

Introduction to the Sociological Perspective – SOC 100¹ **Summer 2025 – Online**

Instructor: Dr. Jill K. Doerner

Email: jdoerner@uri.edu

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Course Description

How can we understand human behavior? Sociologists maintain that our behavior is largely a function of our social world, the context in which we live. Our experiences with others shape our own thoughts, values, and actions. In this course, we will cultivate what C. Wright Mills termed our “sociological imagination,” that is, the ability to grasp the connection between history and biography. The sociological imagination suggests that people look at their own personal problems as social issues and, in general, try to connect their own individual experiences with the workings of society. The sociological imagination enables people to distinguish between personal troubles and public issues. To accomplish this, we will be required to question some of the basic structures of understanding in our culture. This does not mean that we will lose our own beliefs and values, but rather we will understand the development of these values and beliefs through thoughtful critique.

We will use our sociological imaginations to critically evaluate a variety of social issues concerning families, crime, gender, race/ethnicity, class, poverty, and education. We will consider both popular and scholarly treatment of such issues and thus I strongly encourage you to stay informed about current events! By the end of the course, you should have a clear understanding of the linkages between individual behavior and society and be able to apply sociological principles to real life.

Course Objectives

- ~ Understand and develop a “sociological imagination”
- ~ Recognize and apply the major concepts of sociology to your everyday life
- ~ Evaluate social issues and develop an informed opinion

Instructor

I started at URI in 2008 and am currently an Associate Professor of Sociology in the [Department of Sociology & Anthropology](#) and an Affiliate in the [Criminology & Criminal Justice \(CCJ\) Department](#). I previously served as the Director of CCJ from 2016-2020. I have a M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from Bowling Green State University and a B.S. in International Business & Economics from Ohio Northern University. I’m originally from Ohio and have a six-year-old daughter.

My research focuses primarily on gender, racial/ethnic, and age differences in the sentencing process within the adult criminal justice system, as well as consequences of incarceration for the aging prisoner population. I have also done research exploring how experiential learning and other teaching methods can impact students’ attitudes and learning outcomes, particularly about issues of inequality and social justice. In addition to this course, I teach courses in CCJ focusing on the criminal justice system, gender and crime, and policy issues in criminal justice. I also teach courses in the Honors Program and serve as a Summer Orientation Advisor for Criminology & Criminal Justice majors.

¹ This course fulfills two URI General Education Outcomes:

A2: Social and Behavioral Science Knowledge and C3: Diversity and Inclusion Responsibilities

Required Text (eBook)

[Sociology Matters](#)

~ Schaefer, Richard T. (2024). 8th Edition. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

* This book is available from the [URI Bookstore](#) in eBook format, or you can buy the [eBook](#) direct from the publisher.

Other course materials will be available in Brightspace

Technology Requirements

It is important that you have access to a computer with reliable, high-speed Internet access and appropriate software/system to support the Brightspace learning platform. For both in-person and any possible remote learning, you will also need Microsoft Office, Adobe Flash, and Adobe Reader (and Zoom, just in case). These programs are all free – you will need to log-in using your URI single sign-on (SSO) to utilize the Microsoft license that URI provides for free to students.

Brightspace Training

If you have not used Brightspace before, or need a refresher, I would highly recommend enrolling in this training course. On the main homepage of Brightspace, click on ‘Discover’, and then you will see the ‘Students Getting Started in Brightspace’ course.

Course Requirements

This course is divided into five lessons, one for each week of the course. These are listed below in the Course Schedule/Outline and can be found in the menu on the left side of the Brightspace page for our course (Lesson 1, Lesson 2, etc.). Each lesson/week includes PowerPoint slides outlining material I would cover if taking this class in person, some additional reading to supplement the text, reading checks/activities, an assignment or video link (which will be the basis for the group discussion for the week, when assigned), and a test. Each lesson is timed to open after the conclusion of the previous one, however you can access some of the materials earlier via links here in the syllabus.

In Brightspace, I have also included some recommended readings, videos, and podcasts, which I think you might find interesting/helpful. Links can be found within each lesson.

Each week’s material will open the Saturday prior to the week they are to be completed. For example, Lesson 1 material will open on Saturday, June 21st at 6 a.m. and needs to be completed June 23rd – June 27th (see below). Each lesson/week concludes with a test to be done on the last day of each week (Fridays – exception is July 4th – see below).

[Pre-Course Survey/Practice Test](#)

So that I may get a better sense of who is in the class, I ask that you complete a short pre-course survey before 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, June 26th. It will only take a few minutes of your time. It will also give you practice in taking tests in Brightspace as they will be in the same format. You can find it in the Quizzes tool and also linked on the Content page.

**Brightspace will not let me create an ungraded assignment in Quizzes. Therefore, this does have points attached to it – please do not pay attention to your score (if displayed), as it does not count toward your course grade.*

Reading

The pages in the text to be read in conjunction with each lesson are specified in the Course Schedule/Outline below. Any additional readings will be linked on the Content page for each lesson and are listed in the schedule.

**There is a substantial amount of reading assigned each week, as this 5-week course does cover most of what would be included in a 14-week course taught during the regular semester. Also, because it is asynchronous, it requires a great deal of commitment and drive on your part to learn the material. You will need to create a schedule for yourself to stay on top of things.*

**If you need to access articles from the NYTimes, URI has a site license, and you can register: <https://uri.libguides.com/newspapers>*

PowerPoint Slides

These slides present modified outlines of the lectures I give when teaching the course in a face-to-face classroom. For the most part, they run parallel to the text, emphasizing what I consider the most important points. Some of the information in the slides, however, is not in the text. Make sure to pay particular attention to updated statistics that are included in the slides, as well as click on hyperlinks to articles, data resources, and the like.

To do well on the tests, you should study these slides both before and after you read the text. It might also be helpful to print these slides out and add in your own notes as you read.

Reading Checks/Activities

Each week you will have one or more reading checks and/or activities that will correspond with the material for that week. They may include questions about a specific reading and/or for you to think about how this material might apply to your own life/experiences. They are intended to test your understanding of what you have read and to go beyond testing your memorization abilities. There will be 10 of these checks/activities for the course, worth 5 points each. In order to receive full credit for this portion of the course, you must complete 8 of these checks/activities. In other words, you can choose not to complete some of these and still receive full credit. They will be available each week until 11:59 p.m. on Thursday.

**I expect that all work you complete/hand in to me is your own original work. Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. This includes knowing how to paraphrase, summarize, cite (using APA citation style), and reference the work of others properly. Using AI writing software, like ChatGPT, is not permitted in this class.*

Weekly Discussions/Assignments

You will alternate between Discussions and Assignments over the five weeks of the course.

In Weeks 1, 3, and 5, you will participate in an Online Discussion with your classmates:

Week 1 – Discussion: Introduce Yourself/Sociological Imagination

The discussion will open at 6 a.m. on Saturday, June 21st and will remain open until 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, June 26th. You must start a thread before you can read and reply to other threads.

Take some time to get to know each other and reflect on some of the foundational ideas and information. Your initial posting should present your own response to the prompts. This post should be about 3-4 paragraphs. This needs to be completed by Tuesday, June 24th at 11:59 p.m. Thereafter you should read what others have posted and comment on their opinions, thoughts, and questions.

1) Introduce Yourself:

Please share a bit about who you are, where you are from, and what sparked your interest in taking this course! What are your academic or career goals, and how do you see sociology fitting into them?

2) Reflect:

Think about the readings and video for this week. I want you to think about how you will use your experiences, values, and personal characteristics to develop your sociological imagination. In other words, in your post, share what it is about you that will help you better understand sociology, our social world, and our society's problems.

3) Your Expectations for the Course:

What are you most excited to learn about in sociology? Are there any specific social issues or topics you're particularly interested in exploring throughout the course? What do you think will be the most challenging aspect of this course?

Week 3 – Video Discussion: Growing Up Poor in America

The discussion will open at 6 a.m. on Saturday, July 5th and will remain open until 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, July 10th. You must start a thread before you can read and reply to other threads.

Your initial posting should present your own view of the video – what you learned from it, what you found interesting, how it connected with the week's reading (or readings from earlier in the course), aspects of it that you disagree with, questions that it raises for you, etc. This needs to be completed by Tuesday, July 8th at 11:59 p.m. Thereafter you should read what others have posted and comment on their opinions, thoughts, and questions.

Week 5 – Video Discussion: Two American Families: 1991-2024

The discussion will open at 6 a.m. on Saturday, July 19th and will remain open until 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, July 24th. You must start a thread before you can read and reply to other threads.

Your initial posting should present your own view of the video – what you learned from it, what you found interesting, how it connected with the week's reading, aspects of it that you disagree with, questions that it raises for you, etc. This needs to be completed by Tuesday, July 22nd at 11:59 p.m. Thereafter you should read what others have posted and comment on their opinions, thoughts, and questions.

Discussion Rubric (used for all discussions)

Expect to post at least 3-5 times per week, in addition to your original post. However, it isn't just about quantity, but also quality. Do not wait until the last minute to post, as this will cost you points. Posting at the last minute does not help to move the discussion along.

5 points: frequent contributions that often move the discussion along by posing new questions, challenging others, answering their questions, and/or presenting new information

3 points: frequent contributions that occasionally move the discussion along as above but that usually are just expressions of opinion and/or agreement/disagreement with the opinions of others

1 point: an occasional contribution that just expresses a personal opinion and/or agreement/disagreement with others and does not move the discussion along.

In Weeks 2 and 4, you will have an Assignment to complete:

Week 2 – Norm Violation Assignment

To explore the power of social norms, you will complete a participant-observation assignment where you select and break an ordinary social norm. More specifically, you should set out to break a “taken for granted” rule of social life, with the goal of making that rule observable. You will complete this rule-breaking behavior at least three times in various settings with different people. You will then write a 1-2-page report outlining your experience. See detailed assignment instructions in Brightspace. This assignment is due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, July 3rd.

Week 4 – Demographic Profile Assignment

To explore important disparities in education and income, you will complete a Demographic Profile comparing your individual data with state and national averages and will write a 1-2-page overview of your relative position in the social system. See detailed assignment instructions in Brightspace. This assignment is due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, July 17th.

Tests

There will be 5 tests. The dates and times are given in the Course Schedule/Outline below.

Each test will consist of 10 to 20 multiple choice questions and one or two short answer-type questions. The questions will be drawn from the reading, PowerPoints, and required videos. **The test will become available to you at 6 a.m. on the day it is to be administered (Fridays, with the exception of July 4th – see below) and will remain open until 11:59 p.m. that day. You will have 45 minutes from the time you open the test to complete it. The test will automatically be submitted at the end of 45 minutes (regardless of whether you are mid-answer).**

While taking the test you may use the text and any other material that I, or your classmates, have put online. However, do not think that you can do well on the tests without having mastered the material beforehand. You will not have time to look up all the answers and even if you did, you would not find them as the tests are designed to measure comprehension and application of the material, not simply memorization.

**I expect that all work you complete/hand in to me is your own original work. Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. This includes knowing how to paraphrase, summarize, cite (using APA citation style), and reference the work of others properly. Using AI writing software, like ChatGPT, is not permitted in this class.*

Calculation of Grades

Grades will be based on a total of 290 points, distributed among various components of the course.

- ~ Reading Checks/Activities (5 points each) x 8 = 40 points
- ~ Discussions (5 points each x 4) x 3 discussions = 60 points
- ~ Assignments (20 points each) x 2 assignments = 40 points
- ~ Tests (30 points each) x 5 tests = 150 points

Grading Scale

A	269-290 (93)	B-	231-239 (80)	D+	187-201 (65)
A-	260-268 (90)	C+	222-230 (77)	D	173-186 (60)
B+	251-259 (87)	C	211-221 (73)	F	172 and below
B	240-250 (83)	C-	202-210 (70)		

Other Important Information

Academic Honesty

The Community Standards of Behavior section in your [student handbook](#) outlines the University Policies and Regulations regarding honesty in all interactions and academic work. Please make sure you are familiar with these as students who violate these policies will be severely penalized.

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Students with Disabilities

Any student with a certified disability that is likely to affect their performance on any or all of the assignments should contact me to arrange for accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with Disability, Access, and Inclusion located at 302 Memorial Union. You can also call – 401-874-2098 or email – dai@uri.edu

Code of Conduct and Anti-Bias Statement

All of you are bound by [URI's Code of Conduct](#). We may encounter concepts that challenge us and perhaps make us uncomfortable or upset, but we must maintain a learning environment that does not infringe on student rights.

URI respects the rights and dignity of each individual and group. We reject prejudice and intolerance, and we work to understand differences. We believe that equity and inclusion are critical components for campus community members to thrive. If you are a target or a witness of a bias incident, you are encouraged to submit a report to the [URI Bias Response Team](#). There you will also find people and resources to help.

Class Materials

I hold the copyright for the materials I have created (such as lectures, class slides, notes, and/or assignments). Anything I post or share with you is for your use only and should not be shared with anyone outside our class.

Netiquette for Online Discussions

In written communication with me or your classmates, consider carefully what you write. Re-read email and discussion content before sending or posting. One benefit of this type of

communication is more opportunity for reasoned thought, more ability to go in-depth, and more time to think through an issue before posting a comment. However, one negative of this type of communication is the possibility of miscommunication. Be aware of this and compose your comments in a positive, supportive, and constructive manner.

Course Assistance and Communication

Do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you are not doing as well as you would like in the course, or if you have questions about anything. I'm very good about answering email and you can make an appointment outside of office hours if the time doesn't work with your schedule.

~A note about emails: Please send proper emails. Make sure to put **SOC 100** in the subject line and to include your full name in the text. Also, use proper capitalization and punctuation, and address me in an appropriate fashion.

Student Resources

Any student who faces challenges with basic needs, securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in this course or others is urged to contact the [Dean of Students Office](#) for support.

[Counseling Center](#) – 217 Roosevelt Hall, 401-874-2288

If you are experiencing stress, mental health, family, or personal issues, please reach out.

[Health Services](#) – Potter Building, 6 Butterfield Road, 401-874-2246, health@uri.edu

[Student First Fund](#) – was established to provide additional emergency support to URI students with demonstrated financial need. Eligible applicants must: 1) be in good academic standing (2.0 cumulative GPA), 2) have applied for financial aid, 3) have exhausted all financial aid options (e.g., subsidized and unsubsidized loans), 4) have sought employment, and 5) cannot be enrolled at another College/University at the time of application.

[Rhody Outpost](#) – Dining Services Warehouse, 10 Tootell Road – [Hours](#)

This food pantry serves all URI students who are food and/or housing insecure, and struggle to make ends meet. All you need is your student ID. The pantry is stocked with canned goods, pasta, pasta sauce, mac and cheese, peanut butter and jelly, toiletries, household items, cleaning supplies, and much more. They also offer eggs, yogurt, milk, bread, chicken (Halal), salmon and fresh vegetables. Also, URI students can visit [St. Peter's by the Sea Friday community market](#). Email barbara_sweeney@uri.edu to request an accommodation around scheduled hours.

Course Schedule/Outline

Lesson 1 – Week 1 – June 23rd – June 27th

Read:

The Sociological View

~ Schaefer, Chapter 1 (pg. 1-37)

~ Mills, "The Promise"

Watch:

[Video - Sociological Imagination](#) (watch after completing reading) – 6 minutes

PowerPoints:

The Sociological View (Chapter 1)

Reading Check/Activity:

1. The Promise

Discussion:

Introduce Yourself/Sociological Imagination

~ Discussion opens on Saturday, June 21st @ 6 a.m. and closes on Thursday, June 26th @ 11:59 p.m.

~ Your initial post needs to be completed by Tuesday (6/24) at 11:59 p.m.

Test 1:

Available Friday, June 27th @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Lesson 2 – Week 2 – June 30th – July 3rd (*Note the short week)

Read:

Culture & Socialization

~ Schaefer, Chapter 2 (pg. 38-72)

~ Becker, “Culture: A Sociological View”

Social Interaction, Groups, & Social Structure

~ Schaefer, Chapter 3 (pg. 73-97)

~ Adler & Adler, “Peer Power: Clique Dynamics among School Children”

PowerPoints:

Culture & Socialization (Chapter 2)

Social Interaction, Groups, & Social Structure (Chapter 3)

Reading Checks/Activities:

1. Culture: A Sociological View
2. Peer Power: Clique Dynamics among School Children

Assignment:

Norm Violation Assignment

~ This assignment is due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, July 3rd

Test 2:

Available Thursday, July 3rd @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Lesson 3 – Week 3 – July 7th – July 11th

Read:

Deviance & Social Control

~ Schaefer, Chapter 4 (pg. 98-126)

~ Becker, "The Outsiders"

Stratification in the United States & Global Inequality

~ Schaefer, Chapter 5 (pg. 127-163)

~ Ehrenreich, "Nickel-and-Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America"

PowerPoints:

Deviance & Social Control (Chapter 4)

Stratification in the United States & Global Inequality (Chapter 5)

Reading Checks/Activities:

1. The Outsiders
2. [Crime Data Explorer](#)
3. Nickel-and-Dimed
4. Play [Spent](#)

Video and Discussion:

[Growing Up Poor in America \(2020\)](#)

~ Discussion opens on Saturday, July 5th @ 6 a.m. and closes on Thursday, July 10th @ 11:59 p.m.

~ Your initial post needs to be completed by Tuesday (7/8) at 11:59 p.m.

Test 3:

Available Friday, July 11th @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Lesson 4 – Week 4 – July 14th – July 18th

Read:

Inequality by Race & Ethnicity

~ Schaefer, Chapter 6 (pg. 164-188)

~ Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty"

Inequality by Gender

~ Schaefer, Chapter 7 (pg. 189-206)

~ ["The Mommy Tax: Is motherhood a boon or a burden for women today?"](#)

PowerPoints:

Inequality by Race & Ethnicity (Chapter 6)

Inequality by Gender (Chapter 7)

Reading Check/Activity:

1. The Culture of Poverty

Assignment:

Demographic Profile Assignment

~ This assignment is due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, July 17th

Test 4:

Available Friday, July 18th @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Lesson 5 – Week 5 – July 21st – July 25th

Read:

Social Institutions: Family & Religion

~ Schaefer, Chapter 8 (pg. 207-232)

~ Cherlin, “The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage”

Social Institutions: Education, Government, & the Economy

~ Schaefer, Chapter 9 (pg. 233-261)

~ Kozol, “Still Separate, Still Unequal”

PowerPoints:

Social Institutions: Family & Religion (Chapter 8)

Social Institutions: Education, Government, & the Economy (Chapter 9)

Reading Checks/Activities:

1. The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage
2. Still Separate, Still Unequal

Video and Discussion:

[Two American Families: 1991-2024](#)

~ Discussion opens on Saturday, July 19th @ 6 a.m. and closes on Thursday, July 24th @ 11:59 p.m.

~ Your initial post needs to be completed by Tuesday (7/22) at 11:59 p.m.

Test 5:

Available Friday, July 25th @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Click [here](#) for important Summer Session dates/deadlines:

~ ***Friday, July 4th is the last day to drop this course***

University of Rhode Island Land Acknowledgement Statement

The University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional stomping ground of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People. We honor and respect the enduring and continuing relationship between the Indigenous people and this land by teaching and learning more about their history and present-day communities, and by becoming stewards of the land we, too, inhabit.

[This video](#), a Newscast produced by the 5 Cent Cigar, explores the history of the URI campus and its complex and often contentious history of building on Indigenous land.