Video Information
The Way We Live
Sociology 1

An introductory course designed to acquaint students with the major principles of sociology as they are applied to contemporary social problems.

All DVDs are closed captioned.

Lesson 1 – Connections

What is Sociology? In this introductory lesson various perspectives are offered by leading sociologists for understanding the complex interplay of individuals, groups and relationships in society, and how they provide a context for living and a road map for understanding life’s limitations … and possibilities. Students Rising Above, a program that helps disadvantaged youth succeed in school, is featured in this episode.

Lesson 2 - Truth Be Told

Sociological research and methodology is often the subject of debate among sociologists. The pursuit of objectivity in sociological research, Critical Sociology, and the idea of Sociology as a science…each have transformed the way sociologists approach sociological research. This lesson also includes discussion of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and features a Slice of Life segment on sociologist Mitchell Duneier and his research on New York homeless populations.

Lesson 3 - Common Ground

Values, beliefs, traditions, language, and material goods form the subject of this lesson about the components of culture. The video lesson begins with a Slice of Life look at the Amish - a group whose members in Southeastern Pennsylvania maintain language and other cultural traditions unique to early Germanic settlers to the region. The American values of individual rights and consumerism are also discussed.

Lesson 4 - Fitting In

Humans are born without any culture. For virtually anyone, the process of socialization begins with the family and continues through other social agents such as school, peer groups and mass media. The popularity of reality television shows that offer “extreme makeovers” is highlighted in this lesson as an example of the desire to fit in.
Lesson 5 - Face to Face

This lesson looks at how such aspects of social interaction as language, humor and emotion can shape and change the way we view the world around us. Nowhere is this interaction more visible than in the fusion of language and emotion which characterize the world of politics. But social interaction in the more mundane world of everyday life can be just as significant. The video lesson begins with a stand-up comedy show that helps us further understand the significance of humor, as both a form of self-expression and as a culturally-specific method of social interaction.

Lesson 6 - All Together

Whether it is a small group or a multinational corporation, every organization has its own culture. This lesson looks at organizational behavior and includes discussion around the ideas of Frederick Taylor and "scientific management," corporate culture and the pitfalls of bureaucracy. As we see in the Outward Bound program, every organization has its own unique culture that is likened to the values and norms of the wider society.

Lesson 7 - Against the Grain

Conventional wisdom suggests that behavior “outside the norm” can be considered deviant. But can we really define deviant behavior? Programs like Delancey Street Foundation operate “outside the norm” by assisting convicted criminals to become productive members of mainstream society. Differing views on sexuality and violent crime are explored in the lesson, as are some of the moral, religious and psychological factors that play a role in understanding deviant behavior.

Lesson 8 - Matters of the Flesh

Conflicting views about sexuality permeate American culture. These conflicts play out in a variety of ways, from how we perceive sexually explicit materials to how we legislate on the issue of abortion. This lesson looks at the concept of sexuality and explores different attitudes towards sexuality education, abortion and sexual orientation. We meet Renee Walker, a concerned mother who objected to the sexuality education program at her son’s school because she believed the program was biased.

Lesson 9 - Ups and Downs

Since the 1950s when opportunity reached its peak, the gap between the “haves and have nots” has grown. This lesson looks at social stratification and the dimensions of social inequality that exist in the United States, as seen in the story of an immigrant from Eastern Europe who, along with her family, comes to the U.S. with virtually nothing, and eventually manages to open and operate a successful child care business.
Lesson 10 - Worlds Apart

Why can one continent be relatively affluent and another mired in poverty? This lesson looks at stratification on a global scale, and introduces the ideas of globalization and neo-liberalism. The lesson features Doctors Without Borders — an organization whose stated aim is to serve populations in need anywhere in the world irrespective of religious, political or social barriers that may exist.

Lesson 11 - Venus and Mars

Are men and women really that different? Society tends to emphasize differences more than similarities. This often leads to competition and, in some cases, inequality. Gender issues and stratification, the gender divide in the workplace, the impact of Title Seven, and the women’s movement are explored in this lesson. As illustrated in the example of a female football team, it can take a lot of determination to defy the agents of socialization and overcome gender bias.

Lesson 12 - Colors

For racial and ethnic minorities, the struggle for recognition and equality is nothing new. Perhaps nowhere is this more visible than in the United States. The polarizing effects of stereotyping, racial prejudice and discrimination, and its impact on generations of Black Americans are discussed. Learners will also meet the Bazzy family — an Arab-American family in Michigan who must cope with local misconceptions and generalizations about Arab culture in the wake of 9/11.

Lesson 13 - Golden Years

The Longevity Revolution, cross-cultural differences, stereotypes — all present challenges to meeting the needs of America’s growing population of elderly adults. This lesson explores issues surrounding aging, death and dying, and features The Jewish Home for the Aged — a nursing home that provides a rich array of programs for its residents.

Lesson 14 - Working World

Today, we live in a rapidly changing economic and social climate that emphasizes the bottom line. What is the impact on society? What role does globalization play? The situation faced by striking grocery workers illustrates some of the frustrations experienced by employees in today’s changing global economy. This lesson also includes a discussion around the impact one retail giant in particular is having on workers, the economy, and the world - Wal-Mart.
Lesson 15 - Balance of Power

Too often government only hears from insiders with access to money and education, which is why grass roots movements in the form of local and statewide initiatives often represent the best way for the average person to make his or her voice heard. This episode looks at the sociology of politics as illustrated in the California ballot initiatives Proposition 68, to expand legalized gambling, and Proposition 71, for the support of stem cell research.

Lesson 16 - Family Matters

The traditional or nuclear family of the 1950s and 1960s is what most of us think of when asked to define ‘family’. But the idea that there is a typical family is perhaps little more than a myth. This lesson considers the diversity of family forms that exist today and cultural shifts that are changing the way we look at families. You will meet the Scott-Chung family — a lesbian couple who discuss their decision to start a family.

Lesson 17 - In God We Trust

Most religions define themselves by their respective rituals and traditions. What is remarkably consistent, however, is the role that virtually all religions play in the lives of their followers. Religion in the United States, its effect on the tapestry of American society, and its delicate relationship with politics are the focus of this lesson — which also features a Slice of Life look at Catholicism and Voodoo in New Orleans.

Lesson 18 - Learning Curves

What kind of education a child can expect to receive may have less to do with the teacher and more to do socioeconomic status, race and culture. These and other factors make the question of how best to educate American children a complicated one. In this episode you will meet two families who have chosen different approaches to educating their children. The growth in home schooling as an alternative to conventional education is explored.

Lesson 19 - Taking the Pulse

Health care in the United States has reached a crisis point, despite advances in medicine and technology. Yet this is not necessarily the case in other parts of the world. This lesson looks at health and society, and explores such issues as inequities in health care coverage, the economics of providing care, alternative medical treatments and ethical questions including right-to-die. Particular emphasis is placed on one of the most serious sexually transmitted diseases — HIV/AIDS.
Lesson 20 – Rise and Fall

This lesson reviews population, urbanization and the environment from a sociological point of view. While each of these is often analyzed separately, it is the dynamic, constantly shifting interplay among all three that is perhaps most significant. Topics covered include fertility, mortality, migration, population growth, global climate change, and sustainability. As we see in the Slice of Life feature that focuses on one American city — there are positive and negative effects of the building boom.

Lesson 21 - Mass Appeal

Social movements are not a new phenomenon. Fundamental to all social movements, past and present, is the idea of collective identity. But other factors are at play which often determine whether a social movement will be a success or a failure. An example of a social movement can be seen in the ANSWER Coalition.

Lesson 22 - Waves of Change

What is social change and what are its causes? This lesson provides a deeper understanding of both the concepts and the consequences at the heart of social change. The Slice of Life segment in this video lesson documents how the Winnemen Wintu — a Native American tribe who live in the Pacific Northwest — have been negatively impacted by U.S. Government water and land policies.