

# DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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The sociology department at VCU provides an engaged, learner-centered experience for our undergraduate and graduate students through active involvement in faculty research and community development. Through cutting-edge research, excellent undergraduate and graduate teaching focused on critical thinking, exciting applied opportunities, vital service and community outreach both nationally and internationally, and preparation of students for a wide range of jobs, sociology plays a central role in quality liberal arts education. Sociology is a “social science”; it is a discipline grounded in using sociological theory and the scientific method to create the knowledge necessary for understanding and improving social life. Using theory as a foundation for analysis, sociologists collect and analyze empirical data useful in making decisions related to public life, such as social and economic policy, and private life, such as family and interpersonal health. It is this relationship between sociological theory, as the foundation of critical thinking, and the scientific method, as the guiding principles of analysis, which makes sociology a rapidly expanding field with expertise increasingly sought after by those who craft policies and create programs.

The Department of Sociology offers a Bachelor of Science in Sociology at the undergraduate level, as well as a Master of Science at the graduate level.

- Sociology, Bachelor of Science (B.S.) (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/college-humanities-sciences/sociology-program/sociology-bs/>)
- Sociology, minor in (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/college-humanities-sciences/sociology-program/sociology-minor/>)

## **SOCY 101. Introduction to Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. An introduction to the study of human society. The basic concepts of society and culture and their relationships to each other are studied and then used to analyze the major social institutions.

## **SOCY 104. Sociology of Racism. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. The course will explore the direct and indirect ways in which racial attitudes are acquired, their effect on individuals and society, and the institutional and ideological manifestations of racism as a “faith system,” as exploitation and as a form of human conflict. The central focus of interest will be on black-white relationships. Crosslisted as: AFAM 104.

## **SOCY 202. Foundations of Theory. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. An introduction to classical theoretical traditions that have guided sociological work. Classical theorists whose writings have shaped the discipline will be studied, including Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, W.E.B. Du Bois and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. This course also traces the historical development of the discipline of sociology during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

## **SOCY 250. Confronting Climate Crisis. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Explores the many ways that people – including students – are confronting the climate crisis, from the local to the global. Engages with major debates in the fight to understand and address climate crisis, centering ways in which Black, migrant, Indigenous peoples and folks in the Global South are forging a path toward socially just responses. Crosslisted as: INTL 250.

## **SOCY 302. Contemporary Social Problems. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. The examination from a sociological perspective of contemporary social problems such as population growth, crime, racism, family problems, substance abuse and aging in terms of their impact on American social institutions and values.

## **SOCY 303. Sociology of Deviance. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. An analysis of the relationship between social structure, social control and patterns of social deviance; a survey and critique of present social theories in light of empirical research and application of the theories to selected problem areas.

## **SOCY 304. Sociology of Families. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101 or ANTH 103/INTL 103. The family in its social and cultural context. Analysis of child rearing, marriage, kinship, family crises and family change in various societies around the world. Crosslisted as: ANTH 304/GSWS 304.

## **SOCY 305. Oppression, Resilience and the Black Family. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Explores the historical and contemporary experiences of Black families, with a central focus on the resilience and contributions of Black families in the U.S. Engages in intersectional analysis of systems of oppression and the full range of Black family structures. Centers Black liberation and Black joy. Crosslisted as: AFAM 305/GSWS 305.

## **SOCY 307. Sociology of Food. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Examines the role food plays in shaping cultures, societies and social inequalities by examining the modern food system, social inequalities surrounding food access and alternatives to the current system.

## **SOCY 310. Social Movements and Social Conflict. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Theory and practice of social movements, community organizing and other forms of collective behavior.

## **SOCY 315. Sociology of Education. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Analysis of education as a social institution in the societal context. Cross-cultural comparative perspectives on education.

## **SOCY 319. Adolescents in Society. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. In order to understand the important role adolescence plays for the individual and society at large, this course is taught as a dialogue between society and the individual. As such the class will explore adolescence in society through monographs that primarily use interview and ethnographic methodologies to understand the role of culture in self-construction.

**SOCY 320. Research Methods in the Social Sciences. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours. 3 credits.  
Prerequisites: SOCY 101; and STAT 208 or STAT 210 with a minimum grade of C. Current methods of research in the social sciences. Includes a brief introduction to the use of SPSS for storage, retrieval and exploration of social science data.

**SOCY 321. Sociology of Economic Inequalities. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101.  
Analysis of social mobility, class, status and power.

**SOCY 322. Sociology of Race and Ethnicity. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101.  
A study of the various racial, religious and ethnic minority groups. Issues of power, pluralism and assimilation are addressed as well as the relationship between subcultures and the dominant culture.

**SOCY 325. Analysis of Sociological Data. 2 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 2 laboratory hours. 2 credits.  
Prerequisites: POLI/SOCY 320 and STAT 210. Statistical techniques used in the analysis of data from sample surveys and censuses, including tabular, graphical and inferential procedures. SPSS software will be used in the laboratory.

**SOCY 326. Rural Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. An introduction to rural society, culture, social interactions and systemic change. The rural regions of the United States will be covered, but emphasis will be given to Appalachia, rural Virginia and the South.

**SOCY 327. Urban Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101.  
Origin, character and significance of urban communities. Ecological and social factors are analyzed as well as changes in urban social organization and their consequences.

**SOCY 330. Global Societies: Trends and Issues. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: INTL/POLI 105 or POLI 201 or SOCY 101. An analysis of factors that are promoting the globalization of social, economic and political relations, and an inquiry into implications of these developments for individuals, localities, nations and the world community. The course will highlight the impact of culture and ethnicity, historical and emerging patterns of international business activity and their societal significance, divergent strategies for economic and social development in the world's regions, and the effects of population growth and environmental problems on public life within and among nations. Crosslisted as: INTL 330.

**SOCY 331. Juvenile Delinquency. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101.  
Analysis of the biological, cultural, psychological and social factors involved in juvenile delinquency and their relation to current techniques of treatment, prevention and control.

**SOCY 332. Immigration and American Society. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101.  
An examination of the social and political dynamics surrounding U.S. immigration. Possible topics include examination of why people migrate, historical changes in U.S. immigration, policies that let some people in and keep others out, and consideration of the lives of immigrants once they have settled in the country.

**SOCY 333. Gender in Society. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101 or permission of instructor. Explores different theoretical approaches to gender and its intersections with other sources of inequality, including sexuality, race, class and age. Possible topics include masculinities, gender and the body, and how gender operates in various institutional settings, such as the economy and the family. Crosslisted as: GSWS 333.

**SOCY 334. Sociology of Women. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101 or consent of instructor. This course will examine the position and status of women across societies and the social forces that maintain existing patterns and arrangements. The integration of family and work in women's lives will be emphasized. Crosslisted as: GSWS 334.

**SOCY 335. Sociology of Masculinities. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101.  
Examines the sociological theories and empirical studies of men and masculinities. Topics include the relational thinking of gender inequality, hegemonic masculinity, subordinated masculinities, inclusive masculinity, hybrid masculinity, toxic masculinity, female masculinity and male femininity, and intersectional masculinities. Addresses the effects and mechanisms of masculinities in social settings, such as the workplace, family, marriage, intimacy, pop culture, politics, migration, globalization and social movements, through empirical studies. Crosslisted as: GSWS 303.

**SOCY 336. Violence Against Women. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101 or GSWS 201. An examination of violence against women from a global and local perspective with a primary focus on violence perpetrated against women in the U.S. Requires a minimum of 20 hours of community service. Crosslisted as: GSWS 336.

**SOCY 340. Self and Society. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101.  
An exploration of sociological theories of everyday life, including examination of the socialization process, as well as how thoughts, feelings and behaviors are guided by micro-level social forces that often remain just outside of awareness. Particular attention will be given to those qualities that make individuals uniquely human – including self-awareness, identity, emotions, empathy, language and symbols.

**SOCY 341. Group Dynamics. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: PSYC 101.  
Social and psychological principles and research related to the individual in groups. Specific topics include motivation for individuals forming and joining groups, performance and productivity of group members, group leadership and majority and minority influence. The group will be examined in relation to the larger society and as a subculture in itself. Crosslisted as: PSYC 341.

**SOCY 344. Medical Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101.  
A survey of the social, economic, cultural and social psychological factors in health and illness; the sociology of health and medical care organizations and settings; the sociology of health occupations; and the techniques of research in medical sociology.

**SOCY 350. Environmental Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. An overview of the field of environmental sociology, with a specific focus on the ways in which climate change affects, and is affected by, modern society. Possible topics include environmental racism, indigenous rights and activism, cultures of waste and disposability, capitalism and ecological transformation, corporate greenwashing, global food-systems, and climate refugees.

**SOCY 351. Sociology of Culture. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. This course provides an overview of cultural sociology, with specific emphasis on cultural theories and understanding the ubiquity of culture and its impacts. Students will discuss how culture is both produced and consumed. Possible topics include food cultures, music cultures, taste cultures, globalization and consumption.

**SOCY 353. Sociology of Sexualities. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Provides empirical and critical ways to analyze multiple forms of human sexuality, including sexual practices, identities, inequalities, desires, relationships and institutions. The course is structured according to three themes: 1) theories and methods of critical sexuality studies; 2) sexualities in social institutions; and 3) contemporary sex-related debates, trends and policies.

**SOCY 354. Sociology of Social Welfare. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Explores the field of social work through a sociological lens. Focuses on a range of social issues in the U.S. and the interplay between the two disciplines of sociology and social work. Examines how the sociological perspective strengthens social work practice and promotes social justice in the lives of individuals, families and communities.

**SOCY 355. Comparative Social Justice: Forging Cultures of Resilience in South Africa and the U.S.. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This service-learning course, in partnership with Mpophomeni, SA, links students from VCU to the Richmond community and youth in South Africa in a shared conversation, as they explore social justice movements and the nature of resilience in two communities affected by a historic transition from racial segregation to inclusive democracy.

**SOCY 356. Sociology of Contemplative Practices. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. The goal of this class is to examine the relationship between individual contemplative practices and activities that engage major social issues in new and creative ways. In this course, students will examine a variety of contemplative practices and the potential that these practices have in helping to develop sociological understanding of intersections between individuals and society.

**SOCY 357. Digital Cultures and Inequality. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Examines how social structures and digital spaces (social media platforms, data and information tech, gaming, etc.) function in tandem, facilitating the reinforcement of social inequalities in both physical and digital worlds. This course engages intersectional modes of sociological inquiry to grapple with how gender, race, sexuality, class, ability and location operate as overlapping categories that interact, complicate one another and (re)produce systemic power digitally and materially.

**SOCY 358. Data Visualizations. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. In this course, students will learn how to present information in an understandable, effective and visually appealing manner to explain insights in data. They will learn how to create their own data visualizations using the software, Tableau. No previous data visualization experience is required.

**SOCY 360. Sociology of Religion. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. A systematic review and assessment of major sociological theories of and empirical research on religious behavior and groups. Topics include the structure of religious organizations; social correlates and functions of religion; denominationalism; religion and social class, social change and population. Crosslisted as: RELS 360.

**SOCY 370. Media and Society. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101, MASC 101 or POLI 103. A survey of the organization and social impact of the major types of mass media. Potential topics include the media as socializing agents; the effect of media messages on cultural patterns and social values; the impact of technology on social behavior; the role of "audiences" in interpreting media content; political and economic influences on the media industry; and the media as an instrument of social change. The structure and functions of the media in different societies will be compared.

**SOCY 380. Public Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Examines what it means to "do sociology" in public and what it means to make sociological work accessible and to involve multiple publics. Particular attention is paid to conceptualizing the term public sociology; public sociology in practice, including on college campuses; and critical digital literacy.

**SOCY 391. Topics in Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Maximum 6 credits per semester; maximum total of 18 credits in all departmental topics courses that may be applied to the major. Check with department for specific prerequisites. A discussion of specialized areas of sociological interest. See the Schedule of Classes for specific topics to be offered each semester.

**SOCY 401. Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202 or permission of the instructor. Explores issues surrounding the disparities in morbidity and mortality experienced by racial/ethnic minority groups, including the impact of structural racism, socioeconomic status, legal status, neighborhood conditions and access to health care. Also examines potential strategies for working toward health equity. Students are required to participate in an experiential exercise designed to enhance learning.

**SOCY 402. Contemporary Theory. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202 with a minimum grade of C; pre- or corequisite: SOCY 320. Restricted to sociology majors. A study of the works of the major sociological theorists of the 20th century.

**SOCY 403. Criminology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202 or permission of instructor. Analysis of the nature, extent and distribution of crime, emphasizing theories of and research on causation, prediction and prevention.

**SOCY 406. Sociology Senior Seminar. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: SOCY 202 and SOCY 320, both with a minimum grade of C; and at least 21 credit hours in sociology. Course must be taken in the student's last 30 hours at VCU. Pre- or corequisite: SOCY 402. Senior capstone class; provides students the opportunity to synthesize, integrate and apply their sociological knowledge and skills.

**SOCY 410. Aging and the Life Course. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202 or permission of instructor. An introduction to the study of aging and the life course. Focus will be on research specific to older adulthood in order to foster an understanding of aging and old age as a characteristic of both individuals and societies. Requires a minimum of 20 hours of community service if taken as a service-learning course.

**SOCY 420. Environmental Racism. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202. Examines the sociological study of environmental racism and the rise of the environmental justice paradigm through the scholarly lenses of environmental sociology, political sociology, critical race theory and environmental justice studies. Key environmental histories, social theories and case studies of environmental racism as well as the broader problem of environmental inequality will be explored.

**SOCY 421. Advanced Research. 1-6 Hours.**

Methods Semester course; variable hours. Variable credit. May be repeated for a total of 6 credits. Prerequisites: POLI 320/SOCY 320 and SOCY 325. A laboratory course providing training in the application of social research methods under laboratory and field situations to problems of mutual interest to community policy makers and professionals in the disciplines of sociology, social psychology and anthropology. This course is designed to enhance the skills of students in applied social research. With direct supervision by the instructor, individuals or small groups of students will address themselves to the tasks of defining, designing and executing research projects.

**SOCY 425. Digital Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202. An exploration of the sociological foundations of digital technologies including apps, platforms and social media. Focus will be on the ways in which people's use of digital technologies configures their sense of self and their embodiment of social relations, as well as the role of digital media in the creation or reproduction of social institutions and structures.

**SOCY 426. Population Dynamics. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202 or permission of instructor. The study of trends in fertility, mortality, population growth, distribution, migration and composition. The mutual influences of these factors and social organization.

**SOCY 430. Politics, Power and Ideology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202 or permission of instructor. Sociological analysis of political organization and behavior. Such subjects as distribution and uses of power, creation and management of group conflict, development and diffusion of political ideologies, and problems of bureaucracy and mass society will be considered.

**SOCY 434. Sociology of Sport. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202. Sport will be viewed as a major social institution within many societies. The class will study the relationship between sport and society – both in terms of sport reflecting the ideology and culture of society and sport as an active agent of change in society. Race, gender and social class will be examined within the context of sport.

**SOCY 435. Sociology of Consumption. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202. Examination and analysis of consumption in modern society, including food, fashion, advertising and opportunities for consumer activism in a globalized world.

**SOCY 436. Sociology of Work and Labor Markets. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202 or permission of instructor. The study of industrial plants and business organizations as social systems.

**SOCY 440. Advanced Social Psychology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 credits. Prerequisites: SOCY 202 and SOCY 340 or permission of instructor. The study of how human groups create the environment that, in turn, influences their individual behavior. The symbolic interactionist perspective will be thoroughly explored for its contribution to the study of persons, objects and meaning.

**SOCY 441. Sociology of Emotions. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202. Exploration of the sociological forces that shape the way we define our emotions, how we communicate through emotions – both explicitly and implicitly – and how our emotions are guided by sociocultural norms. Attention will also be paid to the regulation of human emotions in terms of culture, gender, occupation and interpersonal relationships.

**SOCY 446. Sociology of Mental Disorder. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202. A survey of selected social, economic, cultural and social psychological factors in mental health and illness. Such problems as defining mental illness; social factors in the distribution, diagnosis, etiology and treatment of mental disorders; mental illness as a social role; and research methods used in the sociology of mental illness will be considered.

**SOCY 450. Understanding Capitalism. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202. A critical appraisal of modern capitalist society. Classical and contemporary sociological theory, focusing on comparative-historical methodologies, including historical materialism and critical political economy.

**SOCY 452. Religions, Sexualities and Global Inequalities. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 101. Offers advanced analyses of how religions, sexualities and inequalities shape local and global societies. Focusing on the sociologies of religion, women, LGBTQIA+ and transnationalism, students will explore their theoretical interactions and intersections and discuss the practical examples of religious and sexual inequalities, as well as the global inequalities produced by world religions and gender/sexual politics.

**SOCY 476. Economic Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202. An examination of labor force participation in terms of the individual worker's experience, the work setting, the nature of occupations and labor force composition.

**SOCY 491. Topics in Sociology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: SOCY 202. Maximum 6 credits per semester; maximum total of 18 credits in all departmental topics courses that may be applied to the major. Check with department for specific prerequisites. A discussion of specialized areas of sociological interest. See the Schedule of Classes for specific topics to be offered each semester.

**SOCY 492. Independent Study. 1-6 Hours.**

Semester course; variable hours. Variable credit. Maximum of 6 credits per semester; maximum total of 12 credits for all independent study courses. Open generally only to students of junior or senior standing who have acquired at least 12 credits in the departmental discipline. Determination of the amount of credit and permission of the instructor and department chair must be received prior to registration of the course. Cannot be used in place of existing courses.

**SOCY 493. Internship. 1-3 Hours.**

Semester course; 1-3 field experience hours. 1-3 credits (50 hours per credit). May be repeated for a maximum of 3 credits. Prerequisites: SOCY 101 and SOCY 202. Enrollment is restricted to sociology majors of junior or senior standing. Applications must be approved by the internship coordinator. Provides an opportunity to apply and expand sociological knowledge through actual experience in a variety of work settings. Graded as pass/fail.

**SOCY 498. Honors Research Course. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 credits. Prerequisites: student must be in the honors program of the department and have achieved senior status. This course will entail the planning and execution of a major research project demonstrating a thorough understanding and use of research techniques in sociological/anthropological analysis, knowledge of relevant literature, sophisticated writing and research ability under the direction of a faculty mentor.