
NEWSLETTER

Spring 2026

<https://www.union.edu/sociology>



**Sociology
Department
Newsletter**

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Chair's Corner

As Spring 2026 comes to a close, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve as Sociology Department Chair and to support the continued growth, visibility, and community-building of our department. This year has included meaningful teaching, advising, student research, departmental collaboration, and public-facing scholarship.

I am especially appreciative of the students, colleagues, staff, and campus partners who have contributed to the intellectual life of Sociology. I am grateful for the work of the Sociology Club and the Sociology Newsletter team, whose efforts have helped strengthen student engagement and highlight the vibrant work taking place across the department.

I also want to extend a special thank you to Leahanna Pelish and Bella Rodriguez for their detailed, supportive, and consistent administrative support. Their care, organization, and attention to the department's daily needs have been deeply appreciated.

As I reflect on my time as Department Chair, I remain thankful for the opportunity to work with students and colleagues committed to sociological inquiry, equity, mentorship, and community. Looking forward to our end-of-the-year celebration on Friday, June 5, 2026, at Common Lunch.

Dr. Deidre Hill Butler
Professor and Chair of Sociology
Spring 2026

Faculty Updates

Prof. Deidre Hill Butler is working with three independent studies, teaching Introduction to Sociology, Sociology of Contemporary Cambodia, and Sociology of Mass Media and Power, and advising one Sociology/Political Science thesis. Prof. Hill Butler is also continuing to build the Womanist Musings Podcast, a space for elevated conversations with creatives, innovators, scholars, and students whose voices reflect intergenerational wisdom, Black joy, and reflection. She is especially grateful to work-study research and podcast producers Rwah Mashrah, Haley Gibbons, and Aneisya Williams for their creative labor, research support, and commitment to developing the podcast as a meaningful intellectual and community archive.

In addition to her teaching and scholarship, Prof. Hill Butler continues to advise and support student leadership. She is advising campus Multicultural Greek organizations in collaboration with Alyssa Bailey, Community Director for Fraternity and Sorority Housing, and continues to advise the Black Student Union. She is also grateful to partner with the Sociology Club and the Sociology Newsletter team in strengthening student engagement, departmental visibility, and community-building within Sociology.

This summer, Prof. Hill Butler will collaborate with four undergraduate research students and Special Collections for six weeks on “Uncovering Hidden Histories: Preserving Black Student and Employee Leadership, Union College.” She is also working with Marietta Carr, Librarian/Archivist at the Schenectady County Historical Society, to complete work connected to a 2025 New York State Archives Documentary Heritage Program Grant on Black leadership in Schenectady County. This countywide project connects meaningfully with the Union College archival project, while the Union-focused research will live separately within the Union College Archives.

Prof. Hill Butler presented a paper, “Womanist Homeplaces: Black Placemaking in Ireland,” at the Identities, Continuities, and Transformations: Women, Youths, and Children in Africa and the African Diaspora, at Tennessee State University’s 12th Annual Africa Conference in April. She is also pleased to have been accepted to participate in the Faculty Resource Network at New York University AI Summit 2026.

**Dr. Deidre Hill
Butler**



Dr. Melinda A. Goldner

Professor Goldner is teaching "Introduction to Sociology" this term. Also, she has a few students finishing their health-related senior thesis projects. She just completed an encyclopedic entry on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) that summarizes sociological research from the last few decades. Sociologists study usage, practice, and integration in order to understand how CAM is culturally and historically specific and evolving. She argues that the discipline is well-positioned to analyze the complex, contested, and dynamic nature of all healthcare, especially as hybrid models of integrative medicine develop.



Professor of Sociology
Spring 2026

Professor Cotter is on sabbatical this spring. During this sabbatical he is spending time working on a paper on faculty work-life balance using survey data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic from faculty at Union, Skidmore, and St. Lawrence. He is also starting on a book project on the stalled gender revolution, a project he will continue this summer with the assistance of Sociology/Anthropology Gwyneth Connor. The project will entail analyses of data from longitudinal surveys like the GSS, American Time Use Survey, the U.S. Census and American Community Survey, and Current Population Survey to assess the degree to which gender gaps have shifted since the 1950s.

Dr. David A. Cotter



Roger Thayer Ston
Professor of Sociology
Spring 2026

Dr. Ilene M. Kaplan

Dr Kaplan has been involved with examining several different fishery and aquaculture projects with NOAA, particularly regarding salmon and finfish farming techniques. This past term she also has been involved with expanding student internship opportunities with the NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation as well as maintaining our usual community engagement activities with the other human service organizations in the Capital District. She is looking forward to the honors initiation and end of year Dept get-together during Week 10.



Joseph C Driscoll Professor of Sociology and Marine Policy, Union College and Marine Policy Center Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
Spring 2026

It has been another busy Spring term, teaching “Social Constructions of Deviance” and “Qualitative Social Research”. Next Fall term, I will once again be teaching Introduction to Sociology (SOC-100) (2 sections!) and Juvenile Delinquency (SOC-262). To sociology students, please encourage your peers to enroll in Introduction to Sociology if they have not done so already. I believe it is a course that everyone should take in college, as it applies to so many career paths. If you have not taken Juvenile Delinquency yet, I encourage you to do so! In this course, we explore what motivates young people to commit crimes and engage in delinquent acts. We then evaluate current strategies to prevent and control delinquency, such as incarceration, treatment, and rehabilitation, as well as the role and effectiveness of the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems in these pursuits. Finally, we review theory and research to understand what shapes people’s perceptions of youth crime and the influence they have on shaping policies and strategies to control delinquency in society. Please let me know if you or your peers have any questions about any of these fall term offerings. Have a wonderful summer!

Dr. Timothy P. Stablein



Associate Professor of Sociology
Spring 2026

Sociology Club Update

The Sociology Club, led by Co-Presidents Lora and Tracy, continued its commitment to community engagement and collaborative service throughout the spring term. We are so proud of the work we've done this academic year and the ways our members have shown up for one another and for the broader community.

This term's signature project is a three-day flower-giving initiative in partnership with Kappa Alpha. The club creates cards or tags labeled "KA / Sociology Club" to attach to each flower. Events will take place on May 4, 5, and 7 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

In addition to this initiative, the club has remained active in planning, outreach, and collaboration with campus partners, continuing its mission to foster community care, social awareness, and student involvement.

Lora and Tracy
Class of '26

As the Sociology Club continues to grow, my vision is to build upon the strong foundation we have already established themselves as an inclusive body of students committed to connecting our campus to

greater causes in the surrounding community. Having organized and hosted a variety of meaningful community service events each term, I want to take what we have built even further, expanding our events to more intentionally reflect the six core values of social work: service, social justice, dignity and worth of a person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. I hope that we can continue to deepen our collaboration with both on and off-campus organizations, and foster even greater student involvement so that more members of

our campus community can experience the impact of what this club has to offer personally and professionally.

Valentina Rendon
Incoming Sociology Club President
Class of '28



Sociology Student Highlight

Since the spring of 2024, I have been involved in the Best Buddies chapter at Union College, and this year I have had the opportunity to serve as Co-President. Best Buddies is an international organization that strives to create opportunities, friendships, and connections with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Our chapter works with Schenectady ARC, an organization that closely supports members of our community with IDD. We typically have 3-10 buddies from Schenectady ARC who meet us on campus bi-weekly for our club meetings. One of my favorite events we hosted in the past was our tie-dye meeting, where everyone designed their own shirts to wear for Albany's Best Buddies Friendship Walk. We have also hosted arts and crafts, themed holiday events, bingo, and jeopardy. Next week, we will hold our final meeting of the year with an ice cream social to celebrate the end of the year and the start of summer.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities often face barriers in social participation and opportunities for connection. Through our chapter, we challenge these barriers by creating spaces centered on friendship, respect, and acceptance. Being involved in Best Buddies has changed the way I think about inclusion in our communities. I am incredibly grateful to be part of the organization, as it has made a positive impact on my college experience, allowing me to make meaningful connections with people in the Schenectady community.

Best,
Mariah



Sociology Student Highlight

This exhibit examines the long and evolving history of crew and rowing culture at Union College through a collection of archival photographs, journals, race tickets, constitutions, pamphlets, and historical records spanning from the nineteenth century to the present day. The exhibit traces how rowing emerged as one of Union's earliest organized athletic traditions and how it reflected broader themes of student life, institutional identity, competition, and community across generations.

The materials featured in the exhibit highlight the early formation of rowing culture at Union during the 1870s, when students established boating associations and competed in intercollegiate regattas alongside institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Brown, Columbia, Wesleyan, and Princeton. A central piece in the exhibit is the 1874 Intercollegiate Regatta pamphlet, which captures the growing prominence of collegiate rowing during this period. Other artifacts, including a 1876 race ticket, journal engravings of the men's crew team, and images from Saratoga Lake regattas, illustrate the significance of rowing not only as a competitive sport but also as a visible expression of school pride and student organization.

The exhibit also explores the continuity of crew traditions into the twentieth century and beyond. Photographs of the men's team practicing on the Mohawk River during the 1986–87 season and fundraising efforts such as "Rowing for Dollars" demonstrate how the program adapted while maintaining its longstanding traditions. Equally important is the exhibit's focus on the history of women's rowing at Union. Materials documenting the women's crew team in 1997 highlight the year women's crew officially achieved varsity status, culminating in its inaugural varsity victory at the Head of the Mohawk Regatta on October 4, 1997.

By bringing together these archival materials, the exhibit demonstrates how athletics can serve as a lens through which to understand institutional history and student culture. The collection reveals not only the competitive side of rowing but also the dedication, organization, and community-building that sustained the sport across different eras at Union College. Through these preserved records and images, the exhibit invites viewers to reflect on how traditions are created, maintained, and transformed over time.

The picture below is of the Men's Team in 1876.



Hareem Afridi
Class of '28

Sociology Student Highlight

During my winter term in Sydney, Australia, I moved between two roles that became deeply important to each other in my time abroad. As a student, I sat in sociology courses dissecting inequality and policy impact, and served as a community engagement and outreach intern at Our Big Kitchen, a nonprofit that prepares and distributes more than 250,000 meals annually across 33+ partner charities. What I didn't anticipate was how thoroughly both experiences would reshape the work I returned home to carry out.

My coursework introduced me to the lived realities of Aboriginal communities and the enduring effects of colonial policy, ongoing struggles for land rights and cultural sovereignty, as well as the persistent gap between what government frameworks promise and what communities receive. Meanwhile, my internship pushed me to sit with a parallel tension. Conducting stakeholder outreach, mapping Sydney's charitable landscape, and drafting expansion proposals taught me to think critically about the difference between what communities actually need and what well-meaning institutions assume they need. This distinction, between imposed solutions and community-led ones, became one of the most important pieces I carried home.

Back on campus, that distinction now anchors the research project I'm developing in my Indigenous Rights course, directly inspired by visiting the Garrigarrang: Sea Country exhibition at the Australian Museum in Sydney. The exhibition celebrates the cultures of Australia's Saltwater People through art, creation stories, and the guiding principles shaping these communities' relationships to sea and country. The exhibition held together two strands of study: The depth of Indigenous knowledge systems and the ongoing stakes of protecting them. That visit inspired a zine I'm creating that connects Indigenous coastal peoples globally through their stories of creation and phenomena.

Sydney showed me that understanding a place means diving into its history, evaluating its power dynamics, and the trust-building process that no proposal or survey can shortcut. Lessons I intend to carry into every organizing space I enter. In some ways, Australia has left me with more questions than answers, which I now feel was the best outcome. The most meaningful experiences abroad don't tie things up neatly; they begin a thread that keeps spinning long after you've returned home.



Valentina Rendon
Class of '28

Sociology Department Admitted Students Contribution



Professor Deidre Hill Butler, teaching a mock class for admitted students and their families, spring 2026.

SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

SENIORS

Where they're going...



SOFIA GRAY

**Medical Device Sales Representative
Orange Theory Fitness Coach**



HANNAH INGBER

Loyola Chicago Law School



ELEANOR WINTRINGER

**University of Illinois Chicago
School of Social Work**

Steinmetz Presenters

Pulling Back The Curtain: Generational Differences Among Gender Gaps In American Public Opinion

Adriana Rittgers

A Critical Assessment of The Juvenile Justice System Through Psychological, Sociological, And Philosophical Lenses

Alex Danieli

Routes of Inequality: Highways Infrastructure in Conjunction with Black Activism on the Racial Wealth Gap in Chicago

Danielle Brown

Barriers and Bridges: Mental Health Access for Low-Income Latino Men in the U.S

Ellie Wintringer

Neuropsychological Function of Older Adults: Role of Alcohol Use and Socioeconomic Inequality

Emma Barnes

"Boys Will Be Boys": The Delayed Onset of ADHD Diagnoses For Women

Elizabeth Cramer

Gender, Not Birth Order, Predicts Stressor Frequency in Emerging Adults

Lora Condon

***Don't Blink* Choreography**

Nathan Ramachandran

Investigating Fatty Acid Uptake in Endothelial Cells Using a 3T3L1 Adipocyte Model

Priya Patel

Concert Choir

Riana Kelley

Senior Piece & Union College Dance Team Performer

Sofia Grey

Engagement and Contestation: Immigration Advocacy and the Paradox of Legal Resistance

Tracy Chen

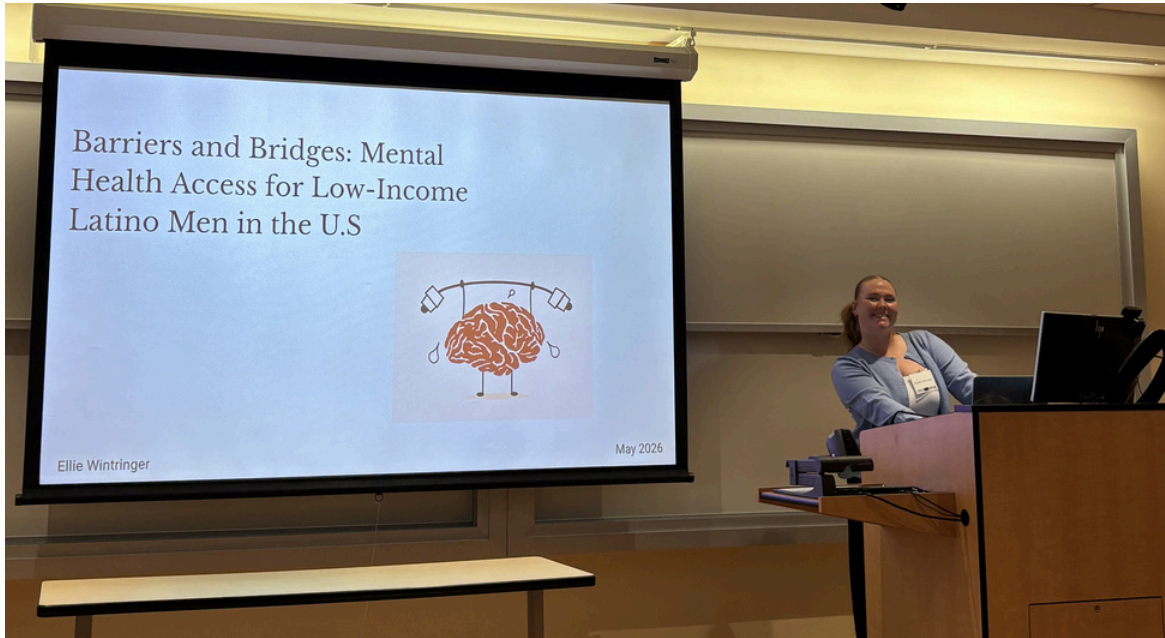
What a Greek Hospital Taught Me About Healthcare Systems and Medical Culture

Trisha Panse

Crimmigration and Immigrant Socialization: How Policing Shapes Perceptions of Belonging, Citizenship, and the American Dream

Wellington Matos

Steinmetz Spotlights



Ellie Wintringer '26 presenting her senior thesis about access to mental health resources for low-income groups.

Following graduation, Ellie will be pursuing her master's in Social Work at the University of Illinois-Chicago's Jane Addams College of Social Work.



Wellington Matos '26 presenting his senior thesis about current immigration policies and their impact on immigrant communities.

Following graduation, Wellington will be taking a gap year and applying to law school with the goal of becoming an immigration attorney.

Fall 2026 Sociology Courses

SOCIOLOGY FALL 2026

SOC-100 INTRO TO
SOCIOLOGY
TTH 9-10:45AM OR
TTH 10:55AM-12:40PM
PROFESSOR STABLEIN

SOC-262 JUVENILE
DELIQUENCY
TTH 1:55-3:40PM
PROFESSOR STABLEIN

SOC-300 QUANTITATIVE
SOCIAL RESEARCH
MWF 8-9:05AM
PROFESSOR COTTER

SOC-359 ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY/MANAGEMENT
PROFESSOR KAPLAN



SOC-362 FAMILY &
COMMUNITY SERVICES
TTH 1:55-4:45PM
PROFESSOR KAPLAN

SOC-372 GLOBAL HEALTH
TTH 10:55AM-12:40PM
PROFESSOR GOLDNER