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Offering a new perspective

Lindsey Wagner

Cavalier Daily Associate Editor

Interested in how the world works? The Sociology department can offer some answers, Department Chair Paul Kingston said.

"It goes down to a lot of root interactions and social causes of things," fourth-year College student Yasir Latifi said.



Rachel Lazarus | Cavalier Daily

The sociology department offers a variety of classes, many of which fill up quickly.

"We take pride in being so popular," Kingston said. "Our classes are overflowing."

Not only is the department popular with students, but it is also distinguished from other sociology departments across the country.

"More than most, the department emphasized a focus on culture research," Kingston said. Other sociology programs have "more quantitative research. There's more of a focus on social structure."

The cultural aspect to sociology is part of why Latifi said he thinks sociology is important to study.

"There are certain observations and differences out there that are stark, that need to be paid attention to," he said.

Kingston said he became interested in sociology for cultural reasons as well.

"I came of age in the '60s," Kingston said. "There was turmoil."

Latifi, a politics and sociology major, said his background in sociology comes in handy for political situations as well.

"I try to apply sociology things to political theory," Latifi said. "I look at [the situation] from social interactions, social concepts ... cultural explanations, structural explanations. I try to apply those different dimensions from sociology and try to put a clearer face on" the situation.

Latifi said sociological skills can help in any situation, not just political current events.

"It's much easier if you have a skill set," Latifi said. "As a citizen of the world, to function you need that kind of background, so sociology helps facilitate that idea and goal."

Latifi said one reason sociology stood out among all his other introductory level classes was the thought-provoking atmosphere.

"I figured out a lot of things I wouldn't have thought about," Latifi said. "I was thinking in ways I didn't really think like before."

Although Latifi said his perspective on the world has changed because of his sociology classes, he does not intensely analyze every situation automatically.

"It makes you aware of more possible options of why something is," Latifi said. "In that sense, I look at things differently."

Latifi said he believes other students, even if they do not have an interest in majoring in sociology, should take sociology classes.

"A lot of professors are really engaging," Latifi said. "They know the information front to back and top to bottom. The classes are relevant, and a lot of people can relate to them."

In addition to sociology's relevancy and tailor-made aspects, Latifi pointed out a broader reason for sociology's attraction for college students.

"Changing perspectives is why you should be going to college," Latifi said. "Sociology is a great way to facilitate that goal."

