

SHIV NADAR UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Undergraduate Academic Prospectus

Sociology at SNU

The Department of Sociology at Shiv Nadar University (SNU) aims to train students in a critical awareness of changing social values and practices and their importance in regulating our lives and relationships with others and ourselves. Individual faculty members have varied interests in unfolding contemporary processes – including the study of law, communalism, violence, dispossession, citizenship, religiosity, media, poetics, visual and material culture, ethnography and methodology, science and ecology in diverse urban and rural contexts. However the Department as a whole emphasises a critical empiricism that is central to the fieldwork, archival and ethnographic tradition of sociology and social anthropology. Simultaneously, we foreground sustained theoretical training and encourage interdisciplinary work. We are especially committed to exploring the disciplinary processes of ethnographic writing.

The Department is a centre of research and envisions a vibrant Masters program. The current Doctoral programme is alive to the plurality of South Asian cultures and societies and welcomes comparative analyses from field sites around the world. At the heart of our Department is a comprehensive undergraduate major, integrated within the larger liberal arts curriculum across the university.

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 India and its place in today's world. With guidance from their departmental advisors, students design their own programme of study, combining core courses and electives of their choice. A third year research workshop course leads to a supervised one year undergraduate research work in their fourth year which entails field 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.

To graduate with a **BA (Research) in Sociology** each student must have 150 credits over four years. Of these 150 credits, students need 108 credits in Sociology. The 108 credits must comprise of 68 core credits from Sociology and 40 credits from sociology electives. 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)

BA (Research) in Sociology | Coursework and Credits Overview

Courses	Year/s	Credits
Academic Writing <i>A course for all students in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences</i>	1 st Year	4 Credits
Logic and Scientific Reasoning <i>A course on quantitative methods specially designed for students in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences</i>	1 st Year	4 Credits
Modernity: A Critical Exploration <i>A course taught by the SHSS faculty across the disciplines</i>	1 st Year	4 credits
Core Themes in Sociology: 9 Foundation Courses <i>Intensive courses covering core themes, questions and debates in classical and contemporary Sociology.</i>	Years 1-3	9 x 4 Credits = 36 Credits
10 Departmental Optionals <i>Selected from a wide range of course offerings covering diverse subjects and organised under conceptual and regional themes and sub-fields</i> <i>Students may propose to take up to 2 optionals as Independent Study in a specific area of interest with the approval of the Department and under the instruction of a faculty member.</i>	Selected from options available Years 1-4	10 x 4 Credits = 40 Credits
Research Workshop: Field, Archive, Ethnography <i>A course on the sources and methods of research in sociology and social anthropology, designed to prepare students for independent fieldwork, analysis and writing</i>	3 rd Year Semester 5	4 Credits
Field Analysis and Undergraduate Thesis <i>Students will conduct supervised fieldwork and analysis on a topic of their choice and prepare a thesis for submission in their final year</i>	Summer fieldwork between Semesters 6 & 7 Thesis writing in 4 th Year Semesters 7 & 8	2 x 8 Credits = 16 Credits
23 Courses	4 Years	108 Credits

Major in Sociology | Semester-wise Schedule

1st Year	Semester 1 1. Academic Writing 2. Logic & Scientific Reasoning 3. Core 1 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC	Semester 2 1. Modernity: An Interdisciplinary Exploration 2. Core 2 3. Optional 1 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC
2nd Year	Semester 3 1. Core 3 2. Core 4 3. Optional 2 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC	Semester 4 1. Core 5 2. Core 6 3. Optional 3 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC
3rd Year	Semester 5 1. Core 7 2. Core 8 3. Optional 4 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC	Semester 6 1. Core 9 2. Research Workshop: Field, Archive, Ethnography 3. Optional 5 4. Optional 6 5. UWE/Minor 6. CCC
4th Year	Semester 7 1. Thesis 1 2. Optional 7 3. Optional 8 4. UWE/Minor 5. CCC	Semester 8 1. Thesis 2 2. Optional 9 3. Optional 10 4. UWE/Minor 5. UWE/Minor 6. 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 Sociology courses (24 Credits) of which at least 3 courses must be from the set of courses that constitute the *Core Themes in Sociology* that the Department offers.

Undergraduate Course Titles and Descriptions

Core Themes in Sociology

This set of 9 courses, taught through lectures and tutorials, will provide the critical foundations of the SNU undergraduate programme in Sociology.

Each thematic course will draw on a selection of important texts and ethnographic works to introduce and examine some of the most significant debates and theoretical developments in the discipline of sociology/social anthropology, focusing on classical problems and questions of great contemporary relevance. While each course will pick up and pursue a different core theme, a number of cross-cutting ideas, concepts and issues – including nation, gender, class, caste, tribe, self/personhood – will be emphasised and investigated throughout the series.

Society and Relatedness (SOC 101- 4 credits)

How can we understand ourselves as persons and our relationships with family, community and nation? This course will examine some of the basic categories of sociology and anthropology that are crucial in this understanding: person/body, kinship/family/love, inequality/difference, nation and nationalism. We will consider approaches that examine small or micro processes first, and building on this basic understanding consider larger or macro processes that encompass the micro. At the heart of this course will be an elaboration and interrogation of the concept of relatedness.

Culture(s) in Context (SOC 103- 4 credits)

What is culture? Is it a set of attributes that people have? Do non-humans have culture, and do things have culture? Do cultures exist in the plural? What do we mean when we talk of the culture of Mumbai or Delhi? An exploration of such questions opens a window to how this term culture extends to a range of social activities and practices. Culture may be both a value to be achieved and an attribute that is embodied. It may be both internal to the self and external

to it. It may be a way of talking of the past, but also a mode of living in the present. And of course it is part of our technical and moral world.

In investigating how the category of culture is studied in sociology and anthropology, the course will provide a history of the concept of culture, its embedding within practices of work and labour and its centrality in the formation of selfhood. A second theme will focus on how the term culture itself is linked to the discipline of anthropology. In this sense we shall also be enquiring into a history of culture in socio-cultural anthropology.

Religion, Science, Society (SOC 203 – 4 credits)

Magic, science and religion are thought to be mutually opposed to each other. This course will explore the intersections between these three themes. What are the ways in which a religious view of the world is influenced by magical and scientific elements? Are scientific practices coloured by magical procedures? Do religious ideologies orient scientific practices? What is the importance of such ideologies in our understanding of contemporary politics?

Gift, Commodity, Debt (SOC 201- 4 credits)

How do we value goods and commodities? Is the value of the gift any different? Are gifts commodified and are commodities gifts? What are the forms of indebtedness created by gifts and commodities? This course explores gifts, commodities and debts as different types of exchange. Commodities and debts are thought to rationalise the world of exchange and erase the gift. As we shall discover, not only has the gift persisted in modern life (for instance, philanthropy, development aid) it also revitalises our understanding of the world of commodities and the notion of debt.

State, Citizenship, Bureaucracy (SOC 204- 4 credits)

The understanding of any contemporary society cannot proceed without considering the centrality of state, citizenship and bureaucracy as providing its foundation. This course explores the place of social order (state), the processes through which membership to the nation-state is achieved (citizenship), and the procedures that arrange order and membership (bureaucracy). What are the differences between state and stateless societies? How does colonialism rationalise the use of power? What is the relationship of legitimacy to power in the making of the modern state? And what are the forms of belonging and resistance to the authority of the state?

Kinship, Relatedness, Networks (SOC 303- 4 Credits)

This course looks at kin, friends and enemies. What are the ties that bind and the ties that tear? How do we make families? Do friendships and contacts offer alternative possibilities of relatedness? Indeed, how do ways of relating constitute ourselves and organise the world? Rather than study kinship through unchanging ties that have characterised our understanding

of kin relationships, this course looks at the changing dynamics and strategies of family-making, gender practices, marriage partners and child rearing. Further, the course will explore the modification and extension of kinship into arenas of diverse social life such as political lineages, social movements, corporate houses and the professions. What are the networks that form the webs of relatedness? How do such networks offer us models of sociality?

Land, Ecology and Society (SOC 301- 4 Credits)

This course will engage with how the notion of 'Land' is conceptualized and realized through relationships that are formed between different entities. In order to explore the different processes in which this is possible the course will explore three main types of relations that allow for the conceptualization of 'land' – how man acts on nature, how man exists 'in' nature and how man & nature constitute one another, to comment on how differing notions of ecology emerge. These engagements will be detailed through different theoretical vantage points that will be supplemented with detailed ethnographies that bring out how 'land' specifically and 'ecology' generally can be understood. The intent of the course will be to problematize how 'land' is understood, conceptualized and emerges through different lenses that allow for an apprehension of ecological relationships.

Work, Labour, Industry (SOC 302- 4 Credits)

As terms that describe physical and mental activity, work and labour are kinds of practices that are essential to the survival of the species. And yet these terms need to be carefully distinguished and their implications for industrial activity explicitly stated. This course will provide an analysis of work and labour within what is known as industrial society. Industry is the conscious, mechanical and mass-based organisation of production, and labour, both formal and informal, and this production is the backbone of such a system. How is work different from labour? What is the importance of distinguishing physical labour from mental activity? Can a work of art be considered an act of labour or an industrial product? How are social relationships in-built in the production of industrial objects? Are such relationships necessarily exploitative or is there room for freedom and self-expression? SOC 301 would deal with these questions as a starting point and use two broad theoretical frames as a base and work with ethnographies that distinguish and separate the distinction, if any between work and labour or maybe make the overlap sharper.

Visuality, Materiality, Information (SOC 202- 4 Credits)

Is the world we see around us real or imagined? If the latter then what is the relationship between the imagined and the real? Sociology as a discipline allows us to decipher the world around us in its complexity, density and sometimes in its simplicity that belies the naked eye. The course *Visuality, Materiality and Information* would like to decipher how we see the world in order to write about it. Can the visual replace the textual or the word? Is what we see always based on a sense of the tangible? If not then how so and if yes, then can we ask if the tangible occupies the same realm as that of the material? What is the materiality of the material? How do we construe the world for our consumption – is it always about what the world represents

itself as or is it that the way we see the world influences how we think about it? Do we consume sight and site in the same way or is there a difference between the two. This course would like to work with these questions theoretically. The premise of this course lies in the fact that a visual understanding of the world complements the materiality that the world partakes of and our sense of what the world is a combination of how we see and think about what we see.

Departmental Options

Reflecting the diverse research interests and experience of the faculty of Sociology, we will offer a number of departmental options 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 **Departmental Options** is as below. This list will expand and change, depending on faculty and student interest:

- War and Media
- Publics, Public Sphere and Spaces of Intimacy
- Body, Performance, Gesture
- Gender and Sexuality
- Medicine and Public Heal
- Urban Anthropology
- Rule of Law and Laws of Rule
- The Anthropology of Violence
- Ethnographies of Love
- Development Dilemmas
- Nomadism
- The Anthropology of Agriculture
- Adivasis and the Making of Indian Modernity
- Theravada Buddhism: Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma
- Memory, Time and Event
- Grief: Mourning and Melancholia
- Films and the National Imaginary
- Cybersociality
- Ethnography and Writing
- Spirituality
- Privilege and Dispossession
- Theatre and Music
- Anthropology of Air and Climate Change

Research Workshop

Field, Archive, Ethnography

Designed specifically for advanced undergraduate students and offered in the sixth semester, the Research Workshop is both a stock-taking of the discipline as it is taught in the Department, and a rigorous study of qualitative methods. The course will emphasise the significance of field-based research, explore the challenges and possibilities of fieldwork across diverse sites and subjects, and pay close attention to the practices of reading and writing ethnographies. During the course, students will also have an opportunity to engage with field research conducted by departmental faculty and by our Ph.D scholars who have recently returned from the field.

Undergraduate Thesis

The thesis is planned in conjunction with the Research Workshop and is an opportunity for our students to design, develop and complete an original, independent research study as a unique part of their undergraduate education at SNU. At the end of the semester-length Workshop, each student will identify an area of research interest and begin work on providing her own sociological / anthropological analysis around a central question. Students will be encouraged to undertake short-term fieldwork during the summer break between their third and fourth years. They will then dedicate a significant part of their final year towards supervised reading and research, field analysis, and writing up their theses. Each student will work closely with designated faculty members throughout this process.

Learning Outcomes

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.

Faculty Members

Dr. Devika Bordia Dr. Urmila Bhirdikar

Dr. Tuhina Ganguly Dr. Vasundhara Bhojvaid

Dr. Anita Sharma Dr. Subhashim Goswami

Prof. Pradeep Jeganathan