

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY
SOC-101-007
TWF 10:30 – 11:20
Accino Hall 201

Dr. Rhiannon Miller
Office Hours: T & F 2:30pm – 3:30pm
 W 1:30pm – 3:30pm
 and by appointment
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Course Description

Students will apply sociological theories, frameworks, and methodologies to contemporary events and their own lived experience. After an overview of the discipline, each week we will consider one or two different subfields. Specific themes will include socialization, social identities, organizations, and institutions.

Course Objectives

Students will:

1. Critically analyze society and their place in it by making the familiar strange and the mundane matter.
2. Identify how their lives are shaped by unseen forces and how those forces shape the lives of others and the world around them.
3. Explore the field of sociology by examining why sociologists think the way they do and know what they know.
4. Recognize how systems of power construct and maintain race, class, and gender and other forms of inequality locally and globally.
5. Understand how and why societies and institutions change, how social movements generate change, and their roles as change agents.

Course Structure

The class will meet for 50 minutes, three times per week. About half of class time will be focused on in class activities and discussion. Most weeks will be focused on a single subfield from the discipline of sociology. Discussion time will be spent applying key theories and frameworks to contemporary examples or problems related to these subfields. Readings are selected to give exposure to classical sociological texts, contemporary studies, and current representations of these ideas within popular media. It is necessary to read/watch/listen to all assigned materials to prepare for class. A course plan is outlined below and subject to change at my discretion.

Course Resources

All course materials and assignments will be posted to the class Canvas site. Each course day will have its own page under the corresponding module. Please complete all assigned readings, podcasts, and videos listed on the page and complete the accompanying pre-class assignment. When conflicts arise between Canvas and this syllabus, Canvas will always be current. Necessary communications between myself and students will be done through notifications in Canvas.

Course Materials

The following books are available through the Providence College bookstore. You must go to the bookstore to pick these up. They are provided to you free of charge by the College.

Paying for the Party, by Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton

Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life, by Erving Goffman

Poverty, by America, by Matthew Desmond

Baseball as a Road to God, by John Sexton, Thomas Oliphant, and Peter Schwartz

Promises I Can Keep, by Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefelas

The Challenger Launch Decision, by Diane Vaughan

All other texts will be made available on Canvas. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings, videos, and podcasts unless otherwise indicated under supplementary materials. These must be reviewed and completed before class. For example, if *Promises I Can Keep*, by Kathryn Edin is listed under September 10th, then you must finish reading the assigned chapters and submit the associated pre-class assignment before September 10th's class.

Course Requirements and Grading

Pre-class Assignments – 20%

Attendance – 10%

Participation – 10%

Chat GPT Essay Critiques (Two) – 20%

Contemporary Application Video – 15%

Group Podcast Project – 25%

Attendance (10%)

Class attendance is required. You are allowed two absences during the semester. You are responsible for any material and information provided in any class that you miss. If you must miss a course, please check with your classmates before emailing me to ask what work you missed or needs to be made up.

Use your absences wisely. You may want to hold onto them if something unexpected arises (e.g., heavy workload during midterms, getting a cold or food poisoning). **You do not need to notify me if you miss a class.**

Please contact me to let me know if you have any additional circumstances that may interfere with your attendance such as:

- severe unavoidable life events, e.g., sudden serious illness or injury to you (requires documentation from medical professional), death in the family;
- religious holidays;
- one intercollegiate event per semester; this exemption can be taken to excuse *one* class per semester; it requires documentation from a non-student university authority figure (e.g., coach).

If you miss for one of these reasons and do not want to use your “free passes,” e-mail me as soon as possible.

Pre-Class Assignments (20%)

Before each class, you must complete the pre-class assignment template and post it to Canvas by 11:59pm the night before class. Late pre-class assignments will not be accepted.

In the event of an absence due to one of the circumstances listed above in the attendance section, pre-class assignments will be excused.

Participation (10%)

Class time will be primarily used for discussion and engaging with assigned materials. Class will be more fun and engaging for you and your peers if you are prepared. Research has consistently shown that students who participate learn more and retain content longer than students who do not.

I understand (and empathize deeply with) those students who do not enjoy or feel comfortable speaking in class. However, I expect that you will try to contribute to our discussions. I care more about the quality than the quantity of your interventions. Indeed, talking too frequently can discourage others from sharing their perspectives. Here are different ways you may participate in discussions¹:

- *Initiating*: breaking an initial or interim silence by introducing a new idea or topic for group consideration
- *Information seeking*: asking a factual question to clarify context
- *Explanation seeking*: asking a colleague to clarify or elaborate an argument
- *Information giving*: providing relevant factual information
- *Explanation giving*: introducing or clarifying an evidence-based argument
- *Encouraging participation*: engaging someone who has not recently spoken to participate in the discussion or complimenting a colleague for their contribution to discussion
- *Summarizing*: listening attentively to the contributions of others and offering a clear recapitulation of the main points
- *Comparing ideas*: identifying the relationship between two or more ideas and/or suggestions
- *Synthesizing*: combing two or more ideas to create a novel argument

If you find yourself having trouble engaging with discussions, please contact me to discuss further.

Contemporary Application Video (15%)

Students will be asked to identify an example of a topic from class in a book, film, television series, or long-form journalism article and assess the likelihood of its trajectory and how it fits into recent trends. Students will prepare a 5–7 minute video to share with their classmates on Canvas. Late assignments will not be accepted after grading has been completed.

ChatGPT Essay Critiques (10% each)

Students will be given essays generated by ChatGPT to two prompts at the end of each of the first two sections of the course and will be asked to write a 250-word critique. Students will be given 24 hours to complete the assignment outside of class. This assignment is a take home exam and should be treated as such. Late assignments will only be accepted under extraordinary circumstances (as

¹ Criteria borrowed from Christopher Consolino

detailed in the attendance policy above). If you have a conflict during the time frame of the exam, please contact me immediately.

Sociological Imagination Podcast (25%)

Students will work in assigned teams of 2-4 to identify a social problem or trend on campus, in Providence, or in one of your communities. You will use course texts, theories, or discussions to either uncover the topic or explain why this problem or trend exists. You **MUST** draw on course materials to earn a B or above. Forty percent of the project grade will be determined by peer evaluation (10% of the overall final grade). Four-minute clips are due during the last week of the semester to share with your peers. Final cuts of the podcast must be uploaded to Canvas on the date of the final exam date determined by the College. Peer evaluations must also be submitted by all team members at the same time. Teams will identify roles and allocated responsibilities including editing, interviewing, and storyboarding. Final cuts must be between 8-10 minutes for a two-person group; 12-15 minutes for a three person group; and 16-20 minutes for a four person group.

COURSE STANDARDS

Academic Integrity

Undergraduate students enrolled at Providence College assume a duty to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the College's mission as an institution of higher learning. Students are obliged to refrain from acts which they know, or under circumstances have reason to know, violate the academic integrity of the College. Violations of academic ethics include but are not limited to: cheating; plagiarism of another student's or another scholar's work; submitting the same or substantially similar work to satisfy the requirements of more than one course without permission; failure to cite sources adequately.

Grading Philosophy

Grades are a social construct (after several weeks in this course, you will understand more fully what that means). While I am obligated to give you a grade for your work in the course, my larger objective is to use grades to give you **feedback** on your work and ideas. Feedback and constructive criticism help you learn and will provide a barometer for you to improve your critical thinking and understanding of sociological concepts. A growth mindset will serve you better inside and outside the classroom than the pursuit of perfection.

“If [people] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” – William and Dorothy Thomas

Even though grades are a social construct, they still have real consequences. Pre-Class Assignments will be valued for completion. All other assignments will be graded using the following rubric:

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Average</u>
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76

C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	Less than 60

Accessibility and Accommodations

Students with disabilities (including those with psychological conditions, medical conditions and temporary disabilities) can request accommodations for this course by providing an Accommodation Letter issued by the Student Success Center. If you believe you might require accommodations, please contact the Student Success Center (ssc@providence.edu) or visit their office on the second floor of the Philips Library. In addition, [tutoring](#) and [writing](#) support are available through SSC.

Family Policy

All babies under six months old are welcome in class. Older babies, children and adults in your care are welcome in class occasionally to manage illness and unforeseen disruptions in childcare/eldercare. You may even see my children make an appearance in class during the semester. Please sit close to the door with your family member so that you can quickly step outside if meeting their needs becomes disruptive to the learning of other students. I ask that all students help me to create a welcoming environment for students that are parents and caregivers. I understand that balancing coursework and caregiving is very challenging (I had my children during graduate school). If you find that your caregiving responsibilities are interfering with your academic work, please contact me.

Mental Health

If you are struggling with anxiety, stress, depression or other mental health related concerns, please consider visiting the Personal Counseling Center. If you are concerned about a friend, please encourage that person to seek out their services. The Counseling Center is located Lower Bedford Hall and can be reached at 401-865-2342 and online at <https://personal-counseling.providence.edu>.

Content Warnings

It's important to note that in this course we may confront difficult ideas, images, and words. Our work will involve delicate and challenging discussions about topics such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and criticism of religious groups/beliefs. At times it may also involve reading texts that express offensive words and views.

We will study and talk about these topics and views to understand their social and historical context and consequences—never to endorse them. I promise to speak about them and facilitate our study with great sensitivity towards their potentially harmful impact, and to giving all students room to develop and express their own ideas in a respectful manner. I expect that you all will embrace those same commitments in our work together. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with material we're studying or are having difficulty adhering to these commitments, please speak to me individually.

Technology

The use of laptops and tablets are permitted in this course for notetaking and to reference class materials. Please keep your phones stowed for the duration of class time.

Email Etiquette

Email in an academic setting is practice for email communication in your future professional life. I expect you to extend the same courtesies to me that you would to your future (or current) colleagues. Please adhere to the following guidelines in our email communications:

- Include a subject line with the format “101.003: TOPIC OF YOUR EMAIL” e.g. “101.007: Office hours appointment”
- Begin the email with a polite salutation (Dear/Hello/Good Morning/Hi Professor (or Dr.) Miller,). Please do not begin your email with “Hey.” That is a salutation to be used in your personal communications.
- State the purpose of your email in the first sentence or two (I am writing to let you know I have a game next Friday and would like to schedule an alternative time to I have several questions about Chapter 5 and would like to schedule a time to discuss them with you.)
- End with a polite valediction (Thanks/Sincerely/Best, YOUR NAME)

Course Plan – Subject to Change at the Discretion of the Professor

Part I: The Discipline of Sociology		
T 1/16		Introductions and Syllabus Review
W 1/17		What do Sociologists Do?
	Read:	Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Laura T. Hamilton. 2015. <i>Paying for the Party</i> . Introduction.
F 1/19		Founding Scholars and the Sociological Imagination
	Read:	Mills, C. Wright. 1959. <i>The Sociological Imagination</i> . P1-11.
	Watch:	Dhingra, Pawan. 2019. <i>Talks at Harvard</i> . “Why You Should Use Your (Sociological) Imagination.”
T 1/23		The Classics
	Watch:	Crash Course Sociology. 2017. Emile Durkheim on Suicide & Society .
		Crash Course Sociology. 2017. Max Weber & Modernity: Crash Course Sociology
		Crash Course Sociology. 2017. Karl Marx & Conflict Theory: Crash Course Sociology
W 1/24		Research Methods
	Read:	Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas. 2011. <i>Promises I Can Keep</i> . P 1-9, 187-213.
		Aragao, Carolina et al. September 14, 2023. <i>Pew Research Center</i> . “The Modern American Family: Key trends in marriage and family life.”
F 1/26		How do we decide what’s good?
	Read:	Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984 [1979]. <i>Distinction</i> . Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press. Pp. 1–17.
		Friedman, Vanessa. 2023. “What Does It Mean to Dress Rich?” <i>New York Times</i>.
T 1/30		Socialization
	Read:	Goffman, Erving. 1959. <i>Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life</i> , Doubleday. New York, NY. P252-255, TBA.
		Friedman, Vanessa. 2023. “How Should Gwyneth Paltrow Dress for Court?” <i>New York Times</i>.
	Listen:	Social Science Bites. 2019. Michele Gelfand on Social Norms .
W 1/31		Review + First Assignment Prep
	Due 2/1	Chat GPT Essay Critique

Part II: Social Identity & Inequality		
F 2/2		Poverty
	Read:	Desmond, Matthew. 2023. <i>Poverty, by America</i> , Chapters 1 & 2.
T 2/6		Social Mobility
	Read:	Badger, Emily and Quoc Trung Bui. October 1, 2018. <i>The New York Times</i>. "Detailed Maps Show How Neighborhoods Shape Children for Life."
		Aisch, Gregor, Eric Buth, Matthew Block, Amanda Cox, and Kevin Quealy. May 4, 2015. <i>The New York Times</i>. "The Best and Worst Places to Grow Up: How Your Area Compares."
	Listen:	People I Mostly Admire, Freakonomics Radio Network. 2022. "How Much Are the Right Friends Worth?"
W 2/7		Income and Wealth
	Read:	Stewart, Matthew. June 2018. <i>The Atlantic</i>. "The 9.9 Percent Is the New American Aristocracy."
		Reeves, Richard. June 10, 2017. <i>The New York Times</i>. "Stop Pretending You're Not Rich."
		Sherman, Rachel. September 8, 2017. <i>The New York Times</i>. "What the Rich Won't Tell You."
F 2/9		Sex vs. Gender
	Read:	Martinez, Rodrigo. 2019. <i>Contexts</i>. "Bad Boys or Exceptional Interrupters?"
	Listen:	Freakonomics. 2016. "The True Story of the Gender Pay Gap."
T 2/13		Masculinities
	Read:	Frances, Goldscheider. 2023. "The Future of Family Demography: Filling in the Fourth Cell," in <i>The Demography of Transforming Families</i> , ed. Robert Schoen.
		Orenstein, Peggy. December 20, 2019. <i>The Atlantic</i>. "The Miseducation of the American Boy."
W 2/14		Sexuality
	Read:	Armstrong, Elizabeth A., Laura Hamilton, and Paula England. 2010. "Is Hooking Up Bad for Young Women?," <i>Contexts</i> .
F 2/16		How do we define Race or Ethnicity?
	Read:	Lopez et al. September 5, 2023. <i>Pew Research Center</i> . "Who is Hispanic?"
		Lai, Rebecca K.K. and Jennifer Medina. October 16, 2023. <i>The New York Times</i>. "An American Puzzle: Fitting Race in a Box."
	Watch:	Trevor Noah: The 60 Minutes Interview

		Thornell, Christina. April 19, 2021. Vox, “Why South Africa is still so segregated?”
W 2/21		Immigration & Migration
	Read:	Zhou, Min. 2004. <i>Contexts</i> . “Are Asian Americans Becoming ‘White?’”
		Demby, Gene. June 16, 2014. <i>Code Switch</i> . “On the Census, Who Checks ‘Hispanic,’ Who Checks ‘White,’ and Why.”
F 2/23		Affirmative Action and School Admissions
	Read:	Badger, Emily, Claire Cain Miller, Adam Pearce, and Kevin Quealy. March 19, 2018. <i>The New York Times</i> . “Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys.”
	Listen:	The Daily. April 2, 2019. <i>The New York Times</i> . “Why Did New York’s Most Selective Public High School Admit Only 7 Black Students?”
		Radio Atlantic. June 16, 2023. “The End of Affirmative Action. For Real This Time.”
	Due: 2/24	Chat GPT Essay Critique
Part III: Organizations, Institutions, and Systems		
T 2/27		The Educational System
	Read:	Calarco, Jessica McCrory. 2014. “Coached for the Classroom.” <i>American Sociological Review</i> .
W 2/28		Higher Education
	Read:	Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Laura T. Hamilton. 2015. <i>Paying for the Party</i> . Chapter 5.
F 3/1		Gender Gap in Educational Attainment
	Read:	Dominus, Susan. September 8, 2023. <i>New York Times Magazine</i>. “Declining male enrollment has led many colleges to adopt an unofficial policy: affirmative action for men.”
		Parker, Kim. November 8, 2021. Pew Research Center. “What’s behind the growing gap between men and women in college completion?”
T 3/5		Marriage and Family
	Watch:	PBS Origins. November 21, 2017. “Where does the Nuclear Family Come From?”
		PBS Origins. February 27, 2018. “When Did Marriage Become about Love?”
		The Atlantic. February 10, 2020. “How the Nuclear Family Broke Down.”

		National Council on Family Relations. Andrew Cherlin on marriage, cohabitation, and societal trends in family formation.
W 3/6		The Household Division of Labor
	Listen:	Wisconsin Public Radio. June 1, 2021. “Why Women in Heterosexual Partnerships Do Most of The ‘Mental Workload.’”
	Read:	Schulte, Brigid. August 6, 2014. <i>The Washington Post</i> . “The Second Shift at 25: Q & A with Arlie Hochschild.”
F 3/8		The Life Course
	Read:	Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen. 2004. <i>Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road From the Late Teens Through the Twenties</i> . Chapter 10.
T 3/19		Video Essay Outline & Brainstorming
W 3/20		What is Religion?
	Read:	Durkheim, Emile. 1995 (1912). <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> (trans. Karen E. Fields). New York: Free Press. Pp. 33–44.
F 3/22		Is Baseball a Religion?
	Read:	Sexton, John with Thomas Oliphant and Peter J. Schwartz. 2013. <i>Baseball As a Road to God: Seeing Beyond the Game</i> . New York: Gotham Books.
	Due:	Video Essay Proposal
T 3/26		Capitalism as an Economic System
	Listen:	Throughline. June 24, 2021. Capitalism: What is it?
	Watch :	Financial Times. February 12, 2020. Interview with economist Thomas Piketty: capital and ideology.
W 3/27		Work
	Read:	Ravenelle, Alexandra. 2019. <i>Gig and Hustle</i> . pTBA.
	Listen:	Planet Money. July 24, 2015. “Why We Work So Much.”
	Due:	Post Contemporary Videos to Canvas
W 4/3		Introduction to Podcasting
	Explore:	Podcasting Resources on Canvas
	Download:	Audacity
		Part IV: Social Problems
F 4/5		Mass Incarceration
	Read:	Apel, Robert. 2016. “The Effects of Jail and Prison Confinement on Cohabitation and Marriage,” <i>The Annals of the American Academy</i> .
	Listen:	Throughline. August 15, 2019. “Mass Incarceration.”

T 4/9		Policing
	Listen:	This American Life. 2015. "Cops See it Differently, Part One."
		This American Life. 2015. "Cops See it Differently, Part Two."
W 4/10		Podcast Planning Workshop
F 4/12		Inequality and Health
	Read:	Baumgaertner, Emily and Farnaz Fassihi. July 12, 2023. <i>The New York Times</i> . "Racism and Sexism Underlie Higher Maternal Death Rates for Black Women, U.N. Says."
		Navathe, Amol S. November 30, 2023. <i>The New York Times</i> . "Why are Nonprofit Hospitals Focused More on Dollars than Patients?"
T 4/16		Covid -19 Pandemic
	Read:	Mooallem, Jon. February 22, 2023. <i>The New York Times</i> . "What Happened to Us."
	Explore:	The NYC Covid-19 Oral History, Narrative, and Memory Project
W 4/17		Organizational Failure
	Read:	Vaughan, Diane. 1996. <i>The Challenger Launch Decision</i> . Chapter 10.
	Watch:	Retro Report, The New York Times: Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster: Major Malfunction.
F 4/19		Meet in Podcast Teams
		Dyad Formation
T 4/23		Podcast Feedback Session
W 4/24		Friendship
	Read:	Healy, Ben. 2018. <i>The Atlantic</i> . "How to Make Friends, According to Science."
		Beck, Julie. October 22, 2015. <i>The Atlantic</i> . "How Friendships Change in Adulthood."
F 4/26		Dating
	Read:	Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Laura Hamilton. 2021. "Classed pathways to marriage: Hometown ties, college networks, and life after graduation," <i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i> . (Introduction and conclusion.)
		Rosenfeld, Michael et al. 2019. "Disintermediating your friends: How online dating in the United States Displaces other ways of meeting," <i>PNAS</i> .
T 4/30		Looking Back

	Review:	Your favorite readings/media
W 5/1		Your Sociological Imagination: The Party Pathway @ PC
	Read:	Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Laura T. Hamilton. 2015. <i>Paying for the Party</i> . Chapter 8.
	Due 5/2	Upload 4-minute clip of Podcast to Canvas
F 5/3		Listening Party
T 5/7/24 11:00am	Due:	Upload Sociological Imagination Podcast to Canvas