

Principles of Sociology



NEITHER THE LIFE OF AN INDIVIDUAL NOR
THE HISTORY OF A SOCIETY CAN BE
UNDERSTOOD WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING
BOTH.
- C. WRIGHT MILLS -

“I could shelter myself from conflict by leaving the conversation, but I have come to believe that the comfort we feel when we avoid hard conversations is a dangerous comfort, one that seduces us into ignorance about the experiences of others and about the full meaning of our own lives.” **Mari Matsuda, Law Professor**

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.” **Martin Luther King, Jr., Sociologist/Minister/Civil Rights Activist**

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Student Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1–2 pm or by appointment

Class Meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Classroom Location: Frank Madla Bldg (MADLA), Room 208

SOCIOLOGY IN ACTION: Exploring the Forces That Shape Our Lives

Course Description: Sociology is a broad and dynamic discipline that seeks to understand the complexities of human behavior, social interaction, and institutional influence. Drawing on diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical research methods, sociologists examine how individuals and groups are shaped by—and in turn shape—families, communities, institutions, and global systems. They ask questions such as: How do family structures guide our lives? Does educational attainment influence job opportunities? How do global markets impact the U.S. economy? Why do digital platforms seem to anticipate our thoughts and conversations? Sociology offers critical insight into our actions, reactions, and social environments, helping us make sense of both everyday encounters and the larger forces that structure society. Sociology offers critical insight into the patterned nature of human behavior and social interaction, illuminating how our individual actions are embedded within broader social structures while interrogating the systemic forces that shape some of the most urgent societal and global challenges facing humanity and the environment.

Learning Objectives

- (1) **Apply** foundational sociological theories to contemporary social issues.
- (2) **Interpret** sociological research and evaluate methods of data collection.
- (3) **Analyze** how structures of power, identity, and inequality shape society.

Course Format & Student Expectations

- This course meets in-person, face-to-face twice a week. You are expected to attend and actively participate during these meetings.
- Weekly sessions combine instructor-led discussion, group discussion, and student reflection.
- Students are responsible for obtaining any missed material from classmates and checking Blackboard for any updates.
- I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as necessary during the semester. Any modifications will be communicated through Blackboard and during class meetings with reasonable notice.

Student Success Tips

- Prioritize attending every class meeting—your presence supports your learning and our shared discussions.
- Keep up with the assigned work and confirm submission receipts for all uploaded assignments. Blank or incorrect file types may be marked late or incomplete with the possibility of earning a low grade or a zero.
- Review class materials regularly: personal notes & textbook resources can all reinforce your understanding.
- Don't hesitate to ask questions—engaged learners grow the most.

Required Text/E-Book

- Schaefer, Richard T. "Sociology Matters." 8th Edition (e-book access).¹

Blackboard

Grades, assignments, announcements, and course materials will be posted on Blackboard.

COURSE POLICIES & CONDUCT

Academic Integrity & Generative AI Policy

Developing your own voice in writing, analysis, and critical thinking is central to this course. All work must be your own. Use of unauthorized sources —generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT)—can be considered academic misconduct and subject to university policy. If you are ever uncertain, consult with me before submitting your work.

Preparation & Participation

Come to class prepared by completing assigned readings prior to our meetings. Active engagement—asking questions, contributing to discussions, and connecting material to your own experiences—enhances your learning and our shared classroom environment.

Attendance & Absences

Consistent attendance is crucial in a fast-paced summer session. If an emergency (e.g., illness, family matter) prevents attendance, notify me with documentation if possible. Staying in communication helps support your success.

¹ To access your materials, head to brytewave.redshelf.com, log in with your account information, and navigate to My Shelf. Please contact University Bookstore for information regarding ebook access if you are experiencing trouble (210)784-1070 or 2168mgr@follett.com. If using another version, please keep in mind that page numbers will vary.

Late Work & Makeup Policy

Late work is generally not accepted unless advance notice and valid justification are provided. Submitting blank or unreadable files via Blackboard may result in a zero. If you're struggling with a deadline, reach out early.

Grading Concerns

You are welcome to schedule a meeting to discuss any concerns about your performance. Grades reflect the evaluation of your work—not a negotiation—but I am here to support your improvement and understanding.

Respectful Dialogue & Classroom Etiquette

Sociology engages difficult and often contentious topics. Your responsibility is not to agree with every idea, but to critically examine multiple perspectives using a sociological lens. Civil, thoughtful discussion led by our readings is expected at all times. Out of respect for our shared learning space, please silence or turn off your phone during class. If you have urgent needs or accessibility concerns, let me know in advance.

Communication & Email

Use your A&M–SA email account for all course-related communication. I typically respond within 24–48 hours during weekdays. Emails sent over the weekend may receive responses the following Monday.

A&M–SA STUDENT CONDUCT POLICIES & RESOURCES

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is essential to your learning and to the university's mission. All work submitted must reflect your own effort. Cheating, plagiarism, or any attempt to gain an unfair academic advantage violates university policy and may result in penalties including a failing grade or disciplinary action. Refer to the Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook: <https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/documents/Student-Handbook-2022-23.pdf>.

Texas Six-Drop Rule

Texas law limits undergraduates to **six course drops** over their academic career. Exceeding this limit can affect your record.

Disability Support Services (DSS)

If you have a documented disability or face learning barriers, you may be eligible for academic accommodations. Contact DSS early to arrange support.

Location: CAB 210 | Email: dsupport@tamusa.tamus.edu | Phone: (210) 784-1335. If aspects of this course design limit your access, please notify me so we can make adjustments.

Jaguar Writing Center

Need help with writing? The Writing Center offers free tutoring on essays, presentations, reading strategies, and more. Location: CAB 208 | Email: tutoring@tamusa.edu | Phone: (210) 784-1332

COURSE GRADE ASSESSMENTS (Brief Description)

Exam/Assignment	Brief Description	Points
Exam 1 (multiple choice/30 ques)	In-class exam covering Chapters 1, 2, and 4	60
Exam 2 (multiple choice/30 ques)	In-class exam covering Chapters 5, 6, and 7	60
Analytic Prompts (2X15)	Short analytical reflection prompts connecting theory to social world (200-word min each)	30
Social Mapping Project	Research Texas city or county government, create a one-page visual map connecting sociological perspective to policies and community life; present your findings in class in a 5-minute presentation	50
Participation	Assessed by meaningful & productive class engagement in class meetings	20
Total Points →		220

198 – 220 = A
176 – 197.5 = B
154 – 175.5 = C
132 – 153.5 = D
Below 132 = F

COURSE GRADE ASSESSMENTS

Exams (Critical Thinking & Reasoning Skills) – 2 x 60 pts

Each exam will be given during a Tuesday (F2F) meeting (see Course Schedule). These exams will be multiple choice ranging at thirty questions at two-points apiece. Exam 1 will be comprised of questions stemming from Chapters 1, 2, & 4. Exam 2 will be comprised of questions stemming from Chapters 5, 6, & 7. The purpose of these exams is to check your understanding of key sociological concepts, theories, and examples from the textbook and class discussions. **Exam 1** is on September 23rd and **Exam 2** is on October 21st. You will have the full class time to complete the exam. Be on time!

Analytic Writing Prompts (Analytical & Communication Skills) – 2 x 15 pts

These short, prompted responses (200-word minimum) are designed to help you apply sociological concepts to society (or social surroundings) using prompted questions. The prompts are guided by major themes in your Schaefer text as well as class discussions. The prompts are scheduled after a unit has been completed (e.g. three chapters comprise a unit). The objective is to connect your Schaefer text to the prompt question. You will complete two prompts, submitted via Blackboard. Each prompt is graded based on the following criteria (shown below). Please see Course Schedule for due dates. Submission categories are created the day before prompts are due.

Writing Prompt Grading Criteria	Points
Use of sociological theory/concept	3 pts
Understanding of the theory/concept	3 pts
Analytical insights	3 pts
Clarity and communication	3 pts
Fulfills format & length (200-word min, Word/Blackboard Textbox)	3 pts
Total per prompt	15 pts

Social Mapping-Local Government Project (Research, Creative & Communication) – 50 pts

Using Canva, each student will produce one visual/explanatory map addressing 3 sociological questions. The objective is to demonstrate the linkages between each theme in the questions and a local government

at the city or county levels in Texas. The goods and services local governments provide are largely determined by the needs and priorities of the communities they serve.² A sociological investigation of local governments in Texas can be done using **Social Mapping (SM)** is a technique used in the social sciences to visually represent the relationships, connections (or conflicts), or patterns, and dynamics within communities. See footnote for more information on SMs and for creating a map in Canva.³ SM project steps are noted below followed by the 3 sociological questions that the student will address for the SM local government project. Students will use class time, beginning in latter part of Week 9 to Week 11, to work on their SM project. My role during that period is to assist you while in class. Approximately, 8-10 students will present beginning on Week 12, November 11th, Tuesday and potentially conclude on Week 15, December 2nd, Tuesday. Student presentations will be based on alphabetical order of last name. Students will have 5 minutes max to present their social map. Please make sure to save your SM project as a pdf file and save to a flash drive. You will need to use that flash drive at the tech podium the day you are scheduled to present. I will create an alphabetical list of presenters before Week 13. Submission of your SM project will need to be a pdf or .png. Submission of a link or other media will not be accepted. Submission categories will be created before a date of presentation.

3 Sociological Questions for SM Local Government Project:

1. Describe a specific local government's policy, ordinance, program, or initiative and explain why it promotes a quality standard of living and/or protection for its community members (e.g. housing, jobs, education, healthcare, policing, or environmental/climate)? – **12 pts (theme: standard of living & protection)**
2. How did the local government foster community engagement (e.g. outreach strategies, etc.) from its constituents to strengthen their involvement in this decision-making process for a policy, ordinance, program, or initiative? – **12 pts (theme: community-engagement and decision-making)**
3. What sociology theory best helps explain this role of local government—it's approach, and its method for involving residents in the decision-making for this policy, ordinance, program, or initiative, and for providing a better quality of life for residents in the community? – **12 pts (theme: application of sociological theory)**
4. Student presentation of SM project to class within *five* minutes – **14 pts**

⇒ Steps for Completion of SM Local Government Project:

Step 1: Choose the Local Government: You'll need to focus on a specific Texas city or county. If you already know which one to choose, that's great. Otherwise, consider cities with rich demographic diversity or unique social challenges that will help you answer sociological questions effectively.

Step 2: Research Local Government Policies: Now that you have sociological questions in mind, you need to gather information about the local government's policies, ordinances, initiatives, etc. that relate to each question. Research: **City/County websites:** City budgets, policy documents, strategic plans, and public health reports; **Public forums or city council meetings:** Many local governments provide transcripts or recordings of public meetings where decisions are made; **Social media or News:** Keep up to date with how the local government is responding to issues like protests, public health crises, or climate challenges.

² Funding for these programs is transferred down from the federal level to the state or municipal level, depending on which jurisdiction administers the services. For many residents, it isn't clear what goods and services their local government provides. This information is vital to the community because it not only lets them know what programs are available but also creates transparency into who is responsible for maintaining and improving essential public services and infrastructure.

³: Social Mapping or Social Maps is a bit like Concept Mapping or Concept Maps, the difference here is that with Social Mapping you can go beyond understanding concepts to understanding how concepts (or theories) help us better understand human behavior. SMs demonstrate visual literacy and contribute to knowledge structures that students can then use for organizing and representing that knowledge. This technique plays a crucial role in community development by identifying key stakeholders or influencers to better understand community dynamics. This deeper understanding can aid sociologists in creating a holistic image of societal functioning. SMs, for example, can help identify key community members, influential figures, or understanding social dynamics and power structures ensuring more efficient resource allocation and effective decision-making processes in Texas communities. Accessing numerous map templates can be found here in Canva: <https://www.canva.com/graphs/concept-maps/>.

Step 3: Define Your Sociological Questions: Your task is to address **three sociological questions**. These questions should relate to the community dynamics and role of the local government in meeting these needs. You can use Schaefer's textbook as a foundation.

Step 4: Create your SM: Select a mapping tool (e.g. Canva), visualize connections, & add brief explanations. Your map will be all on one page (or on one visualization). Use each of the themes noted above to categorize & organize your information.

Step 5: Present your SM Findings to Class for 5-minutes, please practice beforehand so you do not go over time. I will also be keeping time for all students to ensure the 5-minute rule.

Step 6: All students must complete & submit their SM map to Blackboard based on the date of your scheduled presentation (e.g. "Social Mapping Presentation "11-25-25").

Participation (Active Listening, Civic Awareness, Public Speaking Skills) – 20 pts

Your participation grade reflects your engagement during in-class sessions. This includes contributing to discussions, asking questions, and actively listening. Different students engage in different ways—what matters most is your consistent presence and effort to connect with the material and the class.⁴

1. **High Participation** = 20 pts (A student *frequently* participates in meaningful & productive discussion regarding lecture/textbook during class meetings)
2. **Moderate Participation** = 15 pts (A student *periodically* participates in meaningful & productive discussion regarding lecture/textbook during class meetings)
3. **Low Participation** = 10 pts (A student *seldomly* participates in meaningful & productive discussion regarding lecture/textbook during class meetings)
4. **No Participation** = 0 pts (A student *never* participates in any meaningful & productive discussion or exchange throughout entire semester).

CHAPTERS COVERED

Chapter 1 "The Sociological View"

Chapter 2 "Culture & Socialization"

Chapter 4 "Deviance and Social Control"

Chapter 5 "Stratification in the US and Global Inequality"

Chapter 6 "Inequality by Race and Ethnicity"

Chapter 7 "Inequality by Gender"

⁴ **Note:** Meaningful in this context refers to its relevance to the subject/topic as embedded in class lecture and the textbook. Productive in this context refers to input that illustrates critical thinking and can potentially positively elevate the subject matter in an evidence-based direction. Participation is not solely focused on whether a student is present, although that is a major factor.

Course Schedule: Readings, Exams & Due Dates

WEEK 1

What is Sociology?

August 26, Tuesday

- Course Introduction (Discuss highlights of Course Syllabus & brief introductions)
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 1, “The Sociological View,” pp. 1-13.
- **Watch YouTube Film:** “C. Wright Mill’s – The Sociological Imagination – Troubles vs. Issues” URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5lcrT_d-CQ (Closed Captioning and/or transcript Offered).

August 28, Thursday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 1, “The Sociological View,” pp. 1-13.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 1, “The Sociological View,” pp. 14-34.

WEEK 2

What is Sociology? (Cont.)/Culture & Socialization

September 2, Tuesday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 1, “The Sociological View,” pp. 14-34.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, “Culture and Socialization,” Chapter 2, pp. 38-52.

September 4, Thursday

- Lecture highlights over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 2, “Culture and Socialization,” pp. 38-52.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 2, “Culture and Socialization,” Chapter 2, pp. 53-70.
- **Watch YouTube Film:** “Genie Wiley TLC Documentary” URL: <http://amara.org/en/videos/doXnriWsAEgx/en/543498/> (Closed Captioning and/or transcript Offered)

WEEK 3

Culture and Socialization (cont.)/Deviance & Social Control

September 9, Tuesday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 2, “Culture and Socialization,” pp. 53-70.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 4, “Deviance and Social Control,” pp. 98-114.

September 11, Thursday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 4, “Deviance and Social Control,” pp. 98-114.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 4, “Deviance and Social Control,” pp. 115-124.
- **Watch YouTube Film:** “The Milgram Experiment” URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbKikfk-wtc> (Closed Captioning and/or transcript Offered)

WEEK 4

Deviance and Social Control (Cont.)/Gear Up for Exam 1

September 16, Tuesday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 4, “Deviance and Social Control,” pp. 115-124.
- **Analytic Writing Prompt #1:** Using insights from Chapters 1, 2, 4 — how can the sociological imagination help us better understand the ways in which social processes such as socialization, deviance, & social control play a role in shaping an individual’s sense of self in a society? Please explain and provide examples. Submit via Exams & Quizzes, “Analytic Writing Prompt #1 9-16-25” via Blackboard by 11:59 p.m.

September 18, Thursday

- Class discussion over Chapters 1, 2, & 4.
- Students will need to prepare for Exam 1 by reviewing chapters 1, 2, & 4; personal class notes and/or chapter resources; Exam 1 will be in-class on September 23rd, Tuesday - please bring a scantron & pencil.

WEEK 5

Exam 1/ Stratification

September 23, Tuesday

- **Exam 1 In-Class** – please bring a scantron and/or make sure to mark your responses on the exam in a clear fashion with a pencil.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 5, “Stratification in the US and Global Inequality,” pp. 127-144.

September 25, Thursday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 5, “Stratification in the US and Global Inequality,” pp. 127-144.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 5, “Stratification in the US and Global Inequality,” pp. 145-161.
- **Watch YouTube Film:** “Why you don’t care about inequality,”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYgH5QLJCzQ> (Closed Captioning and/or transcript Offered).

WEEK 6

Stratification (Cont.)/Inequality of Race & Ethnicity

September 30, Tuesday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 5, “Stratification in the US and Global Inequality,” pp. 145-161.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 6, “Inequality by Race and Ethnicity,” pp. 164-176.
- Class Activity on February 26, Wednesday: *Bring, if you can do so, your Birth Certificate to sociological examine classification information on it. I will bring mine as well*

October 2, Thursday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 6, “Inequality by Race and Ethnicity,” pp. 164-176.
- Class Activity: Sociologically examining classification information on Birth Certificate.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 6, “Inequality by Race and Ethnicity,” pp. 177-186.
- **Watch YouTube Film:** “The Myth of Race Debunked”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnfKgffCZ7U> (Closed Captioning and/or transcript Offered).

WEEK 7

Inequality of Race & Ethnicity (Cont.)/Construction of Gender

October 7, Tuesday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 6, “Inequality by Race and Ethnicity,” pp. 177-186.
- Class Activity: Sociologically examining information on Birth Certificate.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 7, “Inequality by Gender,” pp. 189-196.

October 9, Thursday

- Lecture highlights & discussion over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 7, “Inequality by Gender,” pp. 189-196.
- **READ Schaefer:** *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 7, “Inequality by Gender,” pp. 197-204.
- **Watch YouTube Film: “Two-Spirit Identity”:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8N7JcYbdlmo&t=32s> (Closed Captioning and/or transcript Offered).

WEEK 8

Construction of Gender (Cont.)/Gear Up for Exam 2

October 14, Tuesday

- Lecture highlights over *Sociology Matters*, Chapter 7, “Inequality by Gender,” pp. 197-204.
- **Analytic Writing Prompt #2:** Using theoretical insights from Chapters 5, 6 & 7 – how do sociologists discuss the ways in which social class, race & gender can affect the life chances of an individual (or group)? Please explain and provide examples. Submit via Exams & Quizzes, “Analytic Writing Prompt #2 10-14-25” via Blackboard by 11:59 p.m.
-

October 16, Thursday

- Class discussion over Chapters 5, 6, & 7.
- Students will need to prepare for Exam 2 by reviewing chapters 5, 6, & 7; personal class notes, and/or chapter summaries; Exam 2 will be in-class on October 21st, Tuesday - please bring a scantron & pencil.

WEEK 9

Exam 2/Begin Working on Social Map

October 21, Tuesday

- **Exam 2 In-Class** – please bring a scantron and/or make sure to mark your responses on the exam in a clear fashion with a pencil.

October 23, Thursday

- Students will research a local Texas government. Professor's role will be to assist students with Social Map Project.

WEEK 10

Working on Social Map

October 28, Tuesday

- Professor's role will be to assist students with Social Map Project.

October 30, Thursday

- Professor's role will be to assist students with Social Map Project.

WEEK 11

Working on Social Map

November 4, Tuesday

- Professor's role will be to assist students with Social Map Project.

November 6, Thursday

- Professor's role will be to assist students with Social Map Project.

WEEK 12

Social Mapping Presentations

November 11, Tuesday

- **Approximately 8-10 students** will present – each group has strictly 5 minutes to present their SM illustration to the class; Team Leads for each group must have map on flash drive & prepare to bring to class the day of group presentation. Based on your scheduled date of presentation, you will submit your SM project in Exams & Quizzes, “Social Mapping Presentation 11-11-25” via Blackboard (you submit the date of your scheduled presentation).

November 13, Thursday

- **Approximately 8-10 students** will present – each group has strictly 5 minutes to present their SM illustration to the class; Team Leads for each group must have map on flash drive & prepare to bring to class the day of group presentation. Based on your scheduled date of presentation, you will submit your SM project in Exams & Quizzes, “Social Mapping Presentation 11-13-25” via Blackboard (you submit the date of your scheduled presentation).

WEEK 13

Social Mapping Presentations

November 18, Tuesday

- **Approximately 8-10 students** will present – each group has strictly 5 minutes to present their SM illustration to the class; Team Leads for each group must have map on flash drive & prepare to bring to class the day of group presentation. Based on your scheduled date of presentation, you will submit your SM project in Exams & Quizzes, “Social Mapping Presentation 11-18-25” via Blackboard (you submit the date of your scheduled presentation).

November 20 Thursday

- **Approximately 8-10 students** will present – each student has strictly 5 minutes to present their SM illustration to the class; Each student must have map on flash drive & prepare to bring to class the day of scheduled presentation. Based on your scheduled date of presentation, you will submit your SM project in Exams & Quizzes, “Social Mapping Presentation 11-20-25” via Blackboard (you submit the date of your scheduled presentation).

WEEK 14

Social Mapping Presentations

November 25, Tuesday

- **Approximately 8-10 students** will present – each student has strictly 5 minutes to present their SM illustration to the class; Each student must have map on flash drive & prepare to bring to class the day of scheduled presentation. Based on your scheduled date of presentation, you will submit your SM project in Exams & Quizzes, “Social Mapping Presentation 11-25-25” via Blackboard (you submit the date of your scheduled presentation).

THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 27th – 29th

WEEK 15

Social Mapping Presentations

December 2, Tuesday

- **Approximately 8-10 students** will present – each student has strictly 5 minutes to present their SM illustration to the class; Each student must have map on flash drive & prepare to bring to class the day of scheduled presentation. Based on your scheduled date of presentation, you will submit your SM project in Exams & Quizzes, “Social Mapping Presentation 12-2-25” via Blackboard (you submit the date of your scheduled presentation).



"My students often ask me, 'What is sociology?' And I tell them, 'It's the study of the way in which human beings are shaped by things that they don't see.'"

-SAM RICHARDS

www.everythingsociology.com