

# Sociology 2031: Social Problems

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Instructor: Laurent Cilia

Class location and time: MWF 12:00PM – 12:50PM CLRE 207

Instructor's office: Ketchum 311

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 10-11am, or by appointment

Email: [Laurent.cilia@colorado.edu](mailto:Laurent.cilia@colorado.edu)

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*"The function of sociology, as of every science, is to reveal that which is hidden."*  
Pierre Bourdieu

*"Society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way."*  
Erving Goffman

*"The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum...."*  
Noam Chomsky

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## Course description

This course is designed to give you a better understanding of what sociology is and does and how sociologists approach social problems. Throughout the course you will become familiar with methods and theories used by sociologists to think about social interactions, inequalities, power dynamics, and cultural assumptions that we take for granted. We will address topics such as race and ethnicity, gender, the economy, drugs, environmental issues, animals and society, and consumption and happiness. Throughout the semester we will try to understand what we "know" about those problems and where that knowledge comes from. We will look at the structural causes of social problems and will look at how we, as a society, understand and address those collective challenges.

A primary goal of this class is for you to develop critical thinking skills that will allow you to question and critique both your own ideas about the social world as well as the information brought to you by the politics, the media and activists about social problems. You should develop a better understanding of the connection between individuals and the macro structures of society that we have created and shape us.

We will mostly adopt a "constructionist" approach and talk about social construction of problems. Who decides that a specific social phenomenon is a problem? Why? Who has the ability to address problems?

## **Course Goals**

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- Refer to the main sociological perspectives and theories
- Use your “sociological imagination” to critically talk, read and write about social problems
- Understand the social process of construction of a social problem
- Be a better-informed student, consumer, and citizen.

## **Teaching Delivery**

This class will incorporate several teaching methods. Each of these methods is important to the learning process in this course. Some of the more common methods to be used in this class are as follows:

*Lectures:* Traditional lecture will be used to assure that all students are fully aware of the information the professor wishes the students to grasp.

*Guest Lectures:* Three guest speakers are scheduled to join us during the semester. The guest lectures are to be highly regarded. Within a week after the presentation you will turn in on dropbox a short essay summarizing your thoughts about the presentation. I will do a special lecture on my PhD research topic, that will also count as a guest lecture and should be approached exactly the same way.

*Films and Videos:* Films and videos will be shown throughout the course to provide visually interpretive examples for several course topics. These screenings are to be treated as lectures for the course and should be taken as serious subject matter.

*Class & Group Discussions:* Even though the class is fairly large, students are strongly encouraged to participate in discussions of the daily topics by providing their insights and asking questions for clarification or rhetorical contemplation. Discussions will be conducted in small groups and as a whole class.

## **Teaching Perspective**

My goal as your instructor is to produce an environment where we can learn the most, become better informed, question assumptions, and creatively develop ideas and strategies. I want the classroom to be an environment where dialogue can take place in an open and respectful manner. If you have something to ask or add, please do so in a manner for the whole class to hear.

## Course Material

### Required text

*Social Problems: Community, Policy and Social Action*. Ed 4. 2013. Anne Leon Guerrero.

### Additional readings

All additional readings will be supplied on D2L, under the tab "week..."(refer to syllabus). It is your responsibility to make sure you can access the assigned readings that are on D2L in a timely manner. I may be adding or replacing a few over the semester (I will), so be sure to follow D2L for updates on this.

### Movies

There are multiple movies to watch during the semester. I will post movies on D2L or post the link to access them online. Movies are to be taken as seriously as the readings and have to be watched before class. Some movies on the syllabus are marked as optional. I highly recommend them but they are not required. You will have to choose one movie on the syllabus to write a graded film review. You can write your film analysis on either a required or an optional movie.

### Podcasts:

There are a few podcasts to listen to before class during the semester. Everything written above about movies applies to podcasts.

## Course Policies

### Attendance, Participation, and Reading Assignments

Students are expected to attend every class, participate in group and class discussions, and actively engage in the course lectures. Completion of the assigned readings is absolutely critical to your success in this class and your final grade will greatly depend upon you having read, thought about, and written about the readings. The assigned readings should be completed prior to coming to class. Some classes will be spent going over readings, sometimes in detail, while others will focus on other material. **Students are expected to have done the reading before each class.**

If you know you are missing an exam due to an athletic engagement, religious observance, court appearance, or family problem on a date that we take a test or have an assignment due please let me know at least three weeks in advance. We will discuss an alternate date. However, regardless of the reason you cannot make up writing responses or class activities that are collected for credit. If you missed a class due to a medical emergency make sure to provide a medical certificate when you come back and I will do all I can to help you catch up with the class.

### Classroom Policies

1. Never ask another student in the course a personal question. (It is up to individual students as to whether they choose to discuss their own experiences, identities, and so on in class.)
2. Never request that another student in the class speak on behalf of a group (e.g., African Americans, Jewish People, Latino/as, Asian Americans, men, women, lesbians/gays, rape survivors, etc.)
3. Do not use your phones, iPods, tablets, or other electronic gadgets during class (including for text messaging or checking the web for something). If you do so, I will ask you to stop once. Then I will ask you to leave the classroom.
4. **I do not allow laptop use during class.** If a student has a reason that s/he believes s/he must use a laptop during class, please talk to me privately about this. To use a laptop every day, I must receive a letter from campus letting me know that you need to use a laptop every day. However, if such a letter is provided and I approve it, using your laptop for anything other than taking notes may result in you not being able to use it anymore.
5. Kindly refrain from becoming involved in separate conversations or making comments under your breath during lecture and class discussions.
6. **Students are responsible for regularly checking their e-mails and D2L announcements.** That is an important way to use your fancy smartphones.
7. In all emails to me, make sure that "SOCY 2031" is in the subject line.
8. Expect to be challenged in this class both in the reading assignments as well as the level of engagement expected from you.
9. You are expected to come on time and to stay until the end of the allotted period unless you have excused yourself ahead of time. Students coming and going during class time is distracting for the whole class. You do not need to raise your hand to use the restroom.
10. Become familiar with the Desire2Learn (D2L) website immediately. If there are technical problems, please call ITS at 303-735-4357. (To access D2L, go to <https://learn.colorado.edu> ; Login with your identikey; Your courses can be accessed from the "My Courses" section on "My Home.")
11. You are expected to attend every class. However, attendance will not be taken.
12. Grades: Grades are awarded on the basis of quality of work turned in and what is subsequently earned; not the grade that a student feels they "deserve." You are encouraged to see me early on in the semester if you are concerned about your grades.

**There is no extra credit in this course and I will not curve the grades.**

### **Graded work**

Your final grade will consist of:

- Exams ( $2 \times 40 + 1 \times 60 = 140$  points): Three exams are scheduled during the semester. The exams consist of a series of in-class short answers (2 during semester, 3 for final exam). A list of potential questions for the exam will be posted weekly so that you can prepare for the exam. All exam questions will be selected from that pool of questions. Please bring blue books for the exams.

➤ Sociological analysis of a movie (50 points): Multiple movies are referenced throughout the syllabus. Some are mandatory for you to watch before class. Some are optional. Choose a movie you are particularly interested in and write a 3page essay about it. This can be done at any time of the semester and will be submitted on Dropbox. **See the guideline posted on D2L (under “documents”) for more information about how to organize your essay.** Even though you could write and turn in a film analysis next week, I encourage you to wait a little to become more familiar with the sociological concepts you could use in your analysis. Wait for the end of a sequence to write an essay on the topic to make sure you have a grasp on all the concepts that relate to that topic. I also suggest you wait until we have addressed the media and the social constructionist perspective (week 7) before writing your essay, but that is not mandatory and I’ll accept essays throughout the entire semester. Do not wait until the end.

**Due on Monday December 5 before class on dropbox.**

➤ Guest-speaker reflection (4\*20 points): You will turn in a one single-space page after each guest speaker presentation. Post those on Dropbox, within a week following a speaker’s presentation. There are three guest speakers scheduled. Those can be a brief summary of the key points of the presentation followed by some personal comments, critics and/or a contextualization of the presentation in the course.

➤ Writing responses (100 points): these are short (one or two paragraphs at the most) answers written at the beginning of a class, answering a question about one piece or all of material assigned for that day.

➤ Syllabus quiz (10 points): To be completed and returned to me by **Wednesday September 7.**

#### Comments on Grading

I do not grade on a curve. Your final grade will reflect your success in demonstrating your knowledge of the material. To do well in this class, most of you will need to work hard and apply sustained effort over the course of the semester. That said, working hard does not guarantee an “A”. Your final grade is based on the points you have earned throughout the semester. If you find that you are not doing as well as you would like in the course, please come talk to me as soon as possible. There will be no additional extra-credit at the end of the semester to boost low grades.

If you feel that you have been given an unfair grade on an assignment, you need to write a one page response as to why you would like to appeal the grade and hand it to me no more than one week after you received the grade. When appealing the grade, you need to be aware that the grade can be raised or lowered. Therefore, I only advise you to appeal grades if you feel there is a very clear miscalculation. You are responsible for

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keeping all materials that have been graded and returned to you. If you cannot provide these materials, your grade cannot be appealed. University policy prohibits discussions of grades over email to protect your privacy. If you want to discuss your grade, please come to office hours or make an appointment with me.

Syllabus Quiz	10	2.6%
Exams	140	36.8%
Movie Analysis	50	13.1%
Guest Speakers Reflections	80	21%
Writing responses	100	26.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100%</b>

### ***Warning***

This class requires you to read, sometimes a lot. You will need to read. You are expected to read! If you don't like reading, or don't want to, you shouldn't take this class. You will most likely fail the class if you don't work on the material that has been chosen. You can be a fast reader or a slow one, have a lot of interest and time for the class, or not, but you will need to make the time, develop fast reading strategies, and read the assigned content. And while reading, you need to take notes: write down key words and concepts of each paper, the author's argument, the cornerstone information. Keep brief, simple, and organized notes about what you read. **If you read and don't write anything you are wasting your time.** And bring the reading and/or your notes to class so that you can engage with them during lecture. Although laptops are not allowed in class, I will let you look back at readings if you ask. If, by the end of each reading, you can identify the main points and explain why it has been assigned for the unit, you should be in good shape!

You also need to **take notes during class**. Note taking means more than passively copying the content of the slides (which may or may not be used). Slides are often titles meant to organize lectures. Most often they are not content, they have no intrinsic value and will not help you write a paper or prepare for an exam. Make good use of your time and take notes, when you read, watch a movie, or sit in lecture. Otherwise you are throwing time (and money) out of the window.

All instructors require students to come prepared to class. When you don't, rather than a discussion, the class turns into a lecture. If you find it boring and wish your instructor involved you more in the class, then come prepared with questions about the readings, with ideas, comments, concerns. Be actor of your education, not passive recipient!

All instructors require students to come prepared to class, which, here, means read assigned articles and watch assigned movies. When you don't, rather than a conversation the class turns into a monologue. If you find it boring and wish your instructor involved you more in the class, then come prepared with questions about the readings, with ideas, comments, concerns. Be actor of your education, not passive recipient.

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This is the basic criteria that will be used in assigning your grade for each assignment received:

Letter Grade	Percentage of Grade	Description
A	90-100	Exceeds all required elements of an assignment, and the quality of the work is considerably greater than what was required. The quality of the work is considerably above the class average and impressive to the evaluator.
B	80-89	Meets all required elements of an assignment, and the quality of the work is better than what is required and demonstrated by the class average.
C	70-79	Meets all required elements of an assignment, no more, no less. Quality of assignment is satisfactory for college level work. Fails to meet all required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is less than satisfactory.
D	60-69	Fails to meet all required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is less than satisfactory.
F	Less than 59	Only meets some of the required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is considerably lower than satisfactory. 50% of points are not guaranteed. At this level points are only given if some elements of the assignment are met. If not, very low percentages are likely.
Zero	0	Fails to meet any of the required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is well below basic standards of writing, comprehension, and/or ability to follow instructions; assignment is late or incomplete; assignment is not turned in at all; assignment shows signs of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty. If the later is the case, I will file a formal accusation through the honor code council.

## Course Schedule

	Sequence/Lecture Topic	Readings (textbook or D2L)	Movies/Podcasts
Week 1	Introduction to sociology		
M 08/22	<b><i>Class cancelled</i></b>	Rich	
W 08/24	Culture, meanings, and explanations.	Curry	“The Danger of a single story”
F 08/26	Syllabus; The Sociological Imagination	Mills	Hidden Brain, ep. #3: Stereotype Threat
Week 2	Intro to sociology: founders, theories, methods		
M 08/29	Sociological theories	LG Chap.1 (skip 20-21)	
W 09/31	Sociological methods	Adler (103-119); Lovaglia; Schuman	
F 09/02			
Week 3	Thinking with and about animals		
M 09/05	<b><i>Labor Day: No class</i></b>	<b><i>Labor Day: No class</i></b>	<b><i>Labor Day: No class</i></b>
W 09/07		Irvine; Serpell (to p. 12. Rest is optional)	
F 09/09		Jamieson; Bekoff	
Week 4	The social construction of reality		
M 09/12		Gioacchino (skim)	
W 09/14		Perez (skim)	
F 09/16		Reinarman;	
Week 5	Race and Ethnicity		
M 09/19	The social construction of race	LG chap. 3 (skip 82-89); Bruni;	Hidden Brain, ep. 28: #AirBnBwhileblack
W 09/21	Privilege and color blindness	Mc. Intosh	Tim wise; Color of fear (watch 20’, rest is optional)
F 09/23			Hidden Brain, ep. #20:Remembering Anarcha
Week 6	Gender		
M 09/26	Defining gender	LG Chap.4	Miss Representation
W 09/28	“Doing gender”		Wrestling with Manhood Killing us softly*
F 09/30	Guest Speaker #1: MESA (Moving to End Sexual	Stanford rape case (multiple readings, spend time you	



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	Assault) associate	deem appropriate)	
Week 7	Social construction		
M 10/03	<b>Exam #1</b>	<b>Exam #1</b>	<b>Exam #1</b>
W 10/05	The Neoliberal Media	Lg. Ch.11	
F 10/07	Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics		The Century of Self
Week 8	Work and the economy		
M 10/10		LG Chap. 9: 226-252	Walmart
W 10/12		Herring	China Blue
F 10/14		Fishman	
Week9	Poverty and Social Class		
M 10/17		LG Chap. 2: 37-66; Jackson	
W 10/19		Wilson	
F 10/21	<i>Guest Speaker#2: Director of Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, Greg Harms</i>	Rank; Blasi	
Week 10	Education		
M 10/24		LG Chap. 8: 193-225 Downey;	
W 10/26		Kahn; The economist	
F 10/28	<b>Exam #2</b>	<b>Exam #2</b>	<b>Exam #2</b>
Week 11	Intro to environmental sociology		
M 10/31		Ecological literacy; fostering complexity thinking	
W 11/02		LG 395-402; Gardner	
F 11/04	The population question	Hardin	Mother: caring for 7 billion
Week 12	Food and Agriculture Climate Change		
M 11/07		LG 415-416; Walsh	
W 11/09		Beardworth, Shiva	Food Inc. *
F 11/11	<i>Special lecture: "The buzz about bees"</i>	Spivak	
Week 13	Climate Change		
M 11/14	Science and ideology	Climate literacy (skim); Wheeler	
W 11/16	<i>Guest speaker #3: Sarah Dawn Haynes</i>	Cordero	Climate Refugees (watch at least 20')

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	<i>Outreach and Engagement Coordinator CU Environmental Center</i>		
F 11/18	"Living in denial"	Stern	
Week 14	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>
Week 15	Environmental Justice		
M 11/28		Pulido	
W 11/30		Bullard	
F 12/02			"Living Downstream"
Week 16	Happiness and Consumption		
M 12/05	Happiness and sustainability	Kimeldorf	<b>Movie analysis due on dropbox by 12:00PM</b>
W 12/07	Degrowth	Schor ("the new...") pp 1-9; Schor ("keeping up...");	Rich Roll Podcast 3July 2016: Andrew Morgan on the cost of Fast Fashion (listen to what you can, it's 2h long)
F 12/09	Voluntary Simplicity	Elgin	

Movies with a \* are optional

Readings, movies and podcasts must be read/watched/listened to before class

### University Policies

#### Anti Discrimination Policy

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. (Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes, or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual, orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status.

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination-and-harassment-policy-and-procedures>

#### Classroom Learning Environment Policy

Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals on topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address

you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior>

#### Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please inform Laurent in writing by the **end of the second week of class** if you will be unable to attend class, scheduled in class exams, or turn in assignments on time because of religious obligations and observances, or athletic engagements so that we can work out a revised schedule with you to meet course requirements. [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html)

#### Students with Disabilities

Please inform Laurent in person by the **end of the second week of class** if you qualify for accommodations because of a disability. Please bring along a letter from Disability Services by then so that I can work with you to enable you to do your best in this course. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (Contact: 303-492-8671, Center for Community N200, and <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>). If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html>

We (the instructor and students) are expected to adhere to the behavior standards listed in the **Rights and Responsibilities Regarding Standards of Conduct**. The specific policy may be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html>

#### CU Honor Code

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council and those students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member involved and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion) <http://honorcode.colorado.edu/>

Cheating and plagiarizing will result in a failing grade for either or both the assignment and the course. The student(s) will also be reported to the Honor Code Council (even for a first offense). To be clear, plagiarism refers to using the work, ideas, or knowledge of other people as your own. It includes all forms of exam or quiz cheating, using other people's work, copying all or sections of papers from the web, and "borrowing" (without citing) from published sources. Please do not give me **ANY** reason to suspect this type of behavior. If you are unclear about the rules regarding plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, or collaboration, please consult Laurent immediately. **There is no**

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**need to cheat.** Whether through office hours, e-mail, or a scheduled appointment, I am available if you need an assignment explained, writing suggestions, etc. Frequent violations include "overlooking" necessary citations, cheating on an exam, and completing a quiz for someone else.

### Sexual harassment is not tolerated

For more information on maintaining a fair and safe environment and sexual harassment policies and reporting see [www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment](http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment) or call the Office of Sexual harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550.

### The Writing Center

Meet one-to-one with a writing consultant for sound advice at ANY stage of your writing process. They teach you strategies to formulate and organize strong thesis statements, use and cite evidence appropriately, master style and grammar, and overcome writing anxiety. Services are free to all CU students. Please visit <http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html> The Writing Center is located in Norlin Library, Room E-156. For more information on the Writing Center please email [wrtghelp@colorado.edu](mailto:wrtghelp@colorado.edu) or call (303)735-6906. *It is an awesome FREE service - I use it too!*

### Note regarding email

I am more than willing to answer questions via email as long as the answers to your questions cannot be found in the syllabus. To protect my own time and to be able to use it to thoughtfully respond to other questions, I will not respond to emails with these kinds of questions. By University policy grades cannot be discussed over e-mail. I will not respond to grade inquiries over e-mail. Also, please be aware that email is official communication and should be composed as such (use your full name, be clear in your question or concern and no texting abbreviations please). Do not expect replies to emails outside of normal working hours (9-5pm) and during the weekend.

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Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. See full details at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html)

### Learning Environment and Salutations

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

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See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

### Student-Athletes

It is the student's responsibility to notify each instructor—in the first week of the semester and in writing--about any known conflicts between academic requirements and intercollegiate varsity athletic events. For conflicts that arise during the regular term, instructors have full authority to decide whether and/or how to accommodate those conflicts. While an instructor has the right to refuse to allow make-ups or other accommodations, he or she is permitted to provide such accommodations. Intercollegiate varsity athletics events during final exams, which are normally forbidden by university policy, must be approved in writing by the BFA Intercollegiate Athletics Committee well in advance of the event. Students involved in these events must then work with their instructors in regard to any missed work, as required above.

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### Syllabus Quiz

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Possible points: 10

Due date: Wednesday September 7

1/What is the classroom laptop policy?

2/ Do you have to watch all the movies available on D2L? How many movie reviews do you have to write? Do you have to write your review about one of the mandatory movie or can it be about an optional one? Can you choose a movie that I did not post on D2L?

3/ You are unhappy with a grade. What is the process to make a claim?

4/ How many exams are scheduled for this class?

5/ How many guest speakers (and special lecture) are schedule this semester. What do I expect from you after each presentation?

6/ This course syllabus is considered as a contract between the instructor and students; we mutually agree to the requirements and expectations as outlined. Please sign and date below indicating that you have read and understood the expectations of this class and have addressed any concerns or questions with the instructor before the due date of this Syllabus Quiz.

Date\_\_\_\_\_Signature\_\_\_\_\_