WSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

Sociology in Real Life:

Illuminating Transformative Times



Waukesha County Technical College 11/6/26

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President's Welcome Message

Hello and welcome to the 2026 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Sociological Association! Our conference supports collaboration across institutions and disciplines. Students, teachers, and researchers will discuss and explore together.

This year's theme is about using the tools of social science to shed light on the many drastic and disorienting changes reverberating through our world. Thematic sessions, and a keynote address by Dr. Tarryl Janik, offer thoughtful insights into many of the sociopolitical forces shaping and responding to a rapidly evolving cultural and legal environment. Your contributions and participation add a wealth of rich perspectives to our program as well. Several presentations, discussion panels, and a poster session explore environmental issues, politics and religion, identities and inequalities, healthcare, criminal justice, and best practices for teaching sociology in the contemporary field of higher education.

Gratitude goes to Waukesha County Technical College for offering to host our conference this year. WCTC has recently entered into curricular partnerships with several four-year colleges and universities, and has expanded its offerings to include associates degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, now offering a broad menu of social science courses for students to explore. Special thanks goes to WCTC's Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Bethany Leonard, for a generous grant to help cover some of our expenses for the conference.

May this year's conference inspire and challenge, as we share research findings and teaching insights between novice and veteran social scientists!

– Jeffrey Kroll, WSA President

Conference Schedule at a Glance

8:00am – Registration begins (with coffee!) in the lobby of the RTA center
9:00-10:15am – Session 1
10:30-11:45am – Session 2
12:00 noon – Luncheon begins in C-051
12:45pm – Keynote address
1:30pm – Poster session
2:00-3:15pm – Session 3
3:30-4:15pm – WSA Executive Committee business meeting

WSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

📊 *Session 1 (9:00-10:15am)*

Session 1A – **Science & Technology** (C-053) Presider: Paige Miller

Quantum Mechanics and an EcoSociological Imagination: A Paradigmatic Challenge – Alecea Standlee (Gettysburg College), Andy Plotkin (Palm Beach State College), and Bill Ramcheck (Sociological Imagination Movement)

Teaching Against the Machine While Teaching with It: Feminist Pedagogy and the Contradictions of Critical AI Literacy – Krista McQueeney (UW-Whitewater) and Yuka Doherty (UW-Whitewater)

Session 1B – **Political Sociology** (C-051) Presider: Jeffrey Kroll

Divisive Concepts, Unified Tactics: A Multi-State Discourse Analysis of Legislative Anti-DEI Efforts – Jeffrey Kroll (UW-Milwaukee)

Policing Sovereignty: Conditional Recognition and Jurisdictional Siphoning in Tribal-State Law Enforcement Agreements – Brieanna Watters (UW-River Falls)

Arendt, Paxton, and MAGA: The Problem of Democratic Backsliding in an Era of Growing Social Isolation and Loneliness – Marcus Britton (UW-Milwaukee)

Session 1C – **Sociological Imagination** (C-055) – Presider: Jeff Sweat

Workshop / Q&A. The WSA puts out *Sociological Imagination*, the longest continuously published peer-reviewed state sociology journal in America. Join our editor for an interactive conversation about upcoming editions of the journal, topics we're looking to publish on, the process for submitting a paper, how to review for the journal, and possibilities for guest-editing a special issue.

WSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

📊 *Session 2 (10:30-11:45am)*

Session 2A – **Environments** (C-051) Presider: Ray Hitchison

Global Urban Sociology – Ray Hutchison (UW-Green Bay)

Tropical Storm Helene: Western North Carolina and the Unnatural Disasters that Remain – Jacqueline Clark (Ripon College)

Everyday Evolution: Your Daily Choices Create BIG Changes – Bill Ramcheck (Sociological Imagination Movement)

Session 2B – **Religion & Ethics** (C-053) Presider: Wayne Thompson

Media Impact on Religion and Politics: A View from a College Campus – Wayne Thompson (Carthage College), Jeff Walz (Concordia University), and Tim Macafee (Concordia University)

Food for Thought: A Qualitative Study of Motivations for Plant-Based Diets – Samantha Vetter (UW-La Crosse)

Session 2C – **Redesigning the Curriculum, part I** (C-055) Presider: Paige Miller

A Focus on NACE Competencies and Transferable Skills – Paige Miller (UW-River Falls)

Building Connections: A "Speed Dating" Matching Approach – Tricia Davis and Melissa Hayslip (UW-River Falls) with Brandon Carlton, Julia Cline, Tanner Kaufman, Jaycee Lisowski, Izzy Moen, and Nathan Stark.

Interteaching in a First-Year Seminar Course for Sociology and Criminology Majors – Melissa Hayslip (UW-River Falls)

WSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

🍲 *Luncheon (12 noon)*

Rooms C-051 and C-057 will be merged into a banquet hall

👋 *Welcoming Remarks (12:20pm)*

WSA Welcome – Jeffrey Kroll, WSA President

WCTC Welcome – Bethany Leonard, WCTC Dean of the School of Arts & Sciences

🏆 *Awards Ceremony (12:30pm)*

Presented by Paige Miller, UW-River Falls

Student paper; Teaching; Research

🔑 *Keynote Address (12:45pm)*

Negotiating the Sacred: Psychedelics and the Law– Dr. Tarryl Janik

> What happens when a psychedelic church is forced to explain itself to the state? Drawing on ethnographic research and legal analysis of a U.S. ayahuasca church, Dr. Janik (UW-Whitewater) will explain how encounters with the D.E.A. reshaped ritual practice, ethical responsibility, and religious authority, revealing the law as not just a limit on religion, but as a force that actively helps produce it.

🎴 *Poster Session (1:30pm)*

- **Why Don't You Smile More?: How Gen Z Women Process Harassment** – Alexandra Rivera (Ripon College)
- **Student Perceptions of the Long-Term Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic** – Gabriel Bukove (UW-Whitewater)
- **Factors Shaping Perceptions of Crime** – Andrew Karls (UW-River Falls)

WSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

📊 *Session 3 (2:00-3:15pm)*

Session 3A – **Identities & Inequalities** (C-051) Presider: Michael Friedson

Has Human Thought Been Commodified? An Inquiry on the Increasing Polarization of Class Relations – Michael Friedson (UW-Whitewater) with Axel Herner and Anola Lessard

Global Financialization and the Distribution of Wealth: A Cross-National Study of the Rich-to-Middle Wealth Gap – Rivka Comrov (UW-Milwaukee)

Management of Gender-Based Risk and Stigma in the Emerging Sport of Women's Freestyle Wrestling – Michael Friedson and Jess Walz (UW-Whitewater)

Session 3B – **Mental / Health** (C-053) Presider: Jeff Sweat

Shame of Disclosure: Stories and Research Notes - Jennifer Huck (Carroll University)

Predictors of Stigma as a Reason for Unmet Substance Use Treatment Needs – Rachel Davidson (UW-La Crosse)

Session 3C – **Redesigning the Curriculum, part II** (C-055) – Presider: Desiree Wiesen-Martin

Beyond Course Outcomes: Building Career-Ready Skills Through Experiential Assessment – Desiree Wiesen-Martin (UW-River Falls) with Izzy Moen, Emma Myrvold, Julia Cline, Taylah Manners, Nathan Stark, Julia Siefert, Grace Foster, and Meadow Beyer

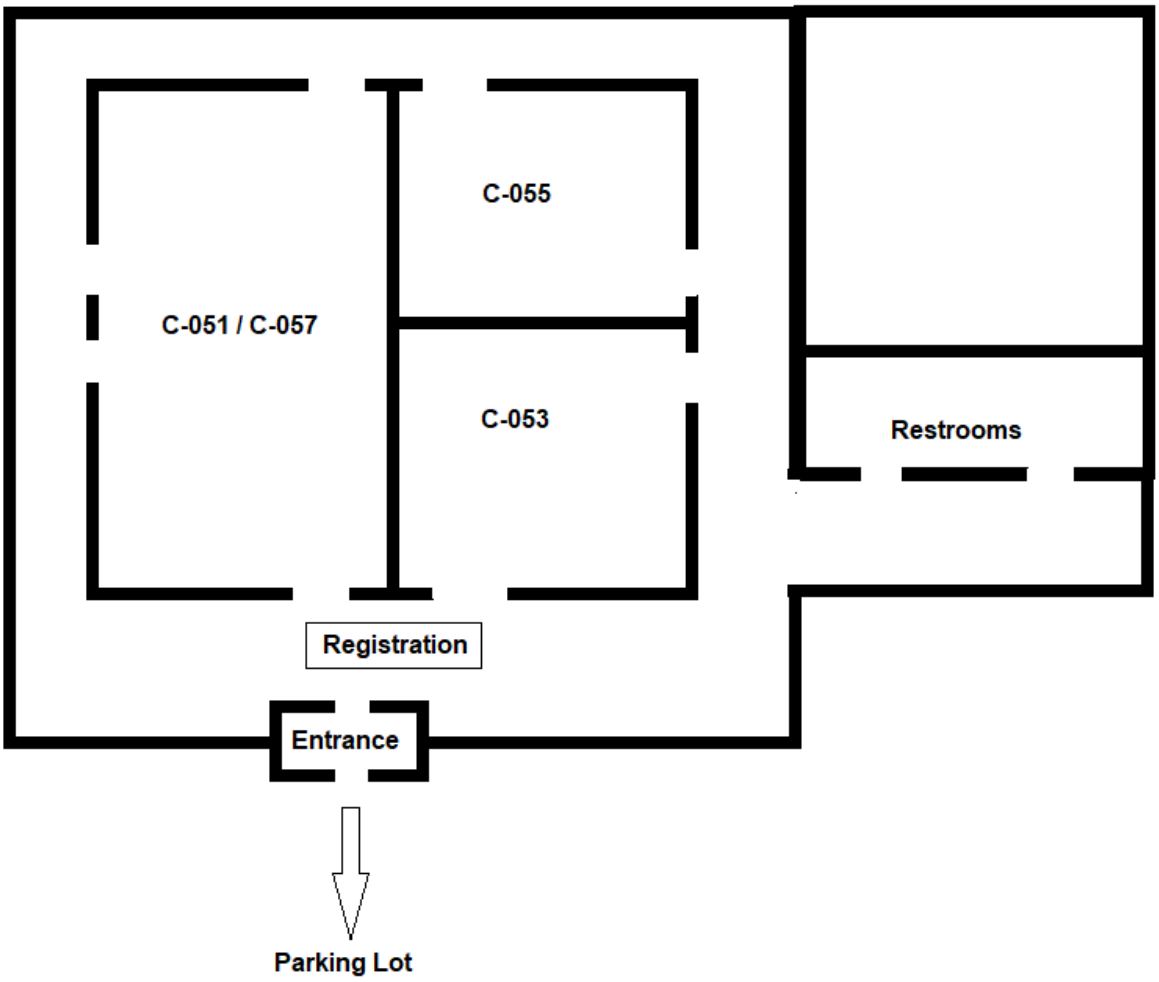
"You Can't Tell by Looking:" Student Perspectives Before and After a Privilege Walk Activity - Dana Atwood, Ray Hutchison, and Valerie Murrenus-Pilmaier (UW-Green Bay)

Structured Reflection and Metacognition: Testing the Efficacy of Exam Wrappers as a Classroom Exercise – Adam Driscoll (UW-La Crosse)

💼 **WSA Business Meeting** (C-051) *(3:30pm)*

WSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

Annotated map of WCTC's RTA conference center



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WSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

Please thank the members of the WSA executive team for their time and effort planning this conference, and their enthusiasm for keeping our organization moving forward. Only with their generous volunteer service can we continue to shine brightly the "lamp of inquiry" to reveal the social forces shaping our world. If you'd like to get more involved, please contact us at... theWSA@live.com

<u>WSA Executive Committee</u>:

President – Jeffrey Kroll

President-elect – *vacant*

Secretary – Paige Miller

Treasurer – Desiree Wiesen-Martin

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Journal Co-Editors – Jeff Sweat and Erik Withers

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Past President – Wayne Thompson

See you next year!