

Ara Francis, Ph.D.

Curriculum Vitae, Fall 2026

Professor of Sociology
Department of Sociology & Anthropology
College of the Holy Cross
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Education

- 2008 Ph.D. Sociology, University of California-Davis
- 2003 M.A. Sociology, University of California-Davis
- 2000 B.A. Sociology, University of Colorado, Boulder, summa cum laude

Appointments

- 2026-Present Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, College of the Holy Cross.
- 2016-2026 Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, College of the Holy Cross.
- 2017-2020 Director, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, College of the Holy Cross.
- 2009-2016 Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, College of the Holy Cross.
- 2008-2009 Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of California-Davis.
- 2001-2008 Teaching Assistant, Department of Sociology, University of California-Davis.
- 2000 English Instructor, Huaiyin Teacher's College, Jiangsu, China.

Areas of Study

Death and dying
The death positive movement
Care work
Normalcy and social control
Sociology of knowledge
Qualitative methods

Courses

Current Rotation

The Sociological Perspective
Deviance, Normalcy, and Social Control
Self and Society
Sociology of Death and Dying
Death Positivity, White Femininity (senior seminar)

Out of Current Rotation

Sociology of the End of Life (senior seminar)
Why We Age & How We Die (cross-disciplinary college honors course co-taught with Holy Cross Professor of Biology Michelle Mondoux)
End-of-Life Care (college honors course)
Death and Society: Making Sense of Mortality, fall semester first-year course
Death and Society: Caring for our Dead and Dying, spring semester first-year course
The Sociology of Trouble
Sociology of Family
Qualitative Methods
Social Relationships

Publications

Recent publications

2025. "Death Positivity, White Respectability: A Critical History of Cicely Saunders and the Hospice Model of Care." *Critical Sociology*, Special Issue on Death and Dying, first published online June 26, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205251350>.
2025. "The Staying Power of Analytical Distance: Lyn Lofland's Contributions to the Sociology of Death, Dying, and Bereavement." *Symbolic Interaction*, Special Issue on Lyn Lofland's Intellectual Legacy 48(2): 224-240.
2025. "Editor's Introduction," with E. O. Silva. *Symbolic Interaction*, Special Issue on Lyn Lofland's Intellectual Legacy 48(2): 191-201.
2025. "Critical Approaches to Death Studies: A Conversation," with K. Fletcher and P. Maxwell. *Mortality*, Special Issue on Innovation 30(2): 569-584.
2024. "Social Constructionism in the Symbolic Interactionist Tradition" pp. 162-174 in Wayne Brekhus, Thomas DeGloma, and William Force (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Symbolic Interaction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
2022. "Gender and Legitimacy in Personal Service Occupations: The Case of End-of-Life Doulas and Death Midwives." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 51(3): 376-406.
2019. "Epilogue" Pp. 83-99 in *The Craft of Dying: The Modern Face of Death* (Anniversary Edition), by Lyn H. Lofland. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press

Book

2015. *Family Trouble: Middle-Class Parents, Children's Problems, and the Disruption of Everyday Life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Articles, book chapters, & essays

2015. "Hurricane Katrina, Parenting Trouble, and the Politics of Suffering," with D. Harvey, Pp. 401-411 in R. Anderson (ed.) *World Suffering Book*. New York:
2013. "Family Trouble, Methods Trouble: Qualitative Research and the Methodological Divide" Pp. 59-69 in J.R. McCarthy, C. Hooper, and V. Gillies (eds.) *Family Troubles? Exploring Changes and Challenges in the Family Lives of Children and Young People*. Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.
2013. "Normal Problems or Problem Children? Parents and the Micro-Politics of Deviance and Disability" Pp. 85-96 in J.R. McCarthy, C. Hooper, and V. Gillies (eds.) *Family Troubles? Exploring Changes and Challenges in the Family Lives of Children and Young People*. Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.

2012. "The Dynamics of Family Trouble: Middle-Class Parents Whose Children Have Problems." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 41(4): 371-401.

[Reprint: 2013. "The Dynamics of Family Trouble," pp. 434-443 in S. Cahill, K. Sandstrom, and C. Froyum (eds.) *Inside Social Life: Readings in Sociological Psychology and Microsociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.]

2012. "Stigma in an Era of Anxious Parenting and Medicalisation: How Proximity and Culpability Shape Middle-Class Parents' Experiences of Disgrace." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 34(6): 927-942.

2010. "Losing the 'Normal' Child: Ramifications for Middle-Class Mothers." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative* 1(2): 68-83.

Book reviews, encyclopedia entries, and other short pieces of writing

2022. "Obituary: Lyn H. Lofland." *Member News and Notes*, Newsletter of the American Sociological Association, November Issue.

2019. "Discreditable Stigma," with S. R. Chaudoir and V. A. Earnshaw in G. Ritzer (Ed.), *Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (2nd Ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

2017. "Book Review: Doulas and Intimate Labor: Boundaries, Bodies and Birth." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*, 8 (1-2).

2014. "Book Review: Depression: Integrating Science, Culture, and Humanities." *Teaching Sociology*, 42(3): 252-253.

2013. "On (Not) Practicing What We Preach," with J. Bakehorn, *Pedagogies Essay, Contexts*, 12(4): 80-83.

2011. "Book Review: Self, Attitudes, and Emotion Work: Western Social Psychology and Eastern Zen Buddhism Confront Each Other." *Teaching Sociology* 39(2): 216-217.

2010. "Mothering Children With Disabilities" in A. O'Reilly (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Motherhood*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Public Facing Work

2024. "The Craft of Dying, a Discussion with Dr. Ara Francis," Death and Tea Podcast.

2022. "When Medical Care Dehumanizes Dying People, 'Heart' is Valuable Commodity," invited blog post for *Work in Progress: Sociology on the Economy, Work and Inequality*, hosted by the American Sociological Association.

2016. "Helicopter Parents Aren't the Problem," blog post for *Psychology Today*.

2016. "Is My Child Normal? The question can do more harm than good," invited blog entry for *Psychology Today*.

Conference Participation

August 2026. "Connection or Conversion: Revisiting International Histories of Hospice," paper presented at the Sociologists for Palestine Conference (in protest of the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association). New York City.

August 2026. "The Transnational Lives of Dead Bodies," session organized for the Sociologists for Palestine Conference (in protest of the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association). New York City.

March 2026. "The Critical Sociology of Death," co-organizer of the five-session mini conference, held at the annual meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society. Washington D.C.

June 2025. "Decolonizing Death Studies," co-organizer and participant in the roundtable session, held at the annual meetings of the Center for Death and Society. Fully remote.

August 2023. "The Staying Power of Analytical Distance: Lyn Lofland's Contributions to The Sociology of Death, Dying, and Bereavement," paper presented at the annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. Philadelphia, PA.

August 2023. "The Intellectual Legacy of Lyn Lofland," co-organizer of the session held at the annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. Philadelphia, PA.

May 2023. "'Bottom Line Blackness': Revising Death Awareness Discourse in Light of Black American Experience," paper presented at the annual meetings of the Center for Death and Society. Fully remote.

November 2022. "Where is the Sociology of Death, Dying, and Bereavement?" paper presented at the International Conference of the Association for Humanist Sociology. Mexico City, Mexico.

September 2019. "Gender, Class, and Race in the Occupational Narratives of Alternative Death Care Pioneers," paper presented at the 14th International Conference on the Social Context of Death, Dying, and Disposal. Bath, UK.

March 2019. "Death & Dying," invited panelist for this Presidential Thematic Conversation, held at the annual meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society. Boston, MA.

June 2018. "Gender and Legitimacy in Alternative Death Care," poster presented at the annual meetings of the Center for Death and Society, University of Bath. Bath, UK.

February 2018. "The Professionalization of Personal Care: The Case of Death Midwives and End-of-Life Doulas," paper presented at a mini conference on carework at the annual meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society, Baltimore, MD.

August 2017. "'How are you going to teach heart?' Alternative death care and the dilemma of professionalization," paper presented at the annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. Montreal, Canada.

February 2017. "Death Midwives and End-of-Life Doulas: An Exploratory Study," paper presented at the annual meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society. Philadelphia, PA.

February 2015. "'Those things you just kind of assume': Middle-Class Parents, Children's Problems, and Taken-for-Grantedness in Everyday Life," invited paper presented at the annual meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society, Culture and Cognition Mini-Conference. New York, NY.

August 2014. "Deviance and Disruption," organizers of this session held at the annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. San Francisco, CA.

July 2014. "A Tale of Two Sorrows: Hurricane Katrina, Parenting Trouble, and the Politics of Suffering," paper presented by coauthor Daina Harvey at the International Sociological Association Meetings. Yokohama, Japan.

July 2014. "Troubled Youth, Troubled Families?" organizer of this session held at the International Sociological Association Meetings, Family Research Section. Yokohama, Japan.

August 2013. "Interactionism, Emotion, and the Sociology of Suffering," work-in-progress presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Society, Emotions Section Roundtable. New York, NY.

March 2013. "The Sociology of Suffering," organizer of this session held at the annual meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society. Boston, MA.

August 2012. "Mom Can't Walk the Talk: The Chasm Between Sociological Knowledge and Lived Experience," paper presented at the annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. Denver, CO.

April 2012. "Interactionist Contributions to the Study of Suffering," paper presented at the Couch-Stone Symbolic Interactionist Symposium. Evanston, IL.

February 2012. "Toward a Generic Understanding of Suffering in Everyday Life: Proposed Research in the Micro-Sociology of Trouble," paper presented at the annual meetings of the Eastern Sociological Association, Regular Session. New York, NY.

August 2010. "People in Trouble," organizer of this session held at the annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. Atlanta, GA.

July 2010. "Normal Problems or Problem Children? Parents and the Micro-Politics of Deviance and Disability," paper presented at Family Troubles? Exploring Changes and Challenges in the Lives of Children and Young People, conference hosted by the Family and Parenting Institute at Open University. London, UK.

August 2009. "Putting Words to the Sociology of Trouble," paper presented at the annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, Regular Session. San Francisco, CA.

August 2009. "Parenting and Loss: What Children's Problems Tell Us About Motherhood and Fatherhood," paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Regular Session. San Francisco, CA.

August 2008. "Toward a More Nuanced Account of Intensive Mothering: The Case of Caring for 'Problem Children,'" paper presented at the annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, Regular Session. Boston, MA.

April 2008. "Signs of Trouble: How Parents Come to View Their Children as Having Significant Problems," paper presented at the annual meetings of the Pacific Sociological Association, Regular Session. Portland, OR.

May 2007. "Understanding the Gendered Nature of Intensive Parenting: The Importance of Action and Interaction," paper presented at Monitoring Parents: Childrearing in the Age of Intensive Parenting, hosted by the University of Kent. Canterbury, UK.

April 2006. "'Of Course I Feel Guilty': The Experience of Parenting a Problem Child," paper presented at the Eighth Annual Chicago Ethnography Conference, Roundtable Session. Chicago, IL.

Grants, Honors, & Awards

2019 & 2018. Marshall Memorial Funds Recipient, College of the Holy Cross, small grant to support community-based learning.

2018. Batchelor Ford Summer Fellowship, College of the Holy Cross.

2017. Agnes Williams Career Development Grant, College of the Holy Cross.

2016. Research and Publication Award (October), College of the Holy Cross.

2016. Research and Publication Award (April), College of the Holy Cross.

2015. Research and Publication Award, College of the Holy Cross.

2014. Batchelor-Ford Summer Faculty Fellowship, College of the Holy Cross.

2012. Faculty Development Grant, Center for Teaching, College of the Holy Cross.

2011. Batchelor-Ford Summer Faculty Fellowship, College of the Holy Cross.

2011. Ardizzone Junior Faculty Research Award, College of the Holy Cross.

2006. Institute for Governmental Affairs Dissertation Improvement Award, University of California-Davis.

2006. Department of Sociology Block Grant, University of California-Davis.

2005. First Place, Annual Feminist Essay Prize, University of California-Davis.

2000. Val Fisher Award for outstanding scholarship and community service as an undergraduate sociology major, University of Colorado, Boulder.

Service

To the public

2023-2026. Librarian and Member of the Executive Board for the Collective for Radical Death Studies, a public-facing non-profit organization whose mission is to decolonize death studies and radicalize death practice.

2024. Invited guest, Morbid Anatomy's *Craft of Dying* Book Club, virtual meeting.

2017. Hospice volunteer, Notre Dame Hospice, Worcester, MA.

To the profession

2021-Present. Member of the Editorial Board for *Journal of Aging Studies*.

2020-2021. Member of the Editorial Board for *Social Psychology Quarterly*, published by the American Sociological Association.

2017-present. Reviewer for *American Sociological Review*, *Humanity and Society*, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, and *Social Science and Medicine*, *Sociology of Health and Illness*.

2017. Chair of the selection committee for the Helena Lopata Mentor Excellence Award, Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction.

2004-2005. Editorial Associate, *Theory and Society: Review and Critique in Social Theory*.

To the college

2025-Present. Member of the Community Standards Board, College of the Holy Cross.

2025-Present. Member of the Institutional Review Board, College of the Holy Cross.

2025-Present. Elected member of the Committee on Academic Programs, College of the Holy Cross.

2022-2024. Member of the Health Professions Advising Committee, College of the Holy Cross.

2021. Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Grievance Procedure, College of the Holy Cross.

2019-2021. Elected member of the Committee on Faculty Affairs, College of the Holy Cross.

2017-2018. Member of the Health Professions Advising Committee, College of the Holy Cross.

2013-*2016. Faculty Advisor for Women's Forum, a feminist student group, College of the Holy Cross.

2010-2015. Member of the Health Professions Advising Committee, College of the Holy Cross.

2013-2015. Member of the Sexual Assault Facts, Education, and Resources (SAFER) Committee, College of the Holy Cross.

2008-2009. Mentor for the Guardian Scholars Program, University of California, Davis

To departments and programs at College of the Holy Cross

2025. Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology's Curriculum Committee.

2023. Member of the search committee for an Assistant Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology & Anthropology.

2021-23. Graduate studies advisor, Department of Sociology & Anthropology.

2020-21. Member of the executive committee, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies.

2018. Chair of the search committee for two Distinguished Scholars in Residence, Gender, Sexualities, and Women's Studies.

2014-2015. Member of the executive committee, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies.

2014-2015. Chair of the Honors Program Committee, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, College of the Holy Cross.

2003-2004. Graduate Student Representative, Undergraduate Program Committee, Department of Sociology, University of California-Davis.

2002-2003. Co-Chair, Graduate Student Sociological Association, University of California-Davis.

2002-2003. Graduate Student Representative, Graduate Program Committee, Department of Sociology, University of California-Davis.

2000. Student Representative, Undergraduate Program Committee, Department of Sociology, University of Colorado, Boulder.

1999-2000. President, Alpha Kappa Delta, Sociological Honor Society, University of Colorado, Boulder.