

SOCI 498 (Senior Seminar) Descriptions

Sociology Department, Sonoma State University Spring 2023

Each SOCI 498 section has its own topic and research method. Students will design and conduct an individual research project using their section's topic and method.

Modality: All sections of SOCI 498 will be offered in person. The department does not plan to offer senior seminar online.

Prerequisites: Before enrolling in SOCI 498, students must complete SOC 201, SOCI 300, and SOCI 375, and MATH 165/SOCI 301, each with a minimum grade of C-, and 12 additional sociology units.

Registration: Allowed only for students with an approved Senior Seminar application. There is a hard cap on the number of seats available. If you submit a late application, you are not guaranteed a seat.

SOCI 498.1: Senior Seminar: Gender and Sexualities

- Instructor: Prof. James Joseph Dean, PhD
- Method: ***In-Depth Interviews***
- Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00-11:50 am

Gender is grounded in sex; bodies cannot be represented as entirely social. This lack of a sharp distinction results in a conflation and a confusion around the difference between gender and sex. What is gender, anyway? We will explore gender as a performative identity situated in social and hierarchical relations of power. Sexuality is a three-part relationship among desire, sexual behaviors, and identity. How do we understand the relationship between biology or nature and society or nurture in determining sexuality? We will examine the major models of sexualities, particularly focusing on social constructionist writings that are attentive to social and historical factors and how sexuality is a principle of social organization in social life.

This class focuses on how gender and sexualities are socially constructed in individuals' everyday lives as social identities as well as part of our social institutions, from families to schools to workplaces. Students read articles and books that serve as role models for their own qualitative in-depth interview study. From choosing their study's topic to writing the literature

review and interview questions to conducting and analyzing the interviews themselves, students complete an entire study within the length of the semester.

SOCI 498.2: Senior Seminar: Family and Inequality

- Instructor: Prof. Soo-Yeon Yoon, PhD
- Method: ***Statistics and Secondary Data Analysis***
- Time: Monday and Wednesday, 3:00-4:50 pm

For this section of senior seminar, the theme of the course is the sociology of families. Students will learn how to conduct research on families and become an intelligent and critical consumer of research on families. The course will focus on understanding changing family and demographic behavior in the United States and beyond. Students will conduct research projects drawing upon sociological perspectives on family and social stratification. Research projects will examine how family behavior and family relationships vary by race/ethnicity, age, gender, class and across the life course with the use of the statistical analysis of survey data. Learning outcomes include 1) how to frame research questions and formulate them into testable research hypotheses; 2) critically evaluate previous studies and write a literature review; 3) analyze quantitative survey data to answer the research questions; and 4) produce an original research paper. In this course, students will not collect their own data, but will analyze the General Social Survey, a nationally representative adult sample. The course will cover core topics in descriptive and inferential statistics. Students will use SPSS, a statistical software program, to analyze the data.

SOCI 498.3: Senior Seminar: Environment and Culture

- Instructor: Prof. Allison Ford, PhD
- Method: ***Participant Observation***
- Time: Monday and Wednesday, 5:00-6:50 pm

The theme of this section of senior seminar is Environment and Culture, based on ethnographic methods of participant observation. Students will select a field site and complete field notes based on their observations of social dynamics in their field site. This course will draw on theories and methods of environmental sociology and cultural sociology. Students will complete a research project that examines how social actors understand and relate to the environment differently, based on the intersection of cultural systems (e.g., beliefs, values, worldviews, ideologies, etc.) and material conditions (e.g., infrastructure, institutions, economic arrangements, etc.). Topics may include, but are not limited to climate change, consumer behavior, waste management, composting and recycling, environmental footprints and

individualized behaviors, organizational sustainability initiatives, public policy processes, community organizing and environmental movements, environmental racism and injustice, water and drought, wildfire and smoke, various types of pollution, etc. Each project will explore the tensions between material conditions and the ways culture shapes how different social groups make sense of them.

Students will read articles and books that 1) explain the mechanisms of ethnographic research, and offer guidance on conducting ethnography and, 2) demonstrate excellent examples of environmental ethnography. Learning outcomes will focus on the development of good ethnographic research questions, a research proposal, identification of a field site, the generation of data through observation and field notes, and coding and analysis that will result in a final write up. Students will be introduced to Atlas.ti qualitative data processing software.

SOCI 498.4: Senior Seminar: U.S. Housing Policy

- Instructor: Dr. Roxanne Ezzet, PhD
- Method: ***In-Depth Interviews and Content Analysis***
- Time: Friday, 9:00 am – 12:40 pm

For this section of senior seminar, the emphasis will be on urban sociology as it relates to housing and social services. Your project will focus on the use of interviews to understand the role of housing (e.g., housing policies, affordable housing, homelessness) and the link to social services in urban areas.

Specifically, this course will focus on the role of housing in shaping the quality of life in various parts of society. We will examine housing issues in urban areas while also focusing on the broader history and social impact of housing and affordable housing policies. This course will examine past and current housing policies and their influence on American society. We will also spend a significant amount of time discussing proposed policy issues to persistent affordable housing issues as well as strategies that community-based organizations and social movements are using to bring about change. We will use interviews with members from the public sector, private sector, non-profit groups and the community to understand housing problems and address policy solutions. Students will conduct in depth interviews and use content analysis to examine the interview data.