

# Chapter One: Introduction to Sociology

## Lecture Outline

### Introduction to Sociology

- Sociologists focus upon, investigate, and challenge social patterns, among other issues and areas.
- Sociology helps students understand the issues facing society and discuss them in an informed and critical manner.
- Sociology has much in common with anthropology, economics, history, psychology, philosophy, and political science; however it is a unique discipline with its own tools and distinct vocabulary.
- Sociology looks at and examines patterns in social variables and social institutions as well as social interactions.
- Sociology allows for an understanding of the relationships between the social world, others, and oneself.

### The Heart of Sociology: The Sociological Imagination

- The **sociological imagination**, as coined by **C. Wright Mills**, is one of sociology's most useful instruments.
  - It shows how society works in our personal lives.
- Giroux warns of what happens when there is a lack of sociological imagination:
  - Social issues are collapsed into private problems, which are then seen as a flaw in an individual's character that must be suffered in isolation.
  - It becomes difficult to develop the vocabulary to translate private problems into social issues.
  - Democracy begins to fall and political life becomes impoverished.

### The Origins of Sociology

- **Confucius** (c. 551-479 BCE) is perhaps the earliest person to employ a sociological imagination, arguing that leaders should engage in 'role modelling' moral practices they want their citizens to follow.
- **Ibn Khaldun** (1332–1406) is regarded as the first social scientist because he was the first to carry out a systematic study of sociological subjects, examining various types of societies and their histories, cultures, and economies.
- **Thomas Malthus** (1766–1834), an economist and forerunner of modern sociologists, theorized about the escalating urban population growth.

- Due to social changes occurring in Europe during the nineteenth century, sociology became an area of academic interest at that time.
- **Max Weber** (1864–1920) is considered one of the founders of modern sociology.
  - He developed the **Protestant work ethic** thesis – the idea that capitalism developed from Protestant religious values.
- In North America, a similar set of circumstances fostered the growth of sociology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
  - The Chicago School was the first and one of the most influential schools of sociology.
    - **Robert Park** (1864–1944) was the leading figure of the Chicago School of sociology, writing a seminal introductory sociology textbook with Ernest Burgess.
    - **Ernest Burgess** (1886–1966) is credited with introducing physics-like statistical precision to the field of sociology.
    - **Jane Addams** (1860–1936), although never hired by Chicago’s Department of Sociology, was closely tied to the department and pioneered social reforms and improvements to urban welfare.

## The Development of Canadian Sociology

- Canadian sociology developed in response to unique cultural and national conditions.
  - Canadian sociology has been influenced by historical factors such as French–English relations and the development of the Canadian West.
  - It has also been shaped by Canada’s unique cultural approach to ethnicity.
  - As a discipline, Canadian sociology has also been influenced by its close relationship with anthropology.
- Students will learn about some of the founders and leaders of Canadian professional, institutionalized sociology:
  - **Carl Addington Dawson** (1887–1964); **Everett C. Hughes** (1897–1983); **Horace Miner** (1912–1993); **Harold Innis** (1894–1952); **Samuel Delbert Clark** (1910–2003); and **John Porter** (1921–1979);
  - Notable women sociologists include **Annie Marion MacLean** (c. 1870–1934); **Aileen Ross** (1902–1995); and **Helen C. Abell** (1917–2005).

## Different Kinds of Sociology

- There are five major approaches in sociology:
  1. **Structural functionalism**
    - This approach is based on **functionalism** – focusing on how social systems operate and produce consequences – and **structuralism** – explaining social forms and their contributions to social cohesion.
    - **Émile Durkheim** (1858–1917) was a proponent of this approach.
      - Durkheim coined the term **social fact** (with three essential characteristics), which examines larger social forms and how parts of society function.
      - Durkheim’s book *Suicide* (1897) treats suicide as a social fact.
    - **Robert K. Merton** (1910–2003) identified three types of functions:
      1. **Manifest functions,**

- 2. **Latent functions**, and
  - 3. **Latent dysfunctions**.
2. **Conflict theory**
- The conflict approach is based on conflict, class, contestation, and change.
  - **Karl Marx** (1818–1883) focused on **class** conflict and how it is the driving force behind all major socio-historical change.
3. **Symbolic interaction**
- This approach looks at the meaning of the daily social interaction between individuals.
  - There is an emphasis on **microsociology**.
  - It was pioneered by **George Herbert Mead** (1863–1931).
  - **Herbert Blumer** (1900–1987) was also an important figure.
  - **Erving Goffman** (1922–1982) was a pioneer in microsociology.
    - His book *Asylums* (1961) studied **total institutions**.
    - Goffman believed in the importance of the subjectivity of the people he researched.
    - He introduced the **dramaturgical approach**—conducting research as if everyday life was a stage performance.
4. **Feminist theory**
- Feminist theory emerged as a branch of conflict theory.
  - The movement arguably began with Mary Wollstonecraft and her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).
  - Feminism focuses on discrimination and male-dominated conceptions of gender roles.
  - Feminism challenges **patriarchy**, a social organization in which men hold political, cultural, and social power.
  - **Harriet Martineau** (1802–1876) was one of the first sociologists to carefully examine women’s roles in society.
  - **Dorothy Smith** (1926– ) is a Canadian sociologist who developed **standpoint theory**.
    - This theory challenges traditional sociology’s preference for objective (depersonalized) research and analysis inasmuch as knowledge is developed from a particular lived position (standpoint).
  - Feminism has traditionally been characterized by “waves,” each having a different agenda.
    - First-wave associated with the fight for civil and political rights for women.
    - Second-wave focused on the rights of women both in public realm (especially around employment) and in the private realm (reproductive rights and domestic violence).
    - Third-wave focused on obtaining justice for socially marginalized women, especially as it pertained to class, sexuality, and ethnicity.
    - Fourth-wave focused on millennial-driven (particularly social media) activism related to sexual harassment and violence, online bullying and shaming, media representations of women, and questioning pornography.

- Some argue this is simply third-wave feminism carried out through a new tool – technology.

## 5. Postmodern theory

- Postmodernism utilizes the concept of “voices”—in contrast to the dominant and powerful voice (traditionally white heterosexual men with middle- and upper-class status).
- **Michel Foucault** (1926–1984) was a French philosopher and historian and leading postmodern theorist.
  - He originated the terms **totalitarian discourse** and **archaeology of knowledge**.
- Michael Burawoy (2004) divided sociology into four types:
  1. **Professional sociology**
    - Its audience is the academic world.
    - The research is designed to generate very specific information with the aim of applying it to a particular problem or intellectual question.

2. **Critical sociology**
    - It addresses the same audience as professional sociology.
    - It aims to keep the issues of fundamental importance to sociology at the forefront.
    - Michel Foucault and Dorothy Smith are known for examining the relationship between knowledge production and power.
  3. **Policy sociology**
    - This type of sociology generates sociological data for use in the development of social policy for governments or corporations.
      - The *Report on Social Security in Canada* prepared by **Leonard Marsh** (1906–1982) is a classic work of Canadian policy sociology.
  4. **Public sociology**
    - This type of sociology addresses public audience.
    - The authors nominate C. Wright Mills as the consummate public sociologist.
- Although these types of sociology are often seen as distinct, there can be much overlap between these types of sociology.

## Ideas for the Classroom

### 1. “The Sociological Perspective” resource.

This resource has two images of a needlepoint as a way to illustrate what it means to use a sociological perspective:

<http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/introsociology/StudentResources/Supplemental%20Resources/NeedlepointExamples.html>.

### 2. Suicide as a “social fact” (Durkheim) and using a sociological imagination (C. Wright Mills)

Exploring Individualistic and Sociological Explanations for Human Behaviour. This in-class exercise provides step-by-step instructions to help students develop the “quality of mind” that Mills calls the sociological imagination. The exercise references and links to the American Association of Suicidology website.

- <http://www.asanet.org/introsociology/StudentResources/Exploring%20Data%20Resources/DataSocExplan1.html>.
- For Canadian statistics, see <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/hlth66a-eng.htm>.
- See also: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-624-x/2012001/article/11696-eng.htm>.

### 3. The Sociological Imagination

The video “Sociological Imagination” (5 min 58 secs) can be used to develop the relationship between “personal troubles” and “public issues.” There are questions for reflection at the end of the video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BINK6r1Wy78>

### 4. Suicide Rates Around the World

Utilize the map “Current Worldwide Suicide Rate” (<http://chartsbin.com/view/prm>). By moving your cursor over the map, the suicide rates for various countries will be shown. Discuss the difference in rates of countries and ask the students to suggest possible reasons for such differences. What social, political, economic, and/or cultural factors might impact these figures? The objective is not to give a definitive answer, but rather to practise considering societal structures and forces in an analysis.

## 5. Suicide among First Nations People

Statistics Canada findings from the 2011 Canadian Census Health and Environment Cohort demonstrate that suicide rates have consistently been shown to be higher among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada than the rate among non-Indigenous people. The rate among First Nations people (24.3 deaths per 100,000 person-years at risk) was three times higher than the rate among non-Indigenous people (8.0 deaths per 100,000 person-years at risk). Among First Nations people living on reserve, the rate was about twice as high as that among those living off reserve. Socioeconomic factors explain this difference, including household income, labour force status, level of education, marital status and geographic factors such as living on or off reserve. Students will benefit from Chart 1 – First Nations vs. Non-Indigenous male suicide rates by age, and Chart 2 – Inuit vs. Non-Indigenous male suicide. News resource: “First Nations suicide rate 3 times higher than for non-Indigenous people: StatsCan” (Global News, June 30, 2019). Students may also benefit from the Centre for Suicide Prevention’s “Indigenous Suicide Prevention Toolkit” available from: <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/resource/indigenous-suicide-prevention/>.

*The Guardian* article “First Nations community grappling with suicide crisis ‘We’re crying out for help’” (available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/16/canada-first-nations-suicide-crisis-attawapiskat-history>) contains a 2 min 53 sec video detailing the Attawapiskat suicide crisis, including discussions of the social factors contributing to suicide.

## 6. Symbolic Interaction: The Social Construction of Reality—“Urinal Game”

(Available at: [http://www.sociology.org.uk/notes/johnpaul\\_the\\_urinal\\_game.pdf](http://www.sociology.org.uk/notes/johnpaul_the_urinal_game.pdf)).

This is an excellent learning exercise which accomplishes many things: “breaks the ice” and establishes rapport in the classroom via student participation and interaction. Additionally, students are given the opportunity to “challenge” their taken-for-granted experiences and to approach the everyday with a sociological perspective.

## 7. The Macro and the Micro of Sociology

This video, broken into two parts, could be used as an introduction to the lecture addressing the sociological perspectives or it could be used as a “visual” learning summary/review.

- Visual Sociology: Macro Perspectives, 4 min 20 sec  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvK2ir5IRaw>.
- Visual Sociology: Micro Perspectives, 5 min 13 sec  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SddLEdaJj8w>.

## 8. Postmodernism

This 4 min 34 sec video (found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqsP0vQJJ44>) is useful as a basic introduction to our present-day social world. View and discuss.

AND/OR

Show the following film clip to students: “A Comedian’s View on Postmodernism” (3 min, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aVjaUfcwn8>).

Discuss: Do you agree with Taylor Mali’s argument? Why and/or why not?

## 9. Feminism

Ask students if they consider themselves to be a “feminist,” then view this 5 min 20 sec video “Introduction to Feminism” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XgPD8d3hT0> which identifies the impact and success of the suffragette movement in the UK. Discuss, integrating chapter material/Canadian references and content. Then re-ask the students—Do you believe that women deserve social, political, legal, and economic rights that are equal to those of men?

AND/OR, watch the first 1 min and 30 sec and discuss the comments made by the people being interviewed.

## 10. The Three Waves of Feminism

Show the following film clip “Three Waves of Feminism and have students identify the issue that was at stake in each wave ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObNfDTi\\_9ak](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObNfDTi_9ak), 1 min 37 secs). Ask students to consider and discuss what issues might direct a new wave of feminism today.

## 11. Why Feminism Needs Men

Have students watch “Why feminism needs men – and men need feminism” (8 min 44 sec <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Xu2JE2LoEY>). Have the class discuss what role men should have in feminist movements. Ask the following questions: What do you think would have happened to during the three waves of feminism if men were a greater part of these movements? What might have been the challenges and possibilities of having men fighting for the rights of women?

## 12. John Porter and the Cultural Mosaic

Introduce the ideas of John Porter, then show the video “National Geographic: Canada’s Cultural Mosaic” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRNDmDZwfyo>, 3 min 32 sec). Have students discuss how John Porter’s vertical mosaic might differ from the description of Canada’s “Cultural Mosaic.” How might the sociological imagination have contributed to Porter’s understanding of the cultural mosaic in these terms?

## 13. Homelessness: Public or Private Issue?

Divide the class into two groups. Using homelessness as an example, have one group of students explain homelessness, using at least five examples of how this might be a personal trouble. Have the second group explain homelessness, providing at least five examples of how this issue might be understood as a public issue. Have the groups then discuss which explanation might provide the best avenues for addressing the issue.

#### 14. Melting Pot versus Cultural Mosaic

Explain the distinctions between a melting pot approach to diversity and a cultural mosaic approach. Have students debate the advantages of each approach.

#### 15. Is Bullying a Social Fact?

According to the textbook, social facts are “patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside of any one individual but exert social control over all people (20). Have students use this definition to explain how bullying might be considered a social fact. Encourage students to consider “three essential characteristics” of social facts, as provided on page 20 of the text.

### Ideas for Discussion and Debate

1. Why do students in higher education (college/university) “drop out”? Allow students a few minutes to reflect and write down their reasons then discuss their responses, recording them on the board in two columns: psychological reasons (e.g., lazy) and “sociological” reasons (e.g., need employment/wage hours). Discuss, making connections to Durkheim’s theory of suicide (the epitome of “dropping out”).
2. Have students discuss what it means that Ibn Khaldun was an important figure, not only for the formation of Arab sociology, history, and philosophy, but also for Western sociology.
3. Foucault’s work on discourse compels students to investigate and discover the basis of their beliefs. Have students discuss an issue that is important to them and examine how they have come to know what they believe to be “truth.”
4. Ask students to list, compare, and contrast the similarities between the theories of early sociologists and those of contemporary sociologists. For example, are the ideas of Marx still relevant? Do contemporary sociologists still utilize his ideas? If so, name a few of the ideas that are still relevant.
5. Address Table 1.4 “Examples of Robert Merton’s three functions” (p. 22). Ask students to discuss (either in small groups or as a class) other social and cultural structures and propose the manifest function, latent function, and latent dysfunction for each of their examples.
6. Using Table 1.4 “Examples of Robert Merton’s three functions” (p. 22), have students discuss the manifest function, latent function, and latent dysfunctions of education and/or post-secondary education (highlighting how education can reinforce inequality through unequal access across social classes). This will help students acknowledge their own place of privilege while also gaining an understanding of how Merton’s perspectives apply to their own social world as students.
7. The responses of different countries to Syrian refugees can be explained through the application of various sociological perspectives. Have students compare how a symbolic interactionist and a Marxist might explain these responses (paying special attention to the “Four C’s”: Conflict, Class, Contestation, and Change).

## Ideas for Assignments

1. Assign students to read “The Promise” (Chapter 1 of *The Sociological Imagination*. C. Wright Mills, 1959), available online at: <http://sites.middlebury.edu/utopias/files/2013/02/The-Promise.pdf>. Students can then write a brief synopsis of the chapter or answer specific questions.
2. Ask students to select an issue that is personally important to them (e.g., bullying or lack of employment) and to submit a short paper outlining how this “personal” issue becomes a social problem by examining the structural and social forces in our society.
3. Have students research and create a table that provides a summary of the theoretical perspectives addressed in this chapter. The table should include the following:
  - a) The main level of analysis
  - b) The main focus
  - c) The main question addressed
  - d) The image of the ideal societyFor example, functionalism—macro level—focuses on societal values—asking how societal institutions contribute to social stability—and the ideal society is in a state of equilibrium.
4. Have students select two theoretical perspectives and write a compare and contrast paper. Take symbolic interaction and critical theory approaches, for example—symbolic interaction is micro-sociology, which emphasizes the actions of the individual, while critical theory is macrosociology, and concentrates on the big picture of society and its institutions. Discuss which approach provides for a more robust understanding of social reality.
5. Have students find a newspaper article that identifies a specific social issue. Have students apply at least two different theoretical approaches to this issue,
6. Have students write a short paper outlining how a macro-level analysis of domestic violence would differ from a micro-level analysis. Have student explain what types of information would be missing from each analysis.

## Supplemental Resources

Barr, R.B., & Tagg, J. (1995, November/December). From teaching to learning: A new paradigm for undergraduate education. *Change*, 13–25.

Berger, P.L. (1963). *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanist Perspective*. Anchor.

Berger, P.L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Anchor.

Brock, D., Raby, R., & Thomas, M.P. (2012). *POWER and Everyday Practices*. Nelson Education Ltd.

Brym, R.J. (2011). *Sociology as a Life or Death Issue*. Nelson Education Ltd.

Foucault, M. (1982). The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 777-795.

Hironimus-Wendt, R.J., & Wallace, L.E. (2009). The sociological imagination and social responsibility. *Teaching Sociology*, 37, 76–88.

<http://www.asanet.org/images/journals/docs/pdf/ts/Jan09TSFeature.pdf>

Johnson, A.G. (1997). *The Forest and the Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice and Promise*. Temple University Press.

Mills, C.W. (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press.

Osborne, R., & Van Loon, B. (2009). *Introducing Sociology: A Graphic Guide*. Icon Books.

Smith, Dorothy, (1974). Women’s Perspective as a Radical Critiques of Sociology. *Sociological Inquiry*, 44, 7–13.

TED – Ideas Worth Spreading. “Salman Khan: Let’s use video to reinvent education.”

[http://www.ted.com/talks/salman\\_khan\\_let\\_s\\_use\\_video\\_to\\_reinvent\\_education.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/salman_khan_let_s_use_video_to_reinvent_education.html)

Top Documentary Films offers full watchable documentaries and information on documentaries by quoting reviews from trusted sources. . . Documentaries are classified in categories and you can easily find what you are looking for. <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/>

## Suggested Websites

Introsocsite: Introduction to Sociology. “Glossary of Sociological Terms.”

<http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/introsociology/Documents/Glossary.html>

Introsocsite: Introduction to Sociology. “Resources for Sociology Teachers”

<http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/introsociology/TeacherResources/ContentsForTeaResources.html>

Introsocsite: Introduction to Sociology. What is Sociology? <http://www.asanet.org/about-asa/asa-story/what-sociology>

Michel-Foucault.com “Key Concepts” <https://michel-foucault.com/key-concepts/>

Study.com “What is Sociology? – Definition, Themes & Careers in Sociology.”

<http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-sociology-definition-themes-careers-in-sociology.html>

What is Marxism? (Karl Marx + Super Mario Bros.) – 8-Bit Philosophy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vz3eOb6Y11s>

Wikibooks. "Introduction to Sociology/Sociological Theory" [https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Introduction\\_to\\_Sociology/Sociological\\_Theory](https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Introduction_to_Sociology/Sociological_Theory)