Senior Seminar Sections, Fall 2020

**SOCI 498.1: Senior Seminar: US Housing Policy**
Instructor: Dr. Roxanne Ezzet  
Method: **In-Depth Interviews, Content Analysis**

For this section of senior seminar, the emphasis will be on urban sociology as it relates to housing and social services. Your project will focus on the use of interviews to understand the role of housing (e.g., housing policies, affordable housing, homelessness) and the link to social services in urban areas.

Specifically, this course will focus on the role of housing in shaping the quality of life in various parts of society. We will examine housing issues in urban areas while also focusing on the broader history and social impact of housing and affordable housing policies. This course will examine past and current housing policies and their influence on American society. We will also spend a significant amount of time discussing proposed policy issues to persistent affordable housing issues as well as strategies that community-based organizations and social movements are using to bring about change. We will use interviews with members from the public sector, private sector, non-profit groups and the community to understand housing problems and address policy solutions. Students will conduct in depth interviews and use content analysis to examine the interview data.

**SOCI 498.2: Senior Seminar: Visual and Material Culture**
Instructor: Professor Melinda Milligan  
Method: **Qualitative Content Analysis**

For this section of senior seminar, the emphasis will be the sociological study of visual and material culture. Visual culture refers to images. Material culture refers to objects and other items with the built environment. The class will focus on how images and objects are both physical and social constructions. We will explore questions about how people organize their self-identities, their relationships to one another, and their understandings of spatial environments through images and objects and products of culture. In addition, since this course is a capstone, it will review key sociological concepts and perspectives and will ask you to apply them to your own research.

Your research projects for the course will primarily use qualitative content analysis, which is a method that involves examining images and objects (and texts, but that’s less our focus) to discover emergent patterns and themes in human social life. You will start by formulating a guiding research question linked to a larger sociological theme. You will then consider how you might use content analysis to collect data on that question. In practice, you might study images such as personal photos or the images found on websites, TV shows, newspapers, magazines, and films. You might study objects such as people’s personal possessions, clothing, and homes or objects found in museum collections or in public spaces. The key will be to design a project that illustrates your
ability to use the sociological imagination and critical thinking to move from data collection, to analysis, to theory.

**SOCI 498.3: Senior Seminar: Gender & Sexualities**  
Instructor: Professor James Dean  
Method: **In-Depth Interviews**

Gender is grounded in sex; bodies cannot be represented as entirely social. This lack of a sharp distinction results in a conflation and a confusion around the difference between gender and sex. What is gender, anyway? We will explore gender as a performative identity situated in social and hierarchical relations of power. Sexuality is a three-part relationship among desire, sexual behaviors, and identity. How do we understand the relationship between biology or nature and society or nurture in determining sexuality? We will examine the major models of sexualities, particularly focusing on social constructionist writings that are attentive to social and historical factors and how sexuality is a principle of social organization in social life.

This class focuses on how gender and sexualities are socially constructed in individuals' everyday lives as social identities as well as part of our social institutions, from families to schools to workplaces. Students read articles and books that serve as role models for their own qualitative in-depth interview study. From choosing their study's topic to writing the literature review and interview questions to conducting and analyzing the interviews themselves, students complete an entire study within the length of the semester.