

**Racial and Ethnic Relations**  
**SOC 427**  
**T/TH 9:30-10:45pm**

**Instructor:** Kristin Haltinner, PhD

**Office Hours:** On Zoom, 8:30-9:30am T/Th (please make an appointment within this time so we don't have a waiting room full of people). Additional times also available by appointment.

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**Office:** 107 Phinney Hall

**Course Overview**

The overall objective of this course is to understand the nature and context of contemporary ethnic and race relations in the United States (from a sociological perspective/through a sociological lens), as well as different sociological theories explaining modern ethnic and racial inequality. Additionally, students will be expected to use course readings and conversations to think critically about their own experiences and American society in general.

In this class, we will consider how ideas about race, ethnicity, and racism have changed over time as well as if, where, how, and why racial and ethnic inequality persists in U.S. society. The course contrasts – and draws connections between – historical events and processes with current race relations. In doing so it explores modern stereotypes and essentialist thinking, institutional barriers to equality for everyone, and sociological theories explaining them. The course will also include an assessment of micro-level processes of racism.

**Course Expectations**

Students must attend lectures, keep up with the reading, actively participate, and do the required work. Class periods will be primarily discussion based, with some lecturing, videos and in-class small group activities. There will be approximately 50 pages of reading per week drawn from articles and chapters on BbLearn. Students are expected to critically reflect on their own experiences with race in light of the material covered in the course.

**Special Note:** This is a sociology class. As such, I will be teaching you sociological knowledge and ways of knowing. This may or may not align with your existing political, religious, or cultural beliefs. You will be graded on your ability to demonstrate an understanding of sociological knowledge in your work. I will not ask about your personal beliefs.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

**1. Learn and integrate**

Students will acquire basic knowledge about racial and ethnic relations and learn to apply it to their own lives and the world around them. For example, students will learn about issues such as the racial wealth gap and to use this information to interpret and explain events in broader society. These skills and understanding will facilitate greater engagement with the broader world and provide a solid basis for later scholarly, professional, and personal experiences.

**2. Think and create**

Upon learning about the fundamental challenges facing contemporary racial and ethnic relations, students will learn to draw deeper connections. They will think independently about broader interrelatedness and social dynamics. They will explore and consider the challenges of racial inequality in social institutions and between individuals. Students will also create novel solutions to these problems and develop potential ways of ameliorating contemporary racial inequity.

### **3. Communicate**

Students will practice communicating about issues related to racial and ethnic relations. They will do this through class discussion, written reflection papers, and [ideally] conversations held outside of the classroom.

### **4. Clarify purpose and perspective**

Through having a better foundational knowledge regarding racial and ethnic relations in society, students will better understand broader institutional and cultural stories. Students will critically examine a variety of perspectives on these topics and find their own place within the puzzle.

### **5. Practice citizenship**

Through having greater knowledge of historical oppression and its residual effects, students will develop greater analytic skills to evaluate social, cultural, political and economic events. They will further acquire greater empathy – in the language of Max Weber *verstehen* – and have a more positive influence on their peers and broader society. They will encounter new information and circumstances with grace, compassion, and open minds as true social scientists.

**Required Texts:** All material is available on BbLearn.

**The final course grade is determined according to the following requirements:**

Course Contributions and Classroom Etiquette (25%)

Reflection Essays (45%)

Final Exam (30%)

### **Contributions and Classroom Etiquette (25%)**

#### **1. Learning as a Social Scientist**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sociologist Max Weber used the German term “*verstehen*” to explain the work that social scientists do. *Verstehen* can be understood as a sort of academic empathy, or “putting yourself in the shoes of others to see things from their perspective,” (Maconis and Gerber 2010). It is the core way that social scientists – good social scientists, at least – approach new information and consideration of the world.

As social scientists we seek to understand how societal structures and the histories from which they evolved impact people’s daily lives. It is a different way of approaching social realities than is common in American popular culture. As a result, thinking like a sociologist can be difficult – emotionally, mentally, cognitively – but it can also be liberatory, expansive, and soul-expanding. Consider these words from activist and scholar Alok Vaid-Menon, “Common sense is what happens when a particular point of view is regarded as the status quo because it’s held by the people in power, not necessarily because it is right.” This is social science – we seek, as best we

can, to see through the veils of common sense, of the dominant ideological paradigms, to explore the unanswered questions (or perhaps incompletely answered questions) of our social worlds.

The root of good social science – the core of *verstehen* – is in love and compassion. These values also lay at the heart of my expectations for student participation in this course. In sociology 427 we will create a foundation of **respect, verstehen, love, compassion, and a willingness to be uncomfortable**. We will approach a novel understanding of racial inequity in the United States with open minds and open hearts. We will learn and grow together.

With that said, this course explores issues that provoke strong emotions. Students are expected to respect others. We all bring to the class distinct histories and perspectives – these differences will enable us to better understand each other and society at large. Individuals who fail to behave respectfully will be asked to leave the class.

Respect can look a number of ways. In this class, respect is demonstrated through **listening to and talking about ideas (and not people), refraining from making dismissive comments, utterances (ex: audible sighs), or nonverbal actions (ex: eye rolling) towards your peers, using evidence to support assertions, and refraining from making generalizations about groups of people**. Said simply: it is expected that people in this course behave with **kindness and integrity** with regards to their peers and the instructor.

In this class, I will respect you and your right to speak and learn in your own way, regardless of your gender, race, religion, region, appearance, disabilities, or sexual orientation. I will protect your right to express yourself and your ideas, as long as they do not themselves express disrespect or aggression towards other people. I encourage you to ask hard questions in kind ways. I expect you to do the same for me and for your fellow students.

Respect is also expressed through celebrating one's self-identification. Everyone will **use the names and pronouns an individual expresses as their own**. Social recognition of our sense of self is key to our own integrity and flourishing. Further, **this means that disrespectful, demeaning, and insulting language will not be tolerated. Racist, ableist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, fatphobic, ageist, xenophobic, and other prejudiced language and views are unacceptable as parts of our shared classroom discourse. Slurs and derogatory language are absolutely forbidden. If one of your classmates tells you that a term is derogatory, then take their word for it and stop using it**. Language is a living and evolving medium. You are not the authority on which words hurt another person. If someone tells you that a word is hurtful, then it is your job to find a way of making your point without hurting them, NOT their job to convince you that they are in fact legitimately hurt. (Parts of the above paragraphs adapted from Dr. Rebecca Kukla.)

You are **expected to come to all class sessions unless ill or otherwise unwell, to arrive to class on time, to have completed the assigned readings, and to be an active participant in discussion**. If you do not wish to pay attention in class, you should not come to the session (it will be reflected in your grade). Please do not engage in distracting behavior during class (i.e., knitting, using your phone, playing on Facebook (or whatever medium non-Gen Xers use)). If you do not want to be fully present in class, I prefer that you not attend.

Also, please **refrain from using photography or recording devices during class. This is a violation of your peers' privacy.**

## **2. Participation**

While attendance will not be formally taken in this course, participation matters. One cannot participate if they are not present.

Participation will be evaluated based not on frequency of participation but on the quality of engagement. That is, students shouldn't speak simply to get a "count" but to critically and meaningfully extend discussion. Students are encouraged to connect course readings with personal experience of current events. It is expected that students will come to class on Mondays having completed the course readings and prepared for discussion.

Recognizing that not all students feel comfortable speaking in groups, participation will also be measured through in-class writings, responses to active learning activities, and participation in small group discussion. Note: In-class activities cannot be made up if a student is absent. There will be a substantial number of these over the term and students will be able to miss three without it effecting their participation grade.

## **3. Plagiarism**

One of the core foundations of being a member of an academic environment is that we assume that everyone operates with the highest level of honesty and integrity. One of your main purposes for being here is to learn and develop you own intellect, beliefs and ideals. All students are expected to adhere to the student code of conduct and all school policies concerning academic honesty. Plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, and facilitation of dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to improper (including incomplete) citation/referencing, working on individual projects with others, using someone else's work, using work from one class for another, using an assignment more than once (all assignments must be original), using group study websites (i.e., Chegg), using paraphrasing software, and fabrication of materials including false excuses. It is far better to turn in poor (a.k.a. 'crappy') work than to panic and turn in something that someone else has done.

If you are caught cheating on or plagiarizing an assignment you will receive an F for that assignment. If there is a second offense you will fail the class. Any student suspected of violating academic honesty policies will also be reported to the university. The university will then make a determination as to the seriousness of the situation. Depending on the severity of the breach you may face additional sanctions.

## **4. University of Idaho Classroom Learning Civility Clause (UI Language, not mine)**

In any environment in which people gather to learn, it is essential that all members feel as free and safe as possible in their participation. To this end, it is expected that everyone in this course will be treated with mutual respect and civility, with an understanding that all of us (students, instructors, professors, guests, and teaching assistants) will be respectful and civil to one another in discussion, in action, in teaching, and in learning.

Should you feel our classroom interactions do not reflect an environment of civility and respect, you are encouraged to meet with your instructor during office hours to discuss your concern. Additional resources for expression of concern or requesting support include the Dean of Students office and staff (5-6757), the UI Counseling & Testing Center's confidential services (5-6716), or the UI Office of Human Rights, Access, & Inclusion (5-4285).

### **Reflection Essays (45%)**

Each week will feature a writing prompt (on BbLearn) that brings together the readings, podcasts, films, and activities you do within the module. **There are 15 available. You are expected to complete 8 of them. These reflections are to be critical, sociological, and analytical (NOT opinion-based).**

The goal of this course is to help you understand race and ethnic relations through the lens of sociology. As one of many courses you will take in college, it is one framework through which you will learn to analyze the social world. Your experience will be enriched by similarly engaging with social analysis through the lens of disciplines like psychology, anthropology, history, English, biology, and others throughout your time here at UI. This is how college education works - you take courses from a diversity of analytical and theoretical paradigms and, as a result of looking at social phenomena from so many different frameworks, become rich critical thinkers.

Reflections MUST draw heavily on course materials. Student's analysis should lean heavily on readings, films, and podcasts. This will help ensure that you are analyzing content as a sociologist - which is the goal of this class. It also demonstrates to me that you've done the required work in each module.

To do well on these assignments you must include the following:

#### *Structural-level Analysis*

Sociology is the study of social systems and their impact on people. As such individual-level arguments about inequality (i.e., poor people don't work hard enough) are a) not supported by sociological evidence and b) not sociological in nature. **Your reflections are required to engage with systemic/institutional explanations for inequality.**

#### *Data and Evidence:*

You need to draw on specific examples, data, and citations to support your arguments. You do not need to use outside materials but, if you choose to, all statements that are not common sense need to be supported with reliable sources. These sources must be academic in nature. If you cannot find it on Google Scholar or in academic journals, you should run the source by me.

Include a reference list at the end of the essay that includes any cited materials.

#### *Organization*

Each essay should be approximately one to two pages, single-spaced. It should start with an introductory paragraph that ends with a clear thesis. This should be followed by 3-

5 supporting paragraphs (Each with clear topic or transitions sentences). Essays should end with a clear conclusion paragraph.

*Reflection Prompt Grading Criteria:*

27-30 points = Superior. Well organized, well written, and particularly insightful. The paper thoroughly answers the prompt and evaluates the broader cultural/sociological forces that connect to the issues addressed within the prompt. Is particularly nuanced and well argued. Nearly flawless mechanics.

24-26 points = Above Average. Solid, but might be weaker in organization, description or analysis than a superior paper. Some grammatical or mechanical problems.

21-23 points = Average. Answers the questions adequately, but might be lacking in detail, analysis or insight. Typical number of grammatical errors.

20 points or below = Below Average. Generic, superficial, or fails to address all components of the prompt. Might contain an extraordinary number of spelling, grammatical or punctuation

**Final Exams (30% each)**

The Final Exam will be a take home exam featuring short answer and essay questions based on course content (readings, podcasts, films, and in-class discussions). Students are encouraged to use (and appropriately cite) class materials in their responses. More information will be handed out in class.

**Late Assignments/Grading Information**

All assignments can be turned in using BbLearn or handed in at the beginning of class, which ever works best for each individual student. I will not accept assignments turned in via email. Complete information about how to submit materials is explained on each assignment and available on BbLearn.

All assignments must be typed and turned in on time unless otherwise noted.

Assignments are handed back as quickly as possible. Assignments are returned in the same format they were turned in as, meaning if you turned in an assignment via BBLearn, your assignment will be returned to you via BBLearn. Each assignment will have comments for improvement on them as well as a score.

I usually penalize assignments for being late but, to be honest, life is hard enough right now. I will accept late work as needed, but please let me know you've turned it in as BbLearn will not notify me of late submissions. It is best to talk with me (via email or in person) when you need to submit late work.

**Other Essential Information**

**Communication & Technology**

### *Telephone*

The best ways to communicate with me is either through email or in person. However, my office number is 208-885-8079.

### *Email*

Please check your email regularly as it is the best means for me to contact you. Please remember, no assignments will be accepted via email (only via BbLearn or in class). In turn, I will check my email regularly. Please, when sending me message, use proper email etiquette (do not use all caps, use formal English, etc).

### *BBLearn*

Readings, 'tips', assignments, announcements and other class related materials will be posted on BBLearn. If you have difficulties accessing this, please let me know.

### **Accommodations**

If you have special needs that may affect your academic performance, please speak with me within the first two weeks of the semester so that I can better ensure that your needs are met.

### *Food and Housing Security*

Any student who has difficulty affording or accessing sufficient food, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, is encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office or myself for support. Information on the Vandal Food Pantry can be found here: <http://www.uidaho.edu/current-students/student-involvement/volunteer/food-pantry>

### *Diverse Abilities*

Contact Disability Services for information and assistance in obtaining proper documentation for disabilities and/or other issues that may affect your academic performance. I will make every appropriate effort to accommodate your learning needs, and I will keep all personal information confidential.

*Center for Disability Access and Resources*, Bruce Pitman Center, 127  
(208) 885-6307, <https://www.uidaho.edu/current-students/cdar>, [cdar@uidaho.edu](mailto:cdar@uidaho.edu)

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have documented temporary or permanent disabilities. All accommodations must be approved through the Center for Disability Access and Resources (CDAR) in order to notify your instructor(s) as soon as possible regarding accommodation(s) needed for the course.

### *General Academic Support*

For more general assistance with achieving academic goals, or for help with personal issues that may influence your academic performance, consider seeking help from Counseling and Consulting Services:

**Counseling & Testing Center:** Mary E. Forney Hall, Room 306  
(208-885-6716) <http://www.uidaho.edu/CTC/counseling-services>

The Counseling program helps students with their concerns and offers an opportunity to talk with an experienced counselor who can help students select and achieve goals for personal

and career development. The center offers a variety of counseling types including personal counseling, crisis intervention, and group counseling.

### **Reminder of UI Covid Policies (UI Language, not mine)**

#### **Healthy Vandals Policies**

It is a longstanding tradition that Vandals take care of Vandals, and we all do our best to look out for the Vandal Family. These simple precautions go a long way in reducing the impact of coronavirus on our campuses and in our communities. With everyone engaging in these small actions, we can continue to participate in our vibrant campus culture where we are able to learn, live, and grow. Please bookmark the [University of Idaho Covid-19 webpage](#) and visit it often for the most up-to-date information about the U of I's response to Covid-19.

- Masks are required, effective immediately, in all university buildings, regardless of vaccination status. Faculty may wear a face shield to lead classes and must maintain 6 feet of distance while wearing the shield. These requirements will be reviewed on a periodic basis and are subject to change.
- All classes are offered in the modality listed in the catalog.
- All Vandals are highly encouraged to be [vaccinated](#).
- COVID-19 tests are not required to attend class in person.

Additionally, faculty and students must follow the Healthy Vandal Pledge:

1. **Daily Symptom Monitoring and In-Person Class Attendance.** Evaluate your own health status before attending in-person classes and refrain from attending class in-person if you are ill, if you are experiencing any of the [known symptoms of coronavirus](#), or if you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19.
  - Stay home if you experience any symptoms related to COVID 19 and that are not attributed to a non-infectious health condition regardless of how mild.
  - Contact your medical provider or local Idaho Public Health District for assessment of symptoms and possible COVID19 testing. Positive COVID 19 tests should be submitted via a [VandalCare Report](#) in order to make arrangements that involve classroom absences due to illness, and/or quarantine or isolation requirements directed by a medical provider.
2. **Face Masks.** All faculty, staff, students and visitors across all U of I locations must use face masks whenever indoors at any U of I buildings. You are required to wear a face mask over your nose and mouth indoors at all times.
  - If you have a medical condition that affects your ability to comply with the face covering policy, please contact [the Center for Disability Access and Resources \(CDAR\)](#) to request a reasonable accommodation.
  - Failure to wear a face covering means you will be required to leave the classroom. If a disruption to the learning experience occurs due to repeated offence and/or egregious behavior, it will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for potential code violation.

**Protocols for dealing with students who do not adhere to face mask policy:**

All UI students must wear face masks while inside of UI buildings, including in classrooms. Students are not permitted to remove face masks during classes even if they are able to maintain a six-foot distance from other students.

Step 1 – In the event a student refuses to wear a face mask while in class, faculty member should address the behavior and request that the student put on a face mask. For example: “There is a requirement that all community members wear a face mask while in classrooms to keep us all safe and healthy. Please wear a face mask to continue to be in this space.”

Step 2 – If a student still refuses to wear a face mask, the faculty member should ask them to leave the classroom.

Step 3 – If the student refuses to leave the class you should contact Campus Security (885-SAFE) to have the student removed from the classroom