



**Sociologists
of Minnesota**



2026 SOM Annual Conference

Good Neighbors: Local Acts, Global Impacts

October 8-10th, 2026

Bemidji State University

1500 Birchmont Dr NE, Bemidji, MN 56601, USA

Thursday, October 8th

Food Tasting and Silent Auction 5 PM-8 PM

Location: American Indian Resource Center (AIRC)

***Presidential Address by BSU President John Hoffman
Food Tasting led by Rucha Ambikar (Sociology/Anthropology) and
Thomas Dirth (Psychology), Bemidji State University***

*FOOD TASTING AND SILENT AUCTION GOOD FOOD | GOOD TIMES | GOOD NEIGHBORS!
JOIN US AT AMERICAN INDIAN RESOURCE CENTER (AIRC) THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2026
(AIRC is located at 1620 Birchmont Drive NE Bemidji MN 56601)*

Friday, October 9th*

Registration Table 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

**Friday
9:30 AM
- 12 PM**

**Site
Visit
Options
For
Guided
Tours**

- 1) American Indian Resource Center, 1620 Birchmont Drive NE Bemidji MN 56601
Located on BSU Campus. <https://www.bemidjistate.edu/airc/> Meet your guide, Malia Mains, just inside the building
- 2) Watermark Art Center, 505 Bemidji Ave N, Bemidji, MN 56601 (opens at 10)
Watermark Art Center, located in Minnesota's Northwoods, invites you to explore the best of contemporary art from regional and national artists.
<https://watermarkartcenter.org/> Meet your guide, Lori Forshee-Donnay, inside the front of the building (admission is always free)
- 3) Lake Bemidji State Park, 3401 State Park Rd NE, Bemidji, MN 56601 (Free Entry with Park Permit, \$7 otherwise, meet at the Ranger Station at park entrance)
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/lake_bemidji/lake-bemidji-state-park-history.html

Friday

Catered Lunch & Site Visit Debrief

12:00 - 1:00 PM	Room: Crying Wolf Room (no Zoom) Lunch Provided by SOM	
Friday 1:15 - 1:45 PM	Presidential Address: Timothy Loney, Minnesota North College - Vermilion, <i>Thunderstruck: Sociology of Crisis in a Small Town - A Case Study of Ely, Minnesota Wildfires.</i> Location: Crying Wolf Zoom: https://minnstate.zoom.us/j/93388156053	
Friday 1:45 - 2:00 PM	Break	
Friday 2:00 - 3:00 PM	Room: Crying Wolf & Zoom: https://minnstate.zoom.us/j/98004669646	Keynote Address: Colleen R. Greer, Professor Emeritus, Sociology, Bemidji State University <i>"Becoming Together: Acting in Service with Communities"</i>
Friday 3:00 - 3:15 PM	Break	
Friday 3:15 - 4:30 PM	Room: South Conference	Session Topic: MinnState Faculty at Odds? How to Use a Sociological Perspective to Understand the MinnState Funding Challenges and Future: A Faculty-Led Discussion Presider: Sadie Pendaz-Foster, Inver Hills Community College <u>Panelists:</u> Jenna Chernega, Winona State University Thomas Dirth, Bemidji State University Timothy Loney, Minnesota North College - Vermilion Sadie Pendaz-Foster, Inver Hills Community College Elizabeth Scheel-Keita, St. Cloud State University Wayne Whitmore, Inver Hills Community College

Friday 3:15 - 4:30 PM	Room: North Conference	Session Topic: Sociological Books of Interest Presider: Lukas Szrot, Bemidji State University Panelists: Presenter 1: Lukas Szrot, Bemidji State University <i>Author Presentation: Faiths in Green: Religion, Environmental Change, and Environmental Concern in the United States. Lexington Books "Religious Ethics and Environmental Challenges" Series. [link]</i> Presenter 2: Lai Sze Tso, Gustavus Adolphus University <i>Reviewing Stephanie Medley-Rath's new (Aug 2026) edited book <u>Teaching Introduction to Sociology</u> for applications in Liberal Arts Settings and Undergraduate Teaching Pedagogy</i> Presenter 3: Sarah Epplen, Minnesota State University, Mankato <i>Discussion of Allison Pugh's 2026 book <u>The Last Human Job: Seeing Each Other in an Age of Automation</u></i>
Friday 3:15 - 4:30 PM	Room: Ozawindib & Zoom: https://minnstate.zoom.us/j/98486696442	Session Topic: Social Health & Wellness Issues Presider: Ray Stern, Minnesota State University, Mankato Presenter 1: Ruth Asmamaw, Minnesota State University, Mankato <i>The Impact of Social Factors on Brain Development</i> Presenter 2: Ray Stern, Minnesota State University, Mankato <i>Propaganda Makes Me Mad & That's How I Know It's Working: Ragebait & Outrage Culture on Social Media</i> Presenter 3: Matthew J. Ahlfs, George Mason University <i>The Message No Soldier Ever Wants to Receive: An Investigation on Military Red Cross Message Processes and Deployed Soldiers Grieving Pathways</i> Presenter 4: Klara Lybeck and Millie Lassegard, Minnesota State University, Mankato <i>College Students Sense of Belonging to their Host City</i>
Friday 4:30 - 4:45 PM	Break	
Friday 4:45 - 6:00 PM	Room: Crying Wolf (No Zoom)	Town Hall Topic: State of Sociology in Minnesota & Beyond - Feedback, Insights, & Perspectives from Across Our Diverse Minnesota Communities Presider: Lai Sze Tso, Gustavus Adolphus University

Friday 7:00 - 8:30PM		Dinner (Optional): Table Booked at Green Mill (in Conference Hotel) for Sociologists of Minnesota <i>Some folks are looking to have dinner together elsewhere as well. Let us know if you are interested! Curated restaurant lists available. Please check at the Registration Desk for possible sign-ups to join dinner groups.</i>
Friday	Small Group Study Rooms, Conference Level	Designated Quiet Space & Prayer Room

Saturday, October 10th*

Registration Table 9 AM – 11 AM Silent Auction Ends at 11 AM?

Saturday 9:00 - 10:15 AM Session 4	Room: Crying Wolf	Session Topic: Teaching Sociology in Real Life Presider: Sarah Epplen, Minnesota State University Mankato <u>Panelists:</u> Presenter 1: Sarah Epplen, Minnesota State University Mankato <i>Graduate Student Training in Minnesota</i> Presenter 2: Lai Sze Tso, Gustavus Adolphus University <i>Bringing in Undergraduate Teaching Assistants to Improve Student-Centered Teaching, Skills Development, and Connections to Students' Social Learning Environment</i> Presenter 3: Elizabeth Scheel-Keita, St. Cloud State University <i>Sharing Sociology with our Neighbors: Cross Discipline Talks and Preparing Students and Self for Social Problem Work/Activism in the Field</i>
Saturday 9:00 - 10:15 AM Session 5	Room: South Conference & Zoom in But not out	Session Topic: Literature & Sociology Presider: Steve Phillion, St. Cloud State University Presenter 1: Fairuz Anika, South Dakota State University <i>Literature in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: An Empirical Study of Student's Perceptions of Its Relevance in Higher Education"</i> Presenter 2: Puja Mazumder, South Dakota State University <i>Narrative Technique, Colonial Ideology, and Horror in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (possibly presenting virtually?)</i>
Saturday 9:00 - 10:15 AM Session 6	Room: Ozawindib & Zoom: https://minnstate.zoom.us/j/98245780645	Session Topic: Challenges Faced in Immigration, Migration Status, & Experiences of Visiting Students Presider: Parboti Das, Minnesota State University Mankato Presenter 1: Parboti Das, Minnesota State University Mankato <i>Gendered Sexual Norms in Bengali Culture: Perspectives of Bengali F-1 Students in the United States</i> Presenter 2: Nobiul Hasan, Minnesota State University Mankato <i>Adaptation and Assimilation of Climate-Displaced People in Urban Bangladesh: A Case Study of Chittagong City</i> Presenter 3: Lutfun Nesa Shantana, Minnesota State University Mankato <i>Health Disparities among South Asian Immigrants in the US</i>
Saturday 10:15 - 10:30 AM	Break	

Saturday 10:45 AM - 12 PM Session 7	Room: Crying Wolf & Zoom: Student Paper Awards co-sponsored by Sociologists of Minnesota and Midwest Sociological Association	Session Topic: Student Paper Winner Presentations Presider: Jason Torkelson, University of Minnesota, Duluth <u>Panelists:</u> Presenter 1 (Graduate Winner): Khaleed Rafee, Minnesota State University, Mankato <i>Between Protection and Permanence: Narrating Legal Liminality Amid the 2025–2026 Termination of Temporary Protected Status</i> Presenter 2: Lesly Hernandez, Macalester College (Undergraduate Winner) <i>Always with Family: Navigating surveillance as U.S.-born children in mixed-status families</i> Presenter 3: (Graduate Honorable Mention): Indrani Deka, Minnesota State University, Mankato <i>Twoness and the Hindu Diaspora: Religion, Migration</i> Presenter 4: (Undergraduate Honorable Mention) Ella Countryman, Bemidji State University <i>Expectation Loop Theory: From Waiting for Meaning to Making Meaning from Waiting</i> Presenter 5: (Undergraduate Honorable Mention) Julia Goh, Macalester <i>Barriers to Victim Services Among Sexual Assault Survivors: Evidence from the National Crime Victimization Survey</i>  
Saturday 10:30 - 11:45 AM Session 8	Room: South Conference	Session Topic: Caregiving & Social Support Presider: Elizabeth Scheel-Keita, St. Cloud State University Presenter 1: Lai Sze Tso, Gustavus Adolphus College <i>Navigating Eldercare Ecosystem to Support Sandwich Caregivers - Minnesota as a Case-Study</i> Presenter 2: Elizabeth Scheel-Keita, St. Cloud State University <i>The Caregiving Crisis & Controversies: Regressive Attacks on Social Supports for Disabled People, Older Americans, and Children</i> Presenter 3: Zachariah Turner and Nathanael Talshahar, Minnesota State University Mankato <i>Conveyance of Senior Citizens: Communication and Transportation in a Small Midwest City</i> Presenter 4: Lutfun Nesa Shantanak, Minnesota State University Mankato <i>Digital Technologies in Eldercare</i>
Saturday 11:45am- 12:00 pm	Short Break	

Saturday 12:00 pm -1:00 pm	Room: Crying Wolf & Zoom: https://minnstate.zoom.us/j/93250652877	Plenary (Information TBA) Awards Ceremony for Student Paper Winners Committee Chair: Jason Torkelson, University of Minnesota, Duluth
Saturday 1:00 - 1:15 PM	Break	
Saturday 1:15 - 2:00 PM	Bring Your Lunch and Join us in the Crying Wolf Room Bemidji has DoorDash and limited Uber Eats for food delivery options if needed	2026 Business Meeting All Members Encouraged to Participate Review Conference Highlights Vote on Open Board Positions (Self-Nominations Welcome) Bylaw Changes Open Positions: – Fill Northern Faculty Representative (complete 1-year of a term that started last year) – All Student Representative Positions for Northern, Central, and Southern regions (these are 1-year positions) – President-Elect – Positions elected in even years: • Secretary • Southern Faculty Representative • 2 Applied Positions/Reps
Saturday 2:00 - 3:00 PM		2026-2027 Board Meeting All newly elected and continuing board members attend
Saturday	Small Group Study Rooms, Conference Level	Designated Quiet Space & Prayer Room

*Note that Zoom sessions will be recorded and available to people who are viewing the conference remotely and may be put on the SOM website.

SOM Annual Conference 2026 Organizing Committee

**Timothy Loney, Minnesota North College - Vermillion
(President)**

**Lukas Szrot, Bemidji State University
(President-Elect)**

**Sarah Epplen, Minnesota State University Mankato
(Secretary)**

**Sadie Pendaz-Foster, Inver Hills Community College
(Archivist)**

**Elizabeth Scheel-Keita, St. Cloud State University
(Northern Representative and Program Planner)**

**Lai Sze Tso, Gustavus Adolphus College
(Southern Rep and Town Hall Organizer)**

**Lisa Waldner, University of St. Thomas
(Treasurer)**

Jason Torkelson

Bemidji State University Permit Parking Map

