

**Course Title and Number:**

Sociology of Women,  
WS/SOC 347 3 Credits

**Course Description:**

This course examines women in U.S. society from a sociological perspective. Following the ideas of C. Wright Mills, this class connects the “personal troubles” of individual women with the “social issues” pertaining to women as a minority group in the United States. In doing so, it provides a sociological analysis of women in the major institutions in U.S. society. Throughout the semester, the course will highlight the intersection of race, class, and gender and the unique manner in which sociologists research these interconnections and women in general.

**Prerequisites:** Introduction to Sociology

**Objectives:**

Students will understand the sociological perspective as it relates to women. In particular, will learn how to:

- 1) comprehend the relationship between social structure, culture, individual/collective agency in terms of the status and positions of women in U.S. society;
- 2) give examples of sex differences in social structural positions in the major institutions in U.S. society;
- 3) understand sociological perspectives on sex inequality and change and be able to critique them;
- 4) have a deeper understanding of how individual experience, views, choices, and behavior are shaped by the relationship between gender/race/class and the structural and cultural environment;
- 5) connect individual women’s personal troubles and the public issues concerning women in U.S. society.

**Course Outcomes:**

Upon completion of this course students will:

- 1) display, through tests and discussion, the ability to analyze the status of women in the U.S. on structural/institutional, cultural, and individual levels.
- 2) provide an analyses of the status of women at William Paterson and how it relates to the position of women in the larger society, through an independent research project and class presentation
- 3) show an understanding of the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation through class discussions, tests, and papers.
- 4) use their sociological imagination in class discussions, tests, and papers to reveal the connection between the personal troubles of individual women and public issues concerning women.
- 5) reveal their comprehension of sociological methods, theory and the dialectical relationship they have had with feminist thought, through tests, class discussion, and an independent research project.

## **Course Content:**

### *A. Introduction to Course: Women in a Sociological Context*

-Sociological conceptions of sex and gender

- 1) How is the sociological perspective different from other analyses of women?
- 2) What is the difference between sex and gender?

### *B. Theory*

-Sociological theories of women's roles in society

- 1) What are the main sociological theories that focus on women?
- 2) What is the particular focus of each of these theories?
- 3) What are the pros and cons of each of these theoretical perspectives?

### *C. Methods*

-Mainstream sociological methods and women

- 1) How have women traditionally been studied in the field of sociology?

-Feminist methodologies

- 2) How do feminist methodologies differ from traditional sociological methods?
- 3) What are the pros and cons of traditional and feminist methods in sociology?

### *D. The Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender*

- 1) What are the connections between race, class, and gender in U.S. society?
- 2) How do these connections influence individual's life chances and the structure of society?

### *E. Social Institutions and Women in Society*

- 1) How have women shaped and been shaped by the following institutions in U.S. society?

-Family

-Media

-Religion

-Education

-Legal System

- 2) How have these institutions changed and how might they be different in the future?

- 3) What were the structural and cultural forces that helped bring about these changes and what structural and cultural forces might bring about future alterations in these institutions?

### *F. Special Issues on Women in Society*

-Gender role socialization

How are individuals socialized to become men and women?

-Impact of gender role socialization on individual and systemic violence

How does gender socialization influence violence on the individual and societal levels?

-The commodification of women

How have women been portrayed and treated as objects in U.S. society?

*G. Making the Connection Between the Personal and the Public*

-A case study: Women at William Paterson University

How might we examine women at William Paterson on the individual/cultural/institutional level?

[In this section groups of students will carry out mini-research projects that examine the situation of women at WPU. They will then report back and share their findings with the rest of the class. On the basis of this research, we will then, as a class, assess the situation of women at WPU.]

**Teaching Methods:**

Lectures and Discussions

**Methods of Evaluation:**

1. Oral Presentations
2. Group Projects
3. Written Examinations

**Bibliography:**

*Required readings:*

Anderson, Margaret L. 2000. *Thinking About Women*. Needham, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Crow Dog, Mary (With Richard Erdoes). 1990. *Lakota Woman*. New York: HarperPerennial.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. 1979. *Herland*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Lorde, Audre. 1982. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.

Miller, Tekla Dennison. 1996. *The Warden Wore Pink*. Brunswick, ME: Biddle Publishing Company.

Handouts

***Suggested Readings:***

Butler, Octavia E. *Kindred*. 1988. Boston: Beacon Press.

Cherrie, Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Eds.). 1983. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1991. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

Fonow, Mary Margaret and Judith A. Cook (Eds.). 1991. *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Hooks, bell. 1981. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End Press.

Hurtado, Aida. 1996. *The Color of Privilege: Three Blasphemies on Race and Feminism*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Lindsey, Linda L. 1997. *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Lorde, Audre. 1982. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Watertown, MA: Persephone Press.

-----, 1985. *I Am Your Sister: Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities*. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press.

Schacht, Steven P. and Doris W. Ewing (Eds.). 1998. *Feminism and Men: Reconstructing Gender Relations*. New York: New York University Press.

Zinn, Maxine Baca and Thornton Dill (Eds.). 1994. *Women of Color in U.S. Society*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

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**REVISER'S NAME AND DATE:** Dr. Arlene Holpp Scala, December 1, 2004

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