

Course Design Document

SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology, Online Course Redesign

Sample design document by Sara E. Foy. The course, institution, and data are fictional and shown for portfolio purposes.

Course	SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology (3 credits)
Institution	Fictional public university (sample document)
Format	Fully online, asynchronous, 15 weeks, 7 modules
Learners	First- and second-year undergraduates; many work part-time or are first-generation college students
Team	Faculty lead (SME), instructional designer, accessibility specialist, LMS administrator
LMS and tools	Blackboard, Articulate Rise and Storyline, captioned video, open textbook

Business Need

What problem will this course solve?

Online sections of SOC 101 have more withdrawals than in-person sections, and end-of-course surveys describe the course as “reading-heavy with little interaction.” The required textbook is costly for many students. Several videos lack accurate captions and must be updated to meet WCAG 2.1 AA under the ADA Title II rule. Faculty also want guidance on generative AI, which students are already using.

Recommended Solution

What will we build, and why will it work?

Redesign SOC 101 as seven consistently structured modules that connect sociology to students’ own lives and communities.

- Replace the textbook with an open educational resource (OER) to remove the cost barrier
- Break content into short, captioned videos and interactive practice instead of long readings
- Build in weekly interaction: applied discussions, peer feedback, and regular instructor announcements and feedback
- Scaffold the final project into three checkpoints with feedback at each one
- Add a clear AI policy and an AI-literacy activity so students learn to use AI critically
- Design every element to meet WCAG 2.1 AA and follow Universal Design for Learning

Learning Outcomes

- What will learners be able to do by the end of the course?*
1. Explain how the sociological imagination connects personal experiences to larger social forces.
 2. Compare the major theoretical perspectives and apply them to everyday situations.
 3. Describe how sociologists study social life and evaluate the quality of evidence and sources.
 4. Analyze how social institutions such as family, education, and the economy shape opportunities.
 5. Examine how class, race, and gender shape patterns of social inequality.
 6. Apply sociological concepts to analyze a social issue in their own community.

Conceptual Course Design

How is the course organized?

Part	Modules
Part 1: Foundations	M1 Thinking sociologically M2 How sociologists know
Part 2: Self and Society	M3 Culture and socialization M4 Groups, organizations, and deviance
Part 3: Inequality and Institutions	M5 Social stratification and inequality

Part	Modules
	M6 Social institutions
Part 4: Applying Sociology	M7 Sociology of my community

Every module follows the same pattern: Overview and checklist → Learn → Practice → Apply → Reflect.

Detailed Content Outline

Module 1 is fully outlined as a model for the rest of the course.

Module 1: Thinking Sociologically

Learning objectives

- Define sociology and explain how it differs from other social sciences
- Explain the sociological imagination and use it to connect a personal experience to a broader social pattern
- Compare functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism
- Apply each theoretical perspective to an everyday situation

##	Topic	Outline (content, activities, and assessment)
1.1	What is sociology?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome video from the instructor (4 min, captioned) • Reading: open textbook, chapter 1, sections 1–2 • Interactive timeline: early sociologists and the questions they asked (Rise)
1.2	The sociological imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-lecture with transcript (6 min) • Scenario: “Is it personal or social?” Learners sort 8 situations (Storyline drag-and-drop with a keyboard-accessible option) • Discussion 1: describe a “personal trouble” and the “public issue” behind it
1.3	Theoretical perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison table of the three perspectives (accessible HTML table) • Practice: apply all three lenses to one case (a school dress code) • Knowledge check: 8 questions with feedback, unlimited attempts

Modules 2–7: Objectives and planned activities

##	Module	Learning objectives	Planned activities
M2	How sociologists know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe common research methods (surveys, interviews, observation, existing data) • Distinguish correlation from causation • Evaluate the credibility of a news claim, including AI-generated summaries 	Video on research methods; “Evaluate a news claim” mini-project; AI-literacy activity comparing an AI summary with the original study
M3	Culture and socialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the elements of culture • Explain how agents of socialization shape identity 	Photo essay of everyday norms; reflection journal
M4	Groups, organizations, and deviance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare primary and secondary groups • Explain how sociologists define and study deviance 	Scenario-based branching activity (Storyline); Discussion 4
M5	Social stratification and inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how class, race, and gender shape life chances • Interpret data on income and education 	Interactive data explorer; case study; Discussion 5
M6	Social institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze how family, education, and the economy shape opportunity 	Choice board: learners pick one institution to study in depth

##	Module	Learning objectives	Planned activities
M7	Sociology of my community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply sociological concepts to analyze a local social issue Present findings to a general audience 	Final project: proposal, annotated sources, and a presentation in a format the learner chooses (slides, video, podcast, or poster)

Assessment Strategy

How will learners show they have met the outcomes?

Assessment	Weight	Description	Outcomes
Weekly knowledge checks	15%	Low-stakes practice with feedback; unlimited attempts	1–5
Discussions (5)	25%	Applied prompts tied to learners' own communities; peer replies required	1, 2, 4, 5
Evaluate a news claim	15%	Mini-project on research methods and source quality	3
Applied essay	15%	Uses two theoretical perspectives to analyze a current event	2, 4
Final project	30%	Scaffolded: proposal (wk 9), annotated sources (wk 11), presentation (wk 15)	6

Design Approach

What principles guide the build?

Accessibility	WCAG 2.1 AA throughout: accurate captions and transcripts, alt text, heading structure, 4.5:1 contrast, and keyboard-accessible interactions. Every Storyline activity has a keyboard-friendly option.
Universal Design for Learning	Content in text, video, and interactive formats. Learners choose the format of their final presentation and the institution they study in Module 6.
Interaction	Regular, substantive instructor interaction: weekly announcements, discussion participation, and feedback on each project checkpoint within 5 days.
Generative AI	A course AI policy states what is allowed on each assignment. Module 2 includes an AI-literacy activity where learners check an AI summary against the original study.
Affordability	An open textbook and free tools only; no cost to students for course materials.

Project Timeline and Approvals

Who approves what, and when?

Phase	Timing	Key work	Approval
Analyze	Weeks 1–2	Kick-off with faculty lead; review course data and student feedback	Project plan approved
Design	Weeks 3–5	Course map, this design document, module 1 storyboard and prototype	Faculty sign-off on design
Develop	Weeks 6–12	Build modules in Canvas, Rise, and Storyline; two review rounds per module	Faculty sign-off per module
Implement	Weeks 13–14	QA review with the course rubric; accessibility testing; pilot with 5 students	Final approval to launch
Evaluate	First term	Mid-term check-in, end-of-course survey, completion and withdrawal data	Revision plan for next term

Evaluation Plan

How will we know it worked?

- Mid-term check-in survey and end-of-course survey on clarity, workload, and engagement
- Completion and withdrawal rates compared with the previous three online terms
- Final project scores by outcome, to spot outcomes that need more support
- Faculty debrief after the first term, leading to a prioritized revision plan