

Teaching Statement

Carly Knight – Sociology

I believe that learning sociology is a revolutionary endeavor. When students learn to question assumptions, demand empirical evidence, and read familiar patterns through new theoretical lenses, they unsettle old dogmas. My goal in teaching is to convey this enthusiasm to students and show them the power of developing a critical, sociological worldview that they can carry well outside the classroom door.

For the past years, I've taught the sociology department's required course "Sociological Theory." In addition, I have taught the large lecture class, Introduction to Sociology, as well as seminars on "The Sociology of Wall Street" and "Just Markets: Markets, Morals, and Modern Capitalism."

Across my classes, though my content differs, my teaching objectives are the same. First, I want students to attain a sophisticated understanding of the course content. In my sociological theory class, for example, I've found that students arrive in the classroom with a range of backgrounds and degrees of exposure—with many convinced that theory is just "not for them." In lecture, I try to break down what may at first appear to be insurmountably difficult prose. Through diagrams, contemporary examples, and group exercises, I try to render more accessible difficult or complex ideas.

Second, I strive to facilitate critical thinking. It is one thing to learn to new theory; it is another to wield it. I teach students that theories should be treated as "lenses" that they "try on" to approach social problems. I have students compare evaluating contemporary and local social problems (American inequality, homeless in New York City) through different theoretical lenses (Marxist, Weberian, or Du Boisian). In this way, I try to teach students that rather than simply critique theories for what they may fail to include, we can appreciate how different lenses highlight different aspects of the social world. My hope is that this openness to new and challenging ideas is an approach that they can take with them outside the classroom.

Finally, I believe these goals are only attainable if I create an open and inclusive classroom that encourages engagement. Through surveys, I constantly ask for feedback and try to meet students where they are at. In lectures, I regularly incorporate small group exercises so that students who don't speak up in the larger classroom environment can participate.

In addition to teaching classes, I support undergraduates in their independent research. The two undergraduates whose senior theses I have advised have both gone onto to graduate school in sociology. One of these projects (by Tytus Wilhem) was presented in two different sociology conferences; another (by Ran Wang) has been accepted by a sociology journal (*Qualitative Sociology*). Beyond those formal roles, I've served an advisor and mentor to many students who have sought out a variety of different career pathways. Outside the classroom, I regularly meet with students to discuss their post NYU plans and have kept in touch with many students after they have graduated.