Sociology

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Sociology provides the theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how societies function and how they change over time. Sociologists are interested in the causes and consequences of processes such as the social construction of groups and identity, the evolution of culture, intersubjective meanings, intergroup relations, and hierarchies and social norms. They conduct research on individual behavior and outcomes such as educational attainment, jobs and careers, religious commitment, and political involvement; interpersonal processes such as intimate relationships, sexuality, social interaction in groups, and social networks; the behaviors of organizations and institutions; the causes and consequences of group differences and social inequality; and social change at the societal and global level.

The Sociology major provides both a solid foundation for students interested in careers in the social sciences and a strong background for a variety of professions in which knowledge about social processes and how societies work is relevant. Many recent graduates have gone on to law school, medical school, or graduate programs in public health, business, education, urban planning, criminology, and sociology. Others work in finance, consulting, publishing, marketing, city planning, teaching, research, and advocacy.

The Sociology department offers four undergraduate pathways leading to the B.A. degree: (1) the standard major focuses on sociological concepts, theories, and methods; (2) the concentration in economy and society focuses on the cultural frameworks, social ties, and social institutions that give rise to markets and shape economic behavior; (3) the concentration in health and society emphasizes social processes as they affect health and medicine; (4) the student-designed program combines sociology with a concentration in another field. Students interested in the major are encouraged to contact the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) early in their academic careers to discuss potential options.

COURSE NUMBERING

Courses in Sociology are divided by level, with introductory courses numbered from 100–149, courses in sociological theory from 150–159, courses in sociological methods from 160–169, intermediate courses from 150–299, advanced courses in the 300s, and individual study and research courses in the 400s. First-Year Seminars are numbered below 100 and count as introductory or intermediate courses.

PREREQUISITE

Students interested in the Sociology major should complete either a First-Year Seminar or at least one introductory course (numbered SOCY 110–149), ideally by the end of the sophomore year. This course may be applied toward the requirements of the major. The DUS can waive the introductory course requirement for students who demonstrate adequate preparation for advanced coursework in sociology.
REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The standard major The requirements for the standard major are given here. The three areas of concentration have slightly different requirements, as specified below.

1. Thirteen term courses in sociology (including the prerequisite and senior colloquium), of which normally no more than two may be drawn from outside the Sociology department. At least one must be an introductory Sociology course or a substitute approved by the DUS, but no more than two introductory courses may count toward the total.

2. Two courses in sociological theory and two in sociological methods, normally completed by the end of the junior year. SOCY 151 and 152 are the required courses for theory. SOCY 160 and one additional Sociology course numbered SOCY 161–169 are required for methods. Other methods courses from outside the department can be approved at the discretion of the DUS. Students planning to study abroad in their junior year are strongly encouraged to begin meeting the theory and methods requirements in their sophomore year. They should also discuss the options for their course of study with the DUS before finalizing their plans.

3. One advanced seminar in Sociology (SOCY 300–399).

4. The senior requirement.

Concentration: Economy and Society Students in the economy and society concentration gain a broad understanding of markets and their relationship to social networks, religion, the state, and culture. Students explore the field of economic sociology, develop insights into market logics and economic outcomes, and develop skills in network analysis. Requirements for the concentration are:

1. Thirteen term courses in sociology (including the prerequisite and senior colloquium). At least one must be an introductory Sociology course or a substitute approved by the DUS, but no more than two introductory courses in any department or program may count toward the total. Up to four courses may be drawn from outside the Sociology department, with approval from the DUS.

2. SOCY 160 and one theory course (SOCY 151 or 152).

3. Two intermediate or advanced courses in economic sociology (e.g., SOCY 234, 314, 321).

4. At least one intermediate or advanced course in microeconomics (e.g., ECON 121 or 125).

5. The senior requirement, integrating sociology with business, markets, or economic behavior.

Concentration: Health and Society Students in the health and society concentration gain a broad understanding of how supraindividual factors such as socioeconomic inequality, demographic processes, neighborhood environments, cultural norms, and social networks affect health and medical care. Students explore the fields of medical sociology, stratification, demography, and network science. The core courses in the concentration satisfy the social science requirements of premedical programs while also providing a solid foundation for students interested in public health, health policy, and global health. Requirements for the concentration are:
1. Thirteen term courses in Sociology (including the prerequisite and senior colloquium).
2. SOCY 126 or SOCY 127, the gateway courses for the concentration (or other similar course, with approval of DUS).
3. One theory course (SOCY 151 or SOCY 152).
4. A course in statistics (SOCY 162, S&DS 103, S&DS 105, or GLBL 121, or a higher-level statistics course approved by the DUS).
5. SOCY 160 or a comparable course approved by the DUS.
6. In order to build a broad base of interdisciplinary knowledge on health, students may take up to five course credits from outside the Sociology department, with approval from the DUS. It is recommended that students select at least one course credit from the following: BIOL 101, BIOL 102, BIOL 103, BIOL 104; MATH 112 or higher-level MATH course; ECON 170.
7. Two upper-level Sociology seminars (200 or 300 level), or other courses approved by the DUS.
8. The senior requirement, integrating sociology with health and medicine.

Concentration: Student-Designed This program allows students to combine the study of sociology with the study of another discipline or substantive area, and to design a program that satisfies their own interests and career plans. By the beginning of the junior year, participants in the combined program are expected to consult with the DUS in order to obtain approval for their course of study.

1. Thirteen term courses (including the prerequisite and senior colloquium), of which at least nine and no more than ten are selected from Sociology, the remainder (up to four) being chosen from another department or program. At least one must be an introductory Sociology course or a substitute approved by the DUS, but no more than two introductory courses in any department or program may count toward the total. The courses outside Sociology must constitute a coherent unit alone and form a logical whole when combined with the Sociology courses.
2. Two courses in sociological theory and two in sociological methods, normally completed by the end of the junior year. SOCY 151 and 152 are the required theory courses. SOCY 160 and one additional Sociology course numbered SOCY 161–169 are the required method courses. Other methods courses from outside the department can be approved at the discretion of the DUS. Students planning to study abroad in their junior year are strongly encouraged to begin meeting the theory and methods requirements in their sophomore year. They should also discuss the options for their course of study with the DUS before finalizing their plans.
3. One advanced seminar in Sociology (SOCY 300–399).
4. The senior requirement must integrate sociology and the other subject chosen.

Credit/D/Fail courses A maximum of two courses taken Credit/D/Fail may be counted toward the requirements of the major.

Roadmap See the visual roadmap of the requirements.
SENIOR REQUIREMENTS

For the non-intensive major Students electing the non-intensive major take one additional seminar in Sociology (SOCY 300–399) and write a one-credit senior essay during the senior year (SOCY 491 or SOCY 492). The senior essay for non-intensive majors is intended to be an in-depth scholarly review and critical analysis based on secondary sources. Students select an important topic in any sociological field and write a literature review that evaluates what is known about the topic. All non-intensive majors are required to enroll in SOCY 491 or SOCY 492 to receive credit for the senior essay. To register for this course, students must submit a written plan of study approved by a faculty adviser to the DUS no later than the end of registration period in the term in which the senior essay is to be written. Non-intensive majors are not eligible to graduate with Distinction in the Major.

For the intensive major The intensive major gives students an opportunity to undertake a yearlong program of original research resulting in a contribution to sociological knowledge. The yearlong project requires substantial independent research and knowledge of a sociological sub-field. Students use research methods such as data gathering through participant observation, in-depth interviewing, administration of small-scale surveys, or secondary analysis of existing data. They may present findings in a variety of forms, from ethnographic narratives to analytical statistics. Students select primary and secondary advisers from the faculty. Students in the intensive major enroll in SOCY 493, 494 during their senior year. The colloquium provides a forum for discussing the research process and for presenting students' research at various stages. Intensive majors are eligible to graduate with Distinction in the Major if they meet the grade standards for Distinction and submit a senior essay written in SOCY 493, 494. See The Undergraduate Curriculum, Honors.

ADVISING

All students interested in the Sociology major should meet with the DUS no later than the beginning of the junior year to elect a program of study. Qualified students may petition to enroll in graduate courses, with permission of the instructor and the director of graduate studies. A list of graduate courses and descriptions is available from the DUS.

Admission to the intensive major Candidates for the intensive major should indicate interest to the DUS by the last day of classes in the spring term of their junior year. The intensive major is especially recommended for students considering graduate school or social research. In special circumstances, applications may be accepted through the first week in the first term of the senior year. An email indicating interest to the DUS should include a one-paragraph description of the topic, a list of relevant courses taken, and choice of a prospective senior essay adviser. The DUS and the senior essay adviser serve as advisers to seniors in the intensive major.

STUDY ABROAD

Students planning to study abroad in their junior year are strongly encouraged to begin meeting specific requirements in their sophomore year. They should also discuss the options for their course of study with the DUS before finalizing their plans.
REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisite  1 first-year sem or intro course (SOCY 110–149) or equivalent

Number of courses  13 term courses (incl prereq and senior essay)

Specific courses required  
Standard major and Student-Designed concentration
SOCY 151, 152, 160, 1 addtl course from SOCY 161–169; 
Economy & Society concentration—SOCY 151 or 152; SOCY 160; 
Health & Society concentration—SOCY 126 or 127, SOCY 151 or 152, SOCY 160, or a comparable course approved by the DUS.

Distribution of courses  
Standard major, Economy & Society concentration, and Student-Designed concentration—at least 1, but no more than 2 intro courses; 
Standard major—1 sem from SOCY 300–399; 
Economy & Society concentration—2 intermed or adv courses in economic sociology (e.g., SOCY 234, 314, 321) and 1 in microecon (ECON 121 or 125); 
Health & Society concentration—1 course in stat, as specified; 2 upper-level sems, as specified; 
Student-Designed concentration—9 or 10 courses in sociology; 3 or 4 courses from another dept, as specified; 1 sem from SOCY 300–399

Substitution permitted  
Standard major—up to 2 courses from other depts; 
Economy & Society concentration—up to 4 courses from other depts, with DUS approval; 
Health & Society concentration—up to 5 courses from other depts, with DUS approval

Senior requirement  
Standard major—1 addtl 300-level Sociology sem and senior essay (SOCY 491 or SOCY 492); 
Intensive major—two-term senior essay (SOCY 493, 494)

Sociology provides the foundation for understanding how societies function and how they change over time. Sociological research involves the study of individual behavior and group outcomes, such as educational attainment, jobs and careers, health outcomes, religious commitment, and political involvement; of interpersonal processes, such as intimate relationships, sexuality, social interaction in groups, social networks, economic transactions, and behavior of organizations and institutions; causes and consequences of group differences and social inequality; and social change at the societal and global level.

The Sociology major provides a solid foundation for students interested in careers in the social sciences, but knowledge about social processes and how societies work is also relevant for students in other fields. Recent graduates have attended law school, medical school, or graduate programs in public health, business, education, urban planning, public policy, criminology, and sociology. Others work in advertising, finance, consulting, publishing, marketing, city planning, teaching, research, and advocacy.

The Sociology department offers (1) the non-intensive and intensive programs, (2) a concentration in economy and society, (3) a concentration in health and society, and (4) a student-designed combined program that pairs sociology with another subject. Students in the economy and society concentration take intermediate economics and use sociological tools to study economic behavior. Those in the health and society concentration do coursework in sociological analysis and take courses recommended for the MCAT. Interested students are encouraged to contact the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) early in their academic careers to discuss program options.
First-year seminars in Sociology include:

- SOCY 081, Race and Place in British New Wave, K-Pop, and Beyond
- SOCY 086, China in the Age of Xi Jinping

Introductory courses that provide a broad overview of sociological thinking include:

- SOCY 151, Foundations of Modern Social Theory
- SOCY 152, Topics in Contemporary Social Theory

Other courses focus on particular topics:

- SOCY 133, Computers, Networks, and Society
- SOCY 134, Sex and Gender in Society
- SOCY 144, Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration
- SOCY 147, Introduction to Social Policy Analysis

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Professors  Julia Adams, Jeffrey Alexander, Elijah Anderson, †James Baron, Scott Boorman, Nicholas Christakis, †Paul Cleary, Philip Gorski, Grace Kao, †Marissa King, †Peter Salovey, †Vicki Schultz, Philip Smith

Associate Professors  Rene Almeling, †Monica Bell, Emily Erikson, †Justin Farrell, †Marissa King, †Issa Kohler-Hausmann, Jonathan Wyrtzen

Assistant Professors  †Julie DiBenigno, Daniel Karell, †Balázs Kovács, Alka Menon, Rourke O’Brien, Emma Zang

†A joint appointment with primary affiliation in another department or school.

View Courses