

**University of Pittsburgh
Department of Sociology
Course: Societies
Summer term, 2022
Online**

Thursday Synchronous Zoom Sessions
08:30 am – 11:45 am

Instructor: Sergio Cabrales

Office Hours: Tuesday 11:45 am - 12:45 pm (via zoom. Link available on Canvas)

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Course Rationale and Description

Societies is an introductory course that will bring the students to an **initial discussion** on societal aspects affected by a macro process: globalization. First, we will discuss some fundamental concepts for understanding societies and sociology. Above all, we will identify the classic and necessary debates related to agency and structure. Later, we will pay attention to societal and individual transformations in economics, values, organizations, health, religion, and environment. With the exposition and discussion of these various topics from the sociological perspective, the course makes us understand globalization's problems and possible solutions. Therefore, beyond the theoretical discussion, *Societies* will have a significant action and practice component to address situations and examples worldwide.

Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- a. Identity how global processes shape and transform societal life in various aspects (economy, politics, movements, religion, and culture).
- b. Recognize critical theoretical discussions that help to explain these transformations.
- c. Describe the implications of these global processes at the individual, local, national, and international levels.
- d. Consider possible solutions for the main problems created amid these transformations.

All of the above objectives will be achieved through readings from various cases and authors, discussions on Canvas, reflection quizzes, and film discussion guide.

Required Texts and films

All required readings (papers), podcasts, and the film links will be posted to Canvas.

Classroom Policies

Teaching statement and policies on administrative tasks.

In my sociology classes, I present real situations (no matter how very theoretical the discussion is) with pragmatic elements applicable to social, political, and personal transformation. I try to make the students very competent at mastering sociological concepts and theories and developing their critical thinking, while familiarizing them with various authors and schools of thinking. I do this through assignments, such as essays, that require their analysis and posturing. In our classes, it is common to ask: "What do you think of this author or case?"; not necessarily "What does this author say?". In this way, students will join current academic discussions in the sociological field, bringing their valuable contextualized contributions.

Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity.

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. This class will not tolerate plagiarism and cheating. Please make sure that you properly cite authors, papers, and materials that are not your own. Be careful with this policy, especially in writing assignments and class discussions.

E-mail Policy

Each student is issued a University e-mail address upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read emails sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and respond to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications.

I will respond to your email consultation, usually, within 24 hours in normal business days (Monday-Friday). If you do not receive a response from me within 24 hours, it likely means that I did not receive your email; **please resend and verify the accounts.**

Copyright Notice

These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to university policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials. See Library of Congress Copyright Office and the University Copyright Policy.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the dual modality of this class, the **live Zoom sessions will be recorded for those unable to be present in the synchronous sessions**. However, **attendance to the Zoom sessions on Thursdays is strongly recommended and will be taken in consideration as active participation.**

Statement on diversity and classroom culture guidelines

As a sociologist, analyzing the heterogeneity of social actors is essential. Sociology that does not recognize the diversity of perspectives, opinions, points of view, methods, and interpretations runs the risk of being limited in its work. For this reason, scientific rigor invites us to have an openness to listen, accept, and even discuss, all within the framework of respect for different opinions and ways of being. This provision enriches our disciplinary work and contributes greatly to the development of science and a better society. In addition, as an international teacher-student, I am aware of the enormous challenges of being exposed to multiple cultures and identities. I want my students to be aware of the enormous benefits of being exposed to diversity among their classmates and to protect that environment conducive to expressing it.

Names and Pronouns

If you go by a different name or gender pronoun than the one under which you are officially enrolled, please feel free to share it in our Zoom discussions. Students are expected to refer to each other by preferred names and pronouns during class and discussions.

Accessibility and Accommodations

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodations, especially regarding Zoom, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890/412-624-3346 (Fax), as early as possible in the term.

Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. For more information, visit <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drsabout>.

Basic Needs

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean's office and/or Pitt Pantry (<http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/pittserves/the-pitt-pantry/>) for support. *These guidelines fulfill the best intentions of the University of Pittsburgh's Non-Discrimination Policy: <https://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/07/07-01-03.html>. For additional information please visit the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program: <http://www.gswstudies.pitt.edu/>*

Course Requirements and Grades

Each week, we will have one “Reading session” on Tuesday and a Synchronous Zoom session on Thursdays. The participation in these synchronous sessions **is strongly recommended and will be taken in consideration as active participation**. The following tasks and assignments should be completed at the due.

Individual and weekly discussion post on Canvas – 30 points, 5 points each week—
Every week, students should post two to three paragraphs (around 250 words in total) on Canvas discussion board to react the week’s readings and lecture. The comment should answer three questions:

- (a) What did you find most helpful or impressive about the readings and lecture?
- (b) What did you find most puzzling or unclear about it?
- (c) What questions do you have regarding the reading’s topic?

These paragraphs will be due each Tuesday (except Week 1, when it is due on Wednesday) by 11:59 pm, and we will use these reactions as an initial discussion in the following Thursday session.

Short reflection quizzes (2) – 40 points total, 20 points each—

You will answer two short reflection quizzes via Google Form (2-3 questions each) during the course; one in Week 2, and another one in Week 4. In these quizzes we will focus on one societal issue covered in the course by that moment (see the topics in the next section). Based on the readings, you will reflect on the **causes, implications, and possible solutions**. Besides academic articles, you should use independent or external examples, anecdotes, or cases to explain your arguments.

I will provide you with more details the week before each quiz is due.

Film Viewing Guide - 10 points

There is a film assigned for Week 5. The film viewing guide will have three questions that you will fill out based on your reflections on the film. Your answers will be the base of our discussion in the following week.

Final Case Study – 20 points

We will work in pairs for this task. I will present a *case study* on a social issue, and you will analyze, from the perspective of globalization, its particularities. Our focus, again, will be in causes, implications, and possible solutions. You will submit your answers synchronously and you will briefly share your thinking with the group.

Grades, dates, and scale

Late Work will be lowered a half grade if turned in a day late; a full grade if turned in two to three days late. Work will not be accepted after three days, except in extenuating circumstances that you have discussed it with me in advance.

98-100% = A +	88-89 = B +	78-79 = C +	68-69 = D
93-97% = A	83-87 = B	73-77 = C	Below 68 = F
90-92 = A -	80-82 = B -	70-72 = C -	

Schedule

Week 1. General discussions. May 16-20.	
Tuesday, May 17.	No Zoom session. Overview syllabus, expectations, assignments, and course community rules. *Take time to read the required readings, video to write your weekly comment*
Thursday, May 19.	Zoom session. 08:30 am – 11:45 am Definitions in the study of societies. Intro to Globalization.
Required readings and video:	
<i>First:</i> C.W. Mills “Sociological Imagination”. Excerpt available in Canvas. Durkheim. What makes Sociology different? From the Rules of Sociological Methods. Excerpt available in Canvas. Best, J. (2001). Telling the truth about damned lies and statistics. <i>The Chronicle Review</i> , 47, 34. <i>Then:</i> Ritzer, G., & Ryan, M. (2003). The globalization of nothing. <i>SAIS Review</i> , 23 (2), 189-200 Chomsky's Philosophy (July 20, 2015). Noam Chomsky – Globalization. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RxHzQTHhKk&t=46s	
Assignments. Weekly post on Canvas due on Wednesday, May 18. 11.59 pm - 5 points.	

Week 2. Societies in McDonaldization and Liquification. May 23-27.	
Tuesday, May 24.	No Zoom session. *Take time to read the required readings, video to write your weekly comment*
Thursday, May 26.	Zoom session. 08:30 am – 11:45 am McDonaldization of societies.

Required readings and videos:*First:*

Ritzer, G. (1996). The McDonaldization thesis: Is expansion inevitable?. *International sociology*, 11(3), 291-308.

Watson, J. L. (1997). McDonald's in Hong Kong: Consumerism, Dietary Change, and the Rise of a Children's Culture. *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*, ed. JL Watson

may191 (October 24, 2007). McDonaldization Theory of George Ritzer. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fdy1AgO6Fp4>

Then:

Palese, E. (2013). Zygmunt Bauman. Individual and society in the liquid modernity. *SpringerPlus*, 2(1), 1-4. (available [here](#))

Attwood, F. (2018). Interview with Zygmunt Bauman. *Sexualities*, 21(1) 131–138.

Assignments.

Weekly post on Canvas due on Tuesday, May 24. 11.59 pm - **5 points.**

Short reflection quiz I –Due on Friday, May 27. 11.59 pm – **20 points**

Week 3. Societies *under control*. May 30 – June 3.

Tuesday, May 31.	No Zoom session. *Take time to read the required readings, video to write your weekly comment*
Thursday, June 2.	Zoom session. 08:30 am – 11:45 am Liquification of societies: Liquid fear.

Required readings and videos:

Shearing, C., & Stenning, P. (1985). From the panopticon to Disney World: The development of discipline. *Perspectives in Criminal Law*.

Horne, McIlwaine and Taylor_Civility and Order: Adult Social Control of Children in Public Places. Available in Morrill, C., Snow, D. A., & White, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Together alone: Personal relationships in public places*. Univ of California Press. pp. 181-201

Hunt, J. (1985). Police accounts of normal force. *Urban Life*, 13(4), 315-341.

Thompson, W. E. (1983). Hanging tongues: A sociological encounter with the assembly line. *Qualitative Sociology*, 6(3), 215-237.

Assignments.

Weekly post on Canvas due on Tuesday, May 31. 11.59 pm - **5 points.**

Week 4. Secularization of societies. June 6 – June 10.

Tuesday, June 7.	No Zoom session. *Take time to read the required readings, video to write your weekly comment*
Thursday, June 9.	Zoom session. 08:30 am – 11:45 am Trends and countertrends in societal secularization.

Required readings and podcasts:

Social Science – UvA. 7.8 The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpGupes7NvI>

Nuwer, R. (2014). Will religion ever disappear? BBC. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20141219-will-religion-ever-disappear>

Voas, D., & Chaves, M. (2016). Is the United States a counterexample to the secularization thesis?. *American Journal of Sociology*, 121(5), 1517-1556.

Excerpts of Religious Community and American Individualism. From "Habits of the Heart" Individualism and Commitment in American Life. Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven Tipton.

Conan, N. (Host). (2009, April 8). In Global Revival Of Religion, 'God Is Back' (Audio podcast episode). In Religion. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/102880913>

Assignments.

Weekly post on Canvas due on Tuesday, June 07. 11.59 pm - **5 points.**

Short reflection quiz II –Due on Friday, June 10. 11.59 pm – **20 points**

Week 5. Globalization of Inequality. June 13-17

Tuesday, June 14.	No Zoom session. *Take time to read the required readings, video in order to write your weekly comment*
Thursday, June 16.	Zoom session. 08:30 am – 11:45 am Social reactions to global inequality and values.

Required readings and podcasts:

Gans, H. J. (1994). Positive functions of the undeserving poor: Uses of the underclass in America. *Politics & Society*, 22(3), 269-283.

Sassen, S. (2013). Expelled: Humans in capitalism's deepening crisis. *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 19(2), 198-201.

Stiglitz, J. (2014). Inequality is not inevitable. *New York Times*, 27, 1-2.

Eppard, L. M., Rank, M. R., Bullock, H. E., Chomsky, N., Giroux, H. A., Brady, D., & Schubert, D. (2020). *Rugged Individualism and the Misunderstanding of American Inequality*. Lehigh University Press

Film:

Friedberg, J. Rowley, R. (Director). (2002). This Is What Democracy Looks Like [Video file]. MVD Entertainment Group. Retrieved <https://pitt.kanopy.com/video/what-democracy-looks>.

* You can use your Pitt account to log into Kanopy. This film will be the base for your Film guide due this week. The Guide is available at Canvas, in this week's section.

Assignments.

Weekly post on Canvas due on Tuesday, June 14. 11.59 pm - **5 points.**

Film Guide on Canvas, due on Friday, June 17, 11.59 pm. – **10 points**

Week 6. Globalization of environmental crisis. June 20 - 24

Tuesday, June 21.	No Zoom session. *Take time to read the required readings, video to write your weekly comment*
Thursday, June 23.	Zoom session. 08:30 am – 11:45 am Globalization and vulnerability to climate change. Final Case Study
Required readings and podcasts:	
McMichael, A. J. (2013). Globalization, climate change, and human health. <i>New England Journal of Medicine</i> , 368(14), 1335-1343.	
Glennon, R. Size does count, at least for French Fries: Minnesota's straight river. From Water Follies: Groundwater pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Waters.	
Timmons Roberts, J., & Parks, B. C. (2007). Fueling injustice: globalization, ecologically unequal exchange, and climate change. <i>Globalizations</i> , 4(2), 193-210.	
Aizenman, N. (Host). Why Climate Change Poses A Particular Threat To Child Health. (Audio podcast episode). In Goat and Soda. NPR. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2019/11/14/778992862/why-climate-change-poses-a-particular-threat-to-child-health	
Assignments.	
Weekly post on Canvas due on Tuesday, June 14. 11.59 pm - 5 points.	
Final Case Study in class. Submitted synchronously via Google Form– 20 points	