

SOC 4999W                      Sociology of Film  
University                      Fall 2026  
Meeting time/location: TBA

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Office Hours:    Tuesday 1:45–4:45 PM (and by appointment)

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**Course Description:** This course explores the intersection of film and society through a sociological lens. Films are not just entertainment; they are cultural texts that both reflect and shape societal norms, values, and power structures. Using film as a data source, students will critically analyze representations of race, class, gender, and ideology, applying sociological theories to better understand how cinema engages with the social issues of its time.

Students will be encouraged to think critically about how films both reproduce and challenge dominant social discourses, while also learning how visual storytelling can shape public consciousness. This course will help students build media literacy, develop critical thinking skills, and engage with films as tools for understanding broader social dynamics.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Understand Film as a Sociological Tool: Students will examine films as cultural artifacts that both reflect and shape societal norms and power structures.
2. Apply Sociological Theory to Film: Using key sociological concepts, students will explore issues of race, class, gender, and power within cinematic texts.
3. Develop Critical Media Literacy: Students will learn to critically engage with visual media, recognizing how film influences and reproduces social ideologies.
4. Strengthen Analytical Writing Skills: Through written reflections and a final research paper, students will improve their ability to articulate well-supported arguments that connect film analysis with sociological theory.

### **The Principle of Charity:**

“In philosophy and rhetoric, the **principle of charity** requires interpreting a speaker’s statements to be rational and, in the case of any argument, considering its best, strongest possible interpretation. In its narrowest sense, the goal of this methodological principle is to avoid attributing irrationality, logical fallacies or falsehoods to the others’ statements, when a coherent, rational interpretation of the statements is available.”

**Text(s):**

Course pack available in the bookstore. Additional readings will be distributed via Canvas. Readings should be completed before screenings. Screenings of required films will be shown at Coffman Union Theater at 7:00 PM on Thursdays.

## Grade Distribution:

Participation and Attendance	15%
Film Reflection Memos	15%
Extended Film Analysis	20%
Final Paper (Proposal, Draft, Final)	50%

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## Major Assignments (details):

**Participation and Attendance (15%):** Active engagement in screenings, lectures, and discussions is essential. Students are expected to come prepared, having completed all readings and film viewings.

**Film Reflection Memos (15%):** Students will submit 1–2 page reflections on four films of their choice. These reflections will focus on connecting the film to sociological readings and themes discussed in class. Due every Thursday before class.

**Extended Film Analysis (20%):** For three weeks, students will write an extended 3–4 page analysis of a selected film. This analysis will deepen their engagement with both the film and its sociological implications, requiring synthesis of readings and theory.

**Final Paper (50%):** The final paper for this course will be an 8–10 page analysis of a film of your choice, applying sociological theories and concepts covered throughout the semester. You are encouraged to critically engage with the film, focusing on its representation of key sociological issues, such as class conflict, racial dynamics, gender roles, or power structures. This assignment is an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to apply sociological frameworks to cultural products and develop a well-supported argument. The paper will be due in stages:

- *Paper Proposal (5%):* A one-page proposal outlining the film you plan to analyze, the sociological themes you will explore, and how these themes relate to course material.
- *Rough Draft (10%):* A full draft submitted for feedback, including your main argument, supporting evidence, and sociological analysis.
- *Final Paper (35%):* 8–10 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins. Minimum of 8 sources, including at least 2 external sources. MLA or APA citation format with proper in-text citations and a bibliography.

*Grading Criteria:* Argumentation (250 points); Application of Sociological Concepts (160 points); Textual Analysis (80 points); Organization, Spelling, and Citations (10 points).

## Letter Grade Distribution:

$\geq 93.00$	A	73.00 - 76.99	C
90.00 - 92.99	A-	70.00 - 72.99	C-
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
83.00 - 86.99	B	63.00 - 66.99	D
80.00 - 82.99	B-	60.00 - 62.99	D-
77.00 - 79.99	C+	$\leq 59.99$	F

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## Course Policies:

- **Submissions:** All assignments must be uploaded to Canvas in PDF format. Use standard formatting: double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font.
- **File Naming:** Please name files using the convention: `lastname_assignmentname.pdf`.
- **Late Policy:** Late work will be accepted with a 10% grade dock for each day it is late, up to 3 days.
- **Grade Disputes:** If you wish to dispute a grade, please wait 24 hours after receiving it before reaching out to the TA for discussion.

## Course Outline:

<b>Week</b>	<b>Content</b>
Week 01	<b>Introduction to Course and Methods for Textual Analysis</b> Mills, “The Sociological Imagination”; Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, “Film Art” <i>Screening: No screening</i>
Week 02	<b>Class and Capitalism</b> Marx, “The Communist Manifesto”; Hegel, “The Phenomenology of Spirit” <i>Screening: Parasite [dir. Bong Joon-ho]</i>
Week 03	<b>Gender and Power</b> Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”; Gill, “Gender and the Media” <i>Screening: Alien [dir. Ridley Scott]</i>
Week 04	<b>Race and Representation</b> Erigha, “The Hollywood Jim Crow”; Massey and Denton, “American Apartheid” <i>Screening: Do the Right Thing [dir. Spike Lee]</i>
Week 05	<b>Religion and Ideology</b> Weber, “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”; Lyden, “Film as Religion” <i>Screening: O’Brother Where Art Thou? [dir. Joel and Ethan Coen]</i>
Week 06	<b>Environmental Sociology</b> Schnaiberg, “The Treadmill of Production”; Hannigan, “Environmental Sociology” <i>Screening: Princess Mononoke [dir. Hayao Miyazaki]</i>
Week 07	<b>Domestic Horror</b> Creed, “The Monstrous-Feminine”; Engels, “The Origin of the Family” <i>Screening: The Babadook [dir. Jennifer Kent]</i>
Week 08	<b>Urban Planning and Class Conflict</b> Harvey, “The Right to the City”; Lefebvre, “The Production of Space” <i>Screening: Blade Runner [dir. Ridley Scott]</i>
Week 09	<b>Gender and Capital</b> Federici, “Caliban and the Witch”; Engels, “The Origin of the Family” <i>Screening: Mad Max: Fury Road [dir. George Miller]</i>
Week 10	<b>Imperialism</b> Lenin, “Imperialism”; Fanon, “The Wretched of the Earth” <i>Screening: The Battle of Algiers [dir. Gillo Pontecorvo]</i>
Week 11	<b>Race, Power, and Policing</b> Williams, “Police and Power in America”; Alexander, “The New Jim Crow” <i>Screening: Training Day [dir. Antoine Fuqua]</i>
Week 12	<b>Simulation and Control</b> Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulation”; Foucault, “Discipline and Punish” <i>Screening: The Matrix [dir. The Wachowskis]</i>
Week 13	<b>Consumerism and Postmodernism</b> Jameson, “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”; Debord, “Society of the Spectacle” <i>Screening: Fight Club [dir. David Fincher]</i>
Week 14	<b>Utopian and Dystopian Futures</b> Sargent, “Utopianism”; Engels, “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific” <i>Screening: Children of Men [dir. Alfonso Cuarón]</i>