SOCIETY

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

Chair
Grace Kao

Director of Graduate Studies
Philip Gorski

Professors Julia Adams, Jeffrey Alexander, Elijah Anderson, Scott Boorman, Nicholas Christakis, Ron Eyerman, Philip Gorski, Grace Kao, Philip Smith

Associate Professors Rene Almeling, Emily Erikson, Jonathan Wyrtzen

Assistant Professors Lloyd Griefer, Alka Menon

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. DEGREE IN 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.

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. A student may petition for the M.A. degree in the term following the one in which the student completes the course requirements.

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

COURSES

SOCY 506a / MGMT 734a, Designing Social Research Balazs Kovacs

This is a course in the design of social research. The goal of research design is “to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial [research] question as unambiguously as possible” (de Vaus 2001: 9). A good research design presupposes a well-specified (and hopefully interesting) research question. This question can be stimulated by a theoretical puzzle, an empirical mystery, or a policy problem. With the research question in hand, the next step is to develop a strategy for gathering the empirical evidence that will allow you to answer the question “as unambiguously as possible.”

SOCY 508b / PLSC 505b, Qualitative Field Research Elisabeth Wood

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 512a, Sociology of Islam  Jonathan Wyrtzen
Social scientific studies of Islam; introduction to sociology of religion and its application to Islam; the utility of "Islam" and "Muslim" as analytical categories; debates about definitions of Islam and religion in anthropology and religious studies; comparative sociological studies both within Islam and contrasting Islam with other religions.

SOCY 542a, Sociological Theory  Emily Erikson
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 560a or b / PLSC 734a or b, Comparative Research Workshop  Julia Adams and 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 take the course for a letter grade are expected to present a paper-in-progress the term that they are enrolled for credit.

SOCY 576b, Civil Sphere and Democracy  Jeffrey Alexander
In dialogue with normative and empirical approaches to civil society (Habermas, Putnam), this course introduces "civil sphere theory," starting from Alexander's The Civil Sphere (2006) and its critics. The sacred and profane binaries that animate the civil sphere are examined, as are such civil sphere organizations as polls, mass media, electoral systems, law and office. We read works about U.S. presidential elections, immigration and its controversies, the civil rights movements, the crisis of contemporary journalism, and recent controversies over church pedophilia, the financial system, and telephone hacking. We consider the challenge of deprovincializing civil sphere theory, looking at civil spheres in Latin America and East Asia. Regarding the possibility of a cosmopolitan or global civil society, we examine the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

SOCY 580a, Introduction to Methods in Quantitative Sociology  Ronald Kwon
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  Ronald Kwon
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 595a or b, Stratification and Inequality Workshop  Staff
In this workshop we examine the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

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SOCY 598a and SOCY 599b, Independent Study  Staff
By arrangement with faculty. When students register for the course online, the dropdown menu should be completed.

SOCY 602b, Poverty and Social Welfare Policy in the United States  Lloyd Grieger
Who is poor in America? How has the social safety net evolved over time in the United States? Who is “deserving” of federal assistance? In this course we examine the formation and effectiveness of anti-poverty policies in the United States from a sociological and public policy perspective. Topics include the origins of the modern social safety net, the role of the federal government in constructing and implementing anti-poverty policy, the realities of low-wage work, and the “culture of poverty.” Employment- and family-based policy strategies for alleviating poverty are considered. Applied understanding of quantitative social science research methods is helpful, but not required.

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.

Also SBS
SOCY 606b, American Nationalism and the Muslim “Other”  Jonathan Wyrtzen and Roger Baumann
We have seen resurgent assertions of white Christian American identity under the rubric of Donald Trump’s “Make America Great Again” discourse, provoking renewed questions about the relationship between religion and national identity in the United States today. Observing how Trump has exploited the populist resonance of white Christian American identity, we are watching a fierce battle over what constitutes “American-ness” — with conflicting ideas about religious identities, pluralism, and secularism at deep odds. This course surveys the role of religion in historical debates about American national identity, landing on our primary focus — the trope of the “Muslim other” as it permeates American popular, religious, and political discourse. Students encounter and grapple with the deep history of American interest in the “Muslim world,” with attention to the role that Islam and Muslims play in constituting particular versions of American national identity. The course asks students to consider the juxtaposition of the categories “Islam” and “America,” and especially how these categories are mutually constructed. We also analyze how the category of “Islam” activates certain modes of American nationalism, particularly latent forms of American American nationalism that have long genealogies in American history. The course broadly surveys the sources of American discourse on Islam, including in historical and contemporary context, paying attention to the processes by which certain discourses come to dominate and other are marginalized. Students become familiar with relevant disciplinary tools to understand and interpret American political and religious cultures across time and space, drawing from sociology, anthropology, history, and political science.

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  Jeffrey Alexander
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 629b, Politics of Reproduction  Rene Almeling
Reproduction as a process that is simultaneously biological and social, involving male and female bodies, family formation, and powerful social institutions such as medicine, law, and the marketplace. Sociological research on reproductive topics such as pregnancy, birth, abortion, contraception, infertility, reproductive technology, and aging. Core sociological concepts used to examine how the politics of reproduction are shaped by the intersecting inequalities of gender, race, class, and sexuality.

SOCY 630a / AFAM 773a, 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 647a, 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 660a, Professional Seminar  Philip Gorski
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.

SOCY 659b, Law and Sociology  Monica Bell
This course introduces sociological perspectives on law, legal institutions, and regulated individuals and groups. The course, which includes lecture, small-group discussion, and seminar components, is divided into three parts. Part I focuses on fundamental concepts...
in sociology and the sociological analysis of law, covering topics such as class, culture, solidarity, legitimacy, bureaucracy, power, social control, and social capital. Part II provides a very brief introduction to sociological methods (qualitative and quantitative), with emphasis on learning to interpret and critique empirical research. Part III, the largest portion of the class, applies theory and methods to contemporary legal institutions and social problems. It covers a wide variety of topics, including understandings of law in everyday life, neighborhoods and residential segregation, race and racism, gender and sexuality, stigmatization and discrimination, diversity and affirmative action, poverty and the welfare state, housing law and housing inequality, family law and inequality, violence, policing, punishment, and immigration enforcement. In addition to a final exam or paper, students are expected to submit a small number of reading responses, participate in several small-group class discussions, and give one presentation during the latter half of the course. Permission of the instructor required. Also LAW 21368.