registration time.

3 Credits

SO-200 Contemporary Social Problems

LASC Categories: HBS, DIV, USW

This course studies how social problems come to be: students learn about what constitutes a social problem and who defines a social problem? Why do some social problems receive so much attention, while others are ignored? We will examine these questions drawing on case studies of contemporary issues, like inequality, racism, immigration, mass incarceration, health care, climate change, drugs, and more.

Every year. 3 Credits

SO-201 Prejudice, Privilege, and Power

LASC Categories: DIV, TLC, HBS, ICW

This course is an introduction to the social psychological foundations of identity and its relation to prejudice, privilege, and power in micro-interactions and social structures. Students will engage with social psychological understandings of categorizations and their implications at the individual and structural levels.

Other or on demand and other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-207 First Generation to College: Campus Diversity and College Inequality

LASC Categories: HBS, ICW, DAC

First generation to college is a term for the increasing numbers of students who are first in their families to attend college. As college has been increasingly framed as the primary mechanism for social and economic mobility, college attendance has reached historic highs for nearly every demographic including for historically marginalized communities. This has created increasingly diverse campuses and it has increasingly bound colleges to broader patterns of inequality. This course examines the racial and economic politics facing first generation to college students as well as the structural inequalities shaping college and its promises of social and economic mobility.

Other or on demand and other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-215 Medical Sociology

LASC Categories: HBS, ICW

Prerequisites: SO-100

The structure of health care delivery systems and levels of health care personnel, patients, and families of patients.

3 Credits

SO-220 Sociology of the Family

LASC Categories: HBS

A comparative approach to the study of the structure of family systems with emphasis on changing patterns of family life.

Every year. 3 Credits

SO-228 Latinx Experiences in the U.s. and the World**LASC Categories:** TLC, USW, DAC, DIV

This course surveys current theoretical approaches used to explain Latina/o experiences and provides an empirical overview of how social institutions affect the daily lives of Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. and the world.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-230 Political Sociology**LASC Categories:** HBS, GP**Prerequisites:** SO-100

Foundations of social movements in political phenomena, social conditions, and emerging political institutions; the structural basis of social change and politics.

Other or on demand and every year. 3 Credits

SO-235 Music and Social Change**LASC Categories:** CA, HBS, TLC, ICW

Using case studies, social theory and historical materials, this course explores the role of music in social change.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-240 Sociology of Education**Prerequisites:** SO-100

Study of modern educational systems, emphasizing the social, political and economic factors that influence its organization and its functions.

3 Credits

SO-250 Sociology of Religion**LASC Categories:** HBS, ICW, DAC**Prerequisites:** SO-100

A cross-cultural comparative study of the nature of religious institutions as systems of socially determined and socially relevant beliefs and practices.

3 Credits

SO-255 Sociology of Disability**LASC Categories:** HBS, ICW, DAC

Using theory and practical application, this course explores the impact of impairment and disability within a societal context.

3 Credits

SO-270 Social Theory I**LASC Categories:** TLC, GP**Prerequisites:** SO-100

Fundamental concepts and intellectual traditions, especially the contributions of Comte, Spencer, Marx, Toennies, Durkheim, and Simmel.

3 Credits

SO-275 Social and Behavioral Statistics**LASC Categories:** QAC

Prerequisites: SO-100 and any 200 Sociology course. SO 280 recommended

Data tabulation; graphing; measurement of central tendency, variability, and correlation; hypothesis testing applied to psychological and sociological data. Hand and computer analysis.

3 Credits

SO-280 Research Methods of Sociology**Prerequisites:** SO-100

An analysis of the research function in sociology; the conduct of research appropriate to undergraduate students; the formal presentation of research papers.

3 Credits

SO-285 Race, Class and Gender**LASC Categories:** HBS, DAC

An introduction to dominant-minority group relations through the investigation of the patterns and dynamics of differentiation, inequality and discrimination.

3 Credits

SO-295 Sociology of Death & Dying**LASC Categories:** DAC, HBS, ICW**Prerequisites:** SO-100

The course explores the sociological concepts and perspectives as they relate to death and dying and how American society deals with illness, dying, death and bereavement.

3 Credits

SO-299 Special Topics in Sociology Concepts, Realities and Representations

Intermediate level topics.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-300 Social Change**Prerequisites:** 2 Sociology courses at 200 level, EN-102.

A study of the conditions, patterns, and consequences of social transformation with emphasis on institutional and individual patterns of adjustment and adaptation.

3 Credits

SO-303 Environmental Sociology**LASC Categories:** DIV, GP, HBS

This course explores the relationship between environment and society through a focus on political ecology, sociological dimensions of environmental crisis and dynamics of social change. Prerequisite: 30 completed credits.

Other or on demand and every year. 3 Credits

SO-305 Applied Sociology**LASC Categories:** HBS, ICW**Prerequisites:** SO-100 SO-280

This course approaches Applied Sociology through a project based learning experience incorporating elements of a Community Based Research Process and/or Public Sociology. While applied topics of the course will change from semester to semester, this course will explore the theories and methods of applied sociology, potentially including ethnographic, institutional, and participatory research techniques in community settings.

3 Credits

SO-307 Puerto Rican Diaspora**LASC Categories:** DIV, GP, USW

This course surveys a wide range of Puerto Rican experiences and provides an overview of how social structures shape the daily lives of Puerto Ricans in the United States. Through a focus on diasporas, the course centers on migration as a key experience within Puerto Rican imaginaries. The course explores the sociological themes of identity, race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality, social class, and stratification through the lens of Puerto Rican struggle and resistance. Puerto Rican diasporic communities are examined at the intersections of colonialism, modernity, and neoliberal globalization. Prerequisite: 30 completed credits.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-312 Youth, Race, and Public Space**LASC Categories:** DIV, HBS, ICW

The course studies young people as agents of social change through key debates and local/global case studies across the academic subfields of youth studies, critical race theory, and public space scholarship. Students in this course engage with youth experiences of increased surveillance and regulation in public space as well as creative forms of subversion and resistance. Through the discussion and analysis of cutting-edge scholarship, students in this course craft critical ethnographies at the multiple intersections of youth, race, and public space. Prerequisite: 30 completed credits.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-315 Social Movements**Prerequisites:** two Sociology courses at the 200 level

Processes by which new norms and forms of social organization emerge from group behavior, aggregate behavior, and social movements.

3 Credits

SO-318 Worcester and Its Discontents**LASC Categories:** DIV, HBS, ICW

This course studies the city of Worcester from a sociological perspective focused on settler colonialism, industrial capitalism and neoliberal gentrification. Students learn about the systematic erasure of indigenous knowledge as crucial to the formation of the capitalist city. Students make key connections between settler colonialism and the contemporary displacement of working-class communities of color in Worcester. The course chronicles lived experiences of economic restructuring within Worcester that signal a meaningful shift from industrial powerhouse to postindustrial theme park. Prerequisite: 30 completed credits.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-320 Sociology of Race and Ethnicity**LASC Categories:** GP, USW, DAC, WAC, DIV

This course focuses on historical and contemporary discussions of Race and Ethnicity within Sociology. The course will familiarize students with central threads in the study of race and ethnicity and work to identify gaps, particularly as they are relevant for the academic and social sphere of today. Prerequisite: 30 completed credits.

Every year. 3 Credits

SO-332 Contemporary Immigrant Experiences**LASC Categories:** GP, USW**Prerequisites:** EN-102.

In this course students will examine immigrants' lived experiences in the U.S., and learn about the legal systems immigrants must navigate and their experiences with incorporation into different areas of society. Students will be exposed to current debates in the field and engage with theories of immigration, immigration policies, and other laws that shape immigrants' lives. This course will facilitate an understanding of how communities respond to practices that curtail immigrants' basic rights as they navigate intersecting structures of power in American society. Students will be encouraged to look at local examples to make connections between policies, theories, and debates.

3 Credits

SO-340 Social Psychology**LASC Categories:** HBS, ICW, TLC**Prerequisites:** 6 credits in Sociology.

This course explores the interplay between the individual and society by examining how social factors shape our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. We will investigate the concept of the self as a product of society, as well as the self as a force in society.

Other or on demand and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

SO-350 Wealth, Poverty, and Power**LASC Categories:** HBS, WAC, DAC, DIV, GP, TLC, USW

Sociological examination of economic stratification; focuses on the translation of class into power via politics, education and collective struggle. Prerequisite: 30 completed credits.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-355 Gender and Sexuality**LASC Categories:** HBS, ICW, DAC

This course introduces the sociologist study of gender and sexuality. This course examines how social institutions and cultural norms construct particular gender roles and sexual identities within society.

3 Credits

SO-360 Urban Sociology**LASC Categories:** DIV, HBS, ICW, GP

A cross-cultural study of urban social systems and the phenomena and problems connected with the planning process. Prerequisite: 30 completed credits.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

SO-375 Contemporary Social Theory**Prerequisites:** SO-270

Analytical devices, conceptual schemes, and models used by contemporary theorists with emphasis on structural sociology.

3 Credits

SO-400 Independent Study

For advanced sociology majors only; topic to be approved by an independent study advisor. (Requires eight prior courses in sociology.)

1-6 Credits

SO-408 Directed Study

Directed study offers students, who because of unusual circumstances may be unable to register for a course when offered, the opportunity to complete an existing course with an established syllabus under the direction and with agreement from a faculty member.

1-3 Credits

SO-410 Field Work

Data collection based on participant observation within a social service organization; assignment approval by field-work advisor. (Requires eight prior courses in Sociology.)

1-6 Credits

SO-420 Seminar in Sociology**Prerequisites:** 9 credits from department Sociology.

Advanced study topics in selected areas of Sociology.

1-3 Credits

SO-425 Global Capitalism**LASC Categories:** HBS, GP, WAC**Prerequisites:** EN-102

This class will look at the development of capitalism from an historical, sociological, and critical perspective and consider the ways capitalism has made and unmade the world. Themes may include: imperialism and the underdevelopment of the Global South, decolonization struggles, global urbanization, global financial institutions, global labor struggles, war and capitalism, global environmental crises and the struggle over resources, and market hegemony.

Every year. 3 Credits

SO-499 Sociology Capstone

LASC Categories: CAP, WAC

Prerequisites: SO-270 SO-275 SO-280 EN-102

This course is an overview of the discipline of sociology, emphasizing the mastery of the discipline at an undergraduate level.

4 Credits

Program Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate and apply critical thinking skills in evaluating social theory
- Learn sociological methods
- Learn and understand social structure and social institutions
- Explore the reciprocal relationship between self and society
- Explore public sociology, including engagement with the world, activism, and social change
- Develop a deeper understanding of cultural variation (diversity)