We’ll be exploring many topics together over the next month and a half. We chose these because they are fundamental components of sociology. Understanding the social phenomena we’ll be covering will give you a solid foundation for working in any profession you choose, since all work these days involves interacting with other people, and for developing more rewarding personal and professional relationships. We will be talking about a lot of “social problems”, i.e., what’s wrong with the world, in order to spark your interest in social activism—getting involved in trying to fix problems in an area of life you feel passionate about.

To provide you with as complete a perspective as possible, we’ll be looking at different sub-areas within Sociology each week.

**Week 1: Fundamentals of Sociology:** You will gain an understanding of basic sociological concepts, theoretical perspectives and research methods. This will give you the vocabulary you need to explore more specific topics in the coming weeks.

**Week 2: Society, Socialization, and Groups:** You will be exposed to three different sets of ideas about how society works. Additionally you will discover the inner workings of the process by which newcomers to a society learn the social values, rules, beliefs, etc. they need to understand and use, in order to be full-fledged member of their society. You will also learn how sociologists categorize and distinguish between different types of social groups, including groups that work within complex organizations such as bureaucracies.

**Week 3: Stratification and Inequality:** The big topic here is actually inequality, in all its ugly forms. You will learn about how people and their ways of life are rank-ordered by society’s members from most to least desirable, and about why people feel the need to rank order their fellow humans in the first place. You will learn about the roots of prejudice and how it leads to inequality of opportunity for so many people. And, you will meet some people who are working to break down the barriers between different groups and give everyone a chance at a better life.
Week 4: Gender, Sexuality, and Relationships: This week we will talk about controversial topics such as gender identity and sexual orientation. We’ll also explore the nature of close relationships including friendships and romantic relationships.

Week 5: Education, Work, and Health: This week, you’ll hear from some educators about problems they see in our system of public education and get their ideas on what can be done to remedy those problems. Dr. Whitaker will give you some career-preparation pointers, to give you an advantage over other applicants when you begin your next job search. Through the week’s videos you will learn about a few health problems that have reached the level of social problems - for example, eating disorders and heroin addiction - and about what people can do to help themselves or others who are suffering from such conditions. You will also meet a psychologist who has some tips on how to handle the stress of everyday life.

Week 6: Authority, Deviance, and Social Control: This week you will learn about the conceptual differences between “power” and “authority,” “conformity” and “obedience,” and about the distinctive way that sociologists define “deviance.” You will see excerpts from a famous video, Stanley Milgram’s study of “Obedience”. Finally, you will learn about the sociological perspectives on deviance, crime and social control.

Week 7: Social Change: This week you will learn about various types of social problems, change-oriented groups and the process of social change from a sociological perspective. Through video you will meet social activists who, on the basis of their own experience, provide tips on how you can get started in building a network of persons who will work together to bring about a type of change you want to affect.