

SOCI 498WIC: Senior Seminar (spring 2025)

Prerequisites

To be enrolled in SOCI 498WIC (WIC = Writing Intensive Course) during spring 2025, students must have completed SOC 201, MATH 165/SOCI 301 (or equivalent statistics requirement), SOCI 300, and SOCI 375, each with a minimum grade of C-, and an additional 12 units in Sociology. You must also have filed a seminar application and applied to graduate spring or summer 2025.

Sociology 498 is the “capstone” to the sociology degree at Sonoma State University. It focuses on student completion of independent research projects with an emphasis on a specific course theme and using a specific research method (both selected by the instructor). Additionally, as a capstone, the course will review basic sociological concepts and perspectives and will ask you to apply them to your own research. Students will be required to construct a sociologically-informed guiding question to help structure their empirical investigation.

In addition to meeting the Sociology capstone requirement, SOCI 498WIC meets the SSU Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). The seminars (topics and methods) offered in spring 2025 are described below.

Senior Seminars

SOCI 498WIC.1: Senior Seminar

Topic: Medicine, Health & the Body

Method: Intensive Interviewing

Instructor: Professor Debora Paterniti

This course will focus on the topic of medicine, health, and bodies. We will use sociological theories and concepts that have influence in medical sociology to examine bodies and health as *symbolic social processes*. Our topics will include definitions of individual and public bodies, representations of bodies in understandings of health and illness, and negotiated contexts of health risk and risky behaviors as personal and public issues.

We will discuss how medical definitions and consumer movements frame health and illness and consider their roles in characterizing and shaping understandings of disease, bodies, and public constituencies. Examples of topics students might investigate include management of health and wellness, living with chronic illness, alternative practices to western medicine, decision-making about medicine and medical procedures, variation in health-seeking behaviors, access to care and interactions with care providers, caregiving and caregiver stress, bodily stigma and self-

presentation, body art and body work, and the accessibility of public space for differently-abled bodies, among others.

[SOVI 498WIC.2: Senior Seminar](#)

Topic: Public Space and Public Life

Method: Participant Observation

Instructor: Professor Melinda Milligan

This course will emphasize the investigation of public life and public space using the method of participant observation. The public-ness of a space is linked to the degree of freedom of various types of people to access and use the space. The more accessible a space is and the wider the range of activities that may be done there, the more public is it. Public life is understood to be the activities that take place within public space.

The sociological themes examined will include public spaces as third places, the privatization of public space, features that make for successful public spaces (and what “successful” means), stranger interaction in public spaces, public space and the “decline of community” debate, the role of public space in the creation of public life, and many others. Examples of the types of public spaces students might choose to study for their projects include parks, plazas, bars, cafes, festivals, farmers’ markets, art walks, etc.