

Course Title:

The Arts and Science of Relationships: A Sociological Understanding of Human Needs

Course Type: Add-On Certificate Course

Target Group: UG/PG students of Sociology, Social Work, Psychology, Literature, Gender Studies

Duration: 30 hours

Mode: Offline / Hybrid

Assessment: Reflective essays, case studies, group presentations, field-based mini-projects, sociological analysis of popular media

Aims:

This course aims to explore how human needs and interpersonal relationships are socially constructed, regulated, and interpreted across diverse contexts. It interrogates the influence of institutions like family, caste, class, gender, and culture on the formation, sustenance, and transformation of human relationships, fostering a critical understanding of love, care, dependency, power, and identity from a sociological lens.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Examine human relationships through major sociological theories and frameworks.
 2. Analyze how power, inequality, and culture shape patterns of intimacy, care, and conflict.
 3. Understand the role of institutions like family, marriage, kinship, and media in mediating human needs.
 4. Critically assess the changing dynamics of relationships in contemporary society.
 5. Reflect on their own social locations and relational experiences with sociological sensitivity.
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Module Outline with Activities

Module 1: Human Needs and Social Beings

Topics:

- Social construction of needs (basic vs. socially cultivated)
- From Maslow to Marx: Individual needs vs. collective existence
- Relationality in Sociology: Cooley, Mead, Goffman

Activities:

- **Sociological Autobiography:** Students write a reflection on how their social contexts shaped their core emotional/relational needs.

- **Class Dialogue:** "Is love a human need or a cultural invention?"
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Module 2: Institutions of Intimacy: Family, Marriage, and Kinship

Topics:

- Sociological perspectives on the family (Functionalism, Feminism, Conflict Theory)
- Kinship, care, and reproduction of social norms
- Caste, class, gender, and religion in shaping relational roles
- Changing families: LGBTQ+ kinship, live-in relationships, singlehood

Activities:

- **Case Analysis:** Compare traditional vs. emerging kinship structures using real-life examples.
 - **Mapping Exercise:** Students draw sociograms of their kinship and care networks.
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Module 3: Gender, Power, and Emotional Labor

Topics:

- Gendered expectations in love, care, and household roles
- Arlie Hochschild's concept of emotional labor
- The domestic-public divide and its implications
- Intersectionality and relationships

Activities:

- **Role Reversal Role-Play:** Enact a gender-reversed domestic situation.
 - **Mini Ethnography:** Observe emotional labor in a caregiving setting and analyze its gendered dynamics.
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Module 4: Communication, Boundaries, and Social Scripts

Topics:

- Language, performance, and impression management (Goffman)
- Social scripts of intimacy and masculinity/femininity
- Consent, autonomy, and emotional boundaries
- Communication norms across class/caste/urban-rural divides

Activities:

- **Discourse Analysis:** Examine how love and boundaries are portrayed in wedding cards, advertisements, or Instagram captions.

- **Boundary Mapping:** Students draw a map of relational boundaries in different spheres (family, friendship, romantic, institutional).
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Module 5: The Political Economy of Love and Relationships

Topics:

- Marriage markets, dowry, and relational capital
- Capitalism, commodification of relationships (dating apps, gift economy)
- Labor migration and long-distance intimacy
- Globalization and transnational families

Activities:

- **Group Discussion:** "Are we consuming relationships?"
 - **Media Analysis:** Deconstruct the relational economy in marriage reality shows or matrimonial websites.
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Module 6: Conflict, Violence, and Relationship Breakdown

Topics:

- Domestic violence and relational abuse (sociological and legal frameworks)
- Honor, stigma, and control in patriarchal contexts
- Divorce, separation, and redefinition of family
- Intimate partner violence and social support systems

Activities:

- **Case Study Review:** Analyze real or reported cases of relationship conflict through a sociological lens.
 - **Panel Discussion:** Invite NGO or legal experts to discuss support systems for survivors.
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Module 7: The Future of Relationships

Topics:

- Technology and intimacy: dating apps, digital affection, surveillance
- Relationships in the age of individualism and neoliberalism
- Ethical love and solidarity (Bauman, hooks, Noddings)
- The idea of chosen families, collective care, and relational justice

Activities:

- **Student Presentations:** "Imagining Ethical Relationships in the 21st Century"
 - **Documentary Screening:** Watch and discuss a documentary (e.g., *My Love: Six Stories of True Love* or *The Mask You Live In*).
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Final Project Options (Choose One)

- **Sociological Relationship Diary:** A week-long reflective log analyzed using sociological theory.
 - **Visual Ethnography:** Create a photo-essay or video documenting relational practices in a community (e.g., care work, friendship, marriage).
 - **Critical Media Analysis:** Examine how a film or TV series constructs love, power, and need (e.g., *Made in Heaven*, *Her*, *Little Things*).
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Suggested Readings & Media:

1. Arlie Hochschild – *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*
2. bell hooks – *All About Love: New Visions*
3. Anthony Giddens – *The Transformation of Intimacy*
4. Deborah Tannen – *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*
5. Eva Illouz – *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*
6. Bourdieu – *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*
7. Laura Kipnis – *Against Love: A Polemic*
8. Select episodes of podcasts: *Love Matters*, *The Heart*, *Hidden Brain*