

## Sociology 38: Status and Power in Social Interaction

Fall 2025, Dartmouth College  
Mon/Wed/Fri, 2:10-3:15 pm  
X-hour: Thurs 1:20-2:10 pm  
Class Location: LSC 105

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**Course Description.** This course explores how status and power dynamics contribute to inequality, using theories and research from sociological social psychology. We will discuss how status beliefs emerge from social differences in resources and power, and how they shape our interpretations of events and our behavior and emotions when we interact with others. You will learn why broad social inequalities are often durable, and how interaction dynamics sustain them. You will be introduced to social psychological theories that identify mechanisms of inequality operating through the self and identities, social interactions, task groups, and exchange networks. We will apply these theories to social problems and use them to design interventions by which these problems can be overcome. By learning how we “participate in the construction of our own realities, we can take a more active and purposeful approach toward making this the sort of world in which we want to live” (O’Brien 2009: xi).

**Course Format.** You will be introduced to a new social psychological theory each week, learning how the theory explains social inequality through interactions. You will read articles that apply each theory covered to real-world problems of inequality and discuss social interventions that leverage theoretical mechanisms to reduce inequalities and redress their consequences. You are expected to come to class prepared and participate actively in class activities and discussion. Together, we will develop a toolkit of intervention methods that could be used to work against the mechanisms of inequality identified by each theory studied. You will submit reflections on course readings prior to class and longer reflection papers at the end of each week that link different concepts and readings. You will complete a personal intervention project based on theories covered in the course and assess the efficacy of the intervention pathway chosen. The project will focus on cultivating positive identities to improve your well-being and feelings about the self. We will not use X-hours for this course.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the goals and contributions of experimental research in sociology
- Become familiar with major theories and concepts in sociological social psychology
- Explain the role of status, power, and resources in the reproduction of inequality
- Use social psychological theories and concepts to analyze interaction dynamics
- Grasp key concepts and themes across readings by cultivating a reflective practice
- Design and evaluate theoretically-derived solutions to pressing social problems
- Lead and actively contribute to group and class discussions

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings are available on our course Canvas site: <http://canvas.dartmouth.edu>. The optional textbook below, which reviews theories covered in the course, is available online at the link below. You will need to use a [VPN](#) connection to access it if you are off campus. A hard copy of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition is on 2-hour reserve at Baker-Berry Library.

Burke, Peter J., ed. 2018. *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. ISBN: 978-1503605626.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### *Reflection Journal (50%)*

You will complete written reflections on the assigned readings throughout the term. This will include two main types of writing: reflections on specific course readings prior to class and longer weekly reflections that draw linkages between different concepts and readings after they are covered in class.

***Reflections on Course Readings.*** Your reflections on course readings will take a form known as QCCQ – *quotation, concept, connection, question*. You will select a (2 to 4 sentence) *quotation* from each reading that captures one of its main arguments; summarize, in your own words, the *concept* or idea the quotation captures; make a *connection* between this reading and another reading from the course, current events, or your personal experiences; and pose a critical thinking *question* that can be used to generate discussion in class. ***These are due by the start of class on the day the readings will be discussed in class.*** You do not need to submit QCCQ reflections for pieces that review a theory (Monday readings, marked with an \*\* in our [course schedule](#)), but should submit reflections on all other readings before we discuss them in class. You will submit four such reflections each week – two before class on Wednesday, and two before class on Friday. These reflections will be worth 20% of your final grade in the course.

***Weekly Reflection Papers.*** You will write a 1,000-word reflection paper each week in response to a prompt that I will post for you on Canvas. These reflections are designed to help you understand the major themes and concepts in our reading for the week. While you are welcome to submit them sooner, ***weekly reflections are due each Sunday by 11:59 pm and will cover material already discussed in class.*** These entries will be worth 30% of your final grade in the course.

### *Personal Intervention Project (40%)*

Our course will involve a term-length personal intervention project that builds on theories and research from sociological social psychology. You will invest in a positive, powerful, active identity of your choosing throughout the term, making a concerted effort to take action on your intervention each week. You will track your progress by keeping a diary and completing surveys that evaluate the impact of the intervention on your well-being and feelings about the self. You will assess and adjust your strategy along the way, using knowledge gained in the course to improve the effectiveness of your intervention.

The timeline for the project is as follows. In Week 2, you will [explore cultural data](#) to discover positive, powerful, active identities that might be good candidates for your project and review advice from students who completed this project in the past (5% of grade). You will arrange a [30-minute Zoom meeting with me](#) during Week 3 to develop an action plan for the project (5% of grade) and complete a [Baseline Assessment](#) (5% of grade) ***after this meeting but before 11:59 pm on Sunday, October 5.*** You will begin work on your intervention project in Week 4, keeping a diary of your progress. Diary entries will be due each week in Weeks 4 through 9 (20% of grade). You will complete a [Final Assessment](#) (5% of grade) of the experience in Week 10.

### *Class Participation (10%)*

Participation is an important part of this class. Much of our class time will be spent in discussion groups where you will work with your classmates to understand the assigned reading, discuss real-world applications and mechanisms of the theories we are studying, and brainstorm interventions that could be used to reduce inequality. The effectiveness of group discussions is a shared responsibility. You will be assigned to discussion groups early in the term and rotate through different roles. *Group leaders* will be responsible for keeping the group on task and facilitating participation of all members. *Recorders* will keep

a written record of the ideas generated through group discussion. *Reporters* will speak on behalf of the group, sharing the ideas generated through discussion with the broader class. *Discussants* should come to class having read the assigned articles carefully and ready to engage in thoughtful discussion.

You are expected to come to class prepared, which includes completing the assigned reading prior to the class meeting in which it will be discussed. You are also expected to be an engaged and respectful participant in your discussion groups and our broader class discussions and activities. Class participation will be worth 10% of your final grade in the course. I have provided a rubric on Canvas that explains how your participation grade will be calculated. You should also review the sections on Class Conduct and Absences below. ***Chronic unexcused absences will affect your participation grade.***

### ***Final Grade***

Your final grade in the course will be determined by your reflections on course readings (20%), weekly reflection papers (30%), personal intervention project assignments (40%), and class participation (10%). Your numeric grade will be converted into a letter grade using the scale below. A description of the quality of work necessary to receive a certain letter grade in the course is available [here](#).

A	95-100	B+	89-91.99	B-	80-82.99	C	73-76.99	D	60-69.99
A-	92-94.99	B	83-88.99	C+	77-79.99	C-	70-72.99	E	0-59.99

## COURSE POLICIES

### *Academic Responsibility*

Dartmouth College is a community of scholars and learners committed to academic and personal honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. All students should conduct themselves in accordance with Dartmouth community standards, particularly the [academic honor principle](#). Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the Dartmouth community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

It is my expectation is that you will independently produce any written work you submit for this course. Cheating, plagiarism, use of the same work in multiple courses, and unauthorized collaboration will not be tolerated. Failure to comply with these policies will be considered academically dishonest and a violation of Dartmouth's academic honor principle. ***I consider certain uses of generative AI in producing written work for this class a violation of Dartmouth's academic honor principle.*** Details on this policy are provided in the Artificial Intelligence Policy section below. Minor violations of the honor principle may result in loss of credit or failure for a given piece of work or in the course. Major violations may result in suspension or expulsion from the College.

Academic dishonesty often occurs when students feel pressure to perform and that they do not have the tools to achieve their goals. If you are falling behind or feeling overwhelmed, please speak with me. [Peer tutoring and academic coaching](#) are available through the Academic Skills Center. [Writing and research support](#) are available to you through RWIT.

### *Artificial Intelligence Policy*

I consider unauthorized and undisclosed use of generative AI in producing written work for this class a violation of Dartmouth's academic honor principle. Please review my policies below to learn how and when it is acceptable to use these tools in the course.

1. ***Acceptable uses of generative AI in this course are limited.*** You may only use these tools only for the purposes listed below. If you are unclear whether a certain use of generative AI is acceptable, reach out in advance of using it to produce a written assignment.
  - a. Checking for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors;
  - b. Brainstorming ideas or outlining an assignment (but **not** producing drafts);
  - c. Getting advice on style or organization (but **not** directly revising your writing);
  - d. Properly formatting your reference list (be sure to check the output for mistakes).
2. ***Any use of generative AI in producing written work for this course must be disclosed.*** If you choose to use generative AI in producing a written assignment, you must include a statement that describes which tools you used, the specific purposes you used them for, and the prompts you used to do so.
3. ***Under no circumstances may you directly copy content produced by generative AI into your written work, even if the source of this content is disclosed.*** This is problematic for reasons outlined below, runs counter to our course learning goals, and is not an acceptable use of generative AI in the course.
4. ***It is your responsibility to clarify any confusion about these policies with me before submitting an affected assignment.*** Unauthorized and undisclosed uses of generative AI are not permitted in this course. Misunderstanding the authorized uses and/or disclosure expectations does not exempt you from this policy.

There are several good reasons to be selective and intentional in your use of generative AI tools. First, they have [significant and growing environmental costs](#) relative to getting your information from the source. Second, undisclosed use of generative AI in producing written work constitutes [plagiarism](#), as it presents words you did not produce as if they are your own. Third, generative AI often produces incomplete, inaccurate, unoriginal, outdated, and/or biased output. Any information these tools provide must be checked against reliable, current sources, examined for potential bias and unintended reuse of copyrighted material, and developed to reflect your unique voice and perspective on the issue to avoid these pitfalls. Fourth, overreliance on generative AI can [limit how much you get out of your education](#) (e.g., development of important decision-making, critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and academic writing skills). The responsibility for using these tools wisely ultimately falls to you.

### ***Class Conduct***

The materials we will read and class discussions we will undertake this semester deal with issues that may in some cases be sensitive and personal to students in the class. These materials are important in helping us to expose the ways in which inequalities of status, power, and resources affect social life, come to understand our own and others' experiences through a sociological lens, and develop a class dialogue about how we can work to overcome inequalities and understand our own privilege.

All students are expected to have a voice in our class dialogue. Good class participation is about thinking carefully, listening, and posing questions to others as much as it is about sharing your ideas. This requires us to be present, set aside distractions, and focus our attention on engaging with one another. The tone with which we engage one another is extremely important and should come from a place of mutual respect and understanding. You are free to disagree with views raised in the material or by others in the class, but must do so with a reasoned critique based on a complete consideration of their argument. Your own argument should be supported by sociological evidence rather than personal opinion or anecdotes. Disrespectful behavior such as talking while others are talking, dominating the floor, or personal attacks will not be tolerated. You are expected to treat one another and me with respect at all times.

### ***Absences***

As participation is an important part of this course, ***chronic unexcused absences will cause a significant loss of points from your participation grade.*** If you are already aware of circumstances that will affect your ability to participate in the course regularly or occasionally (e.g., due to participation on an athletic team, college-excused events, religious observances), please arrange a meeting with me at the start of the term so we can plan ahead. If circumstances arise during the term that prevent you from attending class or keeping up with the course material (e.g., serious illness, family emergency), please get in touch with me as soon as possible so we can make plans to keep you on track in the course. Class policies on late and missed work are outlined in more detail below.

### ***Late Work Policy***

Please speak with me at the beginning of the term if you anticipate any circumstances that might affect your ability to get your work in on time and reach out if such a situation arises along the way. My standard policy on late work is as follows. QCCQ reflections on course readings are intended to help you prepare for in-class activities and discussions. ***They will not be accepted late. You will lose 10% of the points on weekly reflection papers and intervention project assignments for each day they come in after the deadline. Assignments submitted more than 5 days late will receive a zero.*** If the deadline has arrived and your work isn't complete, it's best to turn in whatever you have finished.

All students will receive *one 24-hour extension on any class assignment of their choosing*, no questions asked. You should notify me via email if/when you plan to use your extension. Reasonable allowances will be made for extenuating circumstances. Students granted accommodations by Student Accessibility Services should arrange to meet with me early in the term so we can plan ahead.

### ***Course Format and Resources***

Course materials will be made available and assignments will be submitted via [Canvas](#). Office hours are by appointment only and will be held via Zoom. You can sign up for an appointment using [Calendly](#). If you have difficulties installing/accessing these resources or are unsure of how to use their necessary features, please contact me as soon as possible.

### ***Re-Grading of Assignments***

If you believe I have made an error in grading an assignment, please provide me with a written explanation of why your grade should be changed, not to exceed one page. Based on your rationale and my careful examination of your work, *your grade may go up, go down, or remain the same*. You have one week from the date the assignment is returned to you to request that it be re-graded.

### ***Accommodations***

Students requiring academic accommodations, modifications, or auxiliary aids should contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) at either [Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu](mailto:Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu) or 603-646-9900. Once your accommodations have been established with SAS, please arrange a private meeting with me early in the term to discuss how I can best support you in the course.

The guidance from SAS is that students with condition flares are eligible to receive occasional (generally no more than 3 per term), brief (1-2 days long) accommodations on their work, as long as they notify their professor and copy SAS on each occasion when they need accommodation. To ensure equity, these accommodations should not fundamentally alter any essential learning requirements in a course or program of instruction or be implemented retroactively. Once I know you are dealing with a flare, we can discuss the specific assignments affected and come to an agreement about any needed adjustments.

### ***Campus Resources***

I recognize that the academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, that our terms are intensive, and that classes are not the only demanding aspect of your life. There are a number of campus resources available to support your needs. For concerns about your health and wellness, you may reach out to the [Dartmouth Health Service](#) (603-646-9400), [Counseling Services](#) (603-646-9442), and the [Student Wellness Center](#) (603-646-9414). For academic needs, you may contact your [undergraduate dean](#) (603-646-2243), the [Academic Skills Center](#) (603-646-2014), and [Student Accessibility Services](#) (603-646-9900). Students with visa-related concerns may reach out to the [Office of Visa and Immigration Services](#) (603-646-3474). I encourage you to take advantage of these resources, and to speak with me if you need support in the class.

Please note that faculty and staff are required by law to report certain matters to relevant parties on campus, including disclosures of sexual or gender-based harassment, sexual assault, relationship and interpersonal violence, and stalking. You can find more information about confidential versus non-confidential resources and support options [here](#).

## CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

### Week 1: Sociological Social Psychology

- Monday 9/15      Review syllabus and Canvas  
Lecture: Sociological Social Psychology
- Wednesday 9/17      Lucas, *Group Processes*  
Webster and Whitmeyer, *Applications of Theories of Group Processes*
- Friday 9/19      O'Brien, *Shared Meaning is the Basis of Humanness*  
MacKinnon and Heise, *Cultural Theories of People*
- Due this week      QCCQ #1 and Weekly Reflection #1  
[Pre-Course Survey](#)

### Week 2: Affect Control Theory

- Monday 9/22      Robinson, Smith-Lovin, and Wisecup, *Affect Control Theory*\*\*  
Lecture: Affect Control Theory
- Wednesday 9/24      Zhao and Rogalin, *Heinous Crime or Unfortunate Incident: Does Gender Matter?*  
Boyle and Walker, *Neutralization and Denial of Sexual Violence in College Party Subculture*
- Friday 9/26      Francis, *Ideology and Interpersonal Emotion Management*  
shuster and Campos-Castillo, *Measuring Resonance and Dissonance in Social Movement Frames with Affect Control Theory*
- Due this week      QCCQ #2 and Weekly Reflection #2  
[Interact Assignment](#)

### Week 3: Identity Theory

- Monday 9/29      Stets and Burke, *The Development of Identity Theory*\*\*  
Lecture: Identity Theory
- Wednesday 10/1      Cast, *Power and the Ability to Define the Situation*  
Collett et al., *Using Identity Processes to Understand Persistent Inequality in Parenting*
- Friday 10/3      Burke and Cast, *Stability & Change in the Gender Identities of Newly Married Couples*  
Merolla and Serpe, *STEM Enrichment Programs and Graduate School Matriculation*
- Due this week      QCCQ #3 and Weekly Reflection #3  
[Initial Project Meeting](#) and [Baseline Assessment](#)

### Week 4: Expectation States Theory

- Monday 10/6      Correll and Ridgeway, *Expectation States Theory*\*\*  
Lecture: Expectation States Theory
- Wednesday 10/8      Lee and McCabe, *Revisiting the Chilly Climate in College Classrooms*  
Peck and Conner, *The Impact of Status Characteristics on Doctor-Patient Interaction*
- Friday 10/10      Cohen and Lotan, *Producing Equal-Status Interaction in the Heterogeneous Classroom*  
Goar and Sell, *Using Task Definition to Modify Racial Inequality within Task Groups*
- Due this week      QCCQ #4 and Weekly Reflection #4  
Diary Entry #1

## **Week 5: Status Construction Theory**

- Monday 10/13      Ridgeway and Erickson, *Creating and Spreading Status Beliefs*\*\*  
Lecture: Status Construction Theory
- Wednesday 10/15      Ridgeway and Correll, *Consensus and the Creation of Status Beliefs*  
Ridgeway et al., *How Easily Does a Social Difference Become a Status Distinction?*
- Friday 10/17      Harkness, *Reward Interventions: A Strategy to Erode Inequality?*  
Bain et al., *Amplifying Voice in Organizations*
- Due this week      QCCQ #5 and Weekly Reflection #5  
Diary Entry #2

## **Week 6: Legitimacy Theory**

- Monday 10/20      Johnson et al., *Legitimacy as a Social Process*\*\*  
Lecture: Legitimacy Theory
- Wednesday 10/22      Johnson et al., *Legitimacy Processes and Emotional Responses to Injustice*  
Thomas and Louis, *When Will Collective Action be Effective?*
- Friday 10/24      Watson et al., *When Legitimacy Shapes Environmentally Responsible Behaviors*  
Long et al., *The Normative Order of Reporting Police Misconduct*
- Due this week      QCCQ #6 and Weekly Reflection #6  
Diary Entry #3

## **Week 7: Justice Theories**

- Monday 10/27      Hegtvedt, *Examining the Roles of the Group in Justice Research*\*\*  
Lecture: Justice Theories
- Wednesday 10/29      Joyner, *Justice and the Fate of Married and Cohabiting Couples*  
Fallin-Hunzaker, *Making Sense of Misfortune*
- Friday 10/31      Clay-Warner et al., *Procedural Justice, Distributive Justice*  
Hegtvedt et al., *When Will the Unaffected Seek Justice for Others?*
- Due this week      QCCQ #7 and Weekly Reflection #7  
Diary Entry #4

## **Week 8: Power in Social Exchange**

- Monday 11/3      Molm, *The Structure of Reciprocity*\*\*  
Lecture: Power in Social Exchange
- Wednesday 11/5      Molm et al., *Building Solidarity through Generalized Exchange*  
Molm, Peterson, and Takahashi, *Procedural Justice in Social Exchange*
- Friday 11/7      Collett and Avelis, *Reciprocal and Negotiated Exchange in Fragile Families*  
Vargas, *Power Dependence and Status in Adolescent Susceptibility to Peer Influence*
- Due this week      QCCQ #8 and Weekly Reflection #8  
Diary Entry #5

## **Week 9: Affect Theory of Social Exchange**

- Monday 11/10      Lawler, Thye, and Yoon, *Social Exchange and Micro Social Order*\*\*  
Lecture: Affect Theory of Social Exchange

Wednesday 11/12 Park and Melamed, *Reward Stability Promotes Group Commitment*  
Price and Collett, *The Role of Exchange and Emotion on Commitment*  
Friday 11/14 Taylor and Pillemer, *Using Affect to Understand Employee Turnover*  
Seymour et al., *Generating Trust in Congregations*  
Due this week QCCQ #9 and Weekly Reflection #9  
Diary Entry #6

**Week 10: Course Wrap-Up**

Monday 11/17 Course Wrap-Up  
Due this week [Final Assessment](#)