ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY (Div II)

SOCILOGY

Chair: Professor James Nolan

- Zaid Adhami, Assistant Professor of Religion and Faculty Affiliate in Anthropology & Sociology; affiliated with: Anthropology and Sociology; on leave 2019-2020
- Nicholas Carr, Richmond Visiting Professor
- David B. Edwards, James N. Lambert ’39 Professor of Anthropology; on leave Fall 2019
- Antonia E. Foias, Professor of Anthropology; on leave 2019-2020
- Kim Gutschow, Lecturer in Religion and Anthropology/Sociology; affiliated with: Anthropology and Sociology
- Nicolas C. Howe, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies and Faculty Affiliate in Anthropology and Sociology; affiliated with: Anthropology and Sociology, American Studies Program; on leave 2019-2020
- Peter Just, Professor of Anthropology
- Joel Lee, Assistant Professor of Anthropology; on leave Fall 2019
- James A. Manigault-Bryant, Professor of Africana Studies and Faculty Affiliate in Anthropology and Sociology and Religion; affiliated with: Religion Department, Anthropology and Sociology; on leave 2019-2020
- Gregory C. Mitchell, Associate Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Faculty Affiliate in Anthropology/Sociology, Chair of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; affiliated with: Anthropology and Sociology; on leave 2019-2020
- James L. Nolan, Chair and Washington Gladden 1859 Professor of Sociology
- Marketa Rulikova, Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology
- Olga Shevchenko, Professor of Sociology; on leave 2019-2020
- Grant Shoffstall, Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology; on leave 2019-2020
- Christina E. Simko, Assistant Professor of Sociology
- Ben Snyder, Assistant Professor of Sociology

The disciplines of anthropology and sociology aim to teach students how to enter into the social/cultural worlds of others, how to grasp those worlds from the viewpoints of their inhabitants, and how to articulate those denizens’ habits of mind, worldviews, and values to broader audiences. Anthropology critically analyzes social forms and practices in all their local and global diversity, illuminating the cultural grounding of the ideologies, narratives, and structures in which we are all implicated. Archaeology extends this analysis to social formations of the historical and prehistorical past. Sociology studies the nature and trajectories of modernity, examining the intricacies of industrial and post-industrial societies and the dilemmas that confront individuals in modern social systems. These disciplines introduce students to classical and contemporary theories that illuminate the contours and contradictions of social experience. The Anthropology & Sociology program promotes a critical engagement with these theories while at the same time bringing evidence and case studies into conversation with theory.

The Department emphasizes qualitative fieldwork in its many forms. We teach students how to formulate, frame, and address intellectual problems. We also teach students the empirical methods widely used in anthropology, sociology, and other related disciplines, including, but not limited to ethnography, participant observation, interviewing, discourse and visual analysis, archival research, oral history, and archaeological methods.

Because the program emphasizes critical thinking skills to assess social claims made by others, and the application of anthropological and sociological skills to present day concerns, undergraduate training in Anthropology or Sociology has proven invaluable to majors pursuing a range of careers, including public policy, diplomacy, international development, marketing, social media development, K-12 education, journalism, medicine, and law.

MAJORS

The department offers separate majors in both Anthropology and Sociology, with a broad and diverse array of courses in both disciplines. The department is committed, however, to the unity of the social sciences. To this end, Anthropology and Sociology offer joint core courses in methodology and theory, as well as several elective courses in common. All joint courses are designated “ANSO.”
Requirements

For the degree in Anthropology or Sociology, students must complete a minimum of nine courses as outlined below:

Core Courses

Majors in both disciplines must take a sequence of four core courses. Three of these are joint (ANSO) courses. The sequences are:

Anthropology

ANTH 101 How to Be Human

Sociology

SOC 101 Invitation to Sociology

Joint Courses

ANSO 205 Ways of Knowing

ANSO 305 Social Theory

ANSO 402 Senior Seminar

Elective Courses

Majors in Anthropology or Sociology must take five elective courses from the course listings of their respective disciplines or from the joint ANSO listings. Two of the courses chosen are normally at the 300 level or above. In close consultation with their departmental advisors, students may take some selected courses from other disciplines to fulfill major requirements in either Anthropology or Sociology.

Majors in each wing of the department are allowed to count up to two courses in the other wing towards fulfillment of their major requirements.

STATISTICS AND DATA ANALYSIS

In addition to the nine total courses required for the major, it is recommended that Anthropology and Sociology majors take Statistics 101 or a comparable course in statistics and data analysis.

AREA STUDIES CONCENTRATION

Students who wish to combine a major in Anthropology or Sociology with an Area Studies concentration are encouraged to do so. Courses taken to satisfy an Area Studies requirement may be counted toward the major with prior approval of a student’s departmental advisor. The only exception to this rule is the Area Studies senior seminar, which cannot ordinarily be counted toward the Anthropology or Sociology degree.

LANGUAGE STUDY, STUDY ABROAD, AND WINTER STUDY

Departmental advisors will help interested students integrate a major with study abroad, foreign language study, or field research during the winter study period. The department encourages Williams students to take advantage of established foreign study programs in Egypt, Japan, India, Hong Kong, and other countries. Because some foreign study programs do not offer courses that can be counted toward the Anthropology or Sociology degrees, however, sophomores planning to study abroad in junior year must consult with the departmental advisor before declaring a major.

FAQ

Students MUST contact departments/programs BEFORE assuming study away credit will be granted toward the major or concentration.

Can your department or program typically pre-approve courses for major/concentration credit?

Yes. In some cases, provisional approval can be granted (students should be sure to contact the department for details). We welcome discussions of curricular plans for those major who travel abroad in their junior year. However, typically, students don’t have access to all the salient information until AFTER they have taken the course.

What criteria will typically be used/required to determine whether a student may receive major/concentration credit for a course taken while on study away?

Course title and description, and complete syllabus including readings/assignments. The syllabus and readings/assignment information is required in cases when the course title and description are not sufficient to ascertain whether a course should count towards the major. We also request information on course hours.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the number of major/concentration credits that a student might earn through study away?

Yes. We credit two, and in special cases three courses.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the types of courses that can be awarded credit towards your major?

Yes. The expectation is for an intellectually rigorous semester-long course with a paper/exam component.

Are there specific major requirements that cannot be fulfilled while on study away?
Yes. ANSO 205, ANSO 305 and ANSO 402 are almost always taken in the department.

Are there specific major requirements in your department/program that students should be particularly aware of when weighing study away options? (Some examples might include a required course that is always taught in one semester, laboratory requirements.)

Yes. ANSO 305 is offered in the fall and ANSO 205 and ANSO 402 only in the spring. We advise our majors to be aware if they plan to spend all or part of their junior year abroad.

Give examples in which students thought or assumed that courses taken away would count toward the major or concentration and then learned they wouldn’t:

In one case, a student had assumed that he could take the equivalent of ANSO 205 abroad, and was disappointed to discover that was not the case. He ended up taking ANSO 205 his senior year.

THE DEGREE WITH HONORS IN ANTHROPOLOGY OR SOCIOLOGY

Honors and highest honors are normally awarded for the completion of a year-long research project that has resulted in an original thesis of high quality. Students wishing to write an honors thesis should engage a member of the department faculty as a Thesis Advisor as soon as possible and must submit a proposal for the thesis for department approval no later than the end of spring reading period of the junior year. If the proposal is approved, they will be permitted to register for Anthropology and Sociology 493-W31-494, during which they will write and defend a thesis. If their overall work in the major continues to be of high quality and the thesis is deemed of a similar quality, they may be awarded honors or highest honors in Anthropology or Sociology.

SOC 101  (F)(S)  Invitation to Sociology

An introduction to sociological analysis. The course focuses on the relationship of individual men and women to the social world and introduces students to systematic institutional analysis. Students will explore the intersection of biography, history, culture, and social structure as seen in the work of classical and contemporary social thinkers, including Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Veblen, Simmel, and Goffman. Special consideration will be given to the social and cultural problems of capitalism, rationality and irrationality in modern institutions and organizations, the psychological dilemmas facing the individual in modern society, and the problem of social order and conflict.

Class Format: discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: a take-home midterm exam, a class presentation and a final
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 35
Enrollment Preferences: first-year students and sophomores
Expected Class Size: 35
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2019
LEC Section: 01  MWF 11:00 am - 12:15 pm  Grant Shoffstall
LEC Section: 02  MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm  Marketa Rulikova

Spring 2020
LEC Section: 01  MWF 11:00 am - 12:15 pm  Grant Shoffstall

SOC 201  (S) Science, Technology, and Human Values

Cross-listings: HSCI 101  STS 101  SOC 201

Secondary Cross-listing
This course offers an introduction to science and technology studies, or STS. A radically interdisciplinary field of inquiry, the roots of STS stretch through the philosophy, history, and sociology/anthropology of science and technology. Students will become acquainted with major STS schools, methodological strategies and research trajectories through intensive reading and analysis of classical and contemporary works in the field.
Considerable attention will be devoted to exploring the nature of science and technology, their relationships to and interactions with one another, society and the natural world, and the influences these interactions exert in shaping what humans value. A fundamental goal of the course is to cultivate awareness and understanding of the social organization of technology and scientific knowledge production, and the technoscientific structuring of modern social life broadly. The course as such is aimed at attracting from all divisions those students who are intellectually adventurous and inclined to think critically about the place and prominence of science and technology in the modern world.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: two or three short exercises, two papers (3-5 pages and 5-7 pages), and two hour exams
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: first-years and sophomores
Expected Class Size: 20
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
HSCI 101 (D2) STS 101 (D2) SOC 201 (D2)

Spring 2020
SEM Section: 01    MWF 8:30 am - 9:45 am     Grant Shoffstall

SOC 210  (S)  Networks of Power: Technology in Human Affairs
Cross-listings: SCST 210  SOC 210

Primary Cross-listing
Do we control our technologies, or do our technologies control us? This course will explore different philosophies of technological progress, particularly the constructivist and determinist theories, by examining major technological innovations that shaped society over the past century, including electrification, automobiles and the highway system, radio and television broadcasting, and the internet and social media. Each of these innovations entailed the construction of a complex network designed to serve a mix of public and business interests, and each resulted in wide-ranging and often unforeseen changes to people's lives. Guided by pertinent readings in the history and philosophy of technology, we will look critically at the forms and consequences of technological change, seeking answers to a series of complex and important questions: Is the course of technological progress an inevitable byproduct of scientific and engineering advances, or is it contingent on social and political circumstances and choices? Does technological change reinforce the social and political status quo or challenge it? Are technological and social progress synonymous, or is there a tension between the two? One of the goals of the course will be to provide students with a more informed and critical perspective on the technological upheavals that continue to shape society today.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and participation, two 5-page writing assignments, 15- to 20-page seminar paper
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors
Expected Class Size: 18
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
SCST 210 (D2) SOC 210 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

SOC 211  (F)  Race and the Environment
Cross-listings: ENVI 211  SOC 211  AMST 211  AFR 211

Secondary Cross-listing
In contemporary societies, race remains an enduring impediment to the achievement of equality. Generally understood as a socially meaningful way of classifying human bodies hierarchically, race manifests itself in a number of arenas, including personal experience, economic production and distribution, and political organization. In this course, we will explore how race emerges in local and global environmental issues, like pollution and climate change. We will begin with a review of some of the landmark texts in Environmental Studies that address “environmental racism,” like Robert Bullard’s *Dumping in Dixie* and David Pellow’s *Garbage Wars*. We will examine how and to what extent polluting facilities like landfills, oil refineries, and sewage treatment plants are disproportionately located in communities of color; we will also pay attention to how specific corporations create the underlying rationale for plotting industrial sites. After outlining some of the core issues raised in this scholarship, we will turn to cultural productions--like literature, film, and music--to understand how people of color respond to environmental injustice and imagine the natural world.

**Class Format:** discussion

**Requirements/Evaluation:** class participation, 2-3 short papers (5-7 pages), and a self-scheduled final

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 20

**Expected Class Size:** 20

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

ENVI 211 (D2) SOC 211 (D2) AMST 211 (D2) AFR 211 (D2)

**Attributes:** AFR Core Electives AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora AMST Space and Place Electives ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives PHLH Nutrition, Food Security + Environmental Health PHLH Social Determinants of Health

*Not offered current academic year*

**SOC 212 (F) Understanding Social Media**

Over just the last twenty years--beginning with Napster and MySpace and continuing through Facebook and Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram--the rise of social media has had a profound influence on the way we live. It has given a new rhythm to our daily routines, shaped the way we inform ourselves and converse with others, and transformed media and entertainment, politics and public discourse, and many other aspects of culture. This seminar course will undertake a broad and critical examination of social media, looking at it from historical, economic, legal, social, and phenomenological perspectives. The topics addressed will include social media's effects on self-image and self-formation, its influence on protest movements and political campaigns, its use as a conduit for news and propaganda, and the way commercial interests and technical characteristics have shaped its design and use. Through pertinent readings and lively discussions, and drawing on students' own experiences with social media, the course will illuminate social media’s benefits and drawbacks while providing a foundation for thinking about possible legal, regulatory, and personal responses to this far-reaching and still unfolding social phenomenon.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** attendance and participation, two 5-page writing assignments, final exam

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 15

**Enrollment Preferences:** Anthropology and Sociology majors

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

**Attributes:** FMST Core Courses

**Fall 2019**

**SEM Section: 01**  MW 8:30 am - 9:45 am  Nicholas Carr

**SOC 216 (F) The City**

Modern humans have moved to the city, a site with concentrated powers of various kinds, this move has effected irreversible change in human life. We will examine these forces through readings in urban theories as well as ethnographic studies. We will address themes such as the organization of urban life, the political economy of cities, housing and homelessness, and urban planning. The city is also the chief site of cultural production and
meaning, and our scope of interest will range from studying subcultures, to reading graffiti, to analyzing monuments. Bearing in mind the inexorable social change of past decades, we will reconsider some classical thought on urban life in the context of postmodern discourse, conceptualize the post-industrial and global city, and conclude with an examination of the problems faced by cities in developing countries. This course is designed to provide students with a comprehensive introduction to urban studies. Students will become familiarized with both classical and modern urban theories, and in reading ethnographies they will have an opportunity to understand some fundamental methodological approaches to the study of the city.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** response papers, mid term exam and final research paper

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 20

**Enrollment Preferences:** Anthropology and Sociology majors

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

**Attributes:** AMST Space and Place Electives GBST Urbanizing World Electives

Not offered current academic year

**SOC 218 (S) Law and Modern Society**

This class is designed to introduce students to the field of law and society. The course begins with an overview of the various theoretical perspectives on the subject, including Durkheimian, Marxist, Foucauldian, and Weberian analyses of law and society; as well as the work of those following in the different theoretical schools established by these scholars. Informed by the theoretical overview, the next part of the course considers empirical research in selected areas of law, including tort law, criminal trial procedures, abortion and divorce law, "community justice," and the adjudication of drug offenses. Recognizing that understandings of our own legal practices are enlightened through comparisons to other legal systems, the second half of the course is primarily historical/comparative in focus. In this section, through an exploration of several case studies, American legal processes and habits are compared with related legal practices in such places as England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, Germany, Norway, and Canada.

**Class Format:** lecture/discussion

**Requirements/Evaluation:** a short paper and midterm and final exams

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 35

**Enrollment Preferences:** none

**Expected Class Size:** 35

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

Spring 2020

LEC Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am James L. Nolan

**SOC 221 (S) Money and Intimacy**

Can money buy love and care? The course will consider this taboo question from a sociological perspective. We will look into how relevant this question has been over the course of history, what forces have contributed to the shift in thinking about it, and, most importantly, how sociological research helps us understand its current ramifications. We will discuss a wide range of aspects of family life: the relationship between arranged marriage and romantic relationship, the role of inheritance in family and social life, the distribution of resources in the context of modern family forms (most notably remarriages), and the outsourcing of care for dependents. Intimacy bears different value and content in these changing contexts. The course will further look into the changing character of new economy where "people's skills" are ever more required from employees (emotional labor) and where intimacy, care, and/or sex constitute purchasable commodities. A reflection on the growth of new technologies will complicate some of the discussed concepts and notions, but throughout a common denominator of our discussion will be the role of social inequality.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** classroom participation and a final research paper

**Prerequisites:** none
**SOC 228 (F) The Panopticon: Surveillance, Power, and Inequality** (DPE)

**Cross-listings:** SOC 228  STS 229

**Primary Cross-listing**

Surveillance is built into the very fabric of modern life. From CCTV cameras, to supermarket loyalty cards, to the massive gathering of personal data on social media sites, people participate in today's "surveillance societies" just by doing everyday activities. This course uses the metaphor of the "Panopticon" as a doorway to engagement with traditional and new forms of surveillance. First described by philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham, the Panopticon is a physical structure that enables one observer to see all inhabitants without those inhabitants knowing if they are being observed. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault famously expanded thinking on the Panopticon as a metaphor for the "disciplinary" power that lies at the heart of inequality in modern society. Since Bentham and Foucault's time, however, surveillance technologies have changed significantly. To what extent does the concept of the Panopticon give us purchase on today's surveillance societies? How does watching people with new digital and algorithmic surveillance technologies shape the exercise of power and, in turn, (re)produce forms of inequality? Are these technologies always bad? Can they be used for good? Topics include: the historical origins and expansion of surveillance in modern societies, the emerging total surveillance state in Baltimore City, the U.S. military drone program, surveillance in the workplace, and whether social media is turning us all into self-surveillance addicts.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** discussion participation, six reading responses (1- to 2-page papers), Facebook data essay (3-5 pages), final paper (8-10 pages)

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 20

**Enrollment Preferences:** Anthropology and Sociology majors

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)  (DPE)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

SOC 228 (D2) STS 229 (D2)

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** This course explores how power is distributed unequally through the mechanism of surveillance technologies, particularly in regard to racial and class differences. Among other topics, it will consider the concrete case of surveillance in Baltimore City and the question of if and when surveillance is appropriate there given the city's current crisis of gun murders. Students will discuss whether and how to conduct surveillance in a context shaped by deep racial segregation and class inequality.

**Fall 2019**

SEM Section: 01  MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm  Ben  Snyder

**SOC 230 (F) Memory and Forgetting**

On the surface, remembering generally confronts us as a deeply personal act. What is more private than nostalgic reverie or the secrets of a dark and painful past? Yet even "individual" memories take shape through social frameworks, and we also remember "collectively" through shared myths, narratives, traditions, and the like. This course will explore the social dimensions of memory and remembering as well as their inevitable counterpart--forgetting. How do social frameworks inform our individual understandings of the past and shape our sense of selfhood? How and why are figures from the past cast as heroes or villains? How do collectivities celebrate past glories, and how do they deal with shameful or embarrassing
episodes? How do economic and political power relations shape struggles over the past? In an increasingly global society, can we speak of “cosmopolitan” or “transcultural” forms of memory? Topics will include self-identity, memoirs, and oral history; memorials, museums, and monuments; reputations, commemorations, and collective trauma; silence, denial, and forgetting; and transitional justice, official apologies, and reparations.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** active class participation, four response papers (2 pages each), an autobiographical essay (4-5 pages), and a final research paper (8-10 pages) with class presentation

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

**Enrollment Preferences:** Anthropology and Sociology majors

**Expected Class Size:** 19

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

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**SOC 234 (S) How Emotions Work**

What could be more personal and unique than one's own emotions? Over the last century, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and social psychologists have challenged this taken for granted view of emotion, revealing just how much context, institutional structures, and history shape feeling. Emotion does not just emerge from an individual's brain and body; it is also a product of intersubjective dynamics outside the individual. In this deeply interdisciplinary course, students explore how societies shape emotion. Beginning with psychological research on the brain/body connection, we build a capacious model for how social context, norms, and institutions interact with individual psychology to produce both conscious and unconscious forms of feeling. As the course progresses, we zoom further out from the individual level and unpack emotional dynamics at the national, cross-cultural, and civilizational levels. Along the way, we take a deeper look at specific emotions, including love, shame, sympathy, sadness, and happiness. The course concludes by focusing on a pressing social problem--the seemingly global crisis of mental illness on college and university campuses. What is causing this crisis? What can we do to address this issue right here in our community?

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** participation, reflective essay (3-5 pages), emotion map activity, open space meeting, policy memo (1-2 pages), final paper (8-10 pages)

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 20

**Enrollment Preferences:** Anthropology and Sociology majors

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

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**SOC 236 (S) Making Things Visible: Adventures in Documentary Work**

Photography, like ethnography, is an art of looking carefully and taking notice. This course will explore the overlaps between documentary photography and field methods of social science, concentrating particularly on the genre in which the two intersect: the photo essay. The students will learn methods of visual narrative and storytelling, using techniques of interviewing, still photography, and video. Concurrently, we will explore a number of examples of investigative work that blend word and image. We will ask questions about the changing practices and expectations associated with the documentarian's role, and the evolving media in which such work can be presented. Lastly, we will discuss ethical questions that haunt documentary work, including issues of responsibility and politics of representation, as well as the perennial question of whether "objective
representation” is even possible or desirable. Experience in photography and/or video is not required, but students will be expected to master basic
technical skills in image acquisition and audio editing taught in a separate lab section. Students should also be prepared to interact extensively with
people in the community and spend a significant time off campus doing fieldwork.

Requirements/Evaluation: full participation in discussions, weekly photographic assignments, a research journal, field materials, and an independent
final project; in addition to substantial readings, students should be prepared to spend a significant time out of the classroom doing field work

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ENGL 237 (D2) ARTH 237 (D1) SOC 236 (D2) AMST 236 (D2)

Attributes: EXPE Experiential Education Courses FMST Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

SOC 240  (F) Performing Masculinity in Global Popular Culture

Cross-listings: WGSS 240  THEA 241  SOC 240  AMST 241  LATS 241

Secondary Cross-listing

This course examines popular cultural contexts, asking what it means to be a man in contemporary societies. We focus on the manufacture and
marketing of masculinity in advertising, fashion, TV/film, theater, popular music, and the shifting contours of masculinity in everyday life, asking: how
does political economy change the ideal shape, appearance, and performance of men? How have products - ranging from beer to deodorant to
cigarettes -- had their use value articulated in gendered ways? Why must masculinity be the purview of "males" at all; how can we change discourses
to better include performances of female masculinities, butch-identified women, and trans* men? We will pay particular attention to racialized, queer,
and subaltern masculinities. Some of our case studies include: the short half-life of the boy band in the US and in Asia (e.g., J/K-Pop), hip hop
masculinities at home and abroad, and the curious blend of chastity and homoeroticism that constitutes masculinity in the contemporary vampire
genre. Through these and other examples, we learn to recognize masculinity as a performance shaped by the political economy of a given culture.
The course includes a field trip to a drag performance in Northampton.

Requirements/Evaluation: masculinity journal, mid-term essay, visual analyses of pop culture artifact, choice of final essay or 12 page final paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: a short statement of interest will be solicited

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
WGSS 240 (D2) THEA 241 (D2) SOC 240 (D2) AMST 241 (D2) LATS 241 (D2)

Attributes: EXPE Experiential Education Courses FMST Related Courses LATS Comparative Race + Ethnic Studies Electives

Not offered current academic year

SOC 241  (S) Meritocracy

Cross-listings: PSCI 241  SOC 241

Secondary Cross-listing

Although an infinitesimal number of Americans have degrees from Harvard or Yale Universities, 33% of the top decision makers in the second Obama
administration did. So do eight of the country's nine sitting Supreme Court Justices. Is this a positive sign that the United States is governed by its
most talented and capable members who have risen through hard work and equal opportunity? Or a negative one pointing to the power of a corrupt
and self-selecting elite? This course explores the theme of meritocracy --- rule by the intellectually talented --- in comparative perspective. We will look at both old and new arguments regarding the proper role and definition of merit in political society as well as take the measure of meritocracy in present-day Singapore, France, and the United States. The course concludes with a focus on the current debate over American meritocracy and inequality.

Requirements/Evaluation: two papers, take-home final exam, class participation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Political Science and Sociology majors, first-years and sophomores intending a Political Science or Sociology major

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PSCI 241 (D2) SOC 241 (D2)

Attributes: POEC Comparative POEC/Public Policy Courses PSCI American Politics Courses PSCI Comparative Politics Courses

Not offered current academic year

SOC 244 (S) What They Saw in America

Cross-listings: AMST 244 SOC 244 HIST 366

Primary Cross-listing

This course traces the travels and writings of four important observers of the United States: Alexis de Tocqueville, Max Weber, G.K. Chesterton, and Sayyid Qutb. The course will consider their respective journeys: Where did they go? With whom did they talk? What did they see? The historical scope and varying national origins of the observers provide a unique and useful outsider's view of America--one that sheds light on persisting qualities of American national character and gives insight into the nature and substance of international attitudes toward the United States over time. The course will analyze the common themes found in the visitors' respective writings about America and will pay particular attention to their insights on religion, democracy, agrarianism, capitalism, and race. This course is part of the Williams College program at the Berkshire County Jail and House of Corrections and will be held at the jail. Transportation will be provided by the college. The class will be composed equally of Williams students and inmates, and one goal of the course will be to encourage students from different backgrounds to think together about issues of common human concern. * Please note atypical class hour Monday, 4:45-8:30 pm.

Requirements/Evaluation: several short response pieces; a final paper of 10-15 pages

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 9

Enrollment Preferences: juniors and seniors; final selection for the course will be made on the basis of an interview with the instructor

Expected Class Size: 9

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AMST 244 (D2) SOC 244 (D2) HIST 366 (D2)

Attributes: HIST Group F Electives - U.S. + Canada

Not offered current academic year

SOC 248 (F) Altering States: Post-Soviet Paradoxes of Identity and Difference (DPE)

Cross-listings: RUSS 248 GBST 247 SOC 248

Primary Cross-listing

Critics and apologists of Soviet-style socialism alike agree that the Soviet ideology was deeply egalitarian. Putting aside for a moment the very reasonable doubts about how justified this perception actually was, it is still worth asking, how did people who lived in the world in which differences in rank, class, gender or ethnicity were not supposed to matter, make sense of their postsocialist condition, one in which new forms of difference
emerged, and old ones assumed greater prominence? And how do these encounters with difference impact current events, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict or the persistent tensions between East and West Germans? This tutorial will examine new dilemmas through ethnographic studies and documentary films that aim to capture in real time the process of articulating and grappling with newly discovered divides. We will focus especially closely on Russia, but will also read studies on East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and Ukraine. This course fulfills the DPE requirement by exploring comparatively the ways in which people in different countries made sense of the social, cultural and political heterogeneity of the postsocialist condition.

Requirements/Evaluation: 5-page paper every other week, comments on the partner's paper in alternate weeks

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology, Sociology, and Russian majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RUSS 248 (D1) GBST 247 (D2) SOC 248 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Students will learn to identify and interrogate processes of social differentiation and exclusion as they take place across Russia and Eastern Europe. We will also train ourselves to identify parallels, as well as differences, between responses to the social and economic uncertainty ushered by the fall of socialism, and the discontents triggered by similar conditions closer to home.

Not offered current academic year

SOC 252  (F)  Moral Life in the Modern World

Cross-listings: SOC 252  REL 286

Primary Cross-listing

This interdisciplinary seminar attempts to locate and examine modern moral life (i.e., the ethical dimension of modern culture) in its broader historical and cultural context. The aim of the course is less to analyze and debate the theoretical moralities of philosophers and theologians, than it is to interpret and attempt to understand the lived moralities that people actually practice and carry out; that shape conduct and selfhood in the modern world. Part I of the course will provide a guided introduction to a range of contested issues in the study of ethics and morality: moralism, moral relativism, and the nature of modern moral discourse; moral truth, and value freedom; the differences between normative and descriptive ethical inquiry; "thick" and "thin" moral concepts, and the historically variable relationships between lived moralities, theoretical moralities, and moral customs. In Part II we will work through a series of case studies that take up the following issues: moral life in corporate, urban, and suburban contexts; media, moralism, and moral panics; business ethics; race and racism; depersonalization, war and genocide. The course will furthermore examine ethics and morality "in," "through," and "of" literature, as students will select, read, and critique a work of fiction.

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly discussion précis, film screenings, two book review essays, class presentations, and a take-home midterm

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Sociology and Anthropology students

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

SOC 252 (D2) REL 286 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

SOC 264  (S)  Transnational Activism: Practice, Problems, Ethics  (DPE)

Cross-listings: SOC 264  WGSS 263

Secondary Cross-listing

The world's got problems. These problems don't respect national boundaries. This class looks at how activists have engaged across borders and with
transnational institutions in order to address transnational problems like class inequality, sexism, homophobia, climate change, and more. It asks: what are the different forms that transnational activism takes and how have transnational activists have advanced their goals? Why and how have transnational activists’ efforts have failed? What are the practical and ethical difficulties associated with transnational activism? What does ethical transnational activism look like, and can it also be effective? While focusing especially on the role of transnational activism in combating sex and gender-based inequities, we will also engage with activism that targets the other axes of oppression with which sex and gender-based oppressions are inextricably entwined.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class attendance/participation; critical profile of transnational activist; essay or project proposal, final essay or project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies majors and Sociology majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

SOC 264 (D2) WGSS 263 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course centers activism organized around various axes of difference, enabling students to learn about how various groups are defining and pursuing equity. It requires students to explicitly engage the question of ethical intervention in political movements, stressing attentiveness to the dynamics of privilege and marginalization internal to movements.

Attributes: WGSS Racial Sexual + Cultural Diversity Courses

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01 MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Greta F. Snyder

SOC 291 (S) Religion and the American Environmental Imagination

Cross-listings: REL 291 SOC 291 ENVI 291

Secondary Cross-listing

This course examines the relationship between religious and environmental thought in modern America. Exploring a broad range of practices and beliefs, we will examine the religious (and anti-religious) roots of contemporary environmental discourse. Rather than survey the environmental teachings of organized religious groups, our focus throughout will be on ambiguous, eclectic, and fascinating traditions of "eco-spirituality" and popular "nature religion." Where do these traditions come from? What is their relationship to science, to secularism, to politics, and to the search for environmental justice? Starting with the Transcendentalist movement of the 19th century, we will trace a roughly chronological line to the present, taking long detours into several modern religious trends and movements, including the revitalization and contestation of Native American religions, Wicca and neo-pagan ecofeminism, and evangelical Creation Care. Focusing on the writings of activists and radicals from a variety of religious backgrounds, our overarching question throughout the semester is one of the most critical we face in modern environmental thought: what is the relationship between spirituality and the just, sustainable society?

Requirements/Evaluation: a 15- to 18-page research paper and several shorter writing assignments

Prerequisites: ENVI 101 or permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Environmental Studies majors and concentrators

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 291 (D2) SOC 291 (D2) ENVI 291 (D2)

Attributes: AMST Space and Place Electives ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives

Not offered current academic year
SOC 301 (F) Social Construction (DPE)

Cross-listings: SCST 301 COMP 315 REL 301 SOC 301 WGSS 302

Secondary Cross-listing

"Social construction" can often seem like the great collegial insight. By now, you've all heard that categories such as race, gender, and sexuality are in some sense not part of nature, but instead are created and maintained socially or culturally. The idea of social construction has been vital to critical race theory and queer theory, and, in this course, we will push ourselves into philosophy of science to see whether or not these same insights apply to everything. If we know that "Whiteness," "heterosexuality," and "masculinity," for instance, are all socially constructed, we will ask if the same is true of "electrons," "money," "the solar system," and "climate change." Can it be that all of our reality is socially constructed? Or does social construction have limits? If so, what are they? We will also ask more fundamental questions, such as: What does it mean to say something is socially constructed? How does social construction relate to claims that an aspect of the world is "real" or "not real?" Is social construction a theory about language, power, culture, societies, human perceptions, or the limits of science? What kind of political, ethical, ontological, or epistemological work do theories of social construction do? We will begin with different accounts of the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality. In the second part of the course, we will dig deeper into philosophical debates about social construction as such. Then we will explore constructionism about natural science. In the last part of the course, we will change gears and explore look at cutting-edge work in the theory of social science aimed at explaining the construction and ontology of social worlds. The class will culminate in a project in which students will put their social construction theories into practice.

Requirements/Evaluation: regular attendance and participation, short weekly reflection papers, a 10-page research paper, and final project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, then majors from cross-listed departments

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

SCST 301 (D2) COMP 315 (D1) REL 301 (D2) SOC 301 (D2) WGSS 302 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Central to REL 301 will be an analysis of the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality. It will show how power and difference are tied up in their construction and maintenance of these categories. Students will be taught how to critically analyze race, gender, and sexuality as well as social construction as such. Students will also learn sophisticated tools for studying systems of social power and difference.

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

SOC 303 (S) Cultures of Climate Change

Cross-listings: ENVI 303 SOC 303

Secondary Cross-listing

This course asks why people think and talk about climate change in such very different ways. Climate change is a physical phenomenon that can be observed, quantified, and measured. But it is also an idea, and as such it is subject to the vagaries of cultural interpretation. Despite scientific agreement about its existence and its causes, many people do not see climate change as a serious problem, or as a problem at all. Many others see it as the most serious problem our species has ever faced. What are the sources of this disparity? Why can't we agree about climate change? How does something as complex and confusing as climate change become a "problem" in the first place? This course will explore a broad array of factors, from religion to race, class to colonialism. It will focus especially closely on the communication of scientific knowledge, risk perception, and environmental ethics, and it will apply a range of theories from the social sciences and humanities to a set of concrete case studies.

Requirements/Evaluation: a 15- to 18-page research paper and several shorter writing assignments

Prerequisites: ENVI 101 or permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Environmental Studies majors and concentrators first; Anthropology and Sociology majors second

Expected Class Size: 19
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ENVI 303 (D2) SOC 303 (D2)

Attributes: ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives

Not offered current academic year

SOC 314 (F) The Social Ecology of Racial and Gender Inequity (DPE)

Cross-listings: WGSS 314 SOC 314

Secondary Cross-listing

Why the political furor over monuments? What would a feminist city look like? Does racial justice require integration? This course trains your focus on space and place, asking you to take a socioecological perspective on race, gender, and other axes of privilege and marginalization. In it, we examine how ideas about race, gender and more shape space as well as how the design of space reinforces social constructs and power relations. After examining specific regions (the city, the suburb, the country) and their relation to one another, we examine specific sites (public transport, public toilets, libraries, houses). The course enables students to better understand the tenacity of inequity by drawing attention to its spatial dimension while at the same time introducing students to -- and providing students tools to engage in -- spatial interventions designed to disrupt vicious social-spatial cycles.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance, class facilitation, problem identification report, two presentations, reflection

Prerequisites: WGSS/SOC Majors

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies majors

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
WGSS 314 (D2) SOC 314 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course introduces students to a socioecological approach, giving them a lens which can help them understand how important axes of difference--race and gender--are socially constructed as well as the stubborn persistence of racial and gender power differentials. Students in this course will be required to apply this lens to their own experience, as well as to discuss difficult questions about different obstacles and potential paths to greater equity in social relations.

Attributes: WGSS Racial Sexual + Cultural Diversity Courses

Fall 2019

SEM Section: 01 TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Greta F. Snyder

SOC 315 (F) Culture, Consumption and Modernity

How do lifestyles, fashions and trends appear and evolve? Are we authors of our own taste? What structures our choices of goods and activities? What is it that gives meaning to objects and makes them desirable? Are there non-consumer societies in the modern world? How has globalization changed the ways people consume in different parts of the globe? This course will explore consumption and consumer practices as products of modernity and will analyze the political, cultural and social agendas that have transformed consumption over time. Politics of consumption (the way in which seemingly free and independent consumption choices aggregate into the existing system of global capitalism) will be treated alongside its symbolic element: the role of consumer practices in creating and articulating identities, building relationships and creating solidarities. We will look at fashion, advertising, arts and shopping in places as varied as nineteenth-century France, socialist Russia, and in contemporary United States, tracing both the mechanisms that structure patterns of consumption, and the consequences that these patterns have for the larger social order.

Requirements/Evaluation: full participation, ten journal entries and a 15-page term paper that will go through a draft and revision stage

Prerequisites: none; open to first year students

Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives GBST Urbanizing World Electives

Not offered current academic year

SOC 324 (S) Memory and Identity (DPE)

Our sense of self is inextricably tied to our understanding of our past, both as individuals and as members of society. This sense of origins, however, is far from natural; it itself has its origins in the debates and politics of the time, and evolves under an array of influences. This course analyzes discourses of collective and individual identity and the mechanisms involved in the formulation of the individuals' sense of their place in the world. Topics include: media of memory, politics of commemoration, nostalgia and selective forgetting, narratives of trauma and of a "golden age," the invention of tradition, and battles over remembrance and heritage, such as the struggles over the proper way to face the difficult past around the world, with a particular emphasis on the United States and on the memory wars in the post-Soviet space.

Requirements/Evaluation: extensive class participation, several short papers, and a final research project with class presentation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course fulfills the DPE requirement because it explores the diversity of the ways in which communities imagine and engage with their past, and puts struggles over memory in the context of groups' struggles for power and visibility.

Not offered current academic year

SOC 326 (S) Being Mortal

One of the defining features of the human condition is our awareness of our own mortality. How do we cope with this awareness? How does it influence our social institutions? We will begin by exploring how social theorists such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Ernest Becker, and Peter Berger grappled with mortality and its significance for human social life. We will then turn to the social institutions that structure our confrontation with mortality today. How, why, and with what consequences has death been sequestered in modern Western societies and set aside from the social world of the living? What rites and rituals remain for coping with death and dying, and how do our cultural assumptions influence the experiences of grief, loss, and mourning? How does modern medicine, which is oriented toward cure but must ultimately confront the inescapable realities of aging and death, deal with mortality? How have hospice, palliative care, and debates over physician-assisted suicide changed the landscape in recent years? How do societies cope with collective losses in the aftermath of wars, disasters, and atrocities? Our focus will be on the United States, but we will also consider cross-cultural comparisons.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: three 6- to 7-page papers; an in-class presentation; thoughtful and consistent participation in class discussion

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: if overenrolled, Sociology and Anthropology majors will receive preference

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01  W 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm  Christina E. Simko
SOC 328 (F) American Social Dramas

Cross-listings: AMST 328  SOC 328  COMP 325  THEA 328

Primary Cross-listing

As Shakespeare wrote memorably in As You Like It, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." Sociologists have heeded Shakespeare's wisdom, arguing that social and political events are "performances" that take shape in accordance with familiar cultural scripts, and indeed that social actors implicitly interpret real-world events using plot structures from literary and dramatic genres such as romance, irony, comedy, and tragedy. We will explore this thesis through the lens of contemporary American political events, including the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, September 11, Hurricane Katrina, the 2012 presidential election, and current debates over Confederate symbolism. We will also pay careful attention to the unfolding drama associated with the 2016 presidential election. How do social performances and struggles to "control the narrative" shape the meanings and outcomes of political events? Are they merely "spectacles," or wellsprings for genuine civic participation? What role do political comedy, satire, and social media play in shaping the trajectory of contemporary events? Major authors will include Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, J.L. Austin, Erving Goffman, and Jeffrey Alexander. Throughout the semester, each student will develop a significant project on a political event of their choosing.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: active participation, five 2-page response papers, a 12-page paper that will go through draft and revision stage, and a presentation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AMST 328 (D2) SOC 328 (D2) COMP 325 (D1) THEA 328 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

SOC 332 (F) Work and Future of Capitalism

What does it mean to work? How does capitalism shape the way we work? What might work look like in the future? In this three-part course, students engage with global capitalism's past, present, and future, asking analytic and normative questions about work and the trajectory of capitalism. The first part of the course examines the historical origins of capitalism and leading theories about what capitalism is and how it stratifies the world into social classes. A central theme in part one will be how capitalist labor relations shape meaning and subjectivity, particularly the experience of dignity. In part two, we examine recent and emerging trends in capitalist labor, such as global commodity chains, the death of the career, the rise of the "gig" economy, platform capitalism, and even the seemingly inevitable end of work itself as entire occupations become automated by machine learning. A key question will be how these transformations exacerbate and/or alleviate longstanding inequalities from capitalism's 19th century past. Through a series of essays, culminating in a final paper, the course concludes by asking students to imagine what work might look like in the next century. Should we continue to work at all? What kinds of productive activity should we value, and how would we go about restructuring (or even overturning) capitalism to allow them to flourish?

Requirements/Evaluation: participation, three utopia essays (3-5 pages), paper workshop, final paper (10-12 pages)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2019

SEM Section: 01  W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm  Ben Snyder

SOC 332 (F) Life and Death in Modernity
Death is a biological fact. Death is also one of the few universal parameters in and through which social worlds and individual lives are created. Death, in other words, is a primary source of the material and symbolic activities through which humans work to construct, legitimate, and maintain social realities. To attend to "ways of death", then, is to attend simultaneously, if only indirectly, to "ways of life"—the hopes and fears, the ways and wants of a people. In this course we will ask: How, why, and with what manner of consequence has it come to be that, under late-western modernity, the aged, the sick, the dying, the bereaved, and indeed death itself, are routinely "set aside", hidden from view and thus awareness, institutionally sequestered from those of us among the living? We will attend to the historical emergence of the institutional forms that perpetrate this sequestration, and show how they have become tightly articulated with one another: hospitals, nursing homes, hospice centers, funeral homes, cemeteries. We will furthermore examine the peculiar bodies of expert knowledge that have arisen in tandem with these institutional forms, among them gerontology, thanatology, and bereavement therapy, showing how they have conspired in the (bio)medicalization of aging, death, and grief. Other topics to be explored include the commodification and consumption of health and well-being; the emergence of anti-aging medicine and "popular" rationalities of human life extension; cryonic suspension, zombies, and the paranormal.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly journal entries, film screenings, take-home midterm, class presentations, and a final 12- to 15-page paper to be decided in consultation with the instructor

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Sociology and Anthropology students

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health

Not offered current academic year

SOC 338 (F) Transhumanism: Religion, Technoscience, Obsolescence

Cross-listings: STS 338 HSCI 338 REL 338 SOC 338

Primary Cross-listing

This interdisciplinary seminar invites students to pursue sociohistorical analysis and sustained critical discussion of the so-called "transhumanist movement" and its overriding aim: the transformation and eventual transcendence of human biological constitution; the realization, through highly speculative technoscientific means, of an enhanced or even "postbiological" existence, the so-called "posthuman condition," "Humanity 2.0." Through close readings of historical documents, transhumanist texts, scholarship on transhumanism, and relevant works of science-fiction film and literature, we will position the movement as an empirical conduit through which to explore the sociohistorical conditions under which transhumanist ideas have emerged, circulated, and taken up residence. To this end, we will consider transhumanism's ties to some of the most objectionable aspects of modern technology and late capitalism; eugenics, the commodification of health, and massive investments in pharmaceuticals, anti-aging medicine, and so-called "GNR" technologies (i.e. genetics, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence and robotics); the movement's affinities with neoliberalism and Euro-American (cyber) libertarian politics; and what some have pointed to as transhumanism's racialized subtext of whiteness. We will furthermore devote considerable attention to the technological singularity, artificial intelligence, the figure of the cyborg, mind-uploading, space colonization, and cryonic suspension, all of which, like transhumanism broadly, suggest that science and technology have in some sense come to operate as powerful channeling agents for the very sorts of magical beliefs, practices, and forms of expectation and association that theorists of secularization expected modernity to displace. Lastly, throughout the course of the seminar we will take transhumanism as a provocation to think broadly and seriously about embodiment, culture, and ways of being human.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and participation, informal weekly writing, 15- to 20-page seminar paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors and Science and Technology Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
We live in an age characterized by unprecedented technological and scientific progress—we have unraveled the building blocks of life, witnessed the birth of stars at the edge of the galaxy, and harnessed the power of the atom—and yet modern life often appears fundamentally meaningless and lacking in ultimate value—we work, we eat, we excrete, we die, perhaps in the interim shuffling paperwork, sucking up to our boss, and asking ourselves, "What kind of dining set defines me as a person?" Few thinkers have explored the roots of this modern ennui as thoroughly as Max Weber, a German sociologist often regarded as the single most important social theorist of the twentieth century. Weber wanted to know why it was European civilization in particular that gave birth to the grand trifecta of rationality, science, and capitalism and how we have become enslaved by the very things that were supposed to have set us free. Weber's key innovation was to trace the grand trajectory of Western "rationalization"--the historical attempt to produce a world in which "one can, in principle, master all things by calculation." Further, he demonstrated how this rationalization produced not just mastery over nature, but also "the disenchantment of the world" - value fragmentation, hyper-specialization, bureaucracy, and ultimately the "iron cage" of modernity. The first part of this course will follow in Weber's footsteps by studying his theory of rationalization and by exploring it in different social spheres, such as the economy, the law, the professions, and the secularization of religion. The second half of the course will look at Weber's legacy in Critical Theory. It will show how thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Georges Bataille, Jürgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, Michael Löwy, and Alasdair MacIntyre suggested various lines of flight from the iron cage of modernity.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and participation, weekly critical reflections, 5- to 6-page midterm paper, 10- to 15-page final essay
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: preference will be given to REL, ANSO and COMP majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 349 (D2) SOC 350 (D2) REL 350 (D2)
Attributes: AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives
Not offered current academic year

From The Moth to StoryCorps to Williams College's own Storytime, stories are ubiquitous in contemporary society. Indeed, sociologists have argued that social life is itself "storied"-that we locate ourselves within familiar narrative structures, using them to "construct" identities and "tell" our lives. Stories, in this view, are not only the stuff of literature, but also the very fabric of social life: the foundation for individual and collective identities. This tutorial will grapple with the role of stories and storytelling in modern social life. What role do stories play in constituting personal identity? What cultural templates structure the stories we tell? Why are memoirs so popular, and how can we explain the more recent resurgence of interest in oral forms of storytelling? Specific topics will include illness narratives, confessional culture, digital stories, oral history, and memoir. As a capstone exercise, each student will construct a narrative analysis focused on a memoir that we will select collectively. The course will conclude with a final seminar meeting during which each student will tell a story of their own, and we will work together to consider how the theories we have encountered throughout the semester might illuminate our own narratives.

Requirements/Evaluation: 5-page paper every other week; comments on the partner's paper in alternate weeks
SOC 363  (F)  Cold War Technocultures

Cross-listings:  SCST 401  SOC 363

Primary Cross-listing
In this seminar students will pursue sociohistorical analyses of Cold War American culture(s) by attending to key points of intersection between politics, aesthetics, and major technoscientific developments during this period. Part I will focus principally on the emergence of the computer and its role in shaping American infrastructure and styles of thought aimed at Soviet “containment.” We will trace the historical threads connecting MIT’s “Whirlwind” computer project and the SAGE continental air defense system; nuclear wargaming at the RAND Corporation and the aesthetics of “thinking the unthinkable”; the science of cybernetics and the prospect of automation; and ultimately the role of computation, intermedia, and systems logic in perpetrating the atrocities of the Vietnam War. Part II will take up the Cold War space race—from Luna 2, Sputnik I, and Yuri Gagarin to Projects Mercury, Gemini, and the Apollo moon landing. Within this context we will also consider the Club of Rome’s Limits to Growth report; plans backed by NASA for the industrialization and colonization of outer space; and the place of science-fiction as a Cold War aesthetic (print, televisual, cinematic). Part III, finally, will explore key moments of conflict, resistance, appropriation, and unintended consequences of Cold War technoscientific developments, among them antipsychiatry and environmentalism; Project Cybersyn, an infrastructural casualty of the U.S./CIA-backed Chilean coup of 1973; the New Left, the American counterculture, new social movements, and the countercultural roots of new media and neoliberalism.

Requirements/Evaluation:  two 5-page book review essays, weekly 1-page papers, midterm essay exam, final essay exam

Prerequisites:  STS 101 or instructor consent; prior coursework in Anthropology and Sociology and/or History

Enrollment Limit:  15

Enrollment Preferences:  Anthropology and Sociology majors, Science and Technology Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size:  15

Grading:  no pass/fail option,  no fifth course option

Distributions:  (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
SCST 401 (D2) SOC 363 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

SOC 368  (F)  Technology and Modern Society

Cross-listings:  SOC 368  ENVI 368

Primary Cross-listing
With widespread use of new social media, controversial developments in such bio-technical practices as the cloning of mammals, rapid advances in various forms of telecommunication, and the increasing sophistication of technological weaponry in the military, the triumph of technology remains a defining feature of modern life. For the most part, modern humans remain unflinchingly confident in the possibilities technology holds for continuing to improve the human condition. Indisputably, technology has benefited human life in innumerable ways. However, as with other features of modernity, technology has also had significant, albeit largely unanticipated, social consequences. Working within a sociological paradigm, this course will focus on the less often examined latent functions of technology in modern society. It will consider, for example, the social effects of technology on community life, on privacy, and on how people learn, think, understand the world, communicate, and organize themselves. The course will also
examine the effects of technology on medicine, education, criminal law, and agriculture and will consider such counter-cultural reactions to technology as the Luddite movement in early nineteenth century England, Amish agrarian practices, and the CSA (community supported agriculture) movement.

Requirements/Evaluation: two short papers, a midterm exam, and a final exam
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors
Expected Class Size: 20
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
SOC 368 (D2) ENVI 368 (D2)
Attributes: ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives FMST Related Courses HSCI Interdepartmental Electives
Not offered current academic year

SOC 371 (S) Medicine, Technology, and Modern Power
Cross-listings: SOC 371 SCST 371 HSCI 371
Primary Cross-listing
Medicalization: those processes by which previously non-medical problems, once defined as ethical-religious, legal or social (e.g. drug and alcohol addition, shyness, obesity), are brought within the purview of medical science and redefined as medical problems, usually in terms of "illness" or "disorder." Part I: The history of the medicalization thesis; medicalization as a technical process; modern medicine as a form of social control; critiques of the medicalization thesis. Part II: From medicalization to biomedicalization; from the management of human life to the transformation of "life itself" by way of post-World War II technoscientific interventions aimed at "optimizing" human vitality. Empirical cases for consideration will be drawn from those technoscientific developments having made possible the work of optimization that defines biomedicalization: molecular biology, pharmacogenomics, biotechnologies, imaging techniques, robotics, and transplant medicine, among others. Finally, a consideration of how processes of biomedical optimization have produced new ways of seeing, knowing, and imagining human bodies, such that biology is increasingly less representative of "destiny" than it is of possibility. The course will to this end conclude with a survey of emerging issues in speculative technoscience and the ethics and politics of human enhancement.
Class Format: lecture
Requirements/Evaluation: weekly discussion précis, science-fiction book review essay, class presentations, and a take-home midterm
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: preference will be given to Anthropology and Sociology students
Expected Class Size: 20-25
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
SOC 371 (D2) SCST 371 (D2) HSCI 371 (D2)
Attributes: PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health
Not offered current academic year

SOC 372 (S) Time and Temporality
Duration, rhythm, speed, pace, trajectory, sequence, articulation, busyness, boredom, flow--time is one of the most fundamental categories of our experience of reality. Since the founding of the discipline, sociologists have been interested in how time, while seemingly given and natural, is deeply influenced by history and society. This two-part course will introduce students to the sociological analysis of time and temporality. In part one, students will explore the emergence of the so-called "modern western temporal order"--the sense of time that many people take for granted as the way things are. We will excavate the historical roots of schedules, clocks, calendars, and time zones; examine how capitalism and colonial conquest disseminated particular notions of time around the globe; and discuss leading theories of how constructions of time change through history and vary among
In part two, we will focus on one of the most frequently lamented and celebrated qualities of modern temporality: acceleration. Is the world speeding up? Why do so many people feel always pressed for time? What are the promises and limits of speed, acceleration, and ceaseless change for building a robust democratic society?

Requirements/Evaluation: participation, time diary analysis (3-5 pages), final paper (10-12 pages)
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
Not offered current academic year

SOC 386  (F)  Going Nuclear: American Culture in the Atomic Age
Cross-listings: SOC 386  HIST 387
Primary Cross-listing
Following the first use of nuclear weapons against Japan at the end of World War II, atomic science has fueled Americans' fears, hopes, nightmares, and fantasies. This course will examine various aspects of American nuclear culture in the early-Cold War period. It will consider topics ranging from the Manhattan Project to delivery of the bombs for combat, scientists' movements to abolish atomic weapons and expand peaceful atomic energy production, and the destructive consequences of the bomb's initial use and subsequent testing. The class will also investigate the role of the nuclear arms race in the Cold War, the development of civil defense and bomb shelter culture in the United States, and dystopian fiction about the nuclear apocalypse. Employing both historical and sociological perspectives, we will explore the interactions between science, diplomacy, politics, and culture in the nuclear age.
Class Format: discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: a midterm, a final exam, and a 10- to 12-page research paper
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 35
Expected Class Size: 35
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
SOC 386 (D2) HIST 387 (D2)
Attributes: HIST Group F Electives - U.S. + Canada

Fall 2019
LEC Section: 01    TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am     James L. Nolan

SOC 397  (F)  Independent Study: Sociology
Sociology independent study.
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2019
IND Section: 01    TBA     James L. Nolan

SOC 398  (S)  Independent Study: Sociology
Sociology independent study.

**Class Format:** independent study

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

Spring 2020

IND Section: 01    TBA     James L. Nolan

**SOC 493 (F) Senior Thesis: Sociology**

Sociology senior thesis; this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

Fall 2019

HON Section: 01    TBA     James L. Nolan

**SOC 494 (S) Senior Thesis: Sociology**

Sociology senior thesis; this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).

**Class Format:** independent study

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

Spring 2020

HON Section: 01    TBA     James L. Nolan

**Winter Study**

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**SOC 11 (W) Excavating the Purple Bubble**

**Cross-listings:** HIST 11  SOC 11

**Primary Cross-listing**

People often describe Williams College as an "intense" place--a "purple bubble" with its own peculiar micro-culture. This bubble can be stressful, exhausting, and work-obsessed, but also bursting with creative energy and a determination to change the world, not to mention creating experiences and relationships that become deeply nostalgic and lead to a lasting connection. How have these characteristic structures of feeling been built over time? In this course, we will attempt to build a picture of how the emotional cultures of Williams have evolved by excavating their histories. From the powerful emotions triggered by transitional moments in the College's history, such as feelings of inclusion and exclusion by women and people of color, to the everyday emotions of friendship, romance, and work stress, students will analyze materials from the college archives, the archive of the Record, and other sources of institutional memory to uncover the social history of emotions at Williams. Depending on enrollments, students will divide into research clusters focusing on particular topics, which might include: stress and work-obsession, turning points and change, wonder and discovery, nostalgias, staff morale, mental illness and wellness discourse, among other possible topics. Students will spend time in class discussing readings and curating a small collection of archival materials to be presented at the end of the course. Outside class, students will spend time in the archives. As a theoretical and methodological guide, we will draw primarily on scholarship from the sociology and history of emotion, including Norbert Elias, Cas Wouters, Raymond Williams, William Reddy, and Barbara Rosenswein.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** final project or presentation

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 20

**Enrollment Preferences:** anthropology, sociology and history majors, followed by students' expression of interest
SOC 15 (W) Photographic Literacy and Personal Vision

Cross-listings: SOC 15 ANTH 15

Secondary Cross-listing

When you look at a photograph, what is it really saying? How can you make a photograph that says what you want to say? This course is about seeing with emotion and literacy, and making photographs that reflect your own personal voice and vision. This is not a course on technical photography--this is about breaking down the barrier between your ideas and your camera. Students will conceptualize and photograph a project of their own choosing. Whether a narrative documentary project or a more abstract exploration of form, students are expected to photograph on their own outside of class for at least five hours a week. Students must own or borrow a digital camera. Williams has a stock of excellent cameras available for loan. Mondays and Fridays we'll be looking at amazing historical and contemporary photographic work to cover a broad range of what is possible with the medium and discussing what the current conversations and controversies are within the practice. We'll be looking at slides, screens, photobooks and gallery shows to get a sense of how photographs function differently depending on how they're shown. The work we discuss is always adapted to reflect students' interests. On Wednesdays we critique each others' work--we look at students' top images for the week and try to reconcile them against the project's conceptual basis. We have a focused discussion about each student's work for 20-30 minutes, and how to make each project better. After critiques I'll be sending everyone photographic references to use for inspiration depending on your subject matter and aesthetic approach. At the end of the course the class will design and produce a campus exhibition of their photography. This event will serve as a synthesis of all the knowledge students gained while working together to make each others' projects stronger. No photography experience is necessary! Anyone is ready to start reading photographs critically, and establish a concept-driven workflow that will serve you well as long as you take pictures. Adjunct Instructor Bio: Ben Brody is an award-winning photographer working on long-form projects related to the American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their aftermath. Themes of generational trauma, propaganda, and tragic comedy recur in his visual approach. His new book, Attention Servicemember, published by Red Hook Editions, will be available this fall.

Requirements/Evaluation: final project or presentation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: instructor will determine selection

Grading: pass/fail only

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

SOC 15 ANTH 15
Open to upperclass students. Students interested in doing an independent project (99) during Winter Study must make prior arrangements with a faculty sponsor. The student and professor then complete the independent study proposal form available online. The deadline is typically in late September. Proposals are reviewed by the pertinent department and the Winter Study Committee. Students will be notified if their proposal is approved prior to the Winter Study registration period.

**Class Format**: independent study

**Grading**: pass/fail only

Winter 2020

IND Section: 01    TBA    James L. Nolan