

HTS 4011: Seminar in Sociology  
The Politics of Care:  
Wellbeing and Inequality in Society  
FALL 2026

**Instructor:** Kimya Loder, PhD

**Course Description:** How do societies create, sustain, and sometimes abandon systems that are meant to care for people? This seminar invites students to investigate the politics of care across vast domains of social life, including medical institutions, the state, families, workplaces, and grassroots networks. Centering sociological theory and methods, we pair theoretical studies that follow developments in care across space and time with empirical investigations ranging from ethnographies to policy analyses to trace how care is organized, contested, and remade.

*Note: This course centers on advanced undergraduate topics in sociology. Designed for HTS majors, but open to other students with junior or senior standing.*

**Course Learning Objectives:**

- Students will read and discuss sociological and interdisciplinary texts that explain how institutions shape who receives care, under what conditions, and with what moral and political implications.
- Students will learn and apply methods used in care research (ethnography, archival and historical analysis, policy critique, and participatory approaches).
- Students will examine case studies of institutional success and failure, as well as non-institutional alternatives (mutual aid, community clinics, family networks, alternative justice practices).
- Students will construct evidence-based arguments that demonstrate clear, informed contributions to public and scholarly debates

This course welcomes students with diverse interests in public health, social policy, social movements, qualitative methods, and/or community engagement who want rigorous sociological tools to understand and practice care differently.

**Course Materials Required to be Purchased:**

Tronto, Joan. 2013. *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*. NYU Press

*\*All other course readings (see below) can be found via Canvas or the Georgia Tech Library Database.*

**Grading Policy:** Your final grade percentage for the course will be calculated as follows (grades will not be rounded up): A – Exceptional Performance (90-100), B – Above average performance (80-89), C – Average performance (70-79), D – Below Average Performance (60-69), F – Poor Performance (0-59).

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance will be documented through the submission of in-class assignments, quizzes, and discussions. The scores for these assignments will determine students' participation and attendance grade at the end of the semester. Excused and documented absences will not affect the participation grade.

**Academic Honor/Integrity Statement:** It is expected that you and I will follow Georgia Tech's Honor Code in all matters relating to this course. You are encouraged to meet and exchange ideas with your classmates while studying and working on homework assignments, but you are individually responsible for your own work and for understanding the material. You are not permitted to copy or otherwise reference another student's assignments. In this class, you will also be required to cite all sources that you use in your submitted work, including but not limited to writing papers, creative projects, presentations, performances, exams, and research. "Sources" include journals, papers, conversations, anything found on the internet, AI usage, etc. If the thought did not originate with you, you should properly cite it in your work. You, as students, are responsible for understanding the University's Honor Code policy. Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions regarding this

**Student Conduct Statement:** This course embraces a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. We respect people from all backgrounds and recognize the differences among ourselves, including racial and ethnic identities, religious practices, and gender expressions. It is my intent to present materials and resources that are respectful of diversity, ensure that students' learning needs are addressed both in and out of class, and welcome the diversity that students bring to class as a resource, strength, and benefit.

**Accessibility Statement:** Georgia Institute of Technology is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services to inquire about services or request a meeting with a Coordinator. Students can find more information about the Office of Disability Services, including contact information, at [disabilityservices.gatech.edu](http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu), or call ODS at 404.894.2563 or in person at Smithgall Student Services Building, 353 Ferst Drive, Suite 221.

Students who have already been approved for accommodations through the Office of Disability Services, please schedule an appointment with me at the beginning of the semester to discuss your academic accommodations. It is my goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any issues with the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please meet with me outside of class so we can explore potential options. If accessing the classroom becomes (more) challenging due to interpersonal or systemic issues (e.g. racism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, etc.), please know that I can and want to be a

resource. Discussions about classroom accessibility, whether individual or interpersonal, will be kept in strict confidence.

## Required Readings

*\*All readings can be found via CANVAS or the Georgia Tech Library Database*

Week	Readings
II. Politicizing Care Who is responsible for providing care?	
W1: Introduction	Syllabus Review
W2: Care and Inequality	Tronto (2013) "Introduction"; Hall and Lamont (2009), <i>Successful Societies</i> pp 1-22; Hojman and Miranda (2018) "Agency, Human Dignity and Subjective Well-being."
W3: The Politics and Ethics of Care	Tronto (2013) "Chapter 1" and "Chapter 2"
II. Determining Care Who deserves to be cared for?	
W4: Care and Capital	Tronto (2013) "Chapter 5"; Ungerson, C. (1997) "Social Politics and the Commodification of Care"; Waerness, K. (1984) "The Rationality of Caring, Economic and Industrial Democracy"
W5: Care Across Borders	Aulenbacher et al. 2018 "Towards a global sociology of care and work"; Ehrenrieck and Hochschild (2002) "Global Woman"; Lutz and Palenga-Mollenbeck (2012) "Care workers, care drain, and care chains"
W6: Unequal Access to Care	Tronto (2013) "Chapter 6"; Woodly et al. (2021) "Critical Exchange: The Politics of Care"
III. Providing Care How do social institutions provide care? Case Studies: Healthcare and the Social Safety Net	

W7: The Healthcare System	Scott et al. (2000) <i>Institutional Change and Healthcare Organizations</i> pp 340-364; Harvey-Wingfield (2019) “Health Care, Work, and Racial Outsourcing”; Lynne-Joseph (2024) “Sameness Across Difference”
W8: The Healthcare System (continued)	Cervantes and Menjivar (2020) “Legal Violence, Health, and Access to Care”; Becker (2023) “Stratified Reproduction, Hysterectomy, and the Social Process of Opting into Fertility.”
W9: The Social Safety Net	Herd and Moynihan (2018) “Introduction” <i>Administrative Burden.</i> ; Lens (2007) “Administrative Justice in Public Welfare.”; Gooden (1995) “All Things Not Being Equal”
W10: The Social Safety Net (continued)	Butz and Gaynor (2022) “Intersectionality and Social Welfare”; Watkins-Hayes (2009) “Chapter 4” <i>The New Welfare Bureaucrats</i> ; Crenshaw (1991) “Mapping the Margins”
<p>IV. Reimagining Care</p> <p>How do communities care for one another where institutions fail?</p>	
W12: Collective Care	Tronto (2013) “Chapter 7”; Spade (2020) “Three Key Elements of Mutual Aid”
W13: Philanthropy and Advocacy	Wuthnow (2012) <i>Acts of Compassion</i> ; Small (2006) “Neighborhood Institutions as Resource Brokers”