

Core Course Learning Objectives

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

- Understand the meaning of, and develop, a sociological imagination
- Develop an understanding of basic sociological concepts and a basic sociological vocabulary
- Develop critical thinking skills
- Understand how varying ways by which sociologists interpret results of empirical observations
- Learn about the importance of social institutions and their relation to social structure; identify the distinctions between the state, market, and civic institutions
- Make connections between personal choices and structural constraints
- Recognize how identities exist within broader social contexts
- Gain awareness of various forms of inequalities and how they are rooted in structural forces
- Understand how, when, and why social changes take place
- Understand the structural and cultural reasons that social persistence occurs

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

- Develop the ability to critically evaluate theories and apply theories to address contemporary social issues
- Understand the importance of theory in social scientific thinking
- Understand the historical and philosophical origins of the social sciences
- Learn about the arguments of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim and other key sociological thinkers
- Recognize how contemporary social thought has been shaped by these and other theorists
- Understand the relationship between a macro level and micro level theory; and the connection between internal cognitions, emotions, interactions, and social structure Recognize and critique the divisions between the "spheres" of market, state, civic association, family, and religion

RESEARCH METHODS

- Recognize the importance of empirical observations in the creation of knowledge
- Understand how to ask a sociological research question
- Learn various methods sociologists use to gather evidence: surveys, interviews, ethnography, focus groups, comparative historical, experimental, content analysis **through the analysis of original research**. Understand the strengths and limitations of each method.
- Understand how sources of existing data sets are created and the challenges researchers face gathering data
- Learn how to develop a theoretical framework for a research project
- Begin to evaluate the meaning of research findings
- Develop skills for creating a research design: research question, annotated bibliography/literature review, theoretical framework, hypotheses, selection of methods, findings

- Understand the ethics of conducting research using human subjects
- Become familiar with major journals in sociology
- Learn the basics of finding existing research that is theoretically or empirically relevant to the students' own research questions.

STATISTICS

- Successfully calculate, interpret, and critically evaluate descriptive and inferential statistics including measures of central tendency, measures of variation, correlation, and regression
- Calculate and describe tables comprised of cross-tabs, correlation matrices, and regression analyses
- Understand various measures of statistical significance and probability
- Be able to interpret, in oral and written form, the meaning of statistics calculated
- Be able to use statistical software (i.e., SPSS) to generate, analyze, and interpret basic output relating to descriptive and inferential statistics
- Be able to use public access data sets and code books in conjunction with statistical software

APPLIED METHODS

- Use existing data sets to address specific questions about social issues
- Learning to identify and access available data sets appropriate for examining particular research questions.
- Recognize the opportunities and limitations of using existing data to address key policy issues as well as theoretically and/or empirically important research questions
- Successfully interpret the meaning of findings in written and oral form to inform and persuade lay audiences, policy makers, academics, and other audiences
- Create practical ideas for policy changes and other applications, including contributions to theoretical and/or empirical knowledge based on data analysis