Last Updated: 2026-08-12

SOC 101
Introduction to Sociology

Description of the Course
Welcome! This is going to be a great semester! Sociology is the study of how and why human social activities, interactions, and relations are organized. Not only is sociology among the most exciting disciplines I have come across, but it is also one of the most exciting times to study sociology. It would be impossible to provide a survey of all the areas within sociology in a single semester. So, this course will instead develop a way of thinking about social life that you hopefully find useful and informative long after this course has ended. Specifically, we will take a structural and an analytic approach to our study of sociology. By structural, we will focus on the "architecture" or forms of social organization that buttress society. By analytic, we will focus on identifying social mechanisms and social processes that explain order and change in social life. In addition, we will also have forays into topical themes of the global, knowledge, power, and computational social science.

Course Prerequisites or Co-requisites
None

Instructor
Charles J. Gomez, Ph.D. (He/Him)
Email: cjgomez@arizona.edu
- You may refer to me as Charlie, Charles, or [Prof./Dr./Mr.] Gomez, whichever you're comfortable with.
- Please use the header "**SOC 101 | Your Title Here**" to ensure a quick response. We will respond to your initial email within 48 business hours. **Include both me and our TAs**!

Office Hours: By appointment on Zoom.

Teaching Assistants
Jeffrey Shen (He/Him)
Email: j7shen@arizona.edu
- You may refer to me as Jeffrey or Mr. Shen, whichever you're comfortable with.
- Please use the header "**SOC 101 | Your Title Here**" to ensure a quick response. We will respond to your initial email within 48 business hours. **Include our instructor and both TAs**!

Office Hours: By appointment on Zoom.

Dallin Johnson
Email: dallinljohnson@arizona.edu
- You may refer to me as Dallin or Mr. Johnson, whichever you're comfortable with.
- Please use the header "**SOC 101 | Your Title Here**" to ensure a quick response. We will respond to your initial email within 48 business hours. **Include our instructor and both TAs**!

Office Hours: By appointment on Zoom.

Course Format and Teaching Methods
SOC 101 is organized into seven weeks of asynchronous lectures on Brightspace / Desire2Learn (D2L).

Expected Learning Outcomes
- Knowledge of social institutions: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the key social institutions in sociology and their interconnections.

- Knowledge of social inequality: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of social inequalities in contemporary societies. Students will also demonstrate knowledge about how to critically evaluate arguments about and solutions to inequality and diversity in society.
- Knowledge of how to think critically about social issues in contemporary society: Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills, complex reasoning, and written communication skills.
- Knowledge of research methods and primary research evidence: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of research methods, techniques of social research, and primary research evidence, including the interpretation of basic statistics and/or direct research evidence from academic journals.

Course Communications
Official University of Arizona e-mail address, the Ask Me Anything forum, and Brightspace/D2L.

Ask Me Anything Discussion Forum
Have a question? Post it in the Ask Me Anything (AMA) discussion forum on Brightspace/D2L. This forum is a catch-all for any questions that come up during the course (e.g., concepts from the readings or modules you'd like clarified, assignments or course mechanics like instructions, deadlines, how things work, or sociology in general). If something sparks your curiosity beyond our material, ask away. Your TAs and I all monitor the forum and will respond as quickly as we can. If you're wondering about something, chances are a classmate is too, so posting here helps everyone. Seven weeks go by fast, so don't hold back. One exception: If your question is very specific to your situation or involves grades, please email us directly instead of posting it there.

Required Texts or Readings
All texts and readings are available on Brightspace/D2L.

Graded Assessments
Your final course grade will comprise four components, weighted as follows:
(1) The average of your best six out of seven video posts *and* responses is worth **40**% of your final grade.
(2) The final project is worth **30**% of your final grade.
(3) The average of your best two out of three assignments is worth **20**% of your final grade.
(4) The average of your best six out of seven quizzes is worth **10**% of your final grade.

Our aim is for the assessments to be rewarding and enriching to you: It's meant to be challenging but manageable, dynamic but routine, structured but flexible. We use this evaluation scheme for a few reasons:

1. It should relieve stress. There are no big exams. You just have to chug along, doing regular, steady work. Week in and week out, you know exactly what you have to do. It's (mostly) always the same. And if you have a few particularly tough weeks outside of class, you can still do exceptionally well and don't have to worry too much about falling behind and catching up.
2. You will retain more this way. It's not like cramming for a test and forgetting everything.
3. We take a skills-based approach to learning. We hope that at the end of the class, you will have developed two key skills: (1) how to read the material, figure out what is important, remember it, and reproduce it, and (2) how to engage with the material, identify the core argument, and present it yourself in a clear and concise fashion.

Important Details and Policies about Graded Assessments

- All instructions and evaluative criteria for assignments, video discussion posts, response posts, and the final project are on Brightspace/D2L under the "**Start Here**" tab. They are also found in the week in which they are due on Brightspace/D2L.
- All quizzes are available on Brightspace/D2L within each week of the course.
- Quizzes, Assignments, and Responses to Video Discussion Posts are **all due on Sundays before midnight**. However, Video Discussion Posts are **due on Fridays before midnight**, and the Final Project is **due on Wednesday, October 14, before midnight** (the last day of the session).
- Quizzes consist of several multiple-choice, true and false, or "select all that apply" questions. You have two attempts on each quiz, and we use the higher of the two scores.
- At the end of the course, we will drop your lowest quiz grade (i.e., best six out of seven quizzes), your lowest assignment grade (i.e., best two out of three assignments), and we will drop your lowest composite video response grade (i.e., best six out of seven responses). For the video responses, this includes both your video response and your two written replies for that week, but not either alone.
- Any assessment not submitted will receive a grade of **55**, not zero. Zero grades tend to make it very difficult to recover from in any class. However, suspicions of cheating or academic dishonesty on any assessment will result in a score of 0 and the appropriate disciplinary consequences.
- We **strongly advise** that you submit all assessments by the due date. If an assessment is submitted a few minutes to a few hours late, we generally don't penalize. Beyond this short grace period, **we generally do not accept late assessments, including the final project**. We do not accept any assessments after the last day of class. If there are extenuating circumstances, don't hesitate to contact us. We can help find a workable solution!

Important Due Dates

Final Project:
Final Project due Wednesday, October 14, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).

Quizzes:
Syllabus Quiz due Sunday, August 30, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Weeks 1 & 2 Quiz (Modules 1 – 5) due Sunday, September 6, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Week 3 Quiz (Modules 6 – 9) due Sunday, September 13, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Week 4 Quiz (Modules 10 – 13) due Sunday, September 20, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Week 5 Quiz (Modules 14 – 17) due Sunday, September 27, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Week 6 Quiz (Modules 18 – 21) due Sunday, October 4, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Week 7 Quiz (Modules 22 – 25) due Sunday, October 11, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).

Assignments:
Assignment 1 (Week 2) due Sunday, September 6, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Assignment 2 (Week 4) due Sunday, September 20, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Assignment 3 (Week 6) due Sunday, October 4, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).

Video Discussion Posts:
Video Discussion Post 1 (Week 1) due Friday, August 28, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Video Discussion Post 2 (Week 2) due Friday, September 4, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Video Discussion Post 3 (Week 3) due Friday, September 11, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Video Discussion Post 4 (Week 4) due Friday, September 18, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Video Discussion Post 5 (Week 5) due Friday, September 25, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Video Discussion Post 6 (Week 6) due Friday, October 2, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Video Discussion Post 7 (Week 7) due Friday, October 9, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).

Responses to Video Discussion Posts:
Two Responses to Post 1 due Sunday, August 30, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Two Responses to Post 2 due Sunday, September 6, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Two Responses to Post 3 due Sunday, September 13, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Two Responses to Post 4 due Sunday, September 20, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Two Responses to Post 5 due Sunday, September 27, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Two Responses to Post 6 due Sunday, October 4, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).
Two Responses to Post 7 due Sunday, October 11, 2026, before midnight (11:59 pm MST).

Final Course Grade
Your final course grade is converted to a letter grade using the following scheme:
90 to 100: A | Exceeds all requirements and expectations.
80 to 89: B | Meets all requirements and expectations.
70 to 79: C | Misses some of the requirements and expectations.
60 to 69: D | Significantly falls short of requirements and expectations.
< 60 : E | Repeat of course needed for credit.

Extra Credit
As there are many opportunities to do well in this course, extra credit is not offered.

Grading Scale and Policies
University policy regarding grades and grading systems is available at
http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/grades-and-grading-system

Incomplete (I) or Withdrawal (W)
Requests for incomplete (I) or withdrawal (W) must be made in accordance with University policies, which are available at http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/grades-and-grading-system#incomplete and http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/grades-and-grading-system#Withdrawal respectively.

Dispute of Grade Policy
If you feel we have made a mistake in grading your work or calculating your grade, you are entitled to ask us to review your work. (Our policy is that you wait a week before appealing.) That said, a regrade might result in a raised or lowered grade.

Honors Credit
Students wishing to contract this course for Honors Credit should email me to schedule an appointment to discuss the terms of the contract **within the first week of the course**. Information on Honors Contracts can be found at https://www.honors.arizona.edu/honors-contracts.

Important University Policies
https://academicaffairs.arizona.edu/syllabus-policies

Generative AI Use (e.g., Claude, Gemini, ChatGPT or other large-language models)
In this course, generative artificial intelligence (AI) /large-language-models (LLMs) tools, such as Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, Dall-e, etc., may be used for your assignments with appropriate acknowledgment and citation. If you are unsure whether you are using generative AI tools appropriately in this course, I encourage you to discuss your situation with me. Be aware that many AI companies collect information; do not enter confidential information in a prompt. LLMs may make up or hallucinate information. These tools may reflect misconceptions and biases of the data on which they were trained and the human-written prompts used to steer them. You are responsible for checking facts, finding

reliable sources for, and making a careful, critical examination of any work that you submit. Please use the following guidelines for acknowledging/citing generative AI:
https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai
https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt

Reading Effectively and Critically
The readings are highly selective. We will spend limited time on topics about which a full semester is spent in many advanced courses. It is essential that you complete the reading for each session in advance. You will not fully profit from the class session unless you come prepared, nor will you be able to contribute to the discussion.

The goal is to expose you to important ideas and give you some familiarity with them so that you can approach situations with greater insight and confidence. To be sure you have grasped the point of each article, ask yourself:

- What is the author's main argument? What type of evidence is brought to bear in support?
- What key concepts and principles are introduced? How well are these concepts elaborated?

That said, most of us have been taught that the only way to "read" is to go through and mentally digest every word, in every sentence, in every paragraph in a linear fashion. **This is simply not true, nor is it effective.** To be sure, this may be fine (if not preferable) for your favorite work of fiction or for a literature seminar, but not here. Our goal is to distill the broader insights from (at times) dense readings. I highly recommend that you consult the following resources on how to read effectively and efficiently:

- http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/tburke1/reading.html
- http://jamesclear.com/read-more

Subject to Change Statement
The syllabus is a game plan, not a contract. And as with all game plans, we might need to adjust our trajectory. So, information contained in the course syllabus may be subject to change, but with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Last Updated: 2026-08-12

Scheduled Topics and Bibliography

Week 1 – Welcome to the Course!

Module 1: How Is Society Possible?

Required Readings:

- [Module 1] Read: Harari, Yuval Noah. 2015. Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind. New York: HarperCollins. Chapters 1 and 2. Pp. 10-34 [25 Pages]

Week 2 – Defining Social Life

Module 2: The Sociological Imagination and Forms of Societies and Theories
Module 3: How We Study the Social World
Module 4: The Origins of Sociology and Its Foundational Thinkers
Module 5: Human Nature and Socialization

Required Readings:

- [Module 2] Read: Rojas, F., 2017. Theory for the working sociologist. Columbia University Press. Pp. 13-17; 20-25; 58-61; 91-98; 116-119 [27 Pages]
- [Module 3] Read: Lazer, David M. J., et al. 2020. "Computational Social Science: Obstacles and Opportunities." Science 369(6507):1060-62. [2 Pages]
- [Module 4]: Read: Johnson, Doyle P. 2008. *Contemporary Sociological Theory: An Integrated Multi-Level Approach*. New York, NY: Springer. Pp. 25-38 [14 Pages]
- [Module 5]: Read: Hobbes, Thomas, "Of the Natural Condition & the Commonwealth," and Rousseau, Jean-Jacques "Of the Social Contract," Book I, from The Social Contract, in Classical Sociological Theory, Third Edition. Edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk. [12 Pages]

Week 3 – Agency, Structure, and Culture

Module 6: The Social Construction of Reality
Module 7: Social Structure as Society's Hardware
Module 8: Culture as Society's Software
Module 9: Agency and Structure

Required Readings:

- [Module 6] Read: Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. The Social Construction of Reality. Penguin Books. ("The Reality of Everyday Life" and "Social Interaction in Everyday Life") Pp. 33 – 48 [16 Pages]
- [Module 7] Read: Crothers, Charles. 2013. *Social Structure*. Routledge. *Chapter 5: Dimensions of Social Structure: An Analytical Toolkit* Pp. 82-89 [8 Pages]
- [Module 8] Read: Calhoun, Craig. 2012. *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 20 "Structures, *Habitus*, and Practices" by Pierre Bourdieu Pp. 276 – 287 [12 Pages]
- [Module 9] Read: Giddens, Anthony. 1979/2008. "Agency/Structure." Pp 231-242 in *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, edited by Calhoun et al. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. [12 Pages]

Week 4 – The Forms of Social Organization

Module 10: Social Institutions
Module 11: Formal Social Organizations
Module 12: Social Groups, Kinship, and Collectives
Module 13: Social Categories

Required Readings:

- [Module 10] Read: Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. The Social Construction of Reality. Penguin Books. (Starting at "Origins of Institutionalization") Pp. 70 – 85 [16 Pages]
- [Module 11] Drucker, Peter F. 1992. "The New Society of Organizations." *Harvard Business Review* 70(5):95–104. [18 Pages]
- [Module 12] Read: Hechter, Michael and Christine Horne. 2009. *Theories of Social Order*. Stanford University Press. *Chapter 24: The Web of Group-Affiliations* by Georg Simmel Pp. 291-298 [8 Pages]
- [Module 13] Read: Collins, Patricia H. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought*. Routledge. Pp. 553 – 558 [6 pages]

Week 5 – Society as Systems

Module 14: Social Systems
Module 15: Social Networks
Module 16: Social Hierarchies
Module 17: Social Complexity

Required Readings:

- [Module 14] Read: Calhoun, Craig. 2012. *Classical Sociological Theory*. John Wiley & Sons. *Chapter 33: An Outline of the Social System* by Talcott Parsons and *Chapter 34 Manifest and Latent Functions* by Robert Merton Pp. 421 – 447 [27 Pages]
- [Module 15] Read: Kadushin, Charles. 2012. *Understanding Social Networks*. OUP USA. *Chapter 1: Introduction*. Pp. 3-12 [10 Pages]
- [Module 16] Ridgeway, C.L., 2019. Status: Why is it everywhere? Why does it matter?. Russell Sage Foundation. Read or Listen: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/13/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-cecilia-ridgeway.html
- [Module 17] Read: Urry, J., 2003. Global complexity. Polity. Chapter 2: The Complexity Turn. Pp. 17-38 [22 Pages]

Week 6 – Social Processes and Social Mechanisms

Module 18: Social Processes and Mechanisms
Module 19: Identity Formation
Module 20: Micro-motives and Macro-behaviors
Module 21: Diffusion and Isomorphism

Required Readings:

- [Module 18]: Read: https://understandingsociety.blogspot.com/2017/03/mechanisms-according-to-analytical.html
- [Module 19] Read: Jenkins, R., 2014. *Social identity*. Routledge. Pp. 1-4, 16-21, 102-111 [22 Pages]
- [Module 20] Read: Schelling Thomas. 1978. Micromotives and Macrobehaviors. [14 Pages]
- [Module 21] Read: Tosti, Gustavo. 1897. "The Sociological Theories of Gabriel Tarde." *Political Science Quarterly* 12(3):490. Pp. 490-499 [10 Pages]

Week 7 – Social Integration and Social Differentiation

Module 22: Social Integration
Module 23: Social Differentiation
Module 24: Social Boundaries
Module 25: Social Stratification

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Required Readings:

- [Module 22] Read: Calhoun, Craig. 2012. *Classical Sociological Theory*. John Wiley & Sons. *Chapter 12: The Division of Labor in Society by Émile Durkheim* Pp. 141 – 147 [7 Pages]
- [Module 23] Read: Calhoun, Craig. 2012. *Classical Sociological Theory*. John Wiley & Sons. *Chapter 25: Soul of Black Folk by W.E.B. Du Bois* Pp. 323 – 328 [6 Pages]
- [Module 24] Read: Michele Lamont and Virág Molnár (2002). "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 167-195. Pp. 167 – 188 [14 Pages]
- [Module 25] Watch: Thomas Piketty: New thoughts on capital in the twenty-first century TED Talk https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKsHhXwqDqM [22 Minutes]