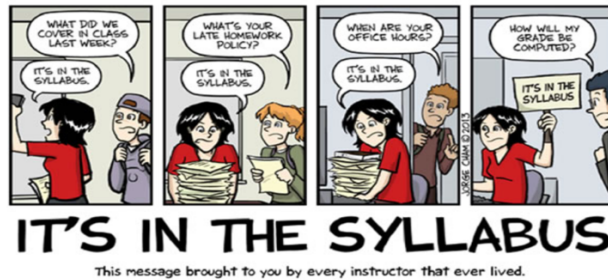


San José State University  
Department of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences  
**SOCI 179: Sociology of Higher Education**  
SPRING 2025 Course Syllabus



“I tell my students, ‘When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.’” - Toni Morrison

### Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and are mindful that San Jose State University sits on the land of the Ohlone and the Muwekma Ohlone people, who trace their ancestry through Missions Dolores, Santa Clara, and San Jose. We remember their connection to this region and give thanks for the opportunity to live, work, learn, and play on their traditional homeland.

### Course and Contact Information

**Professor:** Dr. Yolanda Wiggins (she/her/hers)

**Email:** [yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu](mailto:yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu)

**Class Days/Times:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00AM-10:15AM

**Location:** Dudley Moorhead Hall (DMH), Room 226A

### Course Description

What we call “higher education” in the United States is a complex web of institutions –nearly 3,000 4-year colleges, 1,500 2-year colleges, and still more postsecondary institutions that grant a variety of credentials. There are over 25,000 universities in the world, though the exact number is difficult to measure. It is a system through tens of millions of students pass each year; over the last decades, the importance of earning a postsecondary credential has increased markedly. As such higher education is deserving of rigorous scrutiny and careful interrogation. But in studying “higher education,” we are in fact attending to a multitude of things – among other things, varied institutional types with different resources and different imperatives, experiences of accessing and navigating higher education that are widely divergent along axes of inequality, and institutional processes that play out on campus but have resonance beyond the university gates.

In this course, we will engage with texts examining the enterprise of higher education from vantage points, but always through a sociological lens. We will discuss why and how higher education came to be so important and loom so large in contemporary life, the stark differences between different sectors of the higher education landscape, and how stratification occurs between and within institutions. We will talk at length about how higher education is a microcosm of many of the inequalities we see in the broader society, looking at issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, citizenship status, (dis)ability, and politics on campus.

Policymakers are asking questions about what is happening at American colleges and universities and whether the money spent is worth it. Many have decided that it is not, and have systematically cut funding for higher education. At the same time, these policymakers are telling us of the increasing importance of higher education in the competitive global marketplace. Against this political economic backdrop, universities have struggled to deliver the education that students and the public is demanding while remaining true to their traditional mission of educating tomorrow's leaders. These are interesting times in higher education.

By taking a sociological lens to studying higher education, we will learn a language and facility for rooting discussion of issues in higher education in theoretical grounding and empirical evidence. In doing so, it is my hope that you will develop the capacity to more critically assess research and public discourses on higher education, as well as your own work and experiences in the sector. In this course we will also engage with the current debates, issues, and problems associated with higher education. Among the questions we will explore are: What is the role of higher education in American democracy? What is the mission of higher education and how has it changed? How has the logic of consumerism impacted the university?

**COURSE GOALS**

I expect that through this class, you will:

- Gain an understanding of major issues in U.S. higher education and global educational systems
- Be able to articulate how higher education shapes and is shaped by processes of inequality
- Build comfort by analyzing and engaging with scholarly literature and popular conversations about higher education
- Learn to apply sociological theories relevant to higher education
- Think about this course's content connects to your broader career goals and interests

Required Books and Texts

No textbook is required. All readings will be made available on Canvas.

Method of Evaluation

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course:

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1) Short Reading Reflections              | (15%) |
| 2) Midterm Exam                           | (25%) |
| 3) Class Facilitation/Class Participation | (20%) |
| 4) Video/Portfolio Project                | (30%) |

Evaluation Breakdown and Detailed Information

94-100% = A	80-82% = B-	60-65% = D
90-93% = A-	76-79% = C+	< 60% = F
86-89% = B+	73-75% = C	
83-85% = B	70-72% = C-	

A+ 97-100; A 94-96; A- 90-93

***Distinguished Work:*** The student writes at an exemplary level with work that is error free (proper punctuation, spelling, grammar, sentence structure), demonstrating logical organization, proper documentation and appropriate

supporting evidence. Distinguished work requires a consistent application of concepts with original analysis integrating literature and concepts into course work. The student initiates and effectively responds to questions.

B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83

**Superior Work:** The student completes substantial work including analysis, integration, and application of learned concepts in both written and oral activities. Writing is more a review or summary of materials than a critical analysis. The student attends regularly and participates in class.

C+ 77-79; C 74-76; C- 70-73

**Average Work:** The student satisfies minimum requirements and demonstrates limited integration, application, and analysis.

D+ 67-69; D 63-66; D- 60-62

**Unsatisfactory Work:** The student satisfies only some minimum requirements. The student completes all assignments but demonstrates a lack of understanding in regard to core knowledge.

F 59-below

**Failure:** The student does not meet minimum requirements.

### LATE WORK POLICY

I want you to be successful in this course. As such, assignments are made available well within advance. I will also make announcements in class regarding upcoming assignments. **In order to be fair to all students a part of this class, late work will not be accepted under any circumstances.** I do not accept emailed work.

### OFFICE HOURS

I would like meet with each of you in office hours each. While not required, office hours are a great opportunity to ask additional questions about the course and discuss your research projects and educational career goals. If you cannot make my scheduled office hours, please email me to set up a different time to meet.

### CONTACTING ME

I am available over email if you need to contact me. Please refer to the course name and topic of your email. (105: TOPIC OF EMAIL) in the subject line of your message. You should expect to wait **at least 24 hours** to hear back from me. If you email me on Friday or over the weekend, please do not expect a response until Monday. Please use professional language, tone, and style in your correspondence. For example, do not use texting language. DO use standard greetings – Dear Dr. Wiggins/Prof. Wiggins.

### ASSIGNMENT COMPONENTS

#### Short Reading Reflections (15%)

- Each week, you will be required to provide a short response to a question posed pertaining to that week's topic. These short reflections are not only intended for you to read the assigned material, but to critically engage with it.

#### Class Facilitations/In Class Participation (20%)

- One time during the semester you will be assigned to a group and asked to facilitate a class discussion. More details about the facilitation will be covered in class and posted on Canvas.

### Midterm Exam (30%)

- The midterm exam will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. It will cover content reviewed during lectures and assigned readings up to that point in the course. To help you prepare, a review session will be held during class the week before the exam. This session will provide an opportunity to clarify concepts, ask questions, and go over key topics. Attendance at the review session is highly encouraged.
- Video Project (25%)
  - For this assignment, you will create a 2-minute, TikTok-style presentation using Animaker. This presentation should focus on a sociological concept or theme related to higher education covered in our class. You will describe the concept or theme, explain its application to a social problem, historical event, or contemporary issue, and discuss why this is an important concept to think about in our daily lives.
  - The final project is flexible and I welcome alternative ideas to demonstrate your processing of the course material in a creative way.

### Our Learning Community

Please respect our learning space. Be invested in our time together. Your classmates are important resources. Form study groups to discuss course material, share information, and peer edit assignments. I recommend that you exchange email addresses and phone numbers with at least two other students the first week of class.

San Jose State University is committed to providing an environment consistent with the academic nature and core values of the institution in which students can participate in learning as a humanizing, social activity. Open discussion and disagreement are encouraged when done respectfully and in the spirit of academic discourse. As such, please:

- behave in accordance with the Student Conduct Code and other University policies.
- refrain from disrupting the ability of fellow student to learn.
  - Examples of disruption include:
    - Technological use that significantly or repeatedly distracts others
    - Interrupting class by arriving late or leaving early
    - Not allowing others to participate in discussion; cutting people off during discussions
- communicate in a respectful fashion when interacting online.

Feel free to email me and even better, drop by during in-person or virtual office hours. If those hours do not work with your schedule, please contact me to set up an appointment. Consider yourself warmly invited to discuss the readings, career possibilities/opportunities, or anything else! There are aspects about college that can be confusing. Professors can appear intimidating or scary. I am here to help. Please utilize me as a resource!

### Student Resources

**The Writing Center** provides individualized support to assist you in better understanding course material and to aid you on your path to success. Services are free and include one-on-one tutoring, group tutoring, interactive writing conferences, and academic skills coaching to discuss effective study strategies. Online tutoring services have been expanded significantly. Please see the [Center's website](#) or call: (408) 924-2308 to schedule an appointment.

**Accessible Education Center (AEC)** provides comprehensive services in support of the educational development and success of students. If you are a student in need of academic accommodations, please contact ACE within the

first week of class. From there we can discuss your learning needs and appropriate accommodations. For more information, please visit <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/> or call: (408) 924-6000.

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** offers brief individual, couple, and group counseling to student members of our community. CAPS services are confidential and free of charge. Call (408) 924-5910 for an initial consultation appointment or see their [website](#) for more information.

### **Confidentiality, Mandatory Reporting, and Sexual Assault**

As your professor, it is my responsibility to help create a safe learning space. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on SJSU's campus with the University. For information and resources regarding sexual misconduct or assault visit the [Title IX/Gender Equity Issues website](#) or [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's website](#).

### **Academic Integrity**

All academic work for this course must meet the University's standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating on tests, using previous work submitted to a class without the instructor's approval (even if it's your own!), and plagiarizing the work of others. Please review the [university's policies on academic integrity](#). **By turning in assignments, you are consenting to the Honor Pledge.**

For this course, all of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course Canvas page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work.

AI in this class (i.e., usage of Grammarly, ChatGPT, etc.) is strictly prohibited.

### **Religious Holidays**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. In this class, you should notify me at least two weeks ahead of time to request special accommodation if you have a conflict.

### **COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE**

I have outlined the readings and assignments in the syllabus before the start of the semester, but I may modify the syllabus if the need arises. Please note all readings should be completed by the date listed.

Jan. 23	<b>Welcome Week and Introduction to the Course</b>
Jan. 28-30	The Contested Mission(s) of the University, A Brief History of Higher Education and Is College <i>Worth It</i> ?
Feb. 4-6	If Colleges Are Businesses, <i>Should</i> We Run Them That Way?
Feb. 11-13	Chat GPT, AI... <i>Oh My!</i> Higher Education and Technology <b>GROUP 1 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY</b>

Feb. 18-20	College Rankings and the Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education <b>GROUP 2 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY</b>
Feb. 25-27	Who's "In Charge" at the University? Who Actually Does the <i>Rea</i> /Work of the University? A Look at Visible and Invisible Labor <b>GROUP 3 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY</b>
Mar. 4-6	"What's Going on Here?" Life Inside the University: The Politics of Academics, Social Life, Sports, & Campus Resources <b>GROUP 4 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY</b>
Mar. 11-13	Student Activism on Campus and Its Importance <b>GROUP 5 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY</b>
Mar. 18-20	Higher Education and Mass Incarceration <b>GROUP 6 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY</b>
Mar. 25-27	<b>MIDTERM EXAM ON MARCH 25<sup>TH</sup> (IN CLASS) – NO CLASS ON MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup></b>
Apr. 8-10	Supporting the <i>Whole</i> College Student: Why Should Universities Be Concerned About Student Well-Being <b>GROUP 7 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY</b>
Apr. 15-17	Do Colleges and Universities Prepare Students For What's Next? <b>GROUP 8 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY</b>
Apr. 22-24	Transitions After College: Employer's Viewpoints of Recent College Graduates' Preparedness <b>GROUP 9 FACILITATION ON THURSDAY</b>
Apr. 29-May 1	<b>*** NO READINGS –DROP-IN OFFICE HOURS ***</b>
May 6-8	<b>NO READINGS – DROP-IN OFFICE HOURS ***</b>
May 12	<b>VIDEO PROJECT DUE BY 11:59PM ON MAY 12<sup>TH</sup></b>