

**Call for Papers for the 2026 Annual Meeting of the**

**North Central Sociological Association**

**Conference Theme**

# **The Future of Sociology**

**April 17th and 18th, 2026**

**Sheraton Pittsburgh Hotel at Station Square  
300 W. Station Square Dr.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219**



# NCSA 2026 Annual Meeting Conference Theme

## The Future of Sociology

Public confidence in core institutions is at historically low levels. There is pervasive distrust of empirical evidence, and a backlash against knowledge-producing and knowledge-disseminating activities such as we pursue in academia.

According to Gallup, a majority (68%) of Americans now believe that higher education is headed in the wrong direction. Little more than a third (36%) express a high level of confidence in U.S. colleges and universities, down from 57% only a decade ago. Among those survey respondents who say that they have very little confidence in higher education, the most frequent reasons given are related to “political agendas,” followed by “wrong focus/teaching the wrong things” and “cost/expenses.”

Sociology has not been immune to these trends. In the current national climate, a number of actors and institutions are strongly anti-sociological in focus and actions around issues we claim as central to our discipline. Our enrollments have been falling. Departments are being shuttered and programs discontinued. In some places, politicians have moved to ban the teaching of sociology altogether.

The field of sociology, as well as the larger academy, should rightfully defend itself against unfair attacks. But it is also important that we take any valid criticisms seriously—such as a need for a better pipeline from a sociology degree to a job, concerns about a lack of viewpoint diversity in the field, the need for better and more rigorous graduate preparation, flaws in the peer review process, and more. We urgently need to determine how to address these criticisms in order to build a vibrant sociology that survives and thrives for years to come. This will make our discipline healthier and more sustainable and hopefully reverse enrollment declines. It is no guarantee that it will slow political attacks, but if it helps restore the public’s confidence in us then it may make it more difficult for politicians to unfairly target us.

So, what is the future of sociology? Which criticisms are valid? What should be done to address them? How do we reorient sociology so that it is stronger and more sustainable in the long term? In short: where should sociology go from here?

**President Barbara Jones Denison**  
**Shippensburg University (emeritus)**  
**NCSA President, 2025-2026**

Full Conference Information Online  
[2026 Annual Meeting - NCSA](#)



# NCSA 2026 Annual Meeting

## FEATURED SPEAKERS

### 2026 Ruth and John Useem Plenary Address

### Rigor or Ruin: Sociology's Reckoning Has Arrived



**Lawrence Eppard**, Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Connors Institute for Nonpartisan Research & Civic Engagement at Shippensburg University ([ConnorsInstitute.org](http://ConnorsInstitute.org)). He has published several books, including *The Poisoning of the American Mind*, *Virtuous Nonsense: Progressive America's Epistemic Crisis*, *Seeing America Clearly: Heterodox Reflections on Current Issues*, *Poorly Understood: What America Gets Wrong About Poverty, On Inequality and Freedom*, and *Rugged Individualism and the Misunderstanding of American Inequality*. He is also the host of the Connors Institute's *Utterly Moderate* Podcast and regular contributor to their Substack the Connors Journal.

### 2026 John F. Schnabel Award Winner-Address

### Teaching with Hope: A Sociological Approach to Dark Times

**Colleen Wynn** is an [Associate Professor and Chair of Sociology](#) at the [University of Indianapolis](#). She is also the Co-Director for the [Community Research Center](#) (CRC) housed in the Department of Sociology at the University of Indianapolis.

Originally from Louisville, KY, she holds a Ph.D. in sociology from the University at Albany, SUNY, and a Master of Arts and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Western Kentucky University.

Her research interests include urban sociology, families and households, demography, and housing. Her teaching interests include introductory sociology, research methods, urban sociology, family sociology, and demography.



# TYPES OF SESSIONS

**Length** - All sessions last 75 minutes.

**Topic Session:** A topic session is designed for presentations and discussions focused on a specific subject. A *thematic session* refers to a session that is specifically oriented toward the conference theme.

**Closed Session:** A closed session requires an organizer to select a topic and format. The organizer will recruit all the participants for this type of session. A closed session may be of any format.

**Academics-Meet-Activists:** Academics-Meet-Activists sessions are closed sessions. An organizer recruits an activist or organization as well as academics to discuss the intersections of academic research and activist initiatives as they relate to a specific social movement or social justice issue.

**Author-Meets-Critics:** Author-Meets-Critics are closed sessions. An organizer recruits an author of a recently published book, article or chapter and 2 to 4 critics to participate in a discussion about the significance of the work to the sociological field.

**Panel:** Panels are closed sessions. An organizer recruits subject-area experts to discuss a topic. Panelists' brief presentations are followed by discussion between the speakers and a Q&A facilitated by the organizer.

**Paper:** Paper sessions may be closed or open. Paper sessions consist of three to five presentations that revolve around a common theme. Conference organizers will place papers with a common theme into a session.

**Workshop:** Workshops are interactive, hands-on closed sessions designed by organizers to develop specific professional competencies through interactive activities and discussions. The skills and tools presented in the session should be clear and have high utility for the workshop attendees.

**Undergraduate Paper Presentations:** These are open sessions designed for undergraduate students to present their research. Please see the "Undergraduate Paper Presentation Submissions" section for more information.



# WHAT TO SUBMIT

## Individual Paper – Research

If you want to present or discuss your ongoing or completed research project, submit it as an individual research paper. The program committee will organize the individual submissions into coherent sessions. Include a title and a brief abstract (no more than 150 words) in your submission. Please indicate the general topic that best fits your submission (see list on page 7). If your submission does not fit any of the general research topics, choose the “RESEARCH: other” option. For questions and more information contact Ashley Hutson at [afeely@butler.edu](mailto:afeely@butler.edu).

## Individual Paper – Teaching

If you want to give a presentation on a teaching topic, submit it as an individual teaching paper. The program committee will organize the individual presentations into coherent sessions. The program committee will organize the individual submissions into coherent sessions. Include a title and a brief abstract (no more than 150 words) in your submission. If your submission does not fit any of the general teaching topics, choose the “TEACHING: other” option. For questions and more information please contact Greg Kordsmeier at [gkordsme@iu.edu](mailto:gkordsme@iu.edu).

## Closed Session – Research or Teaching

If you are interested in proposing *and* organizing a closed session, submit the title of the session, a brief abstract for the session (no more than 150 words), and the names and emails of all the participants. If the session consists of papers, submit the titles of everyone’s presentation and a brief abstract for each presentation (no more than 150 words). For questions and more information please contact Gail McGuire at [gmcguire@iu.edu](mailto:gmcguire@iu.edu) (research sessions) or Greg Kordsmeier at [gkordsme@iu.edu](mailto:gkordsme@iu.edu) (teaching sessions).



## SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

**All submissions (except undergraduate papers) must be completed and received by the NCSA no later than 5pm EST on December 1, 2025.**

1. Review the suggested topics for submissions found in this prospectus to determine if your submission should be considered a research or teaching proposal AND which topic the program committee should consider when assigning your presentation to a session. We make every effort to schedule sessions of the same or similar topic at different times, so they do not conflict with each other.
2. For **individual research or teaching papers**, submit information **online [here](#)**. Please have on hand all the information required for the submission (see “What to Submit”). We welcome abstracts for ongoing or completed projects. We do not collect finished papers.
3. For **closed sessions**, submit information **online [here](#)** Please have the closed session submission form completed and ready to upload when you submit the proposal (see “What to Submit”).

## UNDERGRADUATE PAPER PRESENTATION SUBMISSIONS

The NCSA welcomes the participation of undergraduate students. For more than a decade, undergraduate students have presented their work at the NCSA conference. *Undergraduate presenters must register for the conference as a UG registration WITH membership.* Conference registration includes student membership benefits and access to the entire annual meeting.

The submission deadline for undergraduates is January 10, 2026. Please include the author(s)' first and last names, institutional affiliations, most frequently checked email, and an abstract up to 150 words. Undergraduate submissions will be placed in a topic-relevant session in one of the organized Undergraduate Sessions. For questions regarding undergraduate student participation in the conference, contact Mellisa Holtzman at [mkholtzman@bsu.edu](mailto:mkholtzman@bsu.edu).



## Proposal Submission Links

## Research and Teaching Paper Submissions

[Get Started](#)

## Closed Session Submissions

[Get Started](#)

## Undergraduate Paper Submissions

[Get Started](#)

## RESEARCH TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Aging and the Life Course  
 Animals and Society  
 Applied Sociology  
 Children and Youth  
 Collective Behavior and Social Movements  
 Community Based/Participatory Research  
 Crime and Deviance  
 Disability  
 Education  
 Environmental Sociology  
 Family  
 Food  
 Gender and Sex  
 Global and Transnational Sociology  
 Health and Medical Sociology  
 Historical & Comparative Sociology  
 Immigration & Migration  
 LGBTQIA+ Studies  
 Media Studies

Methods  
 Politics  
 Popular Culture  
 Poverty  
 Race and Ethnicity  
 Religion  
 Rural Sociology  
 Social Justice and Human Rights  
 Social Stratification  
 Sociology of Sport  
 Theory  
 Urban Sociology  
 Work and Occupation  
 RESEARCH: Other

## TEACHING TOPICS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Active Learning/Student Centered Learning  
 Assessment of Learning  
 Capstone Projects–Best Practices  
 Challenges in Teaching  
 Choosing Textbooks and other Course Materials  
 Community College Instruction  
 Community Engagement and the Classroom  
 Curriculum Design  
 Equity and Inclusion in the Classroom  
 Ethics and the Classroom  
 Group work–Benefits and Challenges  
 High Impact Practices  
 Innovative Teaching  
 Mentoring Retention Strategies  
 Service and Project–based Learning  
 Student Writing  
 Teaching Difficult Topics  
 Teaching Large Classes  
 Teaching Online Classes  
 Teaching Sociology through Film/Media/News

Technology in and outsides of the Classroom  
Teaching Research Methods and/or Statistics  
Teaching Theory  
Undergraduate Research  
TEACHING: other



## PRESENTER POLICIES

Participating in a conference program should inspire pride in one's work. With that professional pride comes professional responsibilities. Among those responsibilities are paying NCSA membership and conference registration fees and informing the program committee if one is unable to take part in the conference after being accepted onto the program.

Please take a moment to review the following policies before you submit a proposal to ensure that you are adequately prepared for your presenter role/s:

### PARTICIPANT APPEARANCE LIMITS & SCHEDULING REQUESTS

- An individual may be listed on the program no more than two (2) times per annual meeting unless they have the permission of the Program Chair, Gail McGuire.
- Scheduling requests must be made by December 20, 2025.

### ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSAL INTO THE FINAL PROGRAM

- The lead author of a proposal will be notified via email of their proposal's status prior to January 20, 2026.

### REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT

**All attendees, presenters, organizers and speakers are required to pay the conference registration fee.** Registration for the conference includes one year of membership in the NCSA.

Conference fees help to pay for the venue and all related services as well as fund NCSA's operating expenses throughout the year. NCSA seeks to keep costs to a minimum and thus affordable to as many people as possible.

- **Registration Requirement:** All program participants are required to register for the conference; registration for the conference includes one year of membership in NCSA.
- **Non-Presenting Co-Authors:** Non-presenting co-authors are not required to register if they are not attending the conference. However, if they attend the conference, they are required to register for the conference and pay the applicable fees.
- **Registration Deadline:** All program presenters must register for the conference no later than thirty (30) days prior to the first day of the conference. Those that do not register (30) days prior to the first day of the conference will be removed from the final program. Paid registration is required to access all sessions.
- **Receipt:** We recommend every attendee save the emailed receipt as their record of registration. Have a copy with you when checking in at the association conference desk in case of questions.
- **Cancellations:** NCSA's policy is that any registration may be canceled without penalty up to thirty (30) calendar days prior to the first day of conference. The requirement of registration fees helps to guarantee the presence of presenters listed in the final program. This policy hopes to reduce the number of last-minute drops and no-show presenters, thus greatly increasing the quality of the program for all attendees.

## **PRESENTATION CANCELLATION AFTER ACCEPTANCE INTO THE PROGRAM**

- **Cancellations:** To cancel, presenters should notify the Program Chair, Gail McGuire by email [[gmcguire@iu.edu](mailto:gmcguire@iu.edu)] as soon as possible. Cancellations must be received at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the first day of the conference. If you do not attend the conference without canceling, you are still responsible for paying registration fees.
- **Substitute Presenters:** If you are unable to present, but a co-author is available, contact the Program Chair, Gail McGuire at [gmcguire@iu.edu](mailto:gmcguire@iu.edu) with the name of the presenter so that the session is not removed from the program.
- **Refunds:** All cancellations that qualify for a refund will be credited through a refund check payment or credit to the card used to make the original payment.
- **Last Minute Cancellations:** We understand that unforeseen events outside of a presenter's control (e.g., medical issues, family emergencies, and unforeseen travel problems) may prevent them from presenting as scheduled. In these situations, email Gail McGuire at [gmcguire@iu.edu](mailto:gmcguire@iu.edu), so that we can remove you from the program. Conference registration refunds will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- **No Shows:** Presenters who do not attend their scheduled session and/or do not notify the Program Chair, Gail McGuire [[gmcguire@iu.edu](mailto:gmcguire@iu.edu)], will be considered a 'no show.' Registration

fees for 'no shows' are not refundable. Failure to give scheduled presentations without adequate notice is disruptive and leave gaps in the conference program. This diminishes the experience of conference attendees.

## REFUNDS

A processing fee and the 2026 membership dues will be deducted from any refunds made. All refund requests must be made by the attendee or credit card holder. Refund requests must include the name of the attendee and/or transaction number. Please let us know if you would like to donate your registration fee in lieu of a refund. For payments received by credit or debit cards, the same credit/debit card will be refunded. Refunds will not be available for registrants who choose not to attend the conference.

Refund requests must be submitted via email to Anjel Stough-Hunter at [stoughhunter@capital.edu](mailto:stoughhunter@capital.edu).



## CONFERENCE DETAILS

### Conference Contacts

General program questions: Gail McGuire, [gmcguire@iu.edu](mailto:gmcguire@iu.edu)  
Special format sessions: Gail McGuire, [gmcguire@iu.edu](mailto:gmcguire@iu.edu)  
Research sessions: Ashley Hutson at [afeely@butler.edu](mailto:afeely@butler.edu)  
Teaching sessions: Greg Kordsmeier, [gkordsme@iu.edu](mailto:gkordsme@iu.edu)  
Undergraduate papers: Mellisa Holtzman, [mkholtzman@bsu.edu](mailto:mkholtzman@bsu.edu)  
Registration questions: Anjel Stough-Hunter, [stoughhunter@capital.edu](mailto:stoughhunter@capital.edu)  
Hotel/conference arrangements: Erin Baker Geise, [ebakerNCSA@gmail.com](mailto:ebakerNCSA@gmail.com)

### Important Dates

Aug 19, 2025	Online portal opens for all submissions
Dec 1, 2025	Deadline for all submissions EXCEPT undergraduate presentations
Jan 5, 2026	Deadline for undergraduate presentation submissions
Jan 25, 2026	Target date for 2026 preliminary session list to be posted online
March 25, 2026	Reservation for hotel room block closes
March 25, 2026	Early conference registration closes



## HOTEL REGISTRATION LINKS

### Book with Sheraton

Our conference hotel is the Sheraton Pittsburgh Hotel at Station Square. We have secured a block of rooms for the evenings of Thursday, April 16 through Sunday, April 18 at the rate of \$179 per night plus 14% tax. Room rates are guaranteed through March 18, 2026, or until the room block is fully reserved. For those driving to the conference, parking is available at the hotel, there is parking at the hotel for a \$34 surcharge. The Sheraton is a smoke-free hotel. Smoking is not allowed within hotel guest rooms, restaurants, meeting rooms, or any public area. There are designated smoking areas along the perimeter of the hotel property. Online reservation lines will open December 1, 2025.

**Watch for booking link 12/1/2025**

## REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE

All program participants must be NCSA members and register for the conference unless otherwise notified. You may pay your 2026 membership dues and conference registration fees in one simple payment step any time between December 1 and March 5. Fees for the 2026 conference INCLUDE your 2026 membership dues. Late and/or onsite registration fees are higher. Fees for 2026 remain the same as 2024. In 2022, we introduced a tiered professional registration structure. For more information on this year's fees, please visit our conference registration page. Online registration will open December 1, 2025.

**Watch for registration link 12/1/2025**

## AV RESOURCES

Unless prior arrangements are made with the session presider, presenters should bring their laptops loaded with their presentation on the desktop *and* saved to a Flash Drive. We encourage panels to upload their presentations to the presider's laptop to facilitate speedy transitions. If presenters choose to use their personal laptops instead of the presider's, they are responsible for supplying an HDMI adaptor compatible with their device.

Breakout rooms will contain a projector and screen unless the format type prohibits the use of technology.

## SAFE SENDER LIST

Please add the following email addresses to your safe senders list to ensure you receive conference updates and requests: [gmcguire@iu.edu](mailto:gmcguire@iu.edu), [ebakerNCSA@gmail.com](mailto:ebakerNCSA@gmail.com), and [stoughhunter@capital.edu](mailto:stoughhunter@capital.edu)

