

# SOC 346: The Sociology of Guns

Fall 2022

Wednesday, 3:30-6:00 pm, 010 Kirby Hall

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*Office Hours:* By appointment

## INTRODUCTION

Guns often have a spectacular presence in the American imagination, from the Colt .45 “Peacemaker” to the AR-15 to George Zimmerman to Uvalde Elementary School. Guns are also a part of everyday life in communities across the country. They are used as tools of self-defense and criminal violence, and are one of the most commonly owned pieces of sporting equipment in the United States.

Clearly, guns are an important part of American society and culture. With some 400,000,000 guns held by over 75 million private citizens and a Constitutional amendment associated with gun ownership, the possession, regulation, meaning, and use of firearms reaches into important realms of American society, including: civil rights and liberties, identity and culture, crime and violence, public health and personal safety, and even sport and leisure.

This course explores the multifaceted role guns play in the U.S. from a sociological perspective, including the prevalence and distribution of guns, lawful possession and use of firearms, and gun crime and injuries.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT

If you engage this course thoughtfully and with commitment, by the end of the semester you will achieve the following learning objectives:

Learning Objective	Method of Assessment
(1) Better understand the multifaceted role guns play in the U.S., including the history and legalities, and the everyday uses and abuses. Relatedly, you will be able to approach the issue of guns in society in a scholarly – that is, objective and nuanced – manner from a sociological perspective.	(1) Gunography, Reading Responses and Discussion Questions, Class Participation
(2) Better understand your personal beliefs about guns, including scrutinizing your own relationship to guns so as to make informed choices about your own participation with and the place of guns in the communities in which you live.	(2) Field Trip Reflection Essay, Gunography
(3) Have begun to develop an attitude and the tools necessary to cultivate your sociological imagination with respect to guns for the rest of your life.	(3) Gunography, Class Participation

## COURSE REQUIREMENT SUMMARY

1. Class Field Trip to Gun Range (*automatic course failure* for not completing)
2. Field Trip Reflection Essay (5%)
3. Reading Responses and Discussion Questions (30%)
4. Class Participation (25%)
5. Gunography (40%)



## COURSE GRADES

The scale for grades based on the number of points earned over the course of the semester is as follows:

### *Exceptionally High*

A 94-100

### *Superior*

A- 90-93

B+ 87-89

B 84-86

### *Satisfactory*

B- 80-83

C+ 77-79

C 74-76

### *Unsatisfactory*

C- 70-73

D+ 67-69

D 64-66

### *Failure*

F Less than 64

## IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT CLASS

1. Mas vale prevenir que lamentar: It is better to *prevent* problems than to *lament* them once they occur. Similarly, it is easier to *prevent* problems than to *undo* them once they are done. So please be in touch with me early and often and as much as necessary. My door is always open to you.

2. Electronics in class: Studies show that we learn better taking notes by hand, rather than on computers. Studies also show that computers in class, especially when not used appropriately, distract users and their classmates. In addition, studies confirm that we do not read as well online as we do in print. Therefore, **computers/tablets cannot be used in class** unless I specifically say so.



There is to be ***absolutely no use of cell phones, PDAs, or other communication devices*** during class. If you need to send or receive a message from someone, please step out of class to do so. That is not a problem (unless you are regularly leaving class). Disrupting the class and being disrespectful to Professor Yamane and your classmates is a problem. The solution to the problem is the reduction of your class participation grade to 0. No warnings, no questions asked.

3. Electronic mail communication: I check my e-mail regularly and you are welcome to contact me by e-mail with questions or comments. However, please be aware that e-mail is not an appropriate medium for highly personal or confidential correspondence. Finally, because I may not immediately receive or reply to your messages, pressing issues should be handled in person whenever possible.

4. On disabilities: According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with a physical or mental impairment (“disability”) are entitled to equal access, integration and the provision of reasonable accommodation by federally-supported institutions like Wake Forest. The university is required to make “*academic adjustments*” for qualified disabled persons. These adjustments may include modifications to *academic requirements* as are necessary to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate against a qualified handicapped student. Adjustments may also include modifications to course examinations or other procedures for evaluating students’ academic achievement. If these protections apply to you, or you think that they might

apply to you, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) within the first two (2) weeks of the semester.

5. Contingency plan for class meetings: If for any reason we are unable to meet in person, we will continue to “meet” as a class through our course Canvas site and Zoom. Of course, we will make other adjustments, as necessary, to the course requirements in order to get through any disruptive event. If you have any questions about this plan, please let me know.

## DETAILED COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Further information will be provided in Canvas. There are 500 points possible for this course, broken down as follows:



**[1] CLASS FIELD TRIP (automatic course failure for not completing):**

On Wednesday, August 31st we will take a FIELD TRIP to Veterans Range in Mocksville where students will have the opportunity to shoot. Although the range visit is mandatory, shooting is optional but encouraged.

Failure to complete the field trip will result in a course grade of “F.” There is no opportunity to make up the trip. Please plan accordingly.

**[2] FIELD TRIP REFLECTION ESSAY (25 points):** In this essay, you will describe your experience participating in the range visit. The essay is a subjective recollection of your experience at the range, so the content is largely up to you, but it must answer the following question: *How did the experience fit with your prior understanding of guns in the US?*

To answer this question, you might benefit from thinking about the following related questions: What did you find surprising? What did you learn? What did you find appealing (or disturbing)? Although you can (and should) reference particular events, processes, or experiences, this essay should not be a mere “play-by-play” of what you did during the field trip. [Assignment from Brett Burkhardt, Oregon State University]

**[3] READING RESPONSES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (25 points each x 6 = 150 points):** A minimum of 6 times during the semester, you will submit a brief response to the assigned readings for the day by 6:00am the day of class. Each response should include at least one question about some aspect of the readings along with a response that explains the background to and/or motivation of the question with respect to the readings. Page citations or quotations should be provided to make clear the basis of the question(s).

In other words:

1. *The central contribution here is the question(s) you raise. The question(s) can be simple or complex, informational or analytical. Whatever your actual questions are.*
2. *In order for the question(s) to make sense, however, you need to provide some summary of/response to the reading, tied to the question(s).*
3. *For both questions and response, provide specific page numbers (and quote the text when appropriate) to locate what you are talking about.*

**Grading:** These will be graded as “pass” (+25 points) or “fail” (0 points). A response will pass if the assignment is submitted on time, all of the required elements noted above are fulfilled, and the author appears to have made a serious intellectual effort in completing the assignment. A failing assignment can be made up in a subsequent module. There are 9 opportunities to do this component and I will use the 6 highest scores in the final grade calculation. My hope/expectation is that all students get full credit for this component.

**[4] CLASS PARTICIPATION (125 points):** Throughout the semester, you will be given opportunities to participate in the communal life of this course. Collectively this will constitute this portion of your grade. There is nothing preventing you from earning all of these points other than your own (lack of) effort and initiative.

As in life, you do not get credit in this class just for showing up. To do well in this component of the course, you must participate thoughtfully and actively in our class discussions.

“Thoughtfully” here means that your participation is based not only on your own opinions and experiences but on your careful consideration of the course materials. Therefore, reading and thinking about the course materials is a prerequisite of thoughtful participation, but does not constitute participation in and of itself. (The reading responses assignment actually gives you credit for the prerequisite part.) Of

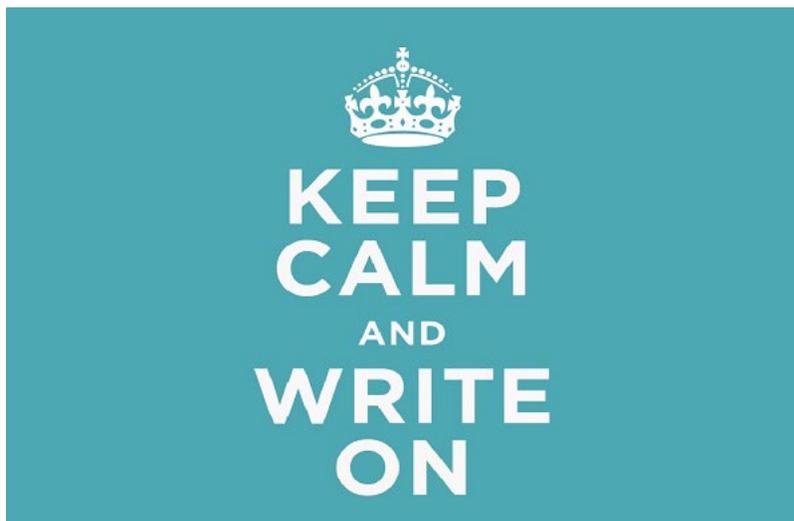
course, the sharing of personal opinions and experiences are important in a class like this, but participation that is limited to that is inadequate.

“Actively” here does not mean constantly. It means that you are regularly involved in the course discussions, can be expected to contribute, and do not go mentally AWOL for periods at a time. “Listening actively” is not a form of participation in this class. If you are not comfortable speaking in group settings, then this is a wonderful developmental opportunity for you (in the same way that it is a wonderful developmental opportunity for people who do not like to read and write).

**[5] GUNOGRAPHY WRITING ASSIGNMENT (200 points):** According to C. Wright Mills, the sociological imagination allows us to see our lives “*as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society.*” One excellent vehicle for the development of a sociological imagination is the sociological autobiography. Robert K. Merton describes it this way:

*... the sociological autobiography uses sociological perspectives, ideas, concepts, findings, and analytical procedures to construct and to interpret one's own life history.*

This “gunography” assignment asks you to write a sociological autobiography of your involvement (or noninvolvement) in the social life of guns. The goal of this assignment is to be critically self-reflective as you remember, describe, and analyze your experiences, the contexts in which they occurred, and the impact they had on you and others who were involved. Of course, for some of you this will be a story of how you were *not* involved with guns, were adversely affected by guns, or perhaps were even against guns/gun violence.



You will complete the assignment in three parts:

**(A) Outline (25 points):** You will submit an outline of your involvement (or noninvolvement) in the social life of guns. The outline should identify who was involved; your personal experiences related to family relationships/dynamics, friends, school, teachers, and others; key moments (try to think of both negative and positive moments); intense memories; your current situation; and your anticipated future. You should also be thinking about what bodies of scholarship on guns will help you make your autobiography *sociological*.

**(B) Revised/Expanded Outline (25 points):** During an off week for face-to-face class, you will submit a revised and expanded version of your gunography outline to keep you moving toward the final paper. Your personal relationship with guns should be more elaborated at this point and your analytical focus sharper in this version.

**(C) Paper (150 points):** This paper is one that you can be working on gradually over the course of the entire semester as you read and think about the course material and try to understand how it helps you to make better sense of your own life and experience. (Further details on the gunography paper are at the end of this syllabus.)

## REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

[1] Secure a used copy on your own: Charles E. Cobb, Jr., *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). For example, search <https://www.abebooks.com/>

[2] Purchase these from Professor Yamane: David Yamane, *Concealed Carry Revolution: Liberalizing the Right to Bear Arms in America* (Shades Creek Press, 2022) and a course reader available for purchase from Professor Yamane.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Also in the “Modules” on Canvas: <https://wakeforest.instructure.com/courses/44643>

### MODULE 0: PRELIMINARIES (8/24)

- Review welcome and class overview video in Canvas
- Required Assignments (0.0 to 0.6 in Canvas)
- Pick up course reader from Erica Talley in Sociology Department Office

### MODULE 1: RANGE FIELD TRIP (8/31) (RAIN DATES: 9/2 OR 9/3)

***\*\*\*Field Trip Reflection Essay due Monday, September 5<sup>th</sup>\*\*\****

### MODULE 2: INTROS/RANGE DEBRIEF; PROF. YAMANE’S PERSPECTIVE (9/7)

- David Yamane, “Introduction: How a Liberal Professor Became an Armed American,” in *Gun Curious: A Journey into America’s Evolving Culture of Firearms* (DRAFT)
- David Yamane, “Guns Are Normal, Normal People Use Guns,” in *Gun Curious: A Journey into America’s Evolving Culture of Firearms* (DRAFT)
- David Yamane, “The Sociology of US Gun Culture” (2017)
- David Yamane, “Understanding and Misunderstanding America’s Gun Culture” (2021)

***\*\*\*Gunography Outline Due Monday, September 12\*\*\****

### MODULE 3: HISTORY, LAWS, OWNERSHIP, ARSENALS (9/14)

- Clayton E. Cramer, “Guns and Sport in the Early Republic,” in *Armed America* (2006)
- Syllabi of SCOTUS decision in *DC v. Heller* (2008), *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010), and *NYSRPA v. Bruen* (2022)
- Wertz, et al., “Differences Between New and Long-Standing US Gun Owners” (2018)
- Azrael and Miller, “Who Bought Guns During the Pandemic?” (2021)

- David Yamane, “Building an Arsenal,” in *Gun Curious: A Journey into America’s Evolving Culture of Firearms* (DRAFT)

#### MODULE 4: THE HUMAN-WEAPON RELATIONSHIP (9/21)

- **Guest Speaker: Randy Miyan, Executive Director, Liberal Gun Owners**
- Selections from “The Liberal Gun Owners Lens, Pillar 1: The Human-Weapon Relationship” (2020)
- David Yamane, “Living with AR-15s,” in *Gun Curious: A Journey into America’s Evolving Culture of Firearms* (DRAFT)

#### MODULE 5: GUN CULTURE 2.0 & THE CONCEALED CARRY REVOLUTION (9/28)

- David Yamane, “Gun Culture 2.0: Evolution and Contours of Defensive Gun Ownership in America,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (forthcoming, 2022)
- David Yamane, *Concealed Carry Revolution: Liberalizing the Right to Bear Arms in America* (2021)
- David Yamane, “Swept Up in the Concealed Carry Revolution,” in *Gun Curious: Journey into America’s Evolving Culture of Firearms* (DRAFT)

#### MODULE 6: TRANSITIONAL WEEK ON SOCIOLOGICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES – INDIVIDUAL ZOOM MEETINGS AS NECESSARY (10/5)

**\*\*\*Revised/Expanded Gunography Outline Due, Wednesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***

#### MODULE 7: THE STANDARD MODEL OF EXPLAINING THE IRRATIONALITY OF DEFENSIVE GUN OWNERSHIP (10/12)

- David Yamane, “Articulating the Standard Model of Explaining the Irrationality of Defensive Gun Ownership” (DRAFT)
- Nicholas Buttrick, “Protective Gun Ownership as a Coping Mechanism” (2020)
- David Hemenway and Sara J. Solnick, “The Epidemiology of Self-Defense Gun Use: Evidence from the National Crime Victimization Surveys 2007–2011” (2015)
- David Studdert, et al., “Homicide Deaths Among Adult Cohabitants of Handgun Owners in California, 2004 to 2016” (2022)
- David Yamane, “Pascal’s Wager and Firearms,” in *Gun Curious: A Journey into America’s Evolving Culture of Firearms* (DRAFT)

## MODULE 8: RACE AND GUNS (10/19)

- *Guest Speaker: Chad King, Black Bottom Gun Club, Detroit*
- Alexandra Filindra, Noah J. Kaplan, and Beyza E. Buyuker, "Racial Resentment or Sexism? White Americans' Outgroup Attitudes as Predictors of Gun Ownership and NRA Membership" (2021)
- Charles E. Cobb, Jr. *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (2015)

## MODULE 9: GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND GUNS (10/26)

- Angela Stroud, "Good Guys with Guns: Hegemonic Masculinity and Concealed Handguns" (2012)
- Margaret Kelley, "Feminism and Firearms: Gun Ownership, Gun Carrying, and Women's Empowerment" (2022)
- Jennifer Carlson, "Carrying Guns, Contesting Gender" (2015)
- Jonathan Rauch, "Pink Pistols" (2000)
- Andrew Belonsky, "Pink Pistols: LGBT Gun Owners Unite in Arming Gay Community" (2016)
- Thatcher Phoenix Combs, "Queers with Guns? Against the LGBT Grain" (2022)

## MODULE 10: GUN INJURIES, SUICIDE, RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES (11/2)

- Katherine Fowler, et al., "Firearm Injuries in the United States" (2015)
- Gonzalo Martínez-Alés, et al., "The Recent Rise of Suicide Mortality in the United States" (2022)
- David Studdert, et al., "Handgun Ownership and Suicide in California" (2020).
- Jeffrey Swanson, "Preventing Suicide Through Better Firearm Safety Policy in the United States" (2021)
- Barnard, Leslie, Ali Rowhani-Rahbar, and Marian E. Betz, "Lethal Means Safety Approaches for Suicide Prevention" (2021)

## MODULE 11: CRIMINAL HOMICIDE AND MASS SHOOTINGS (11/9)

- Andrew Papachristos, Anthony A. Braga, and David M. Hureau, "Social Networks and the Risk of Gunshot Injury" (2012)
- Grant Duwe, "Patterns and Prevalence of Lethal Mass Violence" (2020)

- Emma Fridel, “A Multivariate Comparison of Family, Felony, and Public Mass Murders in the United States” (2021)
- Lankford, Adam, James Silver, and Jennifer Cox, “An Epidemiological Analysis of Public Mass Shooters and Active Shooters: Quantifying Key Differences between Perpetrators and the General Population, Homicide Offenders, and People Who Die by Suicide” (2021)
- Emma Fridel, “Integrating the Literature on Lethal Violence: A Comparison of Mass Murder, Homicide, and Homicide-Suicide” (2022)

## MODULE 12: GUN POLITICS AND THE FUTURE (11/16)

- *Guest Speaker: Mathew Littman, Executive Director, 97 Percent*
- Kristin Goss, “Whatever Happened to the ‘Missing Movement’? Gun Control Politics Over Two Decades of Change” (2019)
- Jordan McMillan and Mary Bernstein, “Beyond Gun Control: Mapping Gun Violence Prevention Logics” (2022)
- Fredrick E. Vars, “Voluntary Do-Not-Sell Lists – An Innovative Approach to Reducing Gun Suicides” (2020).

***\*\*\*Gunography Final Paper Due, Friday, December 2nd\*\*\****

## GUNOGRAPHY: A GUIDE TO WRITING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES

No two lives are exactly the same, so no two gunographies will be exactly the same. But every acceptable paper will include the following:

- 1,500 +/- 250 words. Double-spaced. 12 point font. Pages numbered.
- Proofread for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Interpretation of the biographical material in terms of the scholarly literature discussed in the course as well as other works you find in the course of your work. Quote and cite specific material as necessary.

Major components of the paper are:

**1. Introduction:** This paragraph should capture readers' attention and make them want to continue. It should also suggest what sociological ideas are going to be used to interpret your life story (remember, this is a *sociological* autobiography not just an autobiography) and convey some sense of the overall point of the paper (the "thesis").

**2. Body:** This is the core of the paper in which you connect your life story with "sociological perspectives, ideas, concepts, findings and analytical procedures." The more specific you are about both the sociology and the autobiography, and the more closely connected the two parts are, the better the paper will be. Here are some things you might consider:

- Think back to your early experiences of guns, or your lack of experiences with guns. If you have experiences, describe them in terms of when they occurred, the context in which they occurred, and what was going on in your life as they occurred. Alternatively, think about why you lack experiences with guns. What accounts for that? How were those early experiences related to your age, social class, race or ethnicity, family, and neighborhood or community?
- Opportunities to be involved with guns are different for boys and girls and for children from different racial or ethnic groups and social class backgrounds. Write about how gender, race/ethnicity, and social class did or did not play a role in your life. Have factors related to gender, race/ethnicity, and social class influenced your experiences through your life to the present?
- Many young adults say that without their parents, they never would have had the opportunity to be involved with guns as a child or adolescent. Explain the ways that your parents encouraged/facilitated or discouraged/interfered with your participation. Were there differences between the support provided by your mother and the support provided by your father?

- In general, consider speaking with your parents and grandparents about their relationship with guns to better understand how that shaped your own.

**3. Reflection:** Step back from the story you have been telling and think about the big picture.

- Think about how your experiences related to guns have influenced (or not influenced) your life. Write about this.

**4. Conclusion:** Finish strong and bring it home. Remember, WF = We Finish!

- Your concluding paragraph should describe what you anticipate in the future with respect to guns in your life, and how that future is connected with your past experiences and what may be occurring in your life in the future.