SOCILOGY

493 College Street, 203.432.3323
http://sociology.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair
Grace Kao

Director of Graduate Studies
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Professors Julia Adams, Jeffrey Alexander, Elijah Anderson, Scott Boorman, Nicholas Christakis, Philip Gorski, Grace Kao, Philip Smith

Associate Professors Rene Almeling, Emily Erikson, Jonathan Wyrten

Assistant Professors Daniel Karell, Alka Menon, Rourke O’Brien, Emma Zang

FIELDS OF STUDY
Fields include comparative sociology/macrosociology; cultural and historical sociology; economic sociology; life course/social stratification; mathematical sociology; medical sociology; methodology (qualitative and quantitative approaches); networks; political sociology; race/gender/ethnic/minority relations; social change; social demography; social movements; theory (general, critical, hermeneutic); urban sociology.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE
Qualification for admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. will take place during the student’s first three years of study at Yale. A student who has not been admitted to candidacy will not be permitted to register for the seventh term of study. To qualify for candidacy the student must take twelve seminars to be completed in years one and two: four required courses (SOCY 542, SOCY 578, SOCY 580, SOCY 581) and eight electives, including at least one workshop. After completion of courses, students prepare a research paper and one field exam and defend a dissertation prospectus.

Teaching is an important part of the professional preparation of graduate students in Sociology. Students teach therefore in the third and fourth years of study.

COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAMS
Sociology and African American Studies
The Department of Sociology offers, in conjunction with the Department of African American Studies, a combined Ph.D. degree in Sociology and African American Studies.

Students accepted to the combined Ph.D. program must meet all of the requirements of the Ph.D. in Sociology with the exception that, excluding the courses required, a research paper, and a field exam, combined-degree students may substitute African American Studies courses for six of the twelve term courses required to qualify for the Ph.D. in Sociology. For further details, see African American Studies.

Sociology and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
The Department of Sociology also offers, in conjunction with the Program in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, a combined Ph.D. in Sociology and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. For further details, see Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

MASTER’S DEGREES
M.Phil. See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

M.A. (en route to the Ph.D.) Eight term courses are required for the M.A. degree. Two of these courses must include statistics and theory. A grade of High Pass or Honors must be achieved in five of the eight required courses. The M.A. is normally conferred in the term that follows completion of the course requirements. In special circumstances, students may petition to receive the degree in the same term.

Program materials are available at http://sociology.yale.edu.

COURSES
SOCY 508b / PLSC 508b, Qualitative Field Research  Egor Lazarev
In this seminar we discuss and practice qualitative field research methods. The course covers the basic techniques for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing ethnographic data, with an emphasis on the core ethnographic techniques of participant observation and in-depth interviewing. All participants carry out a local research project. Open to undergraduates with permission of the instructor.
SOCY 534b, Cultural Sociology  Jeffrey Alexander
Cultural sociology studies "irrational" meanings in supposedly rational, modern societies. Social meanings are symbolic, but also sensual, emotional, and moral. They can deeply divide nations but also powerfully unite them. They affect every dimension of social life, from politics and markets to race and gender relations, class, conflict, and war. We look at how this cultural approach developed, from counterintuitive writings of Durkheim and Weber a century ago, to the breakthroughs of semiotics and anthropology in midcentury, the creation of modern cultural sociology in the 1980s, and new thinking about social performance and material icons today. As we trace this historical arc, we examine ancient and modern religion, contemporary capitalism, the coronation of Elizabeth II, professional wrestling, Americans not eating horses, the Iraq War, the impeachment of Bill Clinton, Barack Obama's first presidential campaign, and the new cult of vinyl records.

SOCY 537b / S&DS 575b, YData: Measuring Culture  Daniel Karell
Culture is increasingly digital. Cultural objects, such as songs and artwork, are frequently digitized. Creating cultural objects often involves digital tools and takes place in digital domains. The effects of culture on our social lives are now typically mediated by digital platforms and devices. In this introductory course, we explore how data science is being used to measure the cultural landscape, the consumption and production of culture, and the impact of culture on society. To do so, we review current theories and methodologies, as well as conduct our own analyses of popular culture, the rhetoric and social connections underlying online extremist communities, and other topics. The course provides opportunities to practice the data science skills presented in S&DS 523 with applications to the social scientific study of culture. Can be taken concurrently with or after successfully completing S&DS 523.

SOCY 539a / AFAM 518a / PSYC 536a, Is That Racist? Theory and Methods for Diagnosing and Demonstrating Racism  Phillip Atiba Goff
How do we know when something is racist? And how do we prove it to those who are skeptical? This course is designed to allow students to go beyond armchair pontificating about racism by exploring a broad range of ways social theorists have defined the term and methods they have used to demonstrate it. Together, we read, critique, and synthesize scholarship from across disciplines, with the goal of refining our own definition of the term. To accomplish this, we examine the stakes of calling something racist, who benefits and who suffers from a given definition, and how racism functions across contexts (mostly) within the United States. We also learn about popular methods for demonstrating that an idea, feeling, behavior, person, or institution is racist and evaluate how evidence about racism (or lack thereof) can obscure a diagnosis of racism—or lead to an erroneous one. Throughout the course, we take opportunities to translate the theoretical and methodological lessons we learn to the world we live in today, from popular culture to dinner table conversations. This course is designed to be mostly synchronous, with synchronous sections accompanying lectures. Videos are made available for students who are not able to attend lectures or sections, but taking the course asynchronously is discouraged. Prerequisite: students should be comfortable reading journal articles and thinking critically about contentious social/political topics. Readings and other course materials span a wide range of disciplines. While there are no statistical prerequisites, students are asked to think about the logic of statistical analysis and should be comfortable reasoning about numbers.

SOCY 542a, Sociological Theory  Julia Adams
The course seeks to give students the conceptual tools for a constructive engagement with sociological theory and theorizing. We trace the genealogies of dominant theoretical approaches and explore the ways in which theorists contend with these approaches when confronting the central questions of both modernity and the discipline.

SOCY 545a, Race, Medicine, and Technology  Alka Menon
Medicine and technology are important sources of authority and institutionalization in modern societies. Drawing insights from across sociological subfields and adjacent disciplines, the course offers an in-depth investigation of race, medicine, and technology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This course examines the role of medicine and related technologies in defining race and perpetuating racism. We trace how race became an important component of biomedical research in the United States. We also follow particular medical technologies across borders of time and space, using them to understand race and nationhood in transnational perspective. Taking a broad view of technology, we analyze cutting-edge, state-of-the-art technologies alongside older, more mundane technologies and infrastructures. Ultimately, we consider how medical technologies are not just treatments for individual patients but also windows into broader social and cultural structures and processes.

SOCY 544a, Research Topics on Human Nature and Social Networks  Nicholas Christakis
This seminar focuses on ongoing research projects in human nature, behavior genetics, social interactions, and social networks.

SOCY 560a or b / PLSC 734a or b, Comparative Research Workshop  Staff
This weekly workshop is dedicated to group discussion of work-in-progress by visiting scholars, Yale graduate students, and in-house faculty from Sociology and affiliated disciplines. Papers are distributed a week ahead of time and also posted on the website of the Center for Comparative Research (http://ccr.yale.edu). Students who are enrolled for credit are expected to present a paper-in-progress.

SOCY 580a, Introduction to Methods in Quantitative Sociology  Daniel Karell
Introduction to methods in quantitative sociological research. Covers data description; graphical approaches; elementary probability theory; bivariate and multivariate linear regression; regression diagnostics. Includes hands-on data analysis using Stata.

SOCY 581b, Intermediate Methods in Quantitative Sociology  Daniel Karell
Second part of a two-term introduction to statistical analysis for quantitative social science research. Covers review of linear regression; introduction to models for categorical and count data, the analysis of time data, and longitudinal data; overview of missing data and weighting; and discussion of data that are complicated by issues of nonrandom design. Prerequisite: SOCY 580.
SOCY 584b / AFAM 584b, Inequality, Race, and the City  Elijah Anderson

Urban inequality in America. The racial iconography of the city is explored and represented, and the dominant cultural narrative of civic pluralism is considered. Topics of concern include urban poverty, race relations, ethnicity, class, privilege, education, social networks, social deviance, and crime.

SOCY 595b, Stratification and Inequality Workshop  Grace Kao

In this workshop we present and discuss ongoing empirical research work, primarily but not exclusively quantitative analyses. In addition, we address theoretical and methodological issues in the areas of the life course (education, training, labor markets, aging, as well as family demography), social inequality (class structures, stratification, and social mobility), and related topics.

SOCY 605b / WGSS 570b, LGBTQ Population Health  John Pachankis

Sexual and gender minority individuals (e.g., those who identify as LGBTQ) represent a key health disparity population in the United States and worldwide, but high-quality evidence of this problem has historically been slow to accumulate. This course engages students in critically examining today’s rapidly expanding empirical knowledge regarding sexual and gender minority health by considering challenges to, and opportunities for, conducting this research with methodological rigor. Students consider social and ecological influences on sexual and gender minority health, including migration, community, and neighborhood influences. Social institutions, including religion, school, family, and close relationships, are examined as sources of both stress and support. Given the relevance of individual and collective identity and stress as mechanisms through which stigma impacts sexual and gender minority health, the empirical platform of the course is complemented by intersectionality theory, critical postmodern work on identity fluidity and multiplicity across the life course, and minority stress conceptualizations of health. Students apply lessons learned in the course to evaluating and developing policy and health care interventions for this increasingly visible segment of the global population. Also SBS 570.

SOCY 618a, Managing Blackness in a “White Space”  Elijah Anderson

“White space” is a perceptual category that assumes a particular space to be predominantly white, one where black people are typically unexpected, marginalized when present, and made to feel unwelcome—a space that blacks perceive to be informally “off-limits” to people like them and where on occasion they encounter racialized disrespect and other forms of resistance. This course explores the challenge black people face when managing their lives in this white space.

SOCY 620b, Material Culture and the Iconic Consciousness  Jeffrey Alexander

How and why do contemporary societies continue to symbolize sacred and profane meanings, investing these meanings with materiality and shaping them aesthetically? Initially exploring such “iconic consciousness” in theoretical terms (philosophy, sociology, semiotics), the course then takes up a series of compelling empirical studies about food and bodies, nature, fashion, celebrities, popular culture, art, architecture, branding, and politics.

SOCY 625a, Analysis of Social Structure  Scott Boorman

Emphasizing analytically integrated viewpoints, the course develops a variety of major contemporary approaches to the study of social structure and social organization. Building in part on research viewpoints articulated by Kenneth J. Arrow in The Limits of Organization (1974), by János Kornai in an address at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences published in 1984, and by Harrison C. White in Identity and Control (2nd ed., 2008), four major species of social organization are identified as focal: (1) social networks, (2) competitive markets, (3) hierarchies/bureaucracy, and (4) collective choice/legislation. This lecture course uses mathematical and computational models—and comparisons of their scientific styles and contributions—as analytical vehicles in coordinated development of the four species.

SOCY 628a or b, Workshop in Cultural Sociology  Staff

This workshop is designed to be a continuous part of the graduate curriculum. Meeting weekly throughout both the fall and spring terms, it constitutes an ongoing, informal seminar to explore areas of mutual interest among students and faculty, both visiting and permanent. The core concern of the workshop is social meaning and its forms and processes of institutionalization. Meaning is approached as both structure and performance, drawing not only on the burgeoning area of cultural sociology but on the humanities, philosophy, and other social sciences. Discussions range widely among methodological, theoretical, empirical, and normative issues. Sessions alternate between presentations by students of their own work and by visitors. Contents of the workshop vary from term to term, and from year to year. Enrollment is open to auditors who fully participate and for credit to students who submit written work.

SOCY 630a / AFAM 777a, Workshop in Urban Ethnography  Elijah Anderson

The ethnographic interpretation of urban life and culture. Conceptual and methodological issues are discussed. Ongoing projects of participants are presented in a workshop format, thus providing participants with critical feedback as well as the opportunity to learn from and contribute to ethnographic work in progress. Selected ethnographic works are read and assessed.

SOCY 647b, Social Processes  Scott Boorman

Focus is on identifying and exploring robust alternatives/complements to the rational choice models that have come to dominate so much of the analysis of social (including organizational) processes in recent years. Specifically, emphasis is placed on a range of mathematical models and related analytic approaches originating outside of the rational choice literature—in fields such as social network analysis, evolutionary biology, organization theory, and the law. Possible starting points include the Boorman-Levitt network matching model and its applications to nonprofits and complex statutes; weak ties models of job information transmission and other information transfer in elite social networks; and “garbage can” models of the internal problem-solving dynamics of complex organizations.
SOCY 656a, Professional Seminar  Rene Almeling
This required seminar aims at introducing incoming sociology graduate students to the department and the profession. Yale Sociology faculty members are invited to discuss their research. There are minimum requirements, such as writing a book review. No grades are given; students should take for Audit. Held biweekly.