

MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Sociology

SOC 1113: Introduction to Sociology

Fall 2026 · Section 101

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Office:	O'Donohoe Hall (PY), Room O134
Office Hours:	Monday 12:30–1:30 and 3:30–4:30; Tuesday 10:00–12:00; Wednesday 8:45–9:45 and 12:30–1:30; Thursday and Friday by appointment
Class Meetings:	Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 10:00–10:50
Location:	PY100
Dates:	8/24/2026-12/12/2026

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociology is the study of how social life actually works: the unwritten rules, group pressures, and institutions that shape what we do, usually without our noticing. This course introduces the basic concepts, theories, and methods sociologists use to make sense of everyday life, and we will spend the semester applying them to the world you already live in.

It is a useful time to be learning this. Artificial intelligence is changing the job market, trust in institutions keeps sliding, and social movements can appear and vanish within a single news cycle. Understanding how people behave in groups (not how we assume they behave, but how they actually do) has rarely mattered more. And as machines take over more routine work, the ability to read social situations, understand group dynamics, and ask good questions about human behavior only becomes more valuable. Sociology trains exactly those muscles.

Over the semester you will learn to notice patterns that most people walk right past. Why do organizations sometimes do terrible things even when the individuals in them are decent? How does culture shape who you think you are? How does inequality get built into ordinary places like schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods? How does real social change happen? Along the way you will practice skills that travel well beyond this course: reading evidence carefully, working with data, and making arguments you can actually back up.

You do not need to be a sociology major to get something out of this class. Whether you are here for the major, a minor, or a core requirement, my hope is that by December you will notice things in a parking lot, on your feed, or in a meeting at work that you would have missed in August, and that you will have some idea of how to explain them.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and apply core sociological concepts, theories, and methods to analyze social life
- Think sociologically about everyday phenomena — recognizing the invisible social forces shaping individual behavior
- Understand how social structures, institutions, and organizations shape human behavior and collective outcomes
- Analyze social inequality along dimensions of class, race, ethnicity, and gender

- Conduct and communicate basic sociological research, including engaging with empirical evidence and data
- Articulate the value of sociological thinking to diverse audiences – academic, professional, and public

This course fulfills the Social & Behavioral Sciences component of the Texas Core Curriculum, addressing the following Core Objectives: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical & Quantitative Skills, and Social Responsibility. The three required assignments are each designed to assess one or more of these objectives.

REQUIRED TEXT

Newman, David M. Sociology: Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life. Latest edition.
ISBN: 978-0-7619-3477-7

GRADING

Grade Distribution

Component	Points	% of Grade
Unit Exams (3 × 50 pts)	150	30%
Cumulative Final Exam	100	20%
Assignments (3 × 50 pts)	150	30%
Attendance & Participation	100	20%
TOTAL	500	100%

Grading Scale

A: 90–100%	B: 80–89%	C: 70–79%	D: 60–69%	F: Below 60%
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COURSE STRUCTURE: FOUR UNITS

The course is organized into four units. Each of the first three units ends with an in-class exam covering only that unit's chapters. The fourth (and smallest) unit is covered on the cumulative final exam.

Unit	Chapters	Exam
Unit 1: The Sociological Toolkit	Ch. 1, 2, 3, 9	Unit 1 Exam – Fri Sep 18 (50 pts)
Unit 2: Culture, Socialization & the Self	Ch. 4, 5, 6	Unit 2 Exam – Fri Oct 9 (50 pts)
Unit 3: Deviance, Difference & Inequality	Ch. 8, 7, 10, 11, 12	Unit 3 Exam – Mon Nov 16 (50 pts)
Unit 4: Population & Social Change	Ch. 13, 14	Covered on the Cumulative Final (100 pts)

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (100 PTS)

Your engagement with this course – showing up, being present, and doing the reading – is both a courtesy to your classmates and essential to your own learning. This component has two parts:

- **Attendance (50 pts):** Attendance is recorded at the start of each class. You are expected to be present.
- **Participation (50 pts):** Participation means contributing to discussion, asking questions, and engaging in the in-class activities that are a regular part of this course. Passive presence is not participation.

You must be present to earn credit for that day's attendance and participation. There are no make-ups for missed participation. During Online Forum Week (see below), forum posting and replies take the place of in-person attendance and participation for Wed Nov 18 and Fri Nov 20.

ASSIGNMENTS (150 PTS)

You will complete three assignments over the semester, each worth 50 points. Full instructions and grading rubrics for each assignment are posted to D2L. Each assignment is aligned with the Texas Core Curriculum objectives this course addresses.

Methods Assignment – World Bank Data Exercise (50 pts) – Due Fri Sep 11

A guided data-gathering and analysis exercise using the World Bank's countries and economies database. You will collect development indicators (primary school enrollment, life expectancy at birth, and GNI per capita) for the United States and six other countries across high-, middle-, and low-income levels, then write an analysis comparing and contrasting what the data reveal about global inequality. Assesses Empirical & Quantitative Skills and Critical Thinking.

Culture Assignment – The Danger of a Single Story (50 pts) – Due Fri Oct 2

Watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's talk on the danger of a 'single story' and write a typed, professionally organized response to the assigned questions, examining how single stories feed ethnocentrism and stereotyping, and what it takes to avoid them. Assesses Intercultural Knowledge & Competence and Critical Thinking.

Current Events Assignment – Current Event Analysis (50 pts) – Due Fri Dec 4

Choose a current event (no more than 6 months old) from a reputable newspaper or news magazine and write a 3–5 page sociological analysis. You must summarize the article, then apply no fewer than 10 concepts learned this semester – defining each concept, citing it with page numbers from the Newman text, and explaining precisely how it illuminates the event. Assesses Communication Skills and Critical Thinking.

EXAMS (250 PTS TOTAL)

There are four exams in this course: three unit exams (50 points each) and a cumulative final exam (100 points). Exams include a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. All exams are closed note: no notes, textbooks, or electronic devices may be used during an exam. A review will be held the class session prior to each exam.

- **Unit 1 Exam (50 pts):** Friday, September 18. Covers Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 9.
- **Unit 2 Exam (50 pts):** Friday, October 9. Covers Chapters 4, 5, and 6.
- **Unit 3 Exam (50 pts):** Monday, November 16. Covers Chapters 8, 7, 10, 11, and 12.
- **Cumulative Final Exam (100 pts):** Wednesday, December 9, 10:30–12:30. Comprehensive – covers the full semester, with particular emphasis on Unit 4 (Chapters 13 and 14), which is not covered by any other exam.

Make-up exams are available only with a documented excused absence and require advance communication with the instructor. Do not wait until after the exam to reach out.

ONLINE FORUM WEEK (WED NOV 18 & FRI NOV 20)

There is no in-person class on Wednesday, November 18 or Friday, November 20. In place of those two sessions, you will participate in an interactive online discussion forum on D2L.

- **Original post (due Wed Nov 18, 11:59 PM):** Using one of the course's interactive data tools and/or a current news story of your choosing, write a post (250+ words) applying at least two concepts from Unit 3 — deviance, family, class, race, or gender — to what you found. Be specific: name the concepts, and show exactly how they explain the pattern or event you're describing.
- **Two replies (due Fri Nov 20, 11:59 PM):** Reply substantively to at least two classmates' posts (100+ words each). "Great post!" is not substantive — extend the analysis, complicate it, or connect it to a different concept.

Completing the forum earns your attendance and participation credit for both days. Late or missing forum work is treated the same as an in-person absence.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Work

Late assignments are not accepted without prior arrangement and appropriate documentation. Please communicate early — do not wait until after a deadline has passed.

Academic Integrity

All submitted work must be your own. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will result in a zero on the assignment and may be referred to the university for further action. Use of AI tools to generate submitted work is not permitted unless explicitly approved for a specific assignment. When in doubt, cite your sources.

Americans with Disabilities Act (Accommodations)

If a student has an established disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADAAA) and would like to request accommodation, please contact me as soon as possible. Any student requesting accommodations should first contact Disability Support Services at 940-397-4140, Clark Student Center room 168, to document and coordinate reasonable accommodations if they have not already done so. I am committed to ensuring full participation for all students.

Religious Observance

Students who must miss class due to religious observance should notify the instructor at least one week in advance. Reasonable accommodations will be made without penalty.

Communication

I will reply to emails within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. Please include the course number in your subject line. For anything complex or time-sensitive, office hours are a better option than email.

Classroom Environment

This course covers real social phenomena — inequality, institutional failure, deviance, cultural conflict. These topics matter, and they can be uncomfortable. I expect all students to engage with course material and with each other with intellectual curiosity and mutual respect. Debate and disagreement are welcome. Disrespect is not.

Recording Classes

Recording classes is generally prohibited without the professor's explicit permission. Such recordings, when permitted, are for personal use only and may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published without the professor's prior consent. When it is feasible and appropriate, students may record classes to accommodate disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, with prior approval of Disability Support Services; such recordings may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published.

Title IX: Obligation to Report Sex Discrimination

Midwestern State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. State and federal law require University employees to report sex discrimination and sexual misconduct to the University's Office of Title IX. As a faculty member, I am required to report to the Title IX Coordinator any allegations, personally observed behavior, or other direct or indirect knowledge of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, or stalking, involving a student or employee. After a report is made, the Office of Title IX will reach out to the affected student or employee in an effort to connect them with resources and options for addressing the allegations in the report. You are also encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Title IX directly.

Contact: Laura Hetrick, Title IX Coordinator, Sunwatcher Village Clubhouse, 940-397-4213, laura.hetrick@msutexas.edu. You may also file an online report 24/7 at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?MSUTexas&layout_id=6. Should you wish to speak with someone about your experience in confidence, you may contact the MSU Counseling Center at 940-397-4618. For more information on the University's policy on Title IX or sexual misconduct, visit <https://msutexas.edu/titleix/>.

Campus Carry

Senate Bill 11, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective August 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to the University's Campus Carry webpage.

Emergency Aid Resources for Basic Needs

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs, such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, or textbooks, resources may be available to help. Visit the Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage at <https://msutexas.edu/student-life/dean/student-emergency-support-and-resources.php> to learn more and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU. For additional information, contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center 108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@msutexas.edu.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings should be completed before the class session for which they are listed. ★ indicates a deadline or exam. This schedule is subject to change with two weeks' notice via D2L.

UNIT 1: THE SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLKIT (CH. 1, 2, 3, 9)	
WEEK 1 – The Sociological Eye	
Mon Aug 24	Syllabus day – What is sociology and why does it matter?
Wed Aug 26	Ch. 1 – Taking a New Look at a Familiar World
Fri Aug 28	Ch. 1 continued
WEEK 2 – Thinking Like a Sociologist	
Mon Aug 31	Ch. 2 – Seeing and Thinking Sociologically Methods Assignment introduced
Wed Sep 2	Ch. 2 continued
Fri Sep 4	Ch. 2 wrap-up
WEEK 3 – How Reality Gets Built	
Mon Sep 7	NO CLASS – Labor Day
Wed Sep 9	Ch. 3 – Building Reality: The Social Construction of Knowledge

Fri Sep 11	★ Ch. 3 continued Methods Assignment Due
WEEK 4 – The Hidden Architecture: Organizations & Institutions	
Mon Sep 14	Ch. 9 – Organizations, Institutions, and Globalization
Wed Sep 16	Ch. 9 continued Unit 1 Exam review
Fri Sep 18	★ UNIT 1 EXAM (Ch. 1, 2, 3, 9)
UNIT 2: CULTURE, SOCIALIZATION & THE SELF (CH. 4, 5, 6)	
WEEK 5 – Culture and History	
Mon Sep 21	Ch. 4 – Building Order: Culture and History Culture Assignment introduced
Wed Sep 23	Ch. 4 continued
Fri Sep 25	Ch. 4 wrap-up
WEEK 6 – Who Are You?	
Mon Sep 28	Ch. 5 – Building Identity: Socialization
Wed Sep 30	Ch. 5 continued
Fri Oct 2	Attendance Optional, Substitute Dr. Amy Clark will help you with anything you need related to the Culture Assignment ★ Ch. 5 wrap-up Culture Assignment Due
WEEK 7 – Performance and Self	
Mon Oct 5	Ch. 6 – Supporting Identity: The Presentation of Self
Wed Oct 7	Ch. 6 continued Unit 2 Exam review
Fri Oct 9	★ UNIT 2 EXAM (Ch. 4, 5, 6)
UNIT 3: DEVIANCE, DIFFERENCE & INEQUALITY (CH. 8, 7, 10, 11, 12)	
WEEK 8 – Deviance and Wrongdoing	
Mon Oct 12	Ch. 8 – Constructing Difference: Social Deviance
Wed Oct 14	Ch. 8 continued – Why do good organizations do bad things?
Fri Oct 16	Ch. 8 wrap-up
WEEK 9 – Intimacy, Families, Relationships	
Mon Oct 19	Ch. 7 – Building Social Relationships: Intimacy and Families
Wed Oct 21	Ch. 7 continued
Fri Oct 23	Ch. 7 wrap-up
WEEK 10 – Social Class and Inequality	
Mon Oct 26	Ch. 10 – The Architecture of Stratification: Social Class and Inequality
Wed Oct 28	Ch. 10 continued
Fri Oct 30	Ch. 10 wrap-up
WEEK 11 – Race and Ethnicity	
Mon Nov 2	Ch. 11 – The Architecture of Inequality: Race and Ethnicity
Wed Nov 4	Ch. 11 continued
Fri Nov 6	Ch. 11 wrap-up

WEEK 12 – Sex and Gender	
Mon Nov 9	Ch. 12 – The Architecture of Inequality: Sex and Gender
Wed Nov 11	Ch. 12 continued
Fri Nov 13	Ch. 12 wrap-up Unit 3 Exam review
WEEK 13 – Unit 3 Exam & Online Forum Week	
Mon Nov 16	★ UNIT 3 EXAM (Ch. 8, 7, 10, 11, 12)
Wed Nov 18	NO IN-PERSON CLASS – Online Forum: original post due by 11:59 PM
Fri Nov 20	NO IN-PERSON CLASS – Online Forum: two replies due by 11:59 PM
THANKSGIVING WEEK	
Mon Nov 23	Exam debrief Current Events Assignment introduced A sociological look at the holidays
Wed Nov 25	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break
Fri Nov 27	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break
UNIT 4: POPULATION & SOCIAL CHANGE (CH. 13, 14) – COVERED ON THE FINAL	
WEEK 14 – Landing the Plane	
Mon Nov 30	Ch. 13 – Demographic Dynamics: Population Trends
Wed Dec 2	Ch. 14 – Architects of Change: Reconstructing Society
Fri Dec 4	★ Unit 4 wrap-up Comprehensive Final Exam review Current Events Assignment Due
FINALS WEEK	
Finals Week	★ CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM – covers the full semester with emphasis on Unit 4 (Ch. 13 & 14). Wednesday, December 9, 10:30–12:30.

This syllabus is a living document. Any changes will be announced in class and posted to D2L.