

Sociology

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Sociology courses deal with the structure and functioning of societies, the nature of social interaction, the relationship between the individual and society, and the nature of change in human societies.

Learning Goals: Upon graduation, a student will be able to:

- Understand the discipline of sociology, including foundational concepts such as the sociological imagination, social inequality, stratification, social change, culture, structure, institutions, identity, interactions, and the importance of place and the natural environment in social relations.
- Describe, effectively apply, and engage basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of sociological inquiry.
- Employ various sociological research methods, including qualitative and quantitative approaches, to ethically investigate sociological questions.
- Identify underlying assumptions of, effectively apply, and critically engage sociological work that uses different theoretical and methodological approaches.
- Connect sociological questions with appropriate theories and methods in research.
- Critically and effectively communicate verbally and in written form according to professional standards in sociology.
- Understand both the importance of public and applied sociology and the individual student's role in civic engagement using a sociological lens.

Distribution: Courses completed in sociology apply to the social sciences and cultural pluralism (selected courses) distribution areas, except for Sociology 208, which may also apply to quantitative analysis.

Total credit requirement for a Sociology major: A student who enters Whitman without any prior college-level preparation in sociology will have to complete 36 credits to fulfill the requirements for the sociology major.

Course levels: 200-level courses are designed to introduce students to subfields in sociology. 300-level courses include: more depth and specificity; seminar-style pedagogies; smaller class size; more intensity in reading assignments; deeper engagement with, and application of, theories and methods in sociology; greater emphasis on written and/or oral communication; and an emphasis on thesis preparation. Most 200-level courses in sociology do not have prerequisites. 300-level courses, require at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor.

The Sociology Major:

- 36 Credits
- Required courses
 - Sociology 117, 207, 251, 490, either 492 or 498
 - At least one 300-level Sociology course excluding all courses completed off-campus or as an independent study
 - Additional credits to total 36 credits
- Other notes
 - No P-D-F courses can count towards the major
 - No more than 8 transfer credits may apply toward the major
 - Students should take Soc 117 as early in their Whitman education as possible
 - Students should take Soc 207 and 251 before senior year, if possible.
- Senior Requirements
 - Sociology 490 (fall), 492 or 498 (spring), must be taken in fall-to-spring sequence
 - Written thesis

- Oral Comprehensive Exam
- Honors
 - Students do not apply for admission to candidacy for honors
 - Students must submit a proposal for their thesis or project
 - Must be submitted within the first six weeks of the two-semester period in which student is eligible
 - Accumulated at least 87 credits
 - Completed two semesters of residency at Whitman.
 - Cumulative GPA of at least 3.300 on all credits earned at Whitman College
 - Major GPA of at least 3.500
 - Complete a written thesis or research project prepared exclusively for the satisfaction of this program
 - Earn a grade of at least A- on the honors thesis or project and the honors thesis course
 - Pass the senior assessment with distinction
 - Chair of the department will notify the Registrar of students attaining Honors no later than the beginning of week 12 of the semester.
 - An acceptable digital copy of the Honors Thesis must be submitted to Penrose Library no later than Reading Day

The Sociology minor:

- 18 Credits
- Required Courses
 - Sociology 117, 207, and 251
- Other notes
 - Courses cannot be taken P-D-F

The Sociology-Environmental Studies combined major: The requirements are fully described in the *Environmental Studies* section of this catalog.

The Sociology+French major:

- All the required 36 Credits for a Sociology major
- A total of 24 credits, additional credits, comprised as follows:
 - At least 16 credits taught in French at the 200 level or above, or equivalent.
 - Up to 12 credits may be comprised of any combination of the following:
 - Up to 8 credits from approved courses taught in English
 - Up to 8 credits transferred from off-campus studies or another institution
 - Up to 4 credits “double-dipped” with approved courses counted toward another major or minor program
 - Up to 4 AP /IB credits (see note)
- Attainment of B2 or Advanced Low level on a recognized language proficiency assessment (DELF, ACTFL, etc.).
- Two or more of the following integrative components with the primary major :
 - A thesis topic that explicitly incorporates a significant portion of French/Francophone content, broadly understood (textual, geographic, theoretical, historical, etc.)
 - A grade of B or higher in a course in Sociology taught in French (normally only an option through off-campus studies)
 - A course in Sociology that has been approved as a “double dip” (see note)
 - An internship related to Sociology major, conducted in a French setting
 - An oral presentation of the senior project (or equivalent) in French, for a general public
 - Portfolio + reflective essay in French
- Complete the senior self evaluation survey about their combined major experience.

- **Honors in a Sociology+French** will be determined according to the criteria of the Sociology major.
- **Notes:**
 - Certain majors may allow for a “double dip”, such as:
 - An approved course taught in English that counts towards both the major requirements and the French requirements.
 - A course completed in French off campus that counts towards both the major requirements and the French requirements.
 - Within the 8-credit transfer limitation, any university-level courses taught entirely in French may count toward the French requirements, regardless of topic.
 - Sociology+French candidates have a major advisor in Sociology, and a second advisor from the French department who works with them to define and assess the integrative component. Students should approach a French advisor as soon after declaring their primary major as possible.

117 Principles of Sociology

Fall, Spring Fall: Staff, Wakefield; Spring: Staff, Wakefield 4 credits

Principles of Sociology is a comprehensive introduction to the discipline of sociology, or the systematic study of human group behavior. With a balance between lectures and discussions, the course covers basic sociological theories and quantitative and qualitative methodological perspectives. Course topics include historical foundations of the discipline, social interaction, socialization, structure, culture, groups and networks, applied sociology, inequalities, globalization, and the relationship between humans and the built and natural environments. Student work includes reading assignments, exams, papers, and an empirical research project that entails research design, data collection and analysis, oral and written presentation of findings, and application of a sociological theory and past empirical research to the findings. Required of all majors; should be taken as early in the student’s program as possible. Open to First-years, sophomores and juniors; seniors by consent of instructor only.

207 Social Research Methods

Fall, Spring Santana-Acuña 4 credits

A course designed to introduce the student to the procedures by which sociologists gather, analyze, and interpret factual information about the social world. Topics to be covered in this course include the part which social research plays in the larger discipline of sociology, the relationships between sociological theory and social research, research design, measurement and the operationalization of concepts, probabilistic sampling, observational data-gathering procedures, survey research, the use of secondary source materials, and experimentation. Required of sociology majors and minors; open to students in other social science disciplines with consent of instructor. *Pre or Co-requisite:* Sociology 117.

208 Social Statistics

Spring Wakefield 4 credits

A course designed to complement and expand upon the knowledge gained in Sociology 207, as it introduces the student to the various statistical procedures by which social researchers carry out the quantitative analysis of sociological data. Topics to be addressed in this course include univariate and bivariate descriptive statistics, statistical inference, and techniques of multivariate analysis. The goals of this course are to instill within the student an understanding of these procedures at both the conceptual and practical levels, and to teach the student how to utilize these procedures using computer software packages. This course is particularly recommended for any student who is (a) contemplating writing a senior thesis involving the collection and quantitative analysis of original empirical data, and/or (b) considering the possibility of pursuing graduate study in the social sciences. *Prerequisite:* Sociology 207 or consent of instructor.

209 Sociology of Health and Illness

Not offered 2023-24

4 credits

This course provides an introduction to the sociology of health and illness, also known as medical sociology. It examines the distribution and experience of health and illness, and explores how the health care system, health experiences, and health inequalities are shaped by social, cultural, political, and economic factors. The course will introduce sociological perspectives on health and disease, and focus on understanding illness trends and experiences in social and historical context. Topics covered include: the illness experience; doctor-patient relationships; hierarchies within the health care sector; the social construction of medicine; the impact of food, occupations, and the environment on health; disparities in health outcomes and health care access; ethics in medicine; health social movements; and health care policy.

211 Community-Based Sociology

Not offered 2023-24

4 credits

Community-Based Sociology is designed for any student interested in combining an ongoing or new local paid or unpaid community placement with sociological investigation into the topics central to the placement, to the placement's interactional and group-level organizational dynamics, and to the overarching connection between social inquiry and its application in local organizations and/or projects. Professor-approved placements can be located in non-profit, for-profit, educational, governmental, human service, or other similar community settings in the Walla Walla Valley. Topics for placements can connect to fields in social sciences, humanities, arts, and/or sciences, and placements may be arranged using existing College resources or by the student and professor. Readings, lectures, and discussions cover epistemological, political, and conceptual overlaps and differences between traditional, public, applied, and other forms of community-based sociology, as well as issues surrounding reciprocity and ethics in the relationship between academic inquiry and on-the-ground work in the community. Students who take the class must have an arranged placement by the second week of classes, and must spend at least one hour per week in the placement. Placements must be concurrent with the semester the course is taken. Student work includes readings, reflective writing about the experience, class meetings (which includes discussion and presentation), responses to readings, and a project that integrates sociological investigation with the placement experience.

212 Political Sociology

Not offered 2023-24

4 credits

What is power and what forms can it take? What are nation states and why have they become the dominant form of ruling over people? Who elects our political representatives: markets or voters? Is democracy the best system of government? Are there viable alternatives to it? How is democracy achieved and what threats does it face in the current era? In an increasing globalized world, does it make sense to refer to citizens, states, and power in national terms? These are some of the questions we analyze in this course, which reviews major approaches to political sociology through explorations of the following topics: state and nation formation, civil society, citizenship, democracy, elections, contentious politics, populism, terrorism, globalization, markets, media coverage, and the environment. A strong emphasis is put on historical analyses and empirical studies.

220 Latin@s in the United States

Not offered 2023-24

4 credits

This course provides an introduction to the social scientific study of Latina/os in American society. Major social, political, and economic trends will be discussed in historical and contemporary contexts. The course will focus on issues related to immigration and transnationalism, ethnicity and identity, gender and sexuality, and socioeconomic status and labor market participation. Course readings will focus primarily on the Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Mexican descent populations; however we will also consider other groups in the heterogeneous Latin@ community. Students will be evaluated on class participation, a midterm and final exam, and a short research paper.

229 Environmental Sociology**Fall****Cordner****4 credits**

How is the environment shaped by society, and how is society shaped by the environment? Who controls access to environmental resources, and who is impacted by environmental hazards? How is “nature” defined, and what role do societies have in that definition? This course addresses these and other questions, and provides an overview of the central debates in environmental sociology. We will explore current environmental topics from a sociological perspective, focusing on interactions between human societies and the natural environment. At the end of the course, students will be able to describe key theories in environmental sociology, explain how environmental sociologists look at issues like technological innovation and population stresses on resources, and apply these key theories to a variety of contemporary environmental problems. The course will include lectures, in-class discussions and assignments, papers, applied research projects and exams.

248 Sociology of Big Data: Algorithms, Robots, and Digital Societies**Spring****Santana-Acuña****4 credits**

In recent decades, most societies around the world have experienced an explosion in the production, circulation, and consumption of data. This ongoing revolution, often associated with the word Big Data, is having unprecedented social and cultural consequences. This course will explore such consequences by looking at global usages of Big Data. Sites of observation and analysis will include technological tools and social groups that interact with such data, including algorithms, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, robots, social media, and digital influencers. Areas looked into will include labor markets, political policies, social relations, and cultural values. Students will leave the course with a better understanding of the current relationship between society and technology and especially of the social implications surrounding use of Big Data.

251 Social Theory**Fall****Mireles****4 credits**

This course introduces students to major thinkers, ideas, concepts, and debates that are part of the trajectory of social theory from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. The course also addresses the question of how social theories relate to the context in which they are produced and how they can be put in practice to help us explain social issues. Required of sociology majors and minors.

257 Sociology of the Family**Not offered 2023-24****4 credits**

This course examines contemporary and historical families in the U.S. and globally through a sociological lens. Simultaneously a public and private entity, the family has long been considered by many to be the critical building block and pivotal institution in society, but over the course of many generations and in countless cultures, the concept of family itself has been defined and redefined. Students will learn about changing families as they relate to growing lifespans, globalization, shifts in paid work experiences, changing religious and political perspectives, technological changes, shifting media representations, and innovative lifestyles and dwelling design. Upon completion of the course, students will demonstrate an understanding of, and connection between, topics such as: family theories, research methods used to study families, love and sex, courtship, cohabitation, care work, reproduction, parenting, childhood, paid work and family boundaries, violence, break-up/divorce, family policy, stepfamilies, aging, home design, and more. Through course readings, written assignments, class discussions, and exams, students will explore how race, social class, gender, age, and sexual orientation intersect and shape processes of inequalities, family formation, intimacy, and decisions about various family life stages.

258 Gender and Society**Fall****Staff****4 credits**

What is gender? How does gender inform our lives and the organization of society? This course provides a variety of theoretical, empirical, and narrative responses to these questions. Emphasis is placed on the interplay between theory and lived experience in a variety of interactional and institutional settings. The course investigates the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of gender relations in the context of race and class. Topics include: the

global economy, domestic work, socialization, sexuality, violence, identity, the family, health, education, and social change.

259 Sociology of Crime and Delinquency

Fall

Wakefield

4 credits

A sociological examination of the patterns, causes, and consequences of criminal and delinquent behavior in modern society. Specific topics to be studied in this course include: 1) the origins of and purposes behind criminal law; 2) the various theories of crime and delinquency; and 3) the relationships between the public's perception of and concern about the various forms of criminal deviance and the true impact of these behaviors upon society. This course is open to all students, but previous coursework in sociology would be very helpful.

267 Race and Ethnic Group Relations

Fall

H. Kim

4 credits

This course investigates ways in which power relations in the United States influence cultural, economic, and political meanings of race and ethnicity. A variety of sociological meanings of race and ethnicity are explored. In addition to examining theoretical frameworks regarding race and ethnicity, the course draws upon historical analysis and considers current debates related to cultural politics and identity. Emphasis is placed on the interplay of race, class and gender in the United States. Intended for sophomores and juniors with at least one previous course in sociology.

269 The Sociology of Prisons and Punishment

Not offered 2023-24

4 credits

This course will provide a sociological analysis of prisons in America and throughout the world. Specific topics to be covered include the history of imprisonment as a way of dealing with criminal offenders; the process by which persons become incarcerated in America; theoretical perspectives on imprisonment; the many different types of penal facilities which exist in our society; the impacts of prison upon the larger society; the internal dynamics of the prison institution; and alternatives to incarceration as a means of imprisonment. This course will be conducted as a large seminar, and all participants will be expected to complete a major analytical paper, and to present that paper to the other members of the seminar. In-class lectures and discussion will be supplemented by visits to some of the prisons and jails which are located in eastern Washington and Oregon.

278 Social Movements and Social Change

Spring

Mireles

4 credits

This course provides an introduction to the sociological study of collective action and social change. The causes, trajectories, and outcomes of social movements will be analyzed from a macro-, meso-, and microsociological perspective. The theoretical models presented stress political processes and organizational dynamics as well as the intersections of politics, culture, and identity. Case studies will be drawn primarily from liberal democratic societies. Course evaluation will be based on participation, a course term paper, a midterm, and final exam. This course is open to all students but previous coursework in sociology or a related field is strongly advised.

279 Sociology of Education

Not offered 2023-24

4 credits

A sociological investigation of education in society, including historical and comparative perspectives. Students will understand and apply fundamental social scientific theoretical and methodological approaches to studying education, with emphasis on early learning, K-12 education, and higher education. Topics include inequality, teacher/student/administrator experience, peer culture and cultural constructions of childhood and adolescence, learning abilities, school types, education reform, and intersections between education and other social institutions such as family, government, and media. Students will complete applied research projects and exams.

293, 294 Special Topics in Sociology: Intermediate Level

1-4 credits

An intermediate course designed to review selected topics in sociology through lectures, seminars, or group research projects. Any current offerings follow.

325 Sociology of Disasters

Fall

Cordner

4 credits

This course offers an in-depth exploration of the sociology of disasters. Though disasters are often thought of as being either natural or technological in nature, they are fundamentally social in nature, and their impacts are unequally distributed. This course will examine a number of specific disaster cases, including weather-related disasters, technological hazards, terrorism, and the impacts of climate change. It will also focus on social science theories of disaster response and social vulnerability. The course will pay specific attention to topics including community vulnerability, response, and resilience; disaster risk perception and preparation; impacts of disasters on vulnerable social groups; community disruption and social change after disasters occur; and the geographic and temporal scales at which disasters occur. This course involves group work, oral presentations, independent research projects, exams and quizzes, written papers, and classroom discussion. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor.

329 Environmental Health

Not offered 2023-24

4 credits

Environmental health issues are inherently interdisciplinary. This seminar-style course will examine how the natural, built, and social environments impact human and environmental health outcomes. The course will draw on research articles, theoretical discussions, and empirical examples from fields including toxicology, exposure science, environmental chemistry, epidemiology, sociology, history, policy studies, and fiction. Particular attention will be paid to the use of science to develop regulation, the role of social movements in identifying environmental health problems, and inequalities associated with environmental exposures. This course will be reading, discussion, and writing intensive. May be elected as Environmental Studies 329, but must be elected as Environmental Studies 329 to satisfy the interdisciplinary course requirement in environmental studies. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor.

337 Seminar in Cultural Sociology

Fall

Santana-Acuña

4 credits

This seminar examines cultural dimensions of social processes and explores how cultural categories, symbols, and rituals are analyzed sociologically. Topics covered include: culture in everyday social interactions, identity and social status, culture and institutions, symbolic power, rituals and events, subcultures and countercultures, social change, mass media, and the arts. This course involves intensive reading and writing about classical and contemporary theoretical approaches to analyzing culture, as well as projects that involve innovative research methods in cultural sociology. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor.

340 Economic Sociology

Not offered 2023-24

4 credits

This seminar will provide an advanced exploration into the social bases of economic behavior in society. Three substantive areas will be covered in depth. The course opens with a unit on organizations where students will read classical, contemporary, and critical analyses of formal organizations in modern society. The second unit of the semester is focused on the interactions between organizations, or firms in the economic sense, and the broader sociopolitical contexts in which they are found. This includes classical political economics readings from Europe as well as more contemporary perspectives from the United States. Special emphasis will be placed on the rise of large capitalist firms in American society during the 19th and 20th centuries. The final unit of the course deals with different forms of labor in advanced industrial societies. Course evaluation will be based on participation, a course term paper, a midterm, and final exam. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor.

353 Environmental Justice**Not offered 2023-24****4 credits**

How are environmental problems experienced differently according to race, gender, class and nationality? What do we learn about the meaning of gender, race, class and nationality by studying the patterns of environmental exposure of different groups? Environmental justice is one of the most important and active sites of environmental scholarship and activism in our country today. This course integrates perspectives and questions from sciences, humanities and social sciences through the examination of a series of case studies of environmental injustice in the United States and worldwide. Biology and chemistry figure centrally in links between environmental contaminants and human health. Systematic inequalities in exposure and access to resources and decision-making raise moral and ethical questions. Legal and policy lessons emerge as we examine the mechanisms social actors employ in contesting their circumstances. This course will be reading, discussion and research intensive. May be elected as Environmental Studies 353, but must be elected as Environmental Studies 353 to satisfy the interdisciplinary course requirement in environmental studies. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor.

360 The Sociology of Everyday Life**Not offered 2023-24****4 credits**

An introduction to the sociology of face-to-face interaction, communication, and the social construction of reality. Areas covered include: symbolic interaction and dramaturgy, ethnomethodology, qualitative research methods and ethnography, the presentation of self, feeling rules, boundary work, stigma management, and studies of social space. Students will read canonical pieces of sociology as well as contemporary case studies as they work to see patterns of social behavior in everyday situations. Student assessment is based on in-class participation, tests, and a semester-long qualitative research project. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor.

368 Contemporary Social Theory: A Textual and Visual Approach**Not offered 2023-24****4 credits**

Using a hands-on approach, this course introduces students to key thinkers, ideas, concepts, and debates that are part of contemporary social theory from World War II to the present. This course acknowledges the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary social theory. Students are exposed to theories in the following disciplines: sociology, history, anthropology, economics, political science, and philosophy; and in the following subfields: cultural analysis, gender and feminism, race and ethnicity, global studies, post-colonialism, science studies, environmental studies, and post-humanism. Along with close textual analysis, students will also watch theorists at work in lectures, interviews, and debates. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor.

369 Social Stratification**Spring****Mireles****4 credits**

This course provides an advanced introduction to the study of structured inequality in late industrial, liberal democratic societies. This includes a look at the ways in which economic position, social prestige, and political resources affect individual life chances in society. Specific topics covered include classical approaches to social inequality, social mobility, networks and social capital, class and culture, and educational systems and social mobility. In addition, we review ascriptive factors such as race and gender and their impact on labor market participation and inequality. Student evaluation will be based on class participation, three written seminar papers and presentations, and a midterm and final exam. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor.

381, 382 Independent Study**Fall, Spring****Staff****1-4 credits**

Reading and/or research in an area of sociology of interest to the student, under the supervision of a faculty member. A maximum of four credits may count toward the major. Default of standard grading but can be graded credit/no credit if and when agreed upon by the professor and student, however, courses graded credit/no credit cannot count toward the major. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology and consent of instructor.

393 Special Topics in Sociology: Upper Level

1-4 credits

An advanced course designed to review selected topics in sociology through lectures, seminars, or group research projects. *Prerequisite:* at least two credits of prior work in sociology or consent of instructor. Any current offerings follow.

407, 408 Seminar

4 credits

Seminars in selected topics in sociology primarily for advanced students. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor. Any current offerings follow.

490 Current Issues in Sociology

Fall

Mireles, Santana-Acuña, Staff, Wakefield 4 credits

Limited to, and required of, senior sociology majors. The course meets in a seminar format with all available sociology faculty. Students will demonstrate advanced understanding and application of the sociology major learning goals through discussions of recent research in the field. Students will also make significant progress towards the writing of their thesis and preparation for their oral defense. Must be taken the last fall semester in which the student is in residence. *Prerequisite:* Sociology 117. *Pre- or corequisites:* Sociology 207 and 251.

492 Thesis

Spring

Mireles, Santana-Acuña, Staff, Wakefield 2 or 4 credits

A course in which the student conceptualizes, designs, and carries out a senior thesis. The major emphasis in this course will be upon the student's own individual thesis project, which may be completed under the supervision of any full-time member of the department. In addition, students also will be expected to participate in evaluations and critiques of the theses being written by the other senior majors in the course. Required of all senior sociology majors. Must be taken the last spring semester in which the student is in residence. Sociology majors must sign up for four credits. Sociology-Environmental Studies majors should sign up for two credits in Sociology 492 and two credits in Environmental Studies 488, for a total of four credits. *Prerequisites:* Sociology 117, 207, and 251.

498 Honors Thesis

Spring

Mireles, Santana-Acuña, Staff, Wakefield 2 or 4 credits

Students register for Sociology 492, not for Sociology 498. The registration will be changed from Sociology 492 to 498 for those students who attain honors in Sociology. Designed to allow those students who qualify the opportunity to complete a senior thesis of honors-level quality. Students enrolled in this course also must participate in and meet all requirements of the Sociology 492 seminar. Required of and limited to senior honors candidates in sociology. Must be taken the last spring semester in which the student is in residence. Sociology majors must sign up for four credits. Sociology-Environmental Studies majors who are eligible for honors should sign up for two credits in Sociology 492 and two credits in Environmental Studies 488, for a total of four credits and then those who receive honors are switched by the registrar into Sociology 498 and Environmental Studies 498 on their registration. *Prerequisites:* Sociology 117, 207, and 251.