

# **SOCY 2031 SOCIAL PROBLEMS FALL 2014**

**Class Meeting Times:** MWF 12:00-12:50pm HUMN 135

**Instructor:** Dani Denardo

**Office:** Institute of Behavioral Science (IBS) cube C350E (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor)

**Office Hours:** MW 10-11am and by appointment

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**You are responsible for all information presented in all assigned readings, lecture, and this syllabus. I reserve the right to alter any part of this syllabus at any time. All such changes will be communicated promptly.**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Social problems include many complex and varied issues: inequality, poverty, crime, environmental problems, discrimination, economic recession, and many others. We could spend the entire semester on any one of these topics—some spend entire careers on just one of them. As a survey course, the primary objective in this class is to learn about “social problems” as a category of sociological analysis and research. What we think of as problems, and how we try to solve them, says a lot about the time and society we live in. Learning how to analyze social problems sociologically can be helpful for understanding social patterns, for thinking about values and individual choices, and for gaining insight into institutions, social movements, and social change.

Part of the course will be devoted to learning concepts that can be applied across the spectrum of social problems. However, the only way to truly grasp concepts is by applying them and critically evaluating their usefulness when applied to specific social problems. We will explore several case studies, often combining sociological sources with sources drawn directly from activists, journalists, documentary filmmakers, and experts. Primary sources tend to present arguments that are opinionated and intended to persuade. It will be important to move past reactions of agreement or disagreement to ask who is presenting the argument, and how the construction of arguments conforms or diverges from what we expect. Learning to look at social problems through a sociological lens can improve critical thinking, help you write more clearly, and improve your savvy as a consumer of information.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students should know how to:

- Identify and evaluate social problems claims.
- Explain processes related to social problems.
- Gain a conceptual vocabulary and apply it to specific social problems.

- Be able to describe important characteristics of social problems actors.
- Recognize the role of morals and biases in discourse on social problems.
- Recognize the role of collective action failures in social problems.
- Use critical thinking to discuss or write about social issues.
- Gain a basic understanding of how sociologists research social problems.
- Identify some of the common characteristics that social problems share.
- Recognize areas where the social problems process is undergoing important changes.

## COURSE TEXTS

**Required:** ALL required readings will be posted on D2L---check daily!!

## GENERAL CLASS POLICIES

Participation:

Your participation in class discussion is encouraged. You are welcome to ask questions at any time or even take us a bit off-track in discussion. If something is interesting and important to the class, I do not mind exploring it further. In this class, we will most assuredly express strong opinions and argue over some points. ***We critique ideas not people.*** No one should be made to feel as if they are being attacked personally over something they express in class.

Classroom Environment:

- Please arrive in the classroom and be prepared to begin on time. Please stay for the entire class period.
- Please turn off phones. **TEXTING IS NOT ALLOWED. IF I SEE YOU TEXTING YOU WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE.**
- Please participate in the main conversation by being attentive, abstaining from reading other materials, and not carrying on side conversations during class.
- The D2L page for this class is an official forum for posting updates and readings so please check it DAILY during the semester, as well as your University email.
- If you have any suggestions, feedback, or some aspect of the course requirements or material is not clear, let me know.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

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 that constitutes academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and

threatening or intimidating 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 given by the Honor Code Council (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Please refer to [www.colorado.edu/honorcode](http://www.colorado.edu/honorcode) to view the specific guidelines. If you have any questions related to this policy, contact the Honor Code Council at [honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu). **Honor code violations will result in a 0 for the assignment at a minimum and may also result in failing this course, probation, or expulsion.**

#### Classroom Behavior:

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to disciplinary measures. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion, and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, nationalities, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and gender variance (a major part of this class).

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

#### Discrimination and Harassment:

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

### Religious Holidays:

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, you should notify me at least two weeks ahead of time to request special accommodation if you have a conflict. See full details at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html).

### Students with Disabilities:

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, [www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices)).

### Student Athletics:

If you are on a University athletic team and will be missing classes, please provide me with an official letter no later than the end of the first full week of class. It is your responsibility to look ahead on the syllabus and deal with any conflicts (e.g., scheduled assignments) prior to the conflicting event.

## EVALUATION COMPONENTS

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS
Exam 1	75
Exam 2	75
Short Paper	25
Group Paper & Presentation	75
Attendance & Participation	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>300</b>

**Exams:** Two 50-question multiple-choice/short answer exams will be given during the term. The second exam will NOT be cumulative.

**Short Paper:** A short (two page, double spaced) paper will be due the fourth week. This paper will allow you to demonstrate your mastery of the first few weeks of sociological concepts and theoretical material. I will provide you with more detailed guidelines the second week of classes.

**Group Paper and Presentation:** A group paper and presentation will be due at the end of the semester. This paper and presentation will focus on a social problem (not covered in class) of your group's choosing. Your groups will be randomly selected and you will be responsible for meeting regularly with group members to write the paper and plan a 10 minute presentation. Throughout the semester groups will have an opportunity to meet and choose their topic as well as work on intermittent assignments. There are multiple components to this project for which you will be evaluated either individually or as a group. Keep in mind, however, that group members will also anonymously rate their group-mates. If it is clear that a group member did not participate, their group grade will be negatively affected. I will provide you with more detailed guidelines when groups are assigned during week six.

**Attendance and Participation:** Daily attendance and classroom participation will be evaluated. This evaluation will be completed in multiple ways including, but not limited to, sign-in sheets, in-class writing, in-class group work, and in-class concept checks.

Each of the components of your final grade, as well as the final course grade will be determined based on this general rubric.

Letter Grade	Percentage 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.
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 the required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is well below basic standards of writing, comprehension; assignment is not turned in at all; assignment shows signs of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty.

#### Notes on Grading:

- Please keep all returned work. In the case of a grade discrepancy, it will be required that you have the original graded work. If you do not have the original graded copy of your work, you cannot challenge your final course grade after the semester is over.
- University policy prohibits discussing grades via email. If you wish to discuss your progress in the course, please visit me during my office hours or make an appointment. Additionally, grades will be posted in the Grades section of the D2L page for this course.

#### Late Policy:

- All assignments are due at the *beginning* of class on the date they are due. If you are unable to attend class on the date an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with me for submitting it to me prior to its due date. Late work will not be accepted unless due to severe emergencies. In those rare cases, I expect you to notify me ideally before the assignment is due or within one day of the due date and to provide valid documentation. Do not email or drop off assignments in my mailbox.
- **If you have to miss an in-class exam, you will not be able to take that exam early or late without proper documentation.** Rescheduling an exam will incur a 10% deduction from your exam score, so plan accordingly. Please check immediately for any valid conflicts (religious holiday, university sports team travel, etc) and notify me during the first week of class if we need to schedule an earlier time for you to take the exam. Other than severe emergencies, no make-up exams will be allowed.

#### **TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**Please note that weekly readings will be posted each Friday and are to be completed by the following Wednesday.**

Week One: 8/25- 8/29

**Topic: Course Introduction & Core Sociological Concepts**

Week Two: 9/1- 9/5

**NO CLASS MONDAY**

**Topic: Theoretical Perspectives & Social Problems Research**

Week Three: 9/8- 9/12

**Topic: Theoretical Perspectives & Social Problems Research (cont.)**

Week Four: 9/15- 9/19  
SHORT PAPER DUE FRIDAY 9/19  
**Topic: Race & Ethnicity**

Week Five: 9/22- 9/26  
**Topic: Race & Ethnicity (cont.)**

Week Six: 9/29- 10/3  
**Topic: Wealth & Poverty**

Week Seven: 10/6-10/10  
**Topic: Wealth & Poverty (cont.)**

Week Eight: 10/13- 10/17  
EXAM ONE FRIDAY 10/17  
**Topic: Sex & Gender**

Week Nine: 10/20- 10/24  
**Topic: Sex & Gender (cont.)**

Week Ten: 10/27- 10/31  
**Topic: Sex & Gender (cont.)**

Week Eleven: 11/3- 11/7  
**Topic: Bodies, Health & Healthcare**

Week Twelve: 11/10- 11/14  
**Topic: Bodies, Health & Healthcare (cont.)**

Week Thirteen: 11/17- 11/21  
**Topic: Alcohol & Other Drugs**

Week Fourteen: 11/24- 11/28  
FALL BREAK---no classes

Week Fifteen: 12/1- 12/5  
GROUP PAPER DUE FRIDAY 12/5  
**Topic: Alcohol & Other Drugs (cont.)**

Week Sixteen: 12/8- 12/12  
GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Final Exams Week  
EXAM 2: TBA (our final exam date as provided by the University)