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**Draft AP Sociology Curriculum 07/08/02**  
**Prepared by the ASA Task Force on the AP Course in Sociology**

## **THE COURSE**

### **Purpose:**

The AP Sociology course is designed to introduce students to the sociological study of society. Sociology focuses on the systematic understanding of social interaction, social organization, social institutions, and social change. Major themes in sociological thinking include the interplay between the individual and society, how society is both stable and changing, the causes and consequences of social inequality, and the social construction of human life. Understanding sociology helps discover and explain social patterns and see how such patterns change over time and in different settings. By making vivid the social basis of everyday life, sociology also develops critical thinking by revealing the social structures and processes that shape diverse forms of human life.

### **Goals:**

*A student who has mastered an introductory sociology course will be able to:*

- Show the relevance and reality of structural factors in social life
- Place an issue in a larger context (identify systemic elements; identify stakeholders; list unintended consequences)
- Describe, explain, and predict aspects of social problems
- Debunk individualistic explanations of behavior and identify social patterns
- Identify and offer explanations for social inequality
- Analyze labor force issues
- Perform a content analysis of texts or news to identify possible sources of bias
- Critique the media
- Transform a topic of interest into a researchable, sociological question
- Describe the elements of the scientific method in the social sciences
- Understand basic elements of an ethical code of conduct for social scientists
- Unpack the “causal nexus”, e.g., time order, correlation, logic of causal analysis
- Interpret descriptive statistics
- Evaluate the methodological processes and limits of research (e.g., bias, generalizability)
- Critically assess web sites and electronic resources
- Set up a data table properly and read and interpret a table correctly
- Distinguish levels of analysis
- Posit intervening factors and spurious relationships in social life
- Show awareness of probabilities and contingencies

- Recognize that counterfactual anecdotes do not invalidate sociology
- Understand the intersection of biography and history
- Take the role of the other
- Describe various career trajectories for sociologists at different degree levels; where sociologists work and what they do
- Position personal life choices and chances in a demographic context
- Compare and contrast one's own context with those in other parts of the U.S. and the world
- Describe the tension between generalization and stereotyping; social forces and determinism
- Appreciate the role of human agency in social change

## **Summary Outline**

### **I. The Sociological Perspective**

- A. Sociology as a field of inquiry
  1. Sociology as the study of social behavior
  2. How is sociology different from other social sciences?
- B. The sociological perspective
  1. the empirical basis of sociology
  2. the debunking tendency
- C. Central sociological concepts
  1. social interaction
  2. social structure
  3. social change
- D. The emergence of sociology
  1. The influence of the Enlightenment
  2. Classical sociological theory (Durkheim, Marx, Weber)
  3. The emergence of American sociology (Addams, Park, DuBois, Cooley, Mead, Thomas, Znaniecki)
- E. Sociological theory
  1. Functionalism
  2. Conflict theory
  3. Symbolic interaction
  4. Exchange-rational choice
  5. Feminist theory

### **II. Research Methods**

- A. The Research Process
  1. Scientific method
  2. Stages of research
  3. Qualitative and quantitative research
  4. Inductive/deductive reasoning
- B. Methods of Inquiry

- a. Survey research
- b. Interviews
- c. Participant observation
- d. Content analysis
- e. Comparative and historical research
- C. Probability and Statistical Analysis
- D. Research Ethics

### **III. Culture**

- A. Group influence
  - 1. Social basis of belief – Asch experiments on social influence
    - 1. authority and domination – Milgram experiments: obedience to authority
    - 2. attribution theory – “fundamental attribution error” (bias towards attributing responsibility to individuals), accounts and accountability (Garfinkel)
    - 3. interpersonal attraction – homophily (tendency to choose similar partners)
- B. The Social Construction of the Self
  - 1. The modern “self” as historical product of Christianity and the Enlightenment
  - 2. Cross-cultural variation in selves (Nisbett; Shweder)
  - 3. Selves as constructed out of situations – (Michels; Goffman, Collins)
  - 4. Rational choice – as socially constructed
- C. Characteristics and Elements of Culture
  - 1. Scripts, schema, and typifications
  - 2. Language
  - 3. Norms and Values
  - 4. Beliefs
- D. Cultural Diversity
  - 1. Ethnocentrism
  - 2. Subcultures and countercultures
  - 3. Global culture
- E. Culture in Society
  - 1. Culture as cohesive, functional
  - 2. Cultural as source of improvisation, diversity, innovation
  - 3. Popular culture and the mass media

### **IV. Socialization**

- A. The Social Construction of the Self
- B. Theories of Socialization
  - 1. Freud and the psychoanalytic perspective
  - 2. Social learning theory
    - 1. Cooley, Mead and symbolic interaction
- C. Agents of Socialization
- D. Socialization over the Life Course

1. Rites of passage
2. Adult socialization
3. Conversion

## V. Social Organization

### A. Building Blocks

- a. Roles and Statuses
- b. Institutions
- c. Social networks
  - i. Depicting networks
  - ii. Dimensions of networks
  - iii. Using network analysis
    1. e.g. Getting jobs
    2. e.g. Fighting the AIDs epidemic

### B. Social Differentiation

- a. Size, scale, and differentiation
- b. Differentiation and specialization
- c. Changing bases of solidarity (mechanical and organic solidarity)
- d. Problems of cooperation and coordination in complex social systems

### C. Ways of organizing cooperation

- a. Kinship as a basis of organization
  - i. Historical and contemporary examples
  - ii. Weaknesses of kinship-based systems
- b. Bureaucracy as a solution to weaknesses of kinship-based structures
  - i. Characteristics of bureaucracy (formal roles, specialization based on expertise, clear duties and obligations, hierarchical command and information structures, compliance based on career incentives, and formal records for control and planning)
  - ii. Advantages of bureaucracy (efficiency; expertise; control)
  - iii. Limitations of bureaucracy (flexibility; adaptability; power concentration)
  - iv. Varieties of bureaucracy (e.g., typical western manufacturing firm; Japanese firm; professional nonprofit service organizations; “new economy” firms)
- c. Markets as social organizations (economic sociology)
  - i. What is a market and how sociologists differ from economists in looking at them
  - ii. Markets as groups with roles and statuses
  - iii. Markets as institutions (relation to law and government)
  - iv. Virtues and limitations of markets as ways of organizing
- d. Informal networks
  - i. The persistent importance of informal networks
    1. in bureaucracies
    2. in markets
  - ii. Informal networks and “social capital”

- iii. The dark side of informal networks (e.g., criminal networks)

## **VI. Social Inequalities**

- A. Social Class and Social Stratification
  - 1. Defining and measuring social class
  - 2. The consequences of class inequality
  - 3. Models of social class
    - a. Marx and class conflict
    - b. Weber's multidimensional model of class
    - c. contemporary class analyses
  - 4. The class structure of the United States
    - a. the distribution of wealth and income inequality
    - b. social mobility and status attainment
    - c. intersections of race, class, gender, and age
  - 5. Class consciousness
  - 6. Poverty and welfare
  - 7. Global stratification
    - a. rich and poor nations
    - b. world systems theory
    - c. international poverty
- B. Race and Ethnicity
  - 1. Definitions of race and ethnicity
  - 2. The social construction of race
    - a. racialization
    - b. racial formation theory
  - 3. Prejudice, discrimination and institutional racism
  - 4. Consequences of racial stratification
    - a. racial segregation
    - b. race, ethnicity, and life chances
  - 5. Diverse group experiences
  - 6. Intersections of class and race
- C. Gender
  - 1. Distinguish sex and gender; the social construction of gender
  - 2. Patterns of gender socialization
  - 3. Gender and sexual identity
  - 4. Gendered Institutions
    - a. gender and work
    - b. gender segregation
  - 5. The women's movement
- D. Age
  - 1. Social significance of aging
  - 2. Age stereotypes and age discrimination
  - 3. Ageing and the life course
  - 4. Age cohorts

5. Age stratification
6. The demography of aging

## **VII. Deviance and Conformity**

- A. Sociological Definitions of Deviance
  1. Positive deviance
  2. Negative deviance
  3. Deviance and the Deviant
  4. Types of Youth Deviance
- B. Costs and Benefits of Deviance
  1. Functionalism
  2. Social Control
  3. Structural Strain
    - i. Anomie
    - ii. Innovation
    - iii. Ritualism
    - iv. Retreatism
    - v. Rebellion
  4. Conflict Theory
  5. Labeling Theory
- C. Deviant Identities
  1. Deviant subcultures/communities
  2. Deviant careers
  3. Stigma
- D. Measuring Crime
  1. Crime
    - i. Juvenile Crime
    - ii. White Collar Crime
  2. Crime Control
    - i. Deterrence
    - ii. Retribution
    - iii. Incarceration
    - iv. Rehabilitation
    - v. Recidivism
  3. Terrorism
- E. Race, Class, Gender, and Crime
- F. Criminal Justice System
  1. Criminal Justice System
  2. Courts
  3. Law Enforcement
  
  4. Prisons

## **VIII. Social Institutions**

- A. Family
  - 1. Forms of kinship
  - 2. Diversity in family forms
  - 3. Marriage and divorce
  - 4. Family violence
  - 5. Families and social policy
- B. Education
  - 1. the rise of public education
  - 2. Education and social mobility
  - 3. Inequality and education
    - a. teacher expectations
    - b. tracking
    - c. educational segregation
    - d. inequality and educational testing
    - e. school funding and facilities
    - f. the digital divide and information technology
  - 4. Education and social reform/social policy
- C. Religion
  - 1. Measuring religiosity
  - 2. Influence of religion on social and political attitudes/behavior
  - 3. Forms of religion
  - 4. Diverse world religions
  - 5. Religious organizations/institutions
  - 6. Religion, secularization, and social change
- D. Work/Economy
  - 1. Influence of the Industrial revolution
  - 2. Comparative economies
  - 3. The occupational system
    - a. the division of labor
    - b. occupational distribution
    - c. occupational prestige
    - d. earnings
  - 4. Work and de-industrialization
    - a. the rise of contingent labor
    - b. growth of the service sector
    - c. unionization
  - 5. Worker alienation
- E. Power, Politics, and Government
  - 1. Power and authority
  - 2. Theories of power
  - 3. Political participation
  - 4. Government: who rules?
  - 5. Courts and the law
  - 6. Military
- F. Media and Culture
  - 1. Media conglomerates

2. Studies of media effects (violence, etc.)
  3. Popular culture
  4. “High” culture
- G. Health
1. Inequality and access to health care
  2. Structure of health care institutions
  3. Delivery of health care
  4. Death and Dying

## **IX. Social Change**

- A. Population, Urbanization and the Environment
1. Demographic processes
    - i. birth rate/death rate
    - ii. migration
    - iii. population growth and composition (illustrate demographic transition theory)
  2. Urbanization
    - i. the evolution of cities
    - ii. suburbanization and urban decline
    - iii. segregation
    - iv. megalopolis
    - v. the rural turnaround
  3. Environment and Human Ecology
    - i. environmental racism
    - ii. ecofeminism
    - iii. environmental policy
- B. Collective Behavior and Social Movements
1. Theories of collective behavior
    - i. emergent norm theory
    - ii. competition theory
    - iii. convergence theory
  2. Types of collective behavior
    - i. Crowds
      - a) Mobs and riots. Contagion and emergence theories.
    - ii. Mass Behavior
      - a) Rumor
      - b) Public opinion and propaganda
      - c) Panic and mass hysteria
      - d) Fads and fashion
  3. Social Movements
    - i. How movements develop
    - ii. Organization of social movements
    - iii. Strategies and tactics
    - iv. Theories of social movements: resource mobilization, political process, new social movement theory.

- C. Causes and Consequences of Social Change
  - 1. Demographic changes
  - 2. Collective behavior/social movements
  - 3. Technology and science
  - 4. Cultural diffusion
  - 5. War
  - 6. Modernization
- D. Theories of Social Change
  - 1. World systems theory
  - 2. Dependency theory
  - 3. Evolutionary theory

## Course Narrative

### I. The Sociological Perspective

This section of the course introduces students to the discipline of sociology, focusing on its history, the questions and scientific methods that characterize it as a field, and what distinguishes it from other social science disciplines. Included in this definition is the ongoing evolution of sociology as a discipline that is both basic science and applied science. Important in this perspective are the elements of sociological practice and possible careers in sociology at all levels of academic preparation.

Specific topics include: the definition of sociology, the central concepts of social interaction, social structure, and social change, the significance of diversity and variation among human beings (such as found in race, gender, age, and social and economic class), and the debunking character of sociology. Attention is also given to the basic and applied elements of sociology and the careers that individuals trained in sociological study can pursue.

The history of sociology is grounded in social and ideological changes in Western Europe and America, specifically the Enlightenment and American pragmatism. Contributions of classical sociological theorists such as Durkheim, Marx, and Weber are examined in combination with major scholars prominent in the emergence of American sociology.

### II. Sociological Theory and Research Methods

This section of the course introduces students to the dynamic interplay between theory and the logic of the scientific method in sociology. Learners will become aware of the core theoretical perspectives and the process of developing theory. They will recognize that sociology is a science: it is a creative and, simultaneously, disciplined activity with a bit of serendipity!

Sociological theory attempts to explain in a coherent manner the varieties of societal organization and of social behaviors. Students should understand that though it is posed at an abstract level, sociological theory is continually being refined as it is made to confront empirical reality.

Students should become familiar with the major sociological approaches -- functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, exchange theory, and feminist theory -- to the explanation of social life. Beginning with the question "What makes society possible?" students should be introduced to approaches that explain the formation of groups, their behaviors, the nature of social organization, and attendant variations.

With functionalism (Durkheim, Parsons), students should be aware of the analogy of society to an organism, the assumption of consensus that underlies social life, and ways that society organizes itself to sanction deviance so that it may return to equilibrium. Students should also be aware of the criticisms of functionalism regarding its difficulty in dealing with social change.

Conflict theory (Marx, Weber) introduces students to the notion that societal stability may come from stable power relations rather than from an underlying consensus. Students should become aware of the multiplicity of conflicting interests in society as

well as how changes in resources may, among other factors, lead to major social change. The difficulty of conflict theory in predicting precisely where the fissures in a given society are and when they may erupt is a recurring criticism.

Symbolic interactionism (Blumer, Goffman) focuses the student's attention on how human interaction creates rules and meanings that then structure further interactions. An inductive, qualitative approach to the understanding of individual and group interaction in a variety of contexts is the common orientation of symbolic interactionists. Students should understand that symbolic interactionism's social-psychological focus often prevents its understanding of the larger structural contexts in which its actors operate.

Exchange theory (Blau, Homans, Coleman) brings issues of rational choice to the fore. Students should understand the ways in which relationships of trust and power may develop as people pursue their self-interest. The degree to which exchange theory is relevant largely to interactions among individuals (rather than groups) and is contextually based in the larger culture should be understood.

Feminist theory (Gilman, Rossi, Millett) focuses on the ways that gender systems structure our daily interactions as well as larger systems of power in society. Many feminist theorists focus not only on how patriarchal societies are set up in ways that disadvantage women but on how the effects of patriarchy articulate with other systems of domination, such as class- and race-based domination. From theories of sexual politics to sociobiology to economic and materialist approaches, feminist theory provides a variety of perspectives on relations of power in society. Feminist theories differ radically in how they incorporate other approaches to the study of social life.

Learners will connect the use and construction of theory with the application of diverse research methods to answer sociological questions. Over the years, philosophers, religious leaders, journalists, and many others have speculated about human society. Students will learn how sociology differs from these other enterprises because sociology applies relevant theories and scientific methods to the study of society. The methods are not pre-determined; they depend upon the question being asked. Sometimes the endeavor is exploratory; sometimes it is to test a specific theoretical proposition; it is always systematic. Students will learn how the theory-method process develops and uses a strategy that requires stating a clear question or hypothesis, developing data to address the question or test the hypothesis, and then judging whether the question is answered or the hypothesis is supported. They will learn further that a scientific approach requires that the methods be stated clearly so that other sociologists might repeat the study to confirm the results.

Coverage includes both qualitative and quantitative research, basic and applied research contexts as well as review of different methodologies, including survey research, interviewing, participant observation, content analysis, historical and comparative research. Basic concepts of statistical analysis are also included, along with discussion of probability and measurement. In addition, the course will examine the questions of ethics in research and the role of values in sociological analysis. The scientific method operates in an ethical context. As such, it does not permit the sociologist to conceal or ignore information that fails to support the hypothesis. It also requires that sociological researchers safeguard the human subjects who are a part of their research. Also included

is the use of the internet in research, with a focus on judging the reliability and validity of information found on the internet.

Students will learn how hypotheses are formulated using concepts and relevant sociological theory. For example, a sociologist might develop the hypothesis, “The rate of juvenile delinquency in a neighborhood is inversely related to the predominant social class of the neighborhood.” The root of this hypothesis lies in one or more key sociological theories. To put this hypothesis more concretely, the rate of juvenile delinquency will be higher in low-status neighborhoods and it will be lower in high-status neighborhoods. The rate of juvenile delinquency can be measured from publicly available information on juvenile convictions and census data on the number of teenagers in a neighborhood. The rate of juvenile delinquency is a variable, because its value will differ from place to place. Students will learn how a concept such as “social class” is often not easy to measure, and so sociologists must “operationalize” the variable, which means to designate a measurable indicator that approximates the concept. So, for example, a sociologist might measure social class or status with the variables annual income and occupational prestige. In testing this hypothesis, the sociologist is expecting that neighborhoods with more high income and high occupational prestige residents will have lower juvenile delinquency rates, while neighborhoods with more low income and low occupational prestige residents will have higher rates.

Hypotheses are often tested using a sample of the population of interest. Students will learn how sociologists have developed careful techniques for drawing mathematically accurate samples of the population. Administering a questionnaire to a sample of the population is much less expensive and more accurate than trying to question everyone within a population.

In developing explanations, students will learn how sociologists are careful to distinguish the types of variables they are investigating. In general, a dependent variable is the variable being studied. An independent variable is a variable believed to vary with the dependent variable; the independent variable is often relatively fixed (such as one’s gender), or it occurred earlier than the dependent variable (such as childhood experience). In the example in the preceding paragraph, the dependent variable is juvenile delinquency rate, and the independent variables are family income and the occupational prestige of workers in the family. Notice, however, that high parental income may be associated with a low juvenile delinquency rate, but it does not necessarily cause a low juvenile delinquency rate. Instead, the relationship may be mediated in various ways. For example, wealthier parents may be able to provide more activities for their teens, or they may be able to hire better lawyers if their teens do get into trouble.

Drawing on theoretical foundations, students will learn that to assess a causal relationship between variables, it is necessary 1) to establish the time order of the variables (with the independent variable coming before the dependent variable), 2) to establish that the variables are correlated, and 3) to rule out any competing hypotheses. Suppose, for example, that a researcher finds that ice cream consumption is inversely related to juvenile delinquency rates. This finding does not prove that ice cream prevents juvenile delinquency. Instead, this hypothesis may be misspecified because the wrong independent variable has been named. Perhaps parents with higher income can buy more ice cream, so that higher income co-varies positively with more ice cream and also co-varies negatively with the juvenile delinquency rate.

Students will learn that sociologists collect their data through a number of research methods. One of the most common is the social survey, in which a sample of people respond to a questionnaire that is administered on paper, in a personal interview, by telephone, or over the internet. Sociologists may also engage in a participant observation, in which they become part of a group they seek to understand. Some sociologists, like psychologists, conduct experiments, while others rely principally on historical or archival data to test their hypotheses. The choice of data collection methods depends upon the kind of data that are needed to test a hypothesis. Some hypotheses may be tested through multiple methods.

Students will learn how sociologists tabulate their data using statistical methods, some of which are highly sophisticated. It is common to report measures of central tendency for each variable, for example, the mean or median values. It is also common to report a measure of the spread from the mean, such as the standard deviation or interquartile range. Measures of association indicate whether and/or how closely two variables are related to each other. A measure of association such as chi-square can show if the relationship of two variables might have happened by chance or if it is a significant relationship; it is also possible to calculate the strength of an association through the use of a correlation coefficient. When sociologists measure one variable taking into account the effect of a second variable, they are said to “control” for the second variable, and multivariate statistics are sophisticated means to control simultaneously for the effects of many independent variables.

Students of sociology will learn how to assess the adequacy of research reported in newspapers, websites, and other places. In general, it is important to be able to tell how the research was done, whether competing hypotheses were adequately examined, and whether the appropriate variables were controlled. Studies that contain little information about how the data were collected and analyzed – in particular, studies that cannot be done again by another researcher – are suspect.

### **III. Culture**

This section of the course introduces students to the concept of culture as the realm of socially constructed and, to varying extents, shared ideas, understandings, mental models, modes of categorization, values, speech forms, and traditions. Culture-making is a fundamental human capacity: Cultural phenomena can be observed at any level of analysis, from small groups of short duration to large-scale national societies to the world system as a whole. Culture includes the shared belief systems, rituals, and conversational styles of small groups, as well as societally pervasive ways of seeing that are passed from generation to generation. Although many people, including high school students, may see culture as an unyielding part of their environment, at any scale it is a human creation, and sociologists understand it as such.

This section begins by looking at culture in small groups, with examples from classic social psychological experiments of how group pressures can influence (and thus shape culturally) such phenomena as beliefs about the natural world (for example, assessments of the length of a line) or deeply held moral values (for example, against inflicting pain). Small groups both produce culture (as in minimal-group experiments, where randomly assigned groups create elaborate beliefs about themselves and others

based on trivial cues) and reflect it (as in research experiments demonstrating how cultural stereotypes shape the interpretation of behavior of members of a task group). Examples are considered that show how culture arises from situational contexts, how it changes, and how it influences human behavior.

A particularly important aspect of culture deals with the social construction of individuality and the modern “self.” This section focuses on this issue because it is related to one of the greatest challenges facing teachers of introductory sociology: the challenge of convincing students that social environments have causal force and that not everything can be explained by reference to individual choices, human error, personal heroism, or moral deficiencies. In part, people everywhere tend to favor such interpretations, but especially so in Europe and the Americas. At least from the Reformation and the Enlightenment onward, the western cultural tradition has placed a strong emphasis on the autonomy of the individual as a moral actor with organized preferences and goals and a coherent personality and system of values. Social psychologists have discovered that this emphasis leads people to favor interpretations of events and behaviors that highlight the coherence of the individual personality and the causal force of individual choice and action --- even when experiments are rigged to make outcomes random, or evidence of individual *inconsistency* is abundant. The tendency of people to overestimate the causal importance of individual choice and to minimize the effects of environmental constraint is so strong that psychologists have coined a special term, “the fundamental attribution error,” to describe it.

The next part of this section describes various elements of culture that sociologists study. Just as students of “social structure” break down their topic into more elementary units in order to study it, students of “culture” address different kinds of cultural “stuff” in their research. Some elements of culture are so deeply institutionalized and so much a part of elementary socialization that they shape the very ways in which people think: examples include mental models (pre-conscious scripts and schemas that structure perception and action), or categorical schemes that people use to divide up the world and sort people and things into categories. Other elements of culture – especially norms, values, or moral tenets – can be more readily articulated and serve as yardsticks for evaluating oneself and others. Still other aspects of culture, like rituals and language, are performative, embedding meaning in human action.

Sociologists inherited the notion of culture from anthropologists who studied relatively small-scale, structurally simple, societies where most people shared similar beliefs and participated in the same rituals. At first, sociologists, too, viewed culture as a source of societal unity and cohesion, a kind of social “glue” that held groups and nations together. More recently, sociologists who study culture have focused on the ways in which group and national cultures may be varied and inconsistent. Rather than seeing culture as a source of constraint and unity, they view culture as a source of creativity and innovation, a “toolkit” of ideas, resources, and ways of seeing that people deploy in varied ways. This change reflects some developments in scholarship: for example, new work in social and cognitive psychology that suggests that people’s beliefs are less consistent and more complex than we had previously thought, as well as research in sociology on phenomena (for example, the rapid emergence in many places of religious or ideological or artistic countercultures) that call into question the traditional view. The change also reflects developments in the real world, especially multiculturalism and

globalization. With respect to multiculturalism, a dramatic increase in transnational migration has men and women raised in many places and in many cultural traditions living side by side throughout the world. Meanwhile, the emergence of global media of communications has rendered the voices, ideas, music and art of people from every continent and civilization nearly as available as those from one's own village or metropolis. In such a world, sociologists increasingly must ask *not* "what is these people's culture?" but rather, "how do these people balance and navigate among the variety of cultures with which they come into daily contact"? This section of the course enables the instructor to explore with students the ways in which different aspects of culture serve, at different times and in different ways, as sources of cohesion, as springboards for innovation or creativity, or as bases of social conflict.

#### **IV. Socialization**

Socialization is learning to become a member of the groups and society in which one lives, and is one way that societies continue through time. The course considers such key questions as: Who or what are the primary agents of socialization? What happens when infants receive very little human contact? When does socialization occur, and how does it differ at various stages of the life cycle? What role do "rites of passage" play in transitions through the life course? How do sociologists analyze the contents and context of socialization? How do various sociological perspectives illuminate socialization processes? What do sociologists mean by resocialization and desocialization?

#### **V. Social Organization and Social Networks**

Human societies routinely accomplish what, when one thinks about it, are remarkable feats of coordination: providing food and shelter, waging war, producing rituals and spiritual meanings, fostering technological innovation, and governing, all of which require the participation of many people in a complex set of interactions. The study of social organization provides the tools for understanding the range of forms and processes that enable people to accomplish such routine miracles of social choreography.

This section begins with some basic ideas. *Statuses* are the more or less formally acknowledged positions that constitute any social system, and *roles* represent the stereotyped behaviors that go with those statuses. Because many roles fit with other roles into complementary relationships, they constitute basic building blocks of larger collectivities. *Institutions* are larger complexes of purposive activity, oriented around particular tasks that most societies share: for example, educating the young, providing religious services, or coordinating trade in goods and services. In between are *social networks*, an increasingly prominent concept in all the social sciences. This section will introduce these ideas and illustrate ways in which sociologists use them to analyze concrete social groups and societies. (Because "social networks" may be less familiar than the other terms to many teachers, we provide more detail in the outline, calling attention to research showing how robust social networks help people get desirable jobs and how social network analysis has cast light on the HIV epidemic.)

A central idea in the study of social organization since Durkheim has been the notion that as groups and societies increase in scale, the tasks of fulfilling basic and not-

so-basic social needs become ever more challenging. Over the long haul, the challenges associated with increases in scale (the population of a tribe or community, the number of employees of a business) lead to increasing *differentiation* as people, groups, and role systems specialize around particular tasks or functions. As societies go through this process, we see the emergence of specialized institutions. We also see changes in the basis of social solidarity, from systems in which most people share strong identities and values to ones in which cohesion comes as much from cooperation in a complex division of labor as from shared culture.

In the largest-scale and most complex societies – those that include millions of people within modern nation-states – the challenges of providing the necessities of life and maintaining political order require truly extraordinary feats of coordination. The rest of the section examines the social technologies available to people in complex societies for collective activities. In pre-modern societies, the fundamental basis of social organization is kinship, and kinship remains an important basis of organization and solidarity in contemporary societies, as well. But it has been supplemented, as Max Weber wrote, by bureaucracies, a form of organization that solves some of the problems of coordination and effectiveness that vexed the earliest large-scale societies. This section describes the key characteristics of bureaucracy as a form of organization, contrasting it to pre-modern conditions and considering both its strengths and its disadvantages. It also describes the variety of ways in which people have modified conventional bureaucracies to match specific cultural values or to adapt to rapid environmental change.

Even modern societies, however, rely only partially on bureaucracies. A second important form comprises different kinds of economic markets, in which large-scale activity is organized through exchanges directed by prices. Although Max Weber pioneered the sociological study of markets (placing them alongside bureaucracy as powerful modern forms of organization), many sociologists left the study of markets to economists, until returning to it with new interest and energy with the renewal of “economic sociology” in the 1980s. Unlike contemporary economists, whose approach to markets is almost always abstract and mathematical, sociologists use a variety of approaches and tools – ethnographic and historical as well as mathematical- to study markets, in all their variety, as ways of organizing production and trade.

Finally, informal social networks based on different forms of interpersonal trust, remain a central part of the social organization of modern societies. Some networks lubricate the operation of bureaucracies and markets. Examples of these are the informal ties that bind members of some successful small-business associations, or that produce the “social capital” evident in effective local governments or social movements. In other cases, informal social networks--- for example, the ones that bind together organized crime families or international terrorist organizations--- may pose grave economic and political threats to the societies in which they operate.

## **VI. Social Inequalities**

This section of the course explores how rewards and opportunities are differentially distributed to individuals and groups. Students of sociology understand that patterns of inequality are based on a variety of sources. The course examines how sociologists define and measure social class, race and ethnicity, and gender (age, region,

and other variables may be added). Importantly, students learn how these variables affect one's access to different resources and opportunities. The course explores how resources and opportunities are connected to larger patterns of power and privilege in a given society. A key aspect of the study of social stratification is an understanding of how these patterns of inequality are maintained and challenged. Students should understand that societies differ based on the degree of inequality they exhibit and that different dimensions of inequality intersect and reinforce one another; thus, the course will examine how race, class, gender, and age intersect in the structure of a given society.

Several questions are discussed, including "Why is there inequality?" What are the different dimensions of inequality? What different explanations of inequality are there? Why does inequality persist?" Inequality both within the United States and globally are examined, along with discussion of the impact that inequality has (its impact on access to the information economy, health care, the environment, and patterns of wealth and income differentials, for example).

The course will include detailed analysis of the significance of social class and the class system in determining life chances. Definitions and different models of social class are presented, as well as research on social mobility, poverty, and trends in inequality within the United States and beyond. The course includes an analysis of the global system of stratification, including discussion of cross-national differences in the standing of different nations in the global stratification system.

The component of this section on race and ethnicity covers the sociological definition of race as a social construction, as well as discussion of the significance of ethnicity--both as a source of identity and stratification. Brief histories of the experience of diverse race and ethnic groups are included. Important concepts reviewed in this section, with current research, are prejudice, discrimination, and institutional racism. Research on patterns of racial segregation and the interaction of race and class is included.

The study of gender includes the study of gender as a source of stratification, as well as sociological research on the social construction of gender. The concept of gendered institutions is included, along with analysis of gender segregation and the sociological frameworks for studying gender that have been developed. Also discussed is the development of the women's movement and social policies for gender equity. The section on age includes age as a source of stratification, but also covers the study of aging and the life course. Age stereotyping is analyzed as well as the social factors that influence the aging process. Important concepts that are included are age cohorts and age norms. The significance of the demographic structure of age is also reviewed, especially the current "graying of America." Age prejudice, age discrimination, and ageism are also reviewed.

## **VII. Social Order, Social Control, and Deviance**

This section of the course distinguishes sociological definitions of deviance from biological and psychological definitions of deviance, emphasizing the importance of *social* reaction in its definition. When patterns of daily life are disrupted on a systematic or long-term basis, social order is in peril. Students should understand what forces in a society allow for or encourage the breakdown of social order and/or the disorganization

of social control (e.g. socialization, the criminal justice system, etc.). When a corporation that employs a large percentage of a town's adults decides to leave town resulting in considerable out-migration, social order is potentially threatened. When individuals or groups are fundamentally excluded from access to the resources necessary to live according to the ideals of the society, they are more likely to engage in actions that are not sanctioned. Students will learn to ask: which actions are defined as threatening to the social order or *deviant* and who makes that determination? When do such actions lead individuals to "deviant careers" and when might they be part of a "deviant subculture"?

Students should understand that when terms such as "mentally ill," "juvenile delinquents," or "criminals" are applied to individuals who have violated some usual ways of behaving, agents of social control are *labeling* them. The specific behaviors that are characterized in these ways are historically variable and who gets so labeled is dependent on the characteristics of the person (say, their race, class, and gender). Thus, alcohol purveyors were "criminals" during Prohibition (between 1920 and 1933) but not at other times. Also, individuals from subordinate social groups are more likely to be labeled as "criminal" than those from dominant groups, for example. Students will understand how having power in a society is related to the capacity to label behaviors or individuals as deviant.

The course will examine how, after a person is labeled as deviant, the organization of the judicial or youth welfare system ensures that the deviant is publicly judged and, if found guilty or wanting, ultimately punished. The course will examine the various sanctioning rituals that reinforce the social order, and analyze their relationship to the interests of dominant groups.

In this context, students should explore empirically patterns of crime, arrest rates, and prison sentences as well as patterns of "mental illness" or "juvenile delinquency." They will be able to say how such rates vary by race, class, and gender.

## **VII. Social Institutions**

This section of the course reviews the social structure of major social institutions, including the family, education, religion, the economy and work, government, and health care. Major questions asked include how institutions are organized, how inequality is reproduced and/or challenged in institutions, how institutions change, and how institutions vary across and within different societies/cultures. Students will understand what sociologists mean by social institutions, and will understand examples of major social institutions in Western societies. The course will analyze how social institutions develop as they do in different societies.

### **A. Families**

Material included on families will include study of the diversity of family forms now common in the United States, a comparison of different kinship systems, sociological theories of family structure and family experience, data on marital status and living arrangements, social changes affecting patterns of marriage and divorce. Also included is a discussion of family violence and the social problems affecting contemporary families..

Major questions asked are: What are the major types of families -- in the US and in other societies? How has the form of the family changed over time? How do families

adapt over the life cycles of its members? How does power operate within families? Are there social class and race differences in family organization? How do gay and lesbian families organize themselves? How does sociological research inform social policies about families?

#### B. Education

Material on education includes the study of inequality and education, including patterns of tracking, race and class segregation, the connection between education and social mobility, inequality and educational testing, and the sociological study of school reforms.

Questions asked include: What is the difference between education and schooling? Why were schools formed in various societies? When, where, and why did formal schooling become required? What are schools asked to do in various types of societies? What is home schooling, and where and why does it occur? How is education supported (funded) in different types of societies? Have the purposes of education changed during the course of U.S. history? What about in other countries around the world? Who decides the content of education, and how is this done? What is the "hidden curriculum" of schools? Who decides the educational processes that occur? How and where are decisions about educational structures made? What is "tracking"? What are some of the ways and places that education occurs besides in schools? How does the institution of education relate to other social institutions? How is education related to social stratification? What data can be used to analyze that relationship?

#### C. Religion

The study of religion includes comparative discussion of diverse religious forms, including the classical study of religion from Durkheim, Weber, and Marx. Patterns of religious belief are reviewed, as well as the influence of religion on social and political attitudes and behavior. The structure of diverse religious institutions (churches, sects, and cults) is reviewed, as well as processes of religious socialization. The role of religion in influencing and being influenced by social change is also covered.

Questions asked include: What are the major religions in given societies and how are they organized? What is the difference between a church and a sect? How do people understand their religious behavior? What is fundamentalist religion? Evangelical religion? What is the cause of religious conflict? How do religious behaviors vary by race/ethnicity, social class, and gender? How do religious organizations interact with other organizations in the society, e.g., the state?

#### D. Economy and Work

In studying the economy and work, the influence of the Industrial Revolution is discussed, as well as contemporary patterns of change that are affecting the organization of the economy and work. Thus, the course discusses deindustrialization and the role of changed technology in influencing work institutions and patterns of work in the United States and globally. Patterns of occupational distribution and segregation by race, class, and gender are covered, as well as discussion of worker alienation and issues of power in the workplace.

Questions asked include: How do societies differ in how they organize the production and distribution of goods and services? How is a corporation organized? What are the various roles and relations of authority within corporations? Under what

conditions do workers unionize? What is a profession? How are processes of globalization influencing the social organization of work?

#### E. Government: Power and Authority

The section on government and the state reviews patterns of power and authority in society, as well as analyzing the structure of the following institutions: government, the courts and law, the military. Different theoretical models of the state are reviewed, as well as patterns of political participation and political process.

Questions asked include: How do different societies organize their political systems? How are interests aggregated and expressed in different types of political systems? What are political parties and how do they operate? How do we study power in a given society or community? How do we understand patterns of disenfranchisement and enfranchisement? Who participates in politics and how do they do so? How do voting patterns differ by race/ethnicity, social class, and gender?

#### F. Health Care

In the section on health care, the structure of health care institutions is covered, with a focus on patterns of access and inequality. Sociological analysis of current issues facing health care institutions are also included, as well as discussion of the sociology of death and dying.

### **IX. Social Change**

This section of the course introduces students to various processes that lead to or constitute change. Urbanization, globalization, social movements, and diffusion are some of the ways that particular societies and, indeed, the world change.

#### A. Population, Urbanization and the Environment

Materials for this section include conditions under which groups move from rural to urban areas or from one country to another and the impact this has on the sending and receiving areas. It also considers how groups adapt in the new environment and what the receiving areas do, if anything, to accommodate them.

Questions asked include why do some areas have high birth and death rates? What are some factors which push people to migrate? What is the Demographic Transition Theory? What are some processes of urbanization? Why are some urban areas highly segregated? What are some factors which contribute to suburbanization? How does the population impact on the environment? What are some factors which contribute to environmental racism and ecofeminism?

#### B. Collective Behavior and Social Movements

Materials for this topic include a discussion of emergent forms of social behavior, that is, collective behavior and the mobilization of social groups through social movements. Questions the section addresses include: What are theories of collective behavior? What are some types of collective behavior? What are social movements? Under what conditions may social movements form?

### C. Causes and Consequences of Social Change

Students will examine causes as well as consequences of social change, and the macrolevel patterns of change that sociologists have analyzed as significant over time, such as the movement to an increasingly rationalized, bureaucratized form of society.

### D. Theories of Social Change

Students focus on the major theories of social change such as Modernization, World Systems, and Dependency theories.