

SOC 100 Introduction to Sociology (Contemporary French Society)

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Course Description

This course is an introductory sociology class focusing on important social issues in contemporary French society. With a turbulent history of social revolutions, colonization, war, and social activism, French society has a distinctive identity and displays highly interesting social dynamics. In recent decades, France has witnessed deteriorating economic conditions for working people, the rise of nationalism and the far right, terrorist attacks, labor unrest, and revolts from marginalized populations.

Through a lens of essential sociological concepts and theories, we will investigate important social problems in French society, including those related to social classes and inequality, gender, immigration, ethnicity and race, nationalism and national identity, and social movements.

Sociology is the study of human relationships. This broad definition not only encompasses our most intimate relationships with family and friends, but also our interactions with the populations and places to which we belong and the economic and political structures under which we live. These relationships are often contradictory. We create and maintain relationships with other people that can exclude, create hierarchies, and constrain. We also build and maintain relationships that can include, equalize, and promote mutual freedom.

In this course, we will approach society from a *macro perspective*—we will examine the *groups and social institutions* in which individuals are embedded and which influence people's actions, circumstances, and life chances. The course is designed to introduce you to “the sociological imagination” and encourage you to develop the critical capacity to understand how the social world works. Along the way, you will become familiar with key sociological concepts and some of the major substantive topics that sociologists study.

The course has four parts. Part I provides an overview of the foundations of sociology, covering major theoretical approaches with a focus on French schools of thought. Part II covers the axes of social inequality, including class, gender and race. Part III focuses on several of the major social institutions in society, including the economy, the family, and the state that help to perpetuate particular forms of social inequality. Finally, Part IV considers social dynamics in society, specifically urbanization and globalization.

Student Learning Objectives and Outcomes

The goal of this course is for students to learn how sociologists think and to engage with a wide range of topics covered in sociology. Through our work together, students will be able to:

- 1) Gain a clear understanding of the conceptual and theoretical foundations of sociology as a discipline and numerous important areas of specialization

- 2) Critically consider and analyze social issues using sociological concepts and theories
- 3) Discuss different sociological perspectives and articulate the strengths and weaknesses of each
- 4) Demonstrate knowledge about various social issues in French society
- 5) Clearly understand different class, racial, and gender dynamics in French society
- 6) Identify the causes and outcomes of important social events in France
- 7) Articulate how particular historical conditions have shaped French social institutions
- 8) Understand how globalization has affected French people's lives and discuss the economic winners and losers in France
- 9) Compare and contrast French and American society
- 10) Develop an appreciation of diversity and difference by experiencing French society

Course Assignments and Assessments

- 1) **Class attendance and participation (20%):** All students are expected to attend class meetings and to participate actively in discussions throughout the semester. At the beginning of each class session, every student will discuss and share interesting social or political issues that they have found in news sources. Students are also expected to discuss the readings and films covered in class.
- 2) **Individual presentations (20%):** Students will choose a particular theme listed on the syllabus and give a presentation on the topic by incorporating both class readings and materials from news media. You should sign up for your presentation at the beginning of the semester.
- 3) **Three writing assignments (20% * 3 = 60%):** There will be three writing assignments throughout the semester, worth 20 points each. Each paper should be about 750 words. By the end of each course section (social inequality, social institutions, and social change), you should submit a critical memo discussing a particular social issue of your choosing, linked with class materials. You are strongly encouraged to utilize outside sources such as newspaper and journal articles as well as book chapters.

Grade Scale

A	above 94	B+	87-90	C+	77-80	D	below 70
A-	91-93	B	84-86	C	74-76	F	below 60
		B-	81-83	C-	71-73		

I will be happy to explain why you received the grade you did on any assignment and to discuss how you might improve your performance in the future. But be advised that grades are not up for negotiation.

Course Materials

All reading materials will be posted on Laulima. Please find them on the Resources tab. You must finish the assigned readings *before* each class and be fully prepared to discuss them.

Course Policies

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a mandatory grade of F for the course. If you borrow words, ideas, thoughts, etc. from someone, you must give them

credit. Purchasing papers online, cheating on exams or turning in work written for another course without the instructor's permission are also unacceptable. You are expected to turn in assignments on the day they are due. **No make-up discussions or exams will be accepted.**

Course Outline

PART 1 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Week 1. What is Sociology? The Sociological Imagination

Korgen, Kathleen Odell and Jonathan M. White, 2011. "The Engaged Sociologist: The Sociological Perspective," *The Engaged Sociologist: Connecting the Classroom to the Community* (third edition), Sage, pp. 1-14.

C. Wright Mills, 2000[1959]. "The Promise," *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford University Press, pp. 1-7.

Week 2. Sociological Foundations and French Sociology

Korgen, Kathleen Odell and Jonathan M. White, 2011. "Founders and Foundations of Sociology: Theory," *The Engaged Sociologist: Connecting the Classroom to the Community* (third edition), Sage, pp. 15-30.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Part I of "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (1848), in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2d ed. (W.W. Norton, 1978), pp. 473-483.

Johan Heilbron, 2015, *French Sociology*, Cornell University Press, pp. 1-11, 181-208.

Field Trip: La Maison d'Auguste Comte

PART 2 SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

Week 3. Social Classes

Didier Eribon, 2013. *Returning to Reims*, Semiotext(e), pages TBA

Watch: *La Vie de Jésus* (Bruno Dumont, 1997)

Week 4. Social Classes

Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital" (pp. 241-258 in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*).

Michèle Lamont, 200. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class and Immigration*. Russell Sage Foundation, chapters 4 and 5.

Week 5. Sex and Gender

Simone de Beauvoir, 2011[1949]. *The Second Sex*. First Vintage Books, excerpts.

Virginie Despentes, 2021[2006]. *King Kong Theory*, FSG Originals.

Watch: *Les Années Super-8* (Annie Ernaux and David Ernaux-Briot, 2022)

Week 6. Sex and Gender

Édouard Louis, 2017. *The End of Eddy*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (Read the entire book)

Week 7. Race and Ethnicity

Abdellali Hajjat and Marwan Mohammed, 2023. *Islamophobia in France: The Construction of the Muslim Problem*. University of Georgia Press, TBA.

Alexander Stille, 2014. "Can the French Talk about Race?" *The New Yorker*, July 2014

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/can-the-french-talk-about-race>

George Packer, 2015. The Other France: Are the suburbs of Paris incubators of terrorism? *The New Yorker*

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/31/the-other-france>

Watch: *La Haine* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995)

Field Trip: La Goutte d'Or

Week 8. The Debate on Headscarves

Killian, Caitlin. "The Other Side of the Veil: North African Women in France Respond to the Headscarf Affair." *Gender & Society* 17, no. 4 (August 2003): 567–90.

Chouki El Hamel (2002) Muslim Diaspora in Western Europe: The Islamic Headscarf (Hijab), the Media and Muslims' Integration in France, *Citizenship Studies*, 6:3, 293-308

Kuhç, Sevgi, Sawitri Saharso and Birgit Sauer. 2008. "Introduction: The Veil: Debating Citizenship, Gender and Religious Diversity." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 15(4):397-410.

Thomas, Elaine. 2006. Keeping Identity at a Distance: Explaining France's New Legal Restrictions on the Islamic Headscarf. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29 (2): 237-59.

Video: CNN Debate on France's ban on burkas

Field Trip: Institut du Monde Arabe (Arab World Institute) et La Grande Mosquée (the Great Mosque)

PART 3 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Week 9. Work, Economy, and Financialization

Boltanski, L., Chiapello (Ève), 2005 [1999], *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London-New York, Verso, 2005, Preface and general introduction.

Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction.

Godechot, Olivier. 2017. *Wages, Bonuses and Appropriation of Profit in the Financial Industry: The Working Rich*. Routledge, Introduction and chapter 6.

Week 10. Citizenship and Immigration

Rogers Brubaker (2001) The return of assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany, and the United States, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24:4, 531-548

Rogers Brubaker (1990) Immigration, Citizenship, and the Nation-State in France and Germany: A Comparative Historical Analysis, *International Sociology* 5(4): 379-407

Frederick Cooper (2022) Citizenship and difference in France: Colonial histories and postcolonial controversies, *Citizenship Studies* 26(4-5): 418-425.

Week 11. Education

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1988[1984]. *Homo Academicus*. Stanford University Press.

PART 4 SOCIAL CHANGES

Week 12. Globalization and the EU

Willsher, Kim. 2012. "Foie Gras: French Farmers Defend 'Tradition' after Ban in California." *The Guardian*, August 5.

Sophie Meunier, "The French Exception," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 4 (July/August 2000): 104-116.

DeSoucey, Michaela. 2010. "Gastronationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in the European Union." *American Sociological Review* 75(3):432-55. (Selected excerpts)

Week 13. Social Movements

Daniel Driscoll, Populism and Carbon Tax Justice: The Yellow Vest Movement in France, *Social Problems*, 2021

Chamorel, Patrick. "Macron Versus the Yellow Vests." *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 30 no. 4, 2019, p. 48-62.

Week 14. The Rise of Right-Wing Populism

Dorit Geva, Daughter, Mother, Captain: Marine Le Pen, Gender, and Populism in the French National Front, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, Volume 27, Issue 1, Spring 2020, Pages 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxy039>

Elizabeth Zerofsky, 2022. France's Far Right Turn. *The New York Times Magazine*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/31/magazine/new-french-right.html?searchResultPosition=3>

Week 15. Reflections