

Sociology 417 – Law & Society

Winter 2023

KMC Room 470

Mon & Wed 11:30 AM – 1:20 PM

Instructor: Wynn Strange

Pronouns: they/them/theirs (want to know more about what this means?

<https://www.npr.org/2021/06/02/996319297/gender-identity-pronouns-expression-guide-lgbtq>)

Salutations: Instructor, Professor, Wynn

Email: wstrange@pdx.edu

Office Hours

Monday's 1:30-2:30. Please let me know during class if you plan on attending. Because there are many office hour sessions where no one attends I may head home to take care of my dog after class.

Or we can meet at other times by arrangement – email to schedule – evening and weekend time is available by zoom for those with a limited schedule.

Course Introduction

This course examines sociological theories of and empirical research on the origins, processes, functions, and actors of the social reality known as law. We will approach law as a social institution—one of several major areas of life (like family, religion, the economy, and education) that shapes and is shaped by society, and consider the role of the law in shaping society, including reinforcing and/or ameliorating class, gender, and racial inequalities. We will look at basic facts regarding the legal system as well as read case law to better understand the role that the law plays in everyday life and the reasoning that is used to determine legal outcomes.

Course Goals

Identify major historical and current theoretical approaches to define and explain the origins, processes, functions, and actors in law.

Identify and explain the processes in law and society that reproduce inequalities using examples learned in class.

Explain basic functions of the legal system.

Develop and improve on your academic skills. The assignments in this course are intended to develop your ability to access, recognize, organize, and analyze knowledge, and to effectively

communicate the knowledge you have produced through the synthesis and analysis of your work.

Pedagogy Statement

You each come to this class with varied experiences and at different times in your lives. Education and growth do not happen at all the same rate and it does not follow a universal path. Who is in our lives, where we come from, what is happening around us, where we live, and how we live – all the things that make up our histories and biographies that we bring to the classroom are varied. But we all have immense potential, if given the support and opportunities to continue to grow. I have set up this course purposefully, to be flexible and participatory and to encourage engagement that recognizes your existing knowledge with the hope that you will have an opportunity to grow that knowledge.

I approach teaching through centering discussion and dialogue. Everyone has ways they learn best, that might be talking, listening, reading, watching, writing, and alone, one-on-one, in small groups, or in a class. It can take us some time before we know what works best for us, I encourage you to reflect on what has worked best for you in the past, and engage with this class in a way that works for you. And if you're not sure, try multiple ways of engaging until you find what works well for you! However, I also encourage you to challenge yourself, as it is only through challenging yourself that you will grow.

I am here for each of you, you are not bothering me if you have a question or if you're struggling and need to communicate more frequently.

The combinations of the theories, beliefs, assumptions, and approaches I take are my pedagogy. My pedagogy statement is meant to communicate to you the way I approach teaching this class. This I believe is important because we don't hear much about what goes into class prep, and I feel it's an important part of creating a space for dialogue. I approach teaching as facilitating education, learning, and growth; I am not transmitting knowledge to you as if you are passive absorbers of facts. Knowledge is not something that a teacher owns that is gifted to students. Education and the growth of knowledge is a process, and knowledge is created and re-created by us all. I ask that you bring to this class curiosity and empathy. My hope for each of us is that we will be challenged, that we will wrestle with ideas, and that we will ask more sophisticated questions by the end of the class.

“Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.”

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Course Caveats & Ground Rules

(Adapted from the American Society of Criminology's Division of Critical Criminology and Social Justice's Sociology of Hate Model Syllabus)

This course is designed to engage in a critical analysis of law and society. The materials in this course may challenge deeply held and normative social beliefs. Please keep in mind that they are the product of rigorous scholarly research, peer review, and academic consensus.

Some of the materials we engage may include extreme, foul and bigoted language, sexually explicit material, and potentially graphic violence. There may also be explicit references to these things in class, when necessary to illustrate a point. The subject matter of this course is likely to create an emotional response in most students who engage with the course material. It is my goal as an instructor to facilitate dialogue around challenging topics. I would encourage students to be open and honest about such reactions and to explore using the tools of sociological analysis the roots of their feelings. While there is a place for each of these forms of interaction, I encourage us to strive for dialogue whenever possible and discussion when necessary, but to avoid debate.

Ground Rules for Discussions

- While I encourage making connections to your other classes and your own experiences, discussion should center around the course materials. What do the readings and videos say about the topic(s)?
 - Offer supporting evidence if you would like to share an opinion.
 - Always have your book, readings, and/or notes in front of you.
- We are all responsible for the quality of class dialogue.
 - Be prepared to learn from each other as well as the instructor.
 - Listen actively and attentively.
 - Ask for clarification, additional explanation, or examples if you are confused or don't know something. If you have a question, it is likely that others do too.
 - Build on one another's comments; work toward shared understanding.
 - Do not monopolize discussion.
- We are all responsible for respecting each other and the people we discuss in class.
 - Critique ideas, not people.
 - Talk in turns so as not to interrupt one another.
 - Avoid put-downs (even humorous/sarcastic ones).
 - If you are offended by anything said during discussion, acknowledge it and we can discuss.
- Be conscious of stereotypes. If you use personal experience when you speak, do so without generalizing.
- Consider anything that is said in class strictly confidential.

Ground Rules for Lectures

- Please arrive on time. Class starts on time and you may miss out on important announcements if you are late. If you are late, enter with the least disruption possible. Check with your fellow students at the end of class if you missed announcements.
- Turn your cell phone off and/or keep it on silent.
- Use laptops only for legitimate class activities (note-taking, assigned tasks).
- Do not leave class early without letting the instructor know in advance.
- Try not to distract or annoy your classmates.

If I feel that a student is being disruptive or disrespectful, I reserve the right to ask the student to leave for the remainder of the class session. If a student is asked to leave, I will have a one-on-one meeting with that student to discuss the reason they were asked to leave.

If a student feels uncomfortable in the classroom because of the instructor or another student and I do not address the interaction in class, I ask anyone who feels uncomfortable to speak with me. While I am sensitive to a variety of circumstances that may cause discomfort, I cannot know all circumstances that may be challenging. I take all reports seriously, and will work with the student for a resolution.

Course Calendar

This is where you can follow our readings and upcoming assignments. These can change throughout the term, so make sure you have the most recent syllabus!

I scheduled the readings with a few things in mind. I am a relatively slow reader, it would take me about an hour to get through about 10 pages of college reading and get something out of it. Some of you might take a little longer, others might be faster. My hope is that by having fewer pages of reading you'll get more out of it overall. But, this is your first time with many of these readings, you are not going to glean all the lessons they present, I just expect you to do your best to get something out of the readings. I tried to balance the amount of readings throughout the term. For example, most classes you will have been expected to read less than 30 pages, preparing for about 3 hours for the class. But the first week we are not meeting in person on the 11th so instead of that time we would have been in class you are expected to read a little more and watch a documentary. All of the readings will prepare you for class discussions.

Week/Topic	Readings	Assignments
1 (1/9) – Welcome	Welcome! Syllabus review and introductions	In class activity – Defining law & society Pre-reflection
1 (1/11) – Out of town! Not meeting!	Read: Ewick & Silbey. Ch 1 (11 pages) & Ch 2 (18 pages)	Discussion questions

	Watch: PBS's Frontline Season 2014 Episode 8. Prison State. (1h 23m) https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-prison-state/	
2 (1/16) – Holiday! Not meeting.		
2 (1/18) –	Read: Ewick & Silbey. Ch 3 (22 pages)	Discussion questions
3 (1/23) –	Read: Ewick & Silbey. Ch 4; up to the subheading: Dimensions of Legal Consciousness (23 pages) Watch: Democracy Now. March 22, 2021. Viet Thanh Nguyen on Roots of Anti-Asian Hate from U.S. Colonialism to Anti-China Political Rhetoric.	Discussion questions
3 (1/25) –	Read: Ewick & Silbey. Rest of Ch 4 (23 pages)	Discussion questions
4 (1/30) –	Read: Ewick & Silbey. Ch 5; up to the subheading: Normativity: Partiality (29 pages)	Discussion questions
4 (2/1) -	Read: Ewick & Silbey. Rest of Ch 5 (23 pages)	Discussion questions
5 (2/3) –	Read: Ewick & Silbey. Ch 6; up to subheading: Normativity: Might Makes Right (21 pages) Listen: Translash Media Presents the Anti-Trans Hate Machine (podcast) Ep. 1: It's Not Really About Sports	Discussion questions
5 (2/6) –	Read: Ewick & Silbey. Rest of Ch 6 (28 pages) Listen: Translash Media Presents the Anti-Trans Hate Machine (podcast) Ep. 2: A Coordinated Attack on Trans Youth	Discussion questions
6 (2/8) –	Read: Ewick & Silbey. Ch 7 (22 pages) Read: Ewick & Silbey. Ch 8 (6 pages)	Discussion questions

	Listen: Translash Media Presents the Anti-Trans Hate Machine (podcast) Ep. 3: Transphobia In A Suit	In class activity – Interpreting legal experiences – Before/With/Against
6 (2/10) –	Read: Derrick Bell. Interest Convergence. (~15 pages) Listen: Translash Media Presents the Anti-Trans Hate Machine (podcast) Ep. 4: Money, Power and A Radical Vision	Discussion questions Watch in class: nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up
7 (2/13) –	Read: Harris. Whiteness as property. Up to the subsection: IV: The Persistence of Whiteness as Property on page 1757. (~24 pages actual reading due to the use of footnotes)	Discussion questions
7 (2/15) –	Read: Harris. Rest of Whiteness as property. (~20 pages actual reading due to the use of footnotes) Read: Harris. Reflections on whiteness as property. (~6 pages) Watch: PBS’s Frontline Season 2014 Episode 12. Separate and Unequal. (53m) https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-separate-and-unequal/	Discussion questions In class activity – History of racialized laws
8 (2/20) –	Read: Collier, Megan, and Meghan Daniel. 2019. “The Production of Trans Illegality: Cisnormativity in the US Immigration System.” Sociology Compass. (11 pages) Read: Frank. (2015). The Anti-Trans Bathroom Nightmare Has Its Roots in Racial Segregation. (4 pages) https://slate.com/human-interest/2015/11/anti-trans-bathroom-propaganda-has-roots-in-racial-segregation.html Read: Ndopu, Edward. 2013 (Jan. 2). "Musings from a Queercrip Femme Man of Color." BlackGirlDangerous. (2 pages)	Discussion questions Watch in class: Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution

8 (2/22) –	Read: Richie. Ch 1 (22 pages)	Discussion questions
9 (2/27) –	Read: Richie. Ch 2 (40 pages)	Discussion questions
9 (2/29) -	Read: Richie. Ch 3 (33 pages)	Discussion questions In class activity – News article search
10 (3/6) –	Read: Richie. Ch 4 (26 pages)	Discussion questions
10 (3/8) –	Read: Richie. Ch 5 (32 pages) & Ch 6 (9 pages)	Discussion questions Reflection
Finals week		Final paper due 3/18

Assignments

1. Discussion questions.

- a. I will post discussion questions on Canvas for all course materials (readings, videos, and podcasts) about a week before these materials are to be discussed. You'll submit brief notes for each question. We will go through the discussion questions one by one in class, having small groups or pairs discuss the question, and then coming together as a class to share what you discussed in your small groups. Your notes will be helpful in jogging your memory when we have class discussion. I will fill in if there are key points that were missed. I will also go around the classroom to check in with the smaller groups. Be prepared to talk. You can talk in the smaller pairing if you're not comfortable talking in class, but you will need to participate for a full grade in this class.
- b. There will be 29 opportunities to complete discussion questions, each one is worth 2 points.

2. In class activities

- a. *Defining law & society.*
 - i. In a small group discuss and have someone take notes on: What is law? Why are we interested in understanding how law and society interact? Think of 2-3 examples of laws that have controlled, shaped, or otherwise interacted with family, religion, the economy, immigration, education, healthcare, gender, sexuality, race, disability, or other social institutions. Be specific.
- b. *News Article search assignment.* In a small group do some internet sleuthing to provide context for the case or legislation assigned in class. Find at least 3 news articles that covered the case or legislation. Try to find articles published at

different times throughout, such as when the law was initially introduced or case filed, when legislation or case was in progress, and after the case/legislation, or a retrospective view on the legislation/case.

- i. Things to consider:
 1. How did the media present the case or legislation?
 2. What kind of language does the media use?
 3. Do you feel the news coverage is useful for understanding the circumstances of the case or legislation?
 4. Does the media appear to have bias? Did they leave out important details?
 - ii. Make sure you provide the source links for your 3 articles.
 - c. *History of racialized laws.*
 - i. Collective creation of a timeline including: discriminatory laws, anti-discrimination laws, hate crime laws, significant social-political events, and significant hate crimes.
 - ii. In small groups we'll break up to fill out a timeline of major legislation.
 - d. *Interpreting legal experiences – Before/With/Against.*
 - i. In small groups we'll review vignettes and discuss how they fit into Ewick and Silbey's categorization of being before, with, or against the law.
3. *Final paper, content analysis applying course concepts to media. DUE 3/18*
- a. Select and analyze a movie, 2-4 episodes of a single television show, comic book, novel, or podcast. Apply concepts from the readings and/or lectures to analyze and discuss the media.
 - b. Media should be approved by the instructor unless it is already on this list:
 - i. Just Mercy (film)
 - ii. The Trial of the Chicago 7 (film)
 - iii. Mangrove (film)
 - iv. Philadelphia (film)
 - v. The People vs. Larry Flynt (film)
 - vi. Loving (film)
 - vii. Erin Brockovich (film)
 - viii. Dark Water (film)
 - ix. Denial (film)
 - c. In your analysis you are building an argument with evidence that demonstrates that you understand key concepts we've learned in this class, and that you can apply those concepts in a new setting.
 - d. In the first paragraph of your paper summarize the setting and an overarching summary of the media. Finish your introduction with a topic sentence that states what your main analysis will be. You might need to return to this after you have written your paper as you might not know where your analysis will go.
 - i. Throughout your paper include examples from the major plot lines that are relevant to the following questions (you do not need to give a full

summary of the movie or show, instead summarize the plot lines and provide specific examples if relevant to the following questions):

- a. What are 2-3 major social factors that influence the situations you describe? Think about the discussions we have had around power, who has power in the situation? Does this reflect reality or is this a counter narrative? What intersectional identities and social circumstances influence the situation?
- b. Are the characters acting before, with, or against the law? Do they move between these standpoints? What do they do that demonstrates their relationship with the law?
- c. You must use specific concepts we've learned in class in your paper, with demonstration that you understand the concepts you have chosen to focus on.

Participation

Participation will be counted through attendance and engagement in class. You must attend class regularly to get the most out of this class. You will miss important announcements and changes if you do not attend. Check with a classmate or the professor if you miss a class.

Grading

I will update grades throughout the term on Canvas.

Assignment	Points	% Grade
Participation	30	25
Discussion questions	20	17
In-class Activities x4 (10 points each)	40	33
Final paper (4-5 pages)	30	25
Total	120	100

Writing Assignment Guidelines – For all writing assignments

Why do we have assignment guidelines? Because as I read lots of papers it is helpful for me to have easy-to-read documents. It takes you a few minutes to get these settings correct, if I am doing this it can easily expand into a lot more work. It can save me a lot of time if I don't need to ask for new files.

1. All writing assignments should be printed and turned in at the beginning of class. If you turn in your assignment late you must still turn in a printed version. You can bring it to class or leave it in my mailbox in the sociology office.
2. Use a common font (Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri)
3. Use 11- or 12-point font size
4. Double space lines

5. Use default margins (1 inch)
6. Do not submit your final work with the assignment guidelines included
7. Do not include unnecessary spaces between paragraphs.
8. Make sure to spell check your work
9. Use in-text citations and include a bibliography page, but no need for a title page. Use APA or ASA citation style.

Do not go under the minimum page suggestions as you will likely not provide an adequate assignment. However, you can go over the suggested page limit. Page limits are meant to help give you a sense for how much you need to say to provide enough information while doing it in a clear and concise manner. If you go under the suggestions you likely did not provide enough specific examples, or did not cover enough concepts from the course.

Do not try to stretch your writing onto the page length requirements by using spacing or formatting, you're fooling no one. Either turn in your work with appropriate formatting under the page recommendations knowing you'll probably get a lower grade for not fulfilling the assignment requirements, or talk to me about an extension on your paper so that you can continue to work on it and turn it in late.

If you struggle with technology and figuring out how to meet these requirements, please seek assistance from your peers, the learning center or other sources so that you can learn.

Communications

I will make announcements about changes to readings and assignments in class, if you miss class you will have a harder time keeping up. Any significant changes to the class will also be emailed to the class.

I will try my very best to respond to emails within 24 hours. Occasionally emails can be missed, buried, etc. because I'm only human. If you don't hear back from me in 48 hours, send your email again to bump it to the top of my inbox.

If you send me an email please address me by my first name, Instructor, Professor, or other non-gendered salutations.

Deadlines & Late work

In life we all have to abide by deadlines, and I understand you are all at varying stages of learning how to manage your schedules to meet competing deadlines. We are also continuing to live with the logistical, emotional, and psychological impact of covid.

With all that said, I will accept late work. Though I urge you to adhere to the deadlines when possible. I ask that if you are going to turn in something late, that you turn it in within 3 weeks of its deadline. If you need to turn in something late, here is what that would look like: up to 3 weeks late, no penalty. 3+ weeks late, half a grade off.

One of the reasons following the deadlines is helpful is so that your work, and my work in reading and responding to your assignments, is more evenly spread out and thus more manageable. Sticking to the schedule also helps ensure you get the most out of this class.

If you struggle to stick to the schedule, let me know as early in the term as possible.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities who may require accommodations are encouraged to contact the PSU Disabilities Resource Center (DRC) and the instructor at the beginning of the term to arrange accommodations. The DRC will provide all services remotely and ask that you engage with them via phone, email, or Virtual Front Desk unless you are unable to do so and require an in-person visit. We appreciate your consideration of immunocompromised and chronically ill students, staff, and community members. Please call our office at 503-725-4150 or email us at drc@pdx.edu. You can visit the DRC website at <http://www.pdx.edu/drc>

Disabilities that may require accommodations include: ADD or ADHD; Allergies; Autism Spectrum; Cerebral Palsy; Chronic Medical; Cognitive Disorder; Diabetes; Head Injury; Hearing Impairment; Learning Disability; Orthopedic/Physical; Psychological; Seizures; Speech; Temporary Medical; Visual Impairment; and Other Disabilities.

I encourage students with any of the above disabilities or other disabilities who are not already registered to explore the DRC website, as you may find that your education experience can be made more enriching through available accommodations: <https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center/accommodations>

Academic honesty

I expect that you are here to learn, and that you want to learn. I understand that there are times that it seems like shortcuts are worth taking, but you will shortchange yourself if you cheat or plagiarize. If you are struggling, please speak with me so that we can make a plan. You are expected to be academically honest. Your assignments in this class must be your original work. You can refer to the Student Conduct Code for more information on PSU policies. Plagiarized work will result in failing the assignment, and may be reported to the university.

What is plagiarism?

If you use a direct quote (i.e. someone else's words), you must include it in quotation marks and cite the source, including author(s) name(s), the date of publication, and the page number. If you summarize or paraphrase an idea from another person, you must cite the source, including author(s) name(s) and the date of publication. Failure to cite your sources, whether intentional or not, is plagiarism.

We need to give credit where credit is due! Being able to synthesize your words with the words of others to make an argument, and being able to point to the original author are key skills to develop.

This syllabus is a living document, that means that it may change! If there are changes, I will alert you all in class, via email and Canvas.

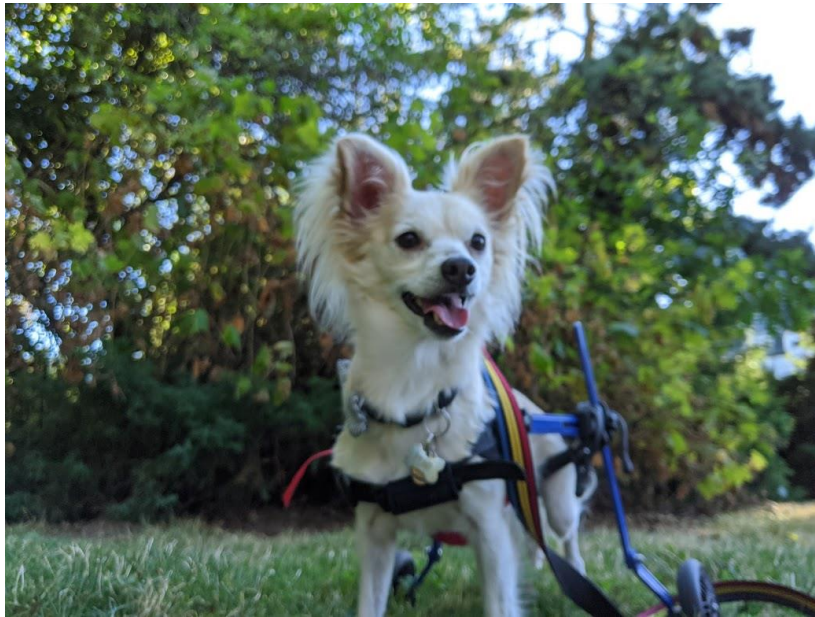


Photo: Your instructor's dog Remi. Remi is a mix with some papillon, Pomeranian, and chihuahua. He's eight years old and paralyzed in his rear so he uses a mobility device when outside. He is suspicious of other dogs but will accept treats from most humans who offer one.