The mission of the Sociology Department is to foster creative and rigorous research on the world's most pervasive social phenomena. Through the cultivation of the sociological imagination, students achieve an understanding of the complex forces that shape the world and develop the skills to analyze and, ultimately, to change that world.

“The difficulty, in Sociology, is to manage to think in a completely astonished and disconcerted way about things you thought you had always understood.”

– Pierre Bourdieu
What is Sociology?
Sociology is one of the core majors of the social sciences. It is organized around the study of the complex forces that influence human behavior in modern societies. As a field of study it emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries in an effort to identify the underlying dynamics of urbanized industrial societies. From this period into the decades following World War II, when Sociology boomed as a field, its areas of inquiry ranged from social control, deviance and crime to the nature of social change, inequality, the economy, and religion. Today, Sociology furthers research in these areas, but also explores race and ethnicity, sexuality and gender, science and technology, as well as culture and art.

At Marymount Manhattan, the Sociology department is built upon the discipline’s two pillars: theory and research. In the classroom, students are exposed to a variety of theoretical approaches as well as a range of qualitative and quantitative research skills. While this is the core of our curriculum, there is more. Outside of the classroom, the rich diversity of New York City serves as our laboratory of research - the unique hallmark of our program. Doing research in the city, students develop rigorous skills for critical analysis that are invaluable to any effort to effect change in the world. On this, we pride ourselves.

Why Study Sociology?
The study of sociology affords students a better understanding of the complex socioeconomic and cultural dynamics that shape individual, community, national and global behaviors. This understanding prepares students for their political and social responsibilities as members of civil society.

Social Work Minor
The Minor in Social Work is based on systems theory and informed by a strengths perspective. Through a series of courses and a required internship experience, students develop professional values, knowledge and skills. Courses are designed to expose students to various perspectives on the social, political, economic and personal factors involved in the construction of human problems. In addition, courses direct students to think critically about their communities and to act powerfully as civic agents within them. Ultimately, this training forges successful providers of human services.

Where Do You Go From Here?
Students majoring in Sociology have gone onto successful careers in journalism, urban planning, survey research, human resources, business, law, criminal justice, marketing research, social work and nonprofit administration. Graduates of the program have also entered academically competitive programs at the Masters and Ph.D. levels.

Jillian Green ’08 is currently a Master’s student at Seton Hall University’s Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations. Jillian interned for a United Nations facet in Geneva in summer ’09 through the Duke University Geneva Program on Global Policy and Governance. Jillian applied through the Humanitarian Assistance and Human Rights portion of the program and intends to work at IPEC (International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor), a program of the International Labor Organization.

Rebecca Steckler ’09 began a Master’s program in Sociology at the University of Texas at San Antonio in the fall of 2010.

Students studying World Trade Center redevelopment.

Faculty Profiles

Manolo Guzmán, Ph.D.
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Professor Guzmán received his Ph.D. from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is a sociologist specializing in the study of gender and sexuality. His work focuses on the social organization of eroticism and its relationship to the categories of race, class, gender and the nation. His book, Gay Hegemony/Latino Homosexualities, and other articles explore the intersection of race and sexuality in the development of systems of same-sex sexuality in both the United States and Puerto Rico.

Prior to his work as an academic, Professor Guzmán was a psychotherapist and youth advocate at New York City’s Hetrick-Martin Institute for the Protection of Lesbian and Gay Youth, the home of the first high school for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students.

Erin O’Connor, Ph.D.
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Erin O’Connor earned a Ph.D. in Sociology at the New School for Social Research in 2009. Her dissertation, “HOTSHOP: An Ethnography of Embodied Knowledge in Glassblowing”, which drew from three years of ethnographic research in a glassblowing studio, analyzes the relations between the body, imagination, work practices, materiality, knowledge and culture. She is currently editing this manuscript for book publication, specifically theorizing how contemporary artisanship facilitates the production of self within a consumer economy.
Professor O’Connor has also conducted ethnographic analysis of creativity in interdisciplinary scientific research as a researcher at the Social Science Research Council and is currently developing future research on crafting ethnicity and the environment. Her work has been published in Thesis Eleven, Qualitative Sociology Review, Qualitative Sociology and Ethnography, as well as in numerous edited volumes, including two forthcoming Spanish translations slated for distribution in Latin America. Her work is also widely cited in the globally-distributed text, The Craftsman, by Richard Sennett.

Michelle Ronda, M.Phil.
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Michelle has long-standing interests in deviance, criminal justice, public policy and the methods of social research. Her dissertation is a case study of a New York City neighborhood examining the impact of neoliberal political forces on people working within low-income urban neighborhoods struggling for social change. Her research focuses on the difficulties that emerge when inequalities of gender, race, ethnicity, wealth and power are obscured and how efforts at “community empowerment” engender exhaustion among the very people they are meant to inspire. Professor Ronda has acted as principal investigator on many social program evaluations, working closely with nonprofits, local residents and governmental agencies on programs ranging from efforts to address youth violence, youth substance abuse, improve children’s educational experiences and train community residents to advocate for health care in underserved communities. She is the Faculty Advisor to the Bedford Hills College Program Club.

Rebecca L. Sperling, Ph.D.
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Rebecca L. Sperling is an Associate Professor of Social Work and Sociology and the Coordinator of the Social Work sequence at Marymount Manhattan College. She earned her M.S.W. and Ph.D. from the Columbia University School of Social Work where she taught graduate level courses in addition to teaching a doctoral level practice course. At Marymount, Dr. Sperling developed and oversees the Minor in Social Work. Her teaching and clinical work are both grounded in systems theory, a firm belief in people’s strengths and the centrality of listening to people tell their stories. She also teaches elective courses in the Sociology curriculum and in Gender and Sexuality Studies.

In over twenty years as a practitioner, Dr. Sperling has been a clinical supervisor in out-patient hospital, community and school-based settings. She has run programs in the Lower East Side and at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City that focused on the treatment of alcohol and substance abuse, improvement of mental health and crisis intervention for individuals and families. She has acted as Civilian Co-Coordinator of Parenting Programs at the Bedford Hills Women’s Correctional Facility. Professor Sperling also maintains a private practice in New York City. Her areas of professional knowledge and interest include: diversity, mental health, prison systems, women’s studies, human development, substance abuse, oral history and pedagogy. Her publications include articles on pedagogy and lesbian and gay policy, including her 2010 publication “Conspicuously Absent: Lesbians in Professional Social Work”, a critical history that calls for a rethinking of the impact of lesbian presence in the profession.