

Shiv Nadar University
Department of Sociology
Undergraduate Academic Prospectus

Sociology at SNU

The Department of Sociology is committed to fostering critical awareness and a nuanced understanding of contemporary society. We encourage our students to think deeply about what it means to inhabit the world with others, and how these relations affect our selves. At the same time, we understand that our individual and collective modes of inhabitation are constantly changing along with broader historical, social and cultural shifts. As we live through these shifts, we react to them based on our common sense. However, a training in the sociological imagination gives us an understanding of the inter-connectedness of the different facets of life and living.

At the department, our focus is on the contemporary in conversation with established new and classical theoretical and pedagogical traditions. By emphasizing a critical empiricism that is central to the fieldwork, archival, and ethnographic tradition of sociology and social anthropology, the curriculum at Shiv Nadar Sociology, explores intersections, ruptures and continuities that form the essence of contemporary life. The vision of the department is reflected in our research areas centred around ecology and science; ethnographic methods; visual and material culture; law; dispossession; nomadism; music and contemporary religiosities.

The Undergraduate Major in Sociology

The undergraduate curriculum at SNU enables students to integrate coursework across the humanities and social sciences with the natural sciences, engineering and technology studies, communication and business. Within this multi-disciplinary framework, the **Sociology Major** at SNU will train scholars and professionals to be engaged and critical thinkers and rigorous social analysts. Our program enables students to engage with a rapidly transforming world. Students in the undergraduate program combine core courses with departmental electives of their choice from a wide range on offer. In the fourth year students undertake a supervised one year research which entails field or archival work culminating in a BA thesis.

Beyond the classroom, our undergraduates play an active role in all aspects of departmental life, contributing to a dynamic and growing community of students and scholars of sociology at SNU. Undergraduates help organise and participate in a whole range of intellectual activities, including academic seminars, conferences, exhibitions, library and archive projects, and ongoing research initiatives and collaborations. The entire program including the final year thesis, will train and prepare students not only for a career in sociology or social anthropology but also gives them the requisite skills to enter the professional field of development, media, journalism, writing or any other field of work

that they may choose to pursue. Inculcating care and empathy, the pedagogy at SNU cultivates a B.A graduate student to be a reflexive and grounded individual with a deep and critical understanding of the world and our position in it.

BA Research in Sociology: Coursework and Credits Overview

To graduate with a **BA (Research) in Sociology** each student must have 150 credits over four years. Of these 150 credits, students need 108 major credits from Sociology. The remaining 42 credits have to be earned from University Wide Electives (UWE's) (minimum 18 credits) and Common Core Curriculum (CCC) (minimum 18 credits)

Courses	Year	Credits
<i>Academic Writing</i> A mandatory course for all the students in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.	Year 1	4
<i>Logic and Scientific Reasoning</i> A mandatory course for all the students in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.	Year 1	4
<i>Understanding Modernity</i> A mandatory course for all the students in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.	Year 1	4
<i>Core Themes in Sociology: 8 Foundational Courses</i>	Years 1-3	8x4 = 32
<i>Major Electives</i> To be chosen from the Sociology Departmental Electives	Years 1-4	12x4 = 48
Thesis I and Thesis II Research thesis by the student under faculty supervision	Year 4	8x2 = 16
Total Major Credits from Sociology		108
A combination of UWE and CCC courses. Minimum 18 credits from each. Courses from other departments and from Common Core Curriculum	Years 1-4	42
Total Credits to Graduate as a Sociology Major (Major Credits + UWE + CCC)		150

The Undergraduate Major In Sociology: Semester wise Schedule

1st Year	Semester 1 1. Academic Writing 2. Logic & Scientific Reasoning 3. Core 1: Sociological Theory I 4. Major Elective 1 5. CCC	Semester 2 1. Understanding Modernity 2. Core 2: Anthropological Theory 3. Major Elective 2 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC
2nd Year	Semester 3 1. Core 3: Sociological Theory II 2. Core 4: Market, Exchange and Obligation 3. Major Elective 3 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC	Semester 4 1. Core 5: Religion and Society 2. Core 6: State and Citizenship 3. Major Elective 4 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC
3rd Year	Semester 5 1. Core 7: Kinship and Relatedness 2. Major Elective 5 3. Major Elective 6 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC	Semester 6 1. Core 8: Field, Archive, Ethnography 2. Major Elective 7 3. Major Elective 8 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC
4th Year	Semester 7 1. Thesis 1 2. Major Elective 9 3. Major Elective 10 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC	Semester 8 1. Thesis 2 2. Major Elective 11 3. Major Elective 12 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC

The Undergraduate Minor in Sociology

Undergraduate students majoring in other disciplines at SNU are invited to explore the fields of sociology and social anthropology through a selection of courses offered as University- Wide Electives (UWEs) by the Department every semester. Students who would like to gain a deeper introduction to and understanding of the discipline, its core themes, analytical approaches, and methods are encouraged to pursue a Minor in Sociology. Students wishing to take a Minor in Sociology must successfully complete 6

courses in Sociology of which at least 3 should be from the set of “Core themes in Sociology: 8 Foundational Courses.”

Core Themes in Sociology: 8 Foundational Courses

1. SOC118: Sociological Theory I (4 Credits)

Social theorists have examined how the institutions and practices that emerged with industrial production, technology, science, urbanization, and colonialism gave rise to new ways of being and new forms of malaise. The work of Karl Marx shows the different forms of *alienation* of the worker from his product with the expansion of capitalism and further how estrangement among people in bourgeois societies leads to a loss of humanity. For Emile Durkheim, the erosion of collective conscience led to *anomie* and individualism characterized by a lack of purpose, worthlessness, and despair. *Disenchantment* for Max Weber involved the eclipsing of supernatural accounts of the world that accompanied processes of rationalization. This course will focus on the ways in which people experience the various institutions and practices of modernity by examining the concepts of alienation, anomie, and disenchantment.

The course will locate alienation, anomie, and disenchantment within the broader works of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber respectively. These thinkers and their interlocutors employed and evolved philosophical thought and social science methods that enabled them to respond to the momentous changes in Europe and develop perspectives on the human condition. The course will situate the work of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber in their specific historical and cultural context and trace the prevailing intellectual genealogies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

With a close reading of some of the key texts of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, the course will provide the foundations that will enable students to pursue social and anthropological theory in other courses. Students would have also developed analytical perspectives to understand modern malaise and modes of individuation with which they could further investigate the rise of intolerance, dispossession, climate change, and technology in contemporary contexts.

2. SOC119: Anthropological Theory (4 Credits)

This course designed for first year students of Sociology major is meant to introduce, in a preliminary way, the history of the discipline. It intends to do this in two ways – on the one hand it will lay out the history, not in a linear fashion of a chronology but through the lens of its defining methodological principle – ethnography. On the other hand this course will lay out the contours of the discipline in the way it straddles the term Sociology and Social Anthropology, how we work with both in the world and how our empirical location of the

global south allows for a particular understanding to emerge.

The course content will work largely through ethnographies written and produced from early twentieth century to contemporary times. It will deal with ethnographies considered to be classical to ethnographies from a wide range of empirical locations including those of South Asia and women ethnographers and so forth. This course will begin with an introduction to some of the classical ethnographic inquiries not focusing on what they investigate per se but thinking about how one mode of inquiry in one part of world at a moment in time could be connected or read in conjunction with another mode of inquiry across time and space. This would enable students to grasp and understand the transition that a discipline can be marked with and how we work in acknowledgement of these shifts and transitions. The chief learning outcome of this course is for students to realise why we frame the discipline the way we do and how they should be aware of the transition of the discipline through the conceptual propositions it makes and think about the relevance of a discipline like social anthropology to investigate complex realities of the contemporary lived world.

3. SOC223: Sociological Theory II (4 Credits)

How do varied theoretical perspectives change understandings of how meaning making takes place in the world? Or, how does one kind of a theory give rise to another? This course will attempt to answer these questions by examining the contributions of structuralism, post-structuralism and two recent significant theoretical developments that have impacted the development of sociology and social anthropology. The main theoretical tenets of some scholars like Saussure, Barthes, Peirce, Levi Strauss's will be examined to emphasize the development of structuralism as a paradigm that diminished the role of the individual subject or agent while highlighting the underlying structural relations that govern social and psychic practices. The transition to poststructuralism will be taken up by positioning several theorists whose work arose as a distinct philosophical response to structuralism that are often positioned far apart, such as – habitus, field and strategy (Bourdieu); dialogic view on language (Bakhtin); relations of power, discourse, and the construction of the subject (Foucault); amongst others. In order to show some effects of this genealogy on contemporary sociology and social anthropology two developments will be taken up. The first is structuralisms influence in the analysis of Hinduism and Sikhism by India social anthropologists. The second, of two strands is structuralism and post-structuralisms effect on the analysis of sociological understandings of science. The intent of the course is to encourage a close reading of critical theory that continues to influence sociology and social anthropology.

4. SOC224: Market, Exchange and Obligation (4 Credits)

This course aims to introduce students to sociological and anthropological currents of thought, both classical and contemporary, regarding social practices and relations that constitute economic life. Sociological and anthropological perspectives help reconceptualise

notions of the 'economy' itself, and broaden it beyond quantified and predictable metrics. These perspectives situate economic actions and relations within a larger and more nuanced framework of social, cultural and political specificities. For this purpose, an examination of the subthemes of market, exchange and obligation serve as lenses through which to approach economic life. The course broadens the scope of the market to situate it within larger systems of social exchange that involve relations of obligation and reciprocity, distribution and consumption, and trust and honour. Dwelling on these through old and new texts, theoretical and ethnographic, bring us to a nuanced understanding of how the economic cannot be studied simply in terms of itself. Based on varied understandings of different kinds of markets and exchange relations, we shall challenge commonsensical distinctions between gift and commodity, self-interest and generosity, and formal and informal economies. In addition, the course will also examine contemporary issues of debt and precarity, and their socio-economic implications.

The prescribed readings are chosen with an eye to both classical and contemporary texts to give students an idea of the ways in which the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology have approached the economy over time, responding to older texts and formulating new concepts and theories. The texts also represent several regions of the world in addition to South Asia in order to provide a range of contexts. By the end of the course, students are expected to have a broad understanding of key sociological and anthropological approaches to economic life; be able to explain how the economic and the non-economic are intertwined; and be able to analyse and reflect on contemporary issues related to the economy in light of the course.

5. SOC225: Religion and Society (4 Credits)

Religion has been a field of enduring enquiry within the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology. This course will introduce students to both classical and contemporary sociological and anthropological analyses of the beliefs, practices, and phenomena understood to be 'religious'. We will examine notions of the sacred, rituals, beliefs, and religious symbols that have been central to anthropological and sociological understandings of religion. We shall also examine the ways in which magic, witchcraft and religion have been studied together in terms of their points of continuity and departures. These discussions will lead us to a critique of studying religion simply in its own terms, taking us to notions of modernity and secularity as well, in order to understand iterations of the religious in national and transnational contexts.

In 1968, sociologist Peter Berger, like many of his fellow American and European sociologists, predicted that by the 21st century religion will have declined considerably in the world (if not died) and religious believers would be found "huddled" in small sects. About thirty years later, Berger retracted his secularization thesis: religion was very much present and, according to many sociologists, had in fact seen a resurgence all over the world. What does this tell us about religion, and about the relation between the religious and the secular? What does it tell us about the ways in which religion and secularity have been understood within the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology, and how have these approaches

changed over time? This course situates itself within such conceptualisations of the religious, and debates around it, in order to offer a complex understanding of the religious with reference to the modern and the secular, in addition to the topics and themes mentioned previously.

By the end of the course, students are expected to be well versed with broad sociological and anthropological approaches to religion; be able to complicate supposed demarcations between the religious and the non-religious; and analyse current and popular contentions around the religious.

6. SOC226: State and Citizenship (4 Credits)

The core aim of this course is to convey a complex, nuanced and robust conceptual matrix adequate to the two categories in the subtitle of the course: State and Citizenship. What are the diverse kinds of political organisations and states that have existed over time, and what indeed is the changing nature of citizenship? What is it that has come to be understood as state-based societies as opposed to those perceived as acephalous or head-less societies? Questions such as how leadership, power and authority operates and circulates and how such societies organise themselves and ensure their longevity are addressed along with studies of kingdoms sovereignties and colonial states, through deciphering their organising structures and principles, and how power and influence is manifested and retained in such formations such as the ‘theatre-state’ and through the ‘exemplary centre.’ We address discussions and debates on what are understood as ‘societies of contract’ with the establishment of modern statehood, and the emergence of the category of citizenship, as well as the contradictions implicit in these; also addressing the nature of governmentality and the regime of biopolitics. There is an exploration of the formation of modern bureaucracies as well as a grounded ethnographic understanding of their labyrinthine processes, and of those who are caught up in the labyrinth. The checkered nature of the dynamics of political identity, citizenship and its margin are negotiated through ethnographies that bring out the encounter, or the lack thereof, of the margin and the state as well as the agentic aspect of the encounter. While debates on aspects of the political help us to mull over the intricacies, ideas and gaps that exist within deliberative democracies and contemporary politics. Delving into the nature of constitutional and insurrectionary politics, along with the above, help us to arrive at the stated objective of the course. The nature of the post-state era in contemporary times is a possible addition to the material already discussed.

7. SOC323: Kinship and Relatedness (4 Credits)

What are the ties that bind and the ties that tear? How do we make families, friendships and enemies? Indeed, how do ways of relating constitute ourselves and organise the world? This course takes up these questions through a combination of classical and contemporary studies of relatedness. Beginning with the classical trends in Sociology and Anthropology of kinship through the selections of works by scholars like A R Radcliffe-Brown, Evans Pritchard, Levi Strauss and Schneider, the course will offer selections from the works on new reproductive

technologies, same sex marriage and adoption and other ways of family making. In the last segment, the course will address the formation of friendship and animosity through theoretical studies and ethnographies from the more recent times with the aim of introducing the students to emerging debates and deliberations on the changing notion of relatedness through new technologies of communication.

The location of this course at Level three of the B A Research programme assumes an awareness of various forms of relatedness and sociality addressed through classical and contemporary theoretical works studied at the earlier levels. The notions of class, caste, race, ethnicity, nationality and gender can now come together into addressing specific methodologies employed in the sub-discipline of Sociology of Kinship and more recent ethnographies that grapple with the changing forms of sociality, and importantly offer a critique of the notion of sociality and suggest radical and ethical forms of sociability.

At the end of the course students are expected to have been exposed to classical and contemporary methodologies through a bouquet of select ethnographies. The organization of the course materials aims to facilitate their entry into the methodology course Field Archive Ethnography and towards that end emphasizes reading and comprehension of the interlinkages between theoretical and methodological frames and writing genres and styles.

8. SOC324: Field, Archive, Ethnography (4 Credits)

Field, Archive, Ethnography is a workshop oriented methods course. The mandate of this course is to equip sixth semester sociology students to work on their undergraduate thesis which they will be doing in their fourth year of B.A. Sociology. This course will work through an engaged reading of various kinds of ethnographies complemented by a hands-on methodological project that students will undertake within the physical space of the university. Theoretically, the course will work along deciphering and teasing out the difference between the three parallel axes of field, archive and ethnography. Asking questions of what constitutes a field and how do we construct or use an archive in the writing of an ethnography is the central thrust of the course.

Students trained in the field of sociology/anthropology fundamentally need to work with the idea of researching and thinking about events, phenomena and processes, placed within the immediate sphere of the known or located within the realm of the unfamiliar or the alien. In probing all such contexts, the eventual object that emerges is a combination of what one produces as an understanding of that context (ethnography) along with that which informs the production of this understanding (theory) and the ways in which one collates words, meaning and approaches (method) to begin the process of this understanding. The anthropological object is but a combination, whether in sync or in flux, of theory, method and ethnography or in other words a coming together of fieldwork, archive and ethnography. This course will work with these questions theoretically as well as through a workshop style pedagogy that enables them to read ethnographies methodologically and do a hands-on methodological intervention within the stipulated duration of the course.

The chief learning outcome of this course is to enable students of Sociology to understand how the discipline of sociology is but a combination of theory and method and how the doing of field work and working on and through an archive allows for the emergence of this elusive object called ethnography – the distinct marker of our discipline.

Departmental Electives

Reflecting the diverse research interests and experience of the faculty of Sociology, we will offer a number of departmental electives for undergraduate major and minor students each semester. The options will be organised under conceptual and regional themes and students will use them as a way to build theoretical depth and further explore sub-fields and regional areas. An indicative list of areas under which departmental electives are currently being offered is as below. This list will expand and change, depending on faculty and student interest:

Anthropology of the Body	Climate Change
Caste, Respectability and Self-respect	Ethnography and Writing
Feminism and Queer Studies	Labour and Work
Law and Society	Nomadism/Pastoralism
Sociology of Science	Visuality
Travel and Tourism	The Commons
Music and Sociality	Atmospheres and Ecology
Life: Biosocial/Biopolitical Perspectives	City/Urban
Military Cultures	

Learning Outcomes

At the end of four years, we expect the Sociology undergraduate program at SNU to enable students to:

- Understand the changing nature of society.
- Equip students to analyse the relationship between the empirical and the conceptual.
- Train students to acquire knowledge of field work and research methods.
- Facilitate the ability to read texts closely.
- Enable critical writing capability.
- Acquire critical tools to interrogate the everyday.
- Think through the interconnections between the local and the global.
- Reflect on the intersection between polity, economy and society.
- Encourage students to question, think and facilitate change.