

HTS 2016 Syllabus

Social Issues and Public Policy HTS 2016, Section A, 3 Credits
Summer 2026 (online asynchronous)

Instructor Information

Instructor

Allen Hyde

Email

allen.hyde@hsoc.gatech.edu

General Course Information

Description

Draws on sociological theory and research to understand the major economic, social, and cultural issues facing American society today.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to apply the sociological imagination to differentiate between "personal troubles" and "public issues," analyzing how individual experiences are shaped by broader social structures and historical contexts.
- Students will be able to analyze the structural dynamics of capitalism in the United States, evaluating how market mechanisms generate both economic productivity and systemic market failures.
- Students will be able to identify and explain the structural foundations of inequality in the United States, specifically focusing on how institutions can perpetuate disparities across class, race, and gender.
- Students will be able to evaluate the contemporary political system of the United States by both the opportunities for change in our system of government and identifying "democratic deficits" that can constrain civic power and distort public policy.

Core IMPACTS

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:
How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:
Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Course Requirements and Grading

Assignments:

- Syllabus Quiz (5% of grade due July 1st by 11:59 pm)
- Weekly video reflections or discussion posts (30% of grade, or 6% per post per week over 5 weeks)
 - Week 1 reflection due July 2nd by 11:59 pm via Canvas
 - Week 2 reflection due July 9th by 11:59 pm via Canvas
 - Week 3 reflection due July 16th by 11:59 pm via Canvas
 - Week 4 reflection due July 23rd by 11:59 pm via Canvas
 - Week 5 reflection due July 30th by 11:59 pm via Canvas
- Part 1 Writing Assignment (20% of grade due July 11th by 11:59pm via Canvas)
- Part 2 Writing Assignment (20% of grade due July 25th by 11:59pm via Canvas)
- Part 3 Writing Assignment/Final Paper (25% of grade due August 4th by 11:59pm via Canvas)

Extra Credit Opportunities

For up to 30 points of extra credit, students can watch the following documentary, Contaminated: The Carpet Industry's Toxic Legacy by Frontline and PBS, and write a 2-to 3-page reflection summarizing a) the importance of the carpet industry in the economy of the South in states like Georgia and the carpet industry's effects on the environment and health of nearby residents and b) the ways that politics, voting, and social policy affect residents in the surrounding communities. Think about the economic benefits and costs (like positive and negative externalities) and potential social policy solutions related to the carpet industry in states like Georgia. This will be due Friday, July 31st by 11:59 pm via Canvas. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/contaminated-the-carpet-industrys-toxic-legacy/Links to an external site.>

Description of Graded Components

- 50 points (5% of grade): There will be a syllabus quiz to evaluate students' understanding of the expectations for the course in the first week
- 300 points (30% of grade): Weekly video reflections (prompts provided) with each week's post being worth 60 points each * 5 weeks
- 200 points (20% of grade): Part 1 writing assignment around the economy in the United States (5-6 pages)
- 200 points (20% of grade): Part 2 writing assignment around inequality and justice in the United States (5-6 pages)
- 250 points (25% of grade): Part 3 writing assignment around public policy and politics (5-6 pages)

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale (total points is 1,000):

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Course Materials

Course Text

The required course textbook is *Erik Olin Wright and Joel Rogers. 2024. American Society: How It Really Works. New York: W.W. Norton. (Third Edition)*. --- Students can get this from Georgia Tech's Barnes and Nobles, and a hard copy or e-book copy is fine. Students may also be able to find a copy of the book on third-party websites or get it through GT's or a local public library. Earlier versions of the textbook are okay, but the newest version will be most up to date and relevant. If you have questions about the textbook, please let me (Dr. Hyde) know.

Additional Materials/Resources

["From Energy Use to Air Quality, the Many Ways Data Centers Affect US Communities" by Walker and Goldsmith.](#)

Inequality for All - Documentary

Course Website and Other Classroom Management Tools

The course will take place entirely on Canvas, as this is an online asynchronous course.

Course Expectations and Guidelines

Recordings of Class Sessions and Required Permissions:

Classes and class recordings may not be recorded or distributed by students without the express consent of the instructor, unless it is according to accommodations granted by the Office of Disability Services. Class recordings, lectures, presentations, and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students currently enrolled in the course.

Students may not record or share the materials or recordings, including screen capturing or automated bots, unless the instructor gives permission. Digitally proctored exams may require students to engage the video camera, but those recordings will not be shared with or disclosed to others without consent unless legally permitted.

Course Expectations for Students

- Students are expected to keep up with readings from week to week, which are tentatively listed in the course outline. Skimming readings is justifiable when necessary.
- Students attend lectures and participate in discussions when possible. I would expect, on average, between 6-10 hours of work per week (including watching the video lectures). Most importantly, I expect students to put high-quality work into their assignments.

Course Expectations for the Instructor

- I will foster an environment of mutual respect, fairness, and kindness, regardless of the students' identity and ideological perspective.
- I will do my best to respond to emails from students within 24 hours during Monday to Friday and 48 hours on weekends, except under extenuating circumstances or if I am out of the office.
- I will be prepared for class and typically grade assignments within a week of receiving them, except under extenuating circumstances.

Guidelines for Class Reflections and Discussion Posts:

1. Feel free to speak your mind; however, be respectful of other students and the instructors. We will be discussing potentially controversial topics at times
2. If you disagree with someone, respond to the argument or idea and not to the person who said it. This keeps the discussions from getting personal.
3. Be careful of generalizing from personal experience. While our personal experiences can inform our sociological discussions, the way we experience or perceive a particular event or

experience may vary.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#)[Links to an external site.](#) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Attendance and Participation

This course is online and asynchronous; therefore, attendance will not be assessed. Completion of assignments will be used to assess participation, including viewing the entire lecture videos. Each week, students should keep up with week-to-week due dates.

Collaboration and Group Work

Given that this course is online and asynchronous, there will not be much collaboration and group work. If you have friends in the course, I don't mind if you collaborate to discuss the course content or brainstorm assignments, but students should only turn in their own original work.

Extensions, Late Assignments, and Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Late assignments: Normally, the policy for late assignments is that you will need a documented health, funeral, or university-sponsored excuse to complete late assignments at full credit. Assignments completed after their due dates without an excuse will receive up to a drop in letter grade (10% of total score) for every two days beyond their due date and receive a 0 if turned in over 7 days late. Even if you have accommodations for a disability, you should still work with me in advance of deadlines to set up appropriate due dates. Any late assignments must be turned in by the last day of class to be graded.

Extensions: For the summer, every student can get a one-time 3-day (or 72-hour) extension for one assignment, no questions asked. Just email Dr. Hyde 24 hours before the due date for that assignment to get the extension. This extension likely won't be granted if asked for less than 24 hours from the due date, unless under extenuating circumstances.

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

This is an online asynchronous course. If there is an extreme weather event that knocks out the internet and/or power where you are, this is a great way to use the one-time extension or simply email the professor with evidence of the power/internet outage and we can negotiate an extension for your assignments.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

Not applicable in an online course.

Student Use of Artificial Intelligence

For assignments, you are expected to write using your own words and ideas; however, you can use AI to help brainstorm or outline your papers, which should be properly cited using the questions that you asked ChatGPT and the answers that you received. Using AI like ChatGPT to completely write your papers will result in an automatic zero (0). Do not copy and paste answers from AI-generated content into your paper. I will provide more guidance on using AI as a handout during the second week of classes.

For transparency, I, Dr. Hyde, will sometimes use AI to help generate assignment guides, rubrics, or new lecture content ideas; however, I will keep this at a minimum whenever possible. I will not use AI for grading or writing entire lectures.

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources: For undergraduate courses, a sample statement that might be included in your syllabus for this section is "A list of resources for undergraduate students' academic success and information about advising can be found at [Success at](#)

[TechLinks to an external site.](#)

Graduate Student Academic and Professional Success Resources: For graduate courses, a sample statement that might be included in your syllabus for this section is “A list of resources for graduate students is given on the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Education websiteLinks to an external site.](#) Specific information for current graduate students includes

- [Academic ResourcesLinks to an external site.](#) such as the Communications Center, Language Institute, Library, Catalog, Registrar, resources for conducting research, Advocacy and Conflict Resolution resources, and how to manage unexpected situations that may impact your academic performance
- [Student ResourcesLinks to an external site.](#) such as Campus Services, Child Care/Family programs, Health & Wellness, Career Services, and the Student Resource Guide.
- [Professional DevelopmentLinks to an external site.](#) such as the programming from the Career Center and other professional development resources and events”]

Student Well-Being: Some faculty include resources that support students’ mental and emotional well-being. Including these additional resources on your syllabus communicates to students that you care about them and that you are committed to facilitating their academic progress. For all courses, a sample statement that might be included in your syllabus is “At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A comprehensive [list of wellness related resourcesLinks to an external site.](#) has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being (e.g., The Counseling Center, The Division of Student Life, or Women’s Resource Center).”