

SOCIOLOGY (SOC)

While all social sciences are interested in understanding human behavior, sociology is distinguished by its focus on understanding patterns of human behavior and emphasizing the social forces that shape and influence these patterns. Often, this perspective is surprising and can challenge assumptions of how the world works. The subject matter of sociology is broad—anything about social life one is interested in can be (and likely has been) studied by sociologists. Ultimately, students of sociology develop an appreciation for ways in which social structures and culture shape the world they live in and thus shape their own lives.

This breadth of social life is reflected in the sociology curriculum. After taking SOC 101 Introduction to Sociology (GT-SS3), which is a prerequisite for other sociology courses, students are free to pursue other areas of interest. Courses on social institutions (such as family, medicine, and the criminal justice system), social processes (such as the relationship between the self and society, social movements, and deviance), and social stratification (such as race, class and gender) represent the rich diversity of social life that sociologists are interested in understanding. These offerings are complemented by grounding in social theory and methodology. As a social science, sociological knowledge is based on empirical observation and analysis that is informed by and informs social theory.

The standard major provides a mix of seven core courses and six elective choices. Students with an interest in criminal justice can pursue a concentration in that area by taking an additional list of core courses in the criminal justice emphasis. Students who wish to pursue a minor take the introductory course and then choose five elective courses. SOC 101 Introduction to Sociology (GT-SS3) and SOC 168 Social Problems also fulfill Area I General Education requirements. Sociology majors are encouraged to take MATH 113 Statistical Thinking (GT-MA1), to fulfill the general education mathematics competency requirement.

In addition to classroom instruction, The Sociology Club and the International Honors Society in Sociology, Alpha Kappa Delta, are active on campus with social and intellectual activities. While sociology provides a useful perspective for any kind of employment, graduates typically find employment in social services, law enforcement, teaching, and research.

Program Goals

- The Sociology Program's main goal is to graduate students who understand and can apply the perspective of Sociology to their everyday lives, relationships, and experiences in social institutions including the family, the workplace, and civil society. This includes training students to recognize the relevance of sociological theories and methods in examining social life.
- The Sociology Program's second goal is to encourage students to actively engage in the University and in their community while attending Western, to train students to use the tools of sociology in doing so, and to continue such community involvement after graduation.
- The Sociology Program's third goal is to prepare qualified graduates to pursue advanced degrees in Sociology or related social science disciplines. Whether or not students pursue graduate study, the Sociology Program aims to prepare all students for entry into careers related to the discipline or for advancement in an already-achieved career.

- Behavioral Health: Principles of Health Navigation and Peer Support Certificate (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/sociology/behavioral-health-nav-support-cert/>)
- Behavioral Health: Principles of Health Navigation and Peer Support Certificate, Spanish Enhancement (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/sociology/behavioral-health-nav-support-cert-span-enhancement/>)
- Sociology Major: Community Health Emphasis (with a 3+2 Master of Behavioral Science in Rural Community Health) (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/sociology/community-health-emphasis-master-behavioral-science/>)
- Sociology Major: Environmental Management Emphasis (with a 3+2 Master in Environmental Management) (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/sociology/environmental-management-emphasis-master-environmental-management/>)
- Sociology Major: Standard Program (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/sociology/sociology-standard-program/>)
- Sociology Minor (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/sociology/sociology-minor/>)
- Sociology Standard Major: Criminal Justice Emphasis (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/sociology/sociology-standard-criminal-justice/>)

Capstone Course Requirement

The following courses in the Sociology Major fulfill the capstone course requirement: SOC 498 Capstone, or SOC 399 Internship in Sociology (Criminal Justice Emphasis).

Sociology Courses

SOC 101. Introduction to Sociology (GT-SS3). (3 Credits)

An introduction to the discipline of sociology with special emphasis on the unique perspective this science utilizes to examine the social world. Sociology is distinguished by its focus on understanding patterns of human behavior and emphasizing the social forces that shape and influence these patterns. Primary course focus is on culture, inequality, race and gender, and social institutions. This course serves as a 'gateway' course for all Sociology majors and minors, and must be passed with a minimum grade of 'C' to be used as a prerequisite. Prerequisite for all 200-, 300-, and 400-level Sociology courses. GT-SS3

SOC 150. Environmental Sociology. (3 Credits)

The sociological perspective is utilized to examine a variety of issues addressing the human-environment interface. In particular, this course examines how social organization and culture both shape and are shaped by the natural environment. The course focuses on issues of sustainability, the rights of the natural world, and environmental justice.

SOC 168. Social Problems. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the field of sociology through an analysis of social problems in the United States and in the world. Course focus is on topics such as drugs and alcohol abuse, crime and prisons, health and illness, hunger and poverty, resource depletion and pollution, and the effects of globalization.

SOC 197. Special Topics. (1-6 Credits)

SOC 211. Quantitative Research Methods. (3 Credits)

Students deepen their familiarity with quantitative social science, casual reasoning, and research design. Emphasis on creating rationales for choosing methods such as field experiments and survey questionnaires, with opportunities for practical experience in assessing and creating research design and instruments for gathering quantitative data. Students enhance their fluency in interpreting descriptive and inferential statistics and the logic of hypothesis testing. Prerequisites: SOC 101 with minimum grade of C; and MATH 113 or MATH 140. Or instructor permission.

SOC 225. Self and Society. (3 Credits)

An examination of how the discipline of sociology approaches micro-level phenomenon. Emphasis is on the formation of the self, the socialization process, and the importance of language to social interaction. Beginning with the premise that social reality is a social construction which has been created through our interactions with others, the implications of this premise for the version of reality each of us experiences is explored. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

SOC 259. Introduction to Criminal Justice. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the history and contemporary issues of the criminal justice system (law enforcement, courts, and corrections) in the United States. Topics surveyed include the system's history, constitutional limitations, philosophical background, and the system's process. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

SOC 285. Criminology. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the field of criminology with special emphasis on theories of crime, types of criminals, victimology, and the criminal justice system. Special topics examined include gangs, white collar crimes, property crimes, victimless crimes, and organized crime. Prerequisites: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C and SOC 259 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

SOC 297. Special Topics. (1-6 Credits)**SOC 302. Origins of Sociological Theory. (3 Credits)**

Students enhance their understanding of sociological perspectives that arose from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, primarily in European and North American sociology. Emphasis on constructing social scientific arguments, ways of evaluating them, and understanding the relevance of theory in social science. Students learn the importance and uses of historical materialism, functionalism, critical theories, symbolic interactionism, and social reproduction theory. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C.

SOC 303. Contemporary Sociological Theory. (3 Credits)

Students deepen their understanding of perspectives that arose from the mid-twentieth century to present day, primarily in European and North American sociology. Emphasis on construction social scientific arguments, ways of elevating them, and understanding the relevance of theory for social science. Students learn the importance and uses of neo-Marxism, world systems theory, queer theory, critical symbolic interactionism, sociology of emotions, and identity theory. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C. Or instructor permission.

SOC 310. Qualitative Research Methods. (3 Credits)

An examination of qualitative approaches to understanding social life. In particular, the course covers selecting a topic suitable for qualitative investigation, participant observation 220 Sociology and in depth interviewing techniques, the ethics and politics associated with doing qualitative research, writing up field notes, formulating topics, reviewing the literature around the topic, the analysis of field notes, and the writing of research reports. Prerequisite: ENG 102 with a grade of C- or above; SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

SOC 320. Sociology of Families. (3 Credits)

An exploration of family forms, intimate relationships, and the symbolic environments that families provide for identity development over the life course. Emphasis on the family as a social organization and as an institution. Students consider how families become embedded in demographic changes and how family life relates to shifts in other social institutions such as religion, the economy, and education. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C. Or instructor permission.

SOC 322. Sociology of Health, Illness, and Medicine. (3 Credits)

An examination of the United States Health Care System and comparison of various components of this system with that of others. The allopathic (Western) medical model is also examined. The course emphasizes the mortality and morbidity trends and patterns which exist in the U.S., the problems facing our health care system (high costs, unequal access), and alternative models of health and disease. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

SOC 323. Cultural Studies. (3 Credits)

A foundation in the sociology of culture as well as extensive analysis of selected regional, national and/or global (sub) cultures and their environments. Issues covered include the social organization of culture, institutions and narratives, material and non-material culture, and cultural identity and the self. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

SOC 340. Social Movements. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the study of social movements with two goals in mind. First, is to expose students to the beliefs, practices, and consequences of a number of important historical, and contemporary movements. Second, the course familiarizes students with the theoretical perspectives, conceptual issues, focal questions, and empirical research that animate the study of social movements. This includes such issues as movement emergence, movement participation, mobilization dynamics, movement strategies and tactics, and movement outcomes. Prerequisite: SOC 101 or ENVS 100 with a minimum grade of C. Or instructor permission.

SOC 349. Law Enforcement. (3 Credits)

An examination of issues affecting American law enforcement. Students are exposed to the historical underpinnings of the American policing experience, police operations and applications at the local, state, federal, and international levels, law enforcement subculture, police structure and organization, ethics, selection and training, and career opportunities. Prerequisite: SOC 259 with a minimum grade of C, or instructor permission.

SOC 350. Deviance. (3 Credits)

Students examine various forms of nonconformity-criminal and otherwise. To do so, they study the major theoretical perspectives addressing deviance and its control. Students explore how ordinary rituals, agents of social control, and ideology interact to maintain the existing social order. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C, or instructor permission.

SOC 351. Juvenile Delinquency. (3 Credits)

Biological, psychological, and sociological factors in juvenile delinquency are examined, as are modern trends in prevention and treatment. The course also addresses the procedural and substantive aspects of the juvenile justice system. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C, or instructor permission.

SOC 355. Drugs and Society. (3 Credits)

An examination of trends and patterns in American drug use, drug classification schemes, the relationship between drugs and crime, and drug education and prevention strategies. The use of hallucinogenic plants in other cultures is also explored. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C, or instructor permission.

SOC 367. Corrections. (3 Credits)

An in-depth look at corrections in the United States. Topics include history of corrections, jails, prisons, community corrections, offenders and inmates, women in corrections, juvenile corrections, correctional officers and treatment professionals, and special inmate populations. Prerequisites: SOC 101, SOC 259 and SOC 285 all with a minimum grade of C. Or instructor permission.

SOC 380. Social Class, Status, and Power. (3 Credits)

An examination of major theories and concepts associated with social inequality as well as the causes and consequence of social inequality. The historical and contemporary aspects of social inequality in the United States are explored. Forms of resistance to social inequality are also considered. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C. Or instructor permission.

SOC 381. Ethnicity, Race, and Racism. (3 Credits)

Students develop their understanding of how ethnic and racial categories get created and reproduced, including the diverse religious ethnic groups and racial identities that arose over the past three centuries in North America. Emphasis on how racial and ethnic categories operate as durable hierarchies. Topics include Blackness/Whiteness dichotomies, the meanings of indigeneity, varieties of Asian-American and Latina/o identities, in-group belonging, and the social forces that enable feelings of ethnic and racial belonging. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C. Or instructor permission.

SOC 382. Gender, Sexuality, and Power. (3 Credits)

Explores gender and sexuality as aspects of socialization, identity development, and relationships. Students develop their understanding of how ideas about gender and sexuality get reproduced, with focus on options for gender and sexuality that have arisen since the mid-twentieth century. Topics include the reproduction of masculinity and femininity in everyday life, and how these relate to stereotypes, in-group bias, discrimination, and the group affiliations that deepen people's feelings of belonging and solidarity. Prerequisite: SOC 101 with a minimum grade of C. Or instructor permission.

SOC 392. Independent Study. (1-6 Credits)**SOC 397. Special Topics. (1-6 Credits)****SOC 399. Internship in Sociology. (1-6 Credits)**

Sociology internships provide Sociology majors of junior and senior status with opportunities to work on sites off campus in the areas of law enforcement and social services. The experience must meet standards set by the College and by the sociology faculty. Up to three hours of internship credit may be counted toward the major. Graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory only.

SOC 492. Independent Study. (1-6 Credits)

Independent studies are available to seniors as a Capstone option. Enrollment is contingent upon developing a proposal with a faculty sponsor and requires a variable credit form. Prerequisite: minimum GPA of 3.50 in Sociology courses or instructor permission.

SOC 497. Special Topics. (1-6 Credits)**SOC 498. Capstone. (3 Credits)**

Provides Sociology majors with a culminating activity for the senior year. Students summarize and integrate their coursework, apply their emerging sociological perspective to real world events, and prepare for future careers, jobs, and/or graduate work. Prerequisites: SOC 101 and SOC 310 with minimum grades of C, and one of the following: SOC 211, PSY 200, ECON 216, or MATH 213 with minimum grade of C; senior standing, or instructor permission.