Sociology Courses for Fall 2011

Soci 103 Sociology of Family
Instructor: Rhoda Carr
Section 01 MWF 10-10:50
Section 02 MWF 12-12:50
This course intends to take you beyond your own personal experience with family into a broader understanding of the multiple forms and changes that the American family has experienced over time. We explore both the effects that major social institutions, such as the economy, have on the family, as well as the effect that families have on reshaping these social institutions. With the help of readings and discussions, we will become more aware of the link between the broader social reality and our individual family choices and experiences. Topics include dating, mate selection, cohabitation, marriage, changing gender roles, parenthood, family violence, divorce, single parenting, child poverty, and many others with an emphasis on the changes in these areas over the past 50 years.

Soci 104 Gender & Society
Instructor: Mimi Schippers
TuTh 12:30-1:45
This course provides an introduction to the sociology of gender. The sociology of gender is the study of how the taken-for-granted meanings for gender and reproductive difference shape and are shaped by social structures and processes. A main focus in this course will be gender stratification or the unequal distribution of power, resources, and prestige on the basis of gender differences in the United States. While our main focus will be gender inequality in the U.S., we will also explore the relationship between gender and other forms of inequality including sexuality, race, ethnicity and global capitalism.

Soci 105 Intro to Education & Society
Instructor: Stephanie Arnett
MW 5-6:15
This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to sociological research on and theories about education in modern societies. In this course, we will consider the functions of education for the individual and society, and we will spend a considerable amount of time discussing the links between education and inequality. Topics that will be discussed in detail include: the ability of schools to make “The American Dream” possible, the ways that schools influence values and attitudes of their students, the influence of parents and peers on school success, and differences between US schools and schools in other countries around the world. Though short lectures will be given regularly, this is NOT primarily a lecture course - students will be expected to actively participate in each class. Since this course includes a mandatory service learning component, student experiences working in a local school will inform discussion of course readings and films.

Soci 106-02 Urban Sociology
Instructor: Sandra Weissinger
TuTh 8-9:15
The idea that there are multiple communities within a single city is not new knowledge. Yet, the ways in which modern US cities develop is still worthy of inquiry. There is much to learn about the processes by which individuals find “home” in urban settings. How do people navigate the boundaries of race-ethnicity, gender, and class when making a space for themselves in urban enclaves? Using a sociological lens, we will examine neighborhoods and boundaries, tactics for “defending one’s turf”, environmental racism, the plight of newcomers to old towns, and consider the future of large American cities. Of particular interest will be New Orleans, as it is a unique city both culturally and in terms of neighborhood boundaries and customs. What social problems are specific to New Orleans and how do people navigate them as a result of their placement as raced, classed, and gendered people?

Soci 108 Deviant Behavior
Instructor: Stephen Ostertag
Section 01 MWF 9-9:50
Section 02 MWF 10-10:50
This course is designed to provide insight into the sociological study of deviant behavior. It will focus on several fundamental issues: (1) the social and cultural forces that define and create deviance, (2) questions related to researching deviance, (3) the processes of entering deviance and acquiring a particular identity, and (4) the intimate work on managing a deviant identity. We will examine these issues while noting the social and political values that inform popular understandings of the vast diversity of human behavior, in particular that which some consider ‘deviant.’ We will then closely investigate a number of specific deviant groups and behaviors to both gain a fuller understanding of them and apply the concepts and theories we learned earlier in the semester. Possible scholarship includes work on graffiti writers, tattooing, dumpster diving, the homeless, survivalists, drug dealing, and others.

Soci 108-03 Deviant Behavior
Instructor: John Hall
MWF 8-8:50
Despite the tendencies of many to assume that certain acts are inherently “deviant” and that those engaging in such behaviors are characteristically different from others, sociologists are attuned to the fact that the realities of deviance are not so simple or straightforward. What acts are considered “deviant” vary from culture to culture, subculture to subculture and, even within the same cultural backdrop, often vary in accord with such factors as the time, place, or setting in which an act is engaged, hinting that deviance is not a “static” but a “relative” condition. Add to this the awareness that “deviance” is as likely to be assessed on the basis of displayed (or assumed) ideological orientations and physical attributes as on behavioral cues and the picture gets murkier. Such realities complicate attempts to understand and cope with such
Sociology asks “big questions”: What causes societies to change? What glues a society together? What is the relationship between individual and society? How have classical sociologists talked about gender and ethnicity/race? How do these sociologists explain economic, gender, and racial inequalities? Social theory provides a framework for answering these questions through the historical and political contests of classical sociological theory. Using original works of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel, we will address sociology’s “big questions” by subjecting the answers of classical theorists to the perspectives of modern sociologists representing diversities of race and gender. This course encourages students to think analytically.
and to apply the ideas of classical and contemporary sociological theorists to their own “big questions,” with class participation required and graded. PREREQUISITE: Soci 201.

Soci 601 Violence Workers
Instructor: Martha Huggins
Thursdays 3:30-6
This course examines State violence and the actors and organizations (‘violence workers’) that legitimize, facilitate, hide, and carry it out, as well as the victims of State violence. Highlighting the regularized and routinized (Max Weber), legitimized (Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber), and ‘banal’ (Hannah Arendt) aspects of State perpetrated human rights atrocities, this course is divided into five academic units: (a) defining violence, defining State, understanding and recognizing State violence; (b) researching and making visible State violence—methods for deconstructing, locating, and disclosing what is hidden and legitimized by power; mitigating and surviving the study of ‘un-loved’ groups and their victims; seeking legitimacy for imperfect ‘data’; (c) State violence-as-system—its actors and hierarchy—power and prestige rankings; gender and age distributions; organizational rationality/‘lone-wolf’ tyrants and sadists; (d) case studies of State violence — Africa (DR Congo, the Congo, 1994-present—massacres and ‘sexual massacres’ ); Asia (Pol Pot’s Cambodia, 1976-1979); (Japan–Nanjing massacre, 1937); Former Yugoslavia (Srebrenica genocide, 1995); Latin America (‘Cold War ’ Argentina ( ‘Dirty War,’ 1976-1983) and Brazil (‘Dirty War,’ 1964-1984), U.S. (War on Terror–Abu Ghraib Prison torture, 2003-present) ; U.S. police, living with and employing violence (2000-present); (e) Sociology of State violence—Arendt, Durkheim, Weber, Huggins, and others. This upper-level seminar course requires students to read, lead, and participate in discussions, to write three short (4 pages each) ‘readings-based’ analytical essays (with extensive revisions of each essay based on Huggins’ comments), and to produce a final 20 page term paper, using the short analytical papers as a foundation, and going beyond these to add at least eight new pages, to create in the process the 20-page page term paper. Students in area studies programs—Africa, Asia, American Studies, Europe, Latin America—must select countries to research among those listed (end of the first paragraph above), unless previously arranged with Huggins. Writing intensive credit will be allowed only if arranged with Huggins prior to a student’s registering for this course.

Soci 615 Gangs, Gangsters & Organized Crime
Instructor: Martha Huggins
Tuesdays 3:30-6
Using case studies—on gangster-era United States (1920s and 1930s); on contemporary gangs in Los Angeles, New York City, Boston; and in Rio de Janeiro Brazil, Colombia, and Peru -- we will explore the social construction of, and social control against, people, groups, and organizations deemed “public enemies.” We analyze constructing and controlling “public enemies” through several theoretical perspectives: Social constructionist sociology, theories of political and social power, conceptualizations of the ethnic ‘stranger,’ and the role of social classification in ordering social worlds. These processes for creating and controlling deviant ‘Others’ are explored in their larger outcomes, including shaping national urban and international places and identities, justifying crime and organized crime “Wars,” and in nationalizing and internationalizing state power and control. PREREQUISITES: Soci 303, 304, 322, or permission of instructor.

Soci 625 Sociology of Childhood
Instructor: April Brayfield
Wednesdays 3-5:30
This capstone course examines theories, methods, and empirical research in several areas of the sociology of childhood. Major themes are (1) how social structure constrains the lives of girls and boys, (2) how social structure and ideology interact and shape childrearing values and practices, and (3) how the experiences of girls and boys vary within and across societies. Topics include images and representations of children, early childhood education and care, childrearing values, and the social reproduction of inequalities in children’s social worlds. Students will design and carry out an independent research project. PREREQUISITES: Soci 303, 304, 322, or permission of instructor.

Soci 688-01 Writing Option for Soci 625
Instructor: April Brayfield
Wednesdays 3-5:30
This optional one-credit course fulfills the Writing Intensive core requirement for the School of Liberal Arts. Students must be simultaneous enrolled in Soci 625 to earn credit for the Writing Intensive requirement. This course pays close attention to the linkages between writing – as a process and a product – and our ideas about children. Through writing, students will improve their ability to read, understand, evaluate, and synthesize the sociological literature on children and childhood.

Soci 630 Urban Policy & Planning
Instructor: Kevin Gotham
Tuesdays 3:30-6
This course examines how urban policies and programs have affected cities and metropolitan in the United States and around the world over the last hundred years or so. Some of the questions the course will address are: How have governmental programs and policies affected urban and regional settlement patterns? Who controls the formulation and implementation of urban policy? What kinds of conflicts and struggles have historically affected public policy at the urban, regional, and national levels? How do policies affect larger socioeconomic processes, power structures, and global forces? What is the relationship between theory, research, and policy? Requirements for this course include an individual research project (or an optional service learning activity), an in-class presentation of the research project or service learning activity, and a series of critical essays based on various books and articles on cities and policy.
Soci 633 Sociology of Education  
Instructor: Carl Bankston  
Mondays 3-5:30  
This course covers major social issues relating to education, with an emphasis on the American educational system. It considers the historical development of formal institutions of education, general questions about the goals and means of educational systems, and specific topics such as determinants of educational attainment and achievement, group inequalities in education, political policies regarding schooling, ability grouping, and standardized testing. Through classroom discussions and reading responses, students will examine educational issues carefully and critically. With a mandatory service learning component, students also will tutor in local schools and connect their tutoring experiences to their readings and classroom discussions. PREREQUISITES: Soci 303, 304, 322, or permission of instructor.

Soci 634 Race in the Americas  
Instructor: Katie Acosta  
Tuesdays 3:30-6  
This course explores the development of racial categories throughout Latin America and the implications of these social constructs for group identities, community building, and social activism. We will begin with a theoretical overview of the scholarship on race and ethnicity in Latin America and on the process of racialization. We will explore the limitations of using a Western lens to understand “race” and racism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Students will learn to expand how they conceptualize these terms in order to better understand Latin America’s distinct racial landscape. Students will engage the empirical scholarship on indigenous populations and Latin Americans of African descent. In doing so, students will explore the fluidity of racial identities across time and space and the increasing importance of this fluidity in our transnational world. Students will learn about the complexities of mestizaje, the erasure of blackness, and rising inter-ethnic conflict.

Soci 694 Political Sociology of Latin America  
Instructor: David Ortiz  
Wednesdays 3-5:30  
Political sociology studies the social basis of politics and political systems. Analyzing the political sociology of Latin America, therefore, entails understanding the causes and consequences of power distributions both within and between Latin American nations, and the processes by which those power distributions may change. This course is designed to meet two goals. First, students should gain a general understanding of what political sociology is and the theories that scholars use to understand political sociology. Second, students should learn about the most central contemporary political issues facing Latin America today, and their sociological relationship with both past and present global occurrences.