

SOCY 2031 SOCIAL PROBLEMS

FALL 2013

MWF 2:00-2:50 HLMS 211

Instructor: Dani Denardo

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 12-2pm 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: Mooney, Knox and Schacht. *Understanding Social Problems*. 8th Edition. Publisher: Cengage Learning.

Additional 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 and beepers or switch to vibrate if you have a childcare or emergency situation.
- 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.
- **I DO NOT ALLOW COMPUTERS IN CLASS (Ipads or laptops).**

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 to view the specific guidelines. If you have any questions related to this policy, contact the Honor Code Council at 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.

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.

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).

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

Exam 1	50
Exam 2	50
Exam 3	75
Short Paper	50
Quizzes	25
Attend/Part.	20
TOTAL	270

Exams: Three 50-question multiple-choice exams will be given during the term.

Quizzes: Six multiple choice/ short answer pop quizzes will be given throughout the course. These quizzes will focus on the week's readings and therefore will only be given on Fridays. You will be able to drop your lowest quiz score so that ultimately five quizzes will count toward your grade. There will be no make-ups for quizzes.

Short Paper: Throughout the course we will discuss how the perception of what is considered to be a social problem varies according to how one constructs such problems. You will write a short paper (~4 pages) that explores the social construction of a social problem not discussed in class or in your text book (your topic needs to be approved by me in advance). For this paper you will draw on a number of media sources (for example newspapers, TV, documentaries, etc.) to illustrate how different claims makers construct an

issue in different ways. More detailed instructions regarding the paper will be provided in class.

Attendance and Participation: Daily attendance and classroom participation will be evaluated. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet each day. No signature=no credit.

Here are the standards for earning a percentage or letter grade on any assignment and overall in the course:

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 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 latter is the case, I will file a formal "accusation" through the honor code council.

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

SECTION 1: SOCIOLOGY AND THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Week One: 8/26- 8/30

Topic: Course Introduction & Core Concepts(Sociological Imagination)

Readings: Syllabus; pp. 1-7; D2L

Week Two: 9/2- 9/6

NO CLASS MONDAY

Topic: Theoretical Perspectives & Social Problems Research

Readings: pp. 8-24; D2L

SECTION 2: PROBLEMS OF INEQUALITY

Week Three: 9/9- 9/13

Topic: Inequalities: Class Stratification

Readings: pp. 168-195; D2L

Week Four: 9/16- 9/20

Topic: Inequalities: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration

Readings: pp. 264-302; D2L

Week Five: 9/23- 9/27

EXAM 1: WEDNESDAY 9/25

Topic: Inequalities: Gender

Readings: pp. 306-341; D2L

Week Six: 9/30- 10/4

Topic: Inequalities: Gender (cont.)

Week Seven: 10/7-10/11

Topic: Inequalities: Sexuality

Readings: pp. 343-372; D2L

Week Eight: 10/14- 10/18

Topic: Inequalities: Education

Readings: pp. 233-261; D2L

SECTION 3: PROBLEMS OF WELL BEING

Week Nine: 10/21- 10/25

Topic: Family Problems

Readings: pp. 135-165; D2L

Week Ten: 10/28- 11/1

EXAM 2: WEDNESDAY 10/30

Topic: Alcohol and Other Drugs

Readings: pp. 65-96; D2L

Week Eleven: 11/4- 11/8

Topic: Alcohol and Other Drugs (cont.)

Week Twelve: 11/11- 11/15

Topic: Crime and Social Control

Readings: pp. 99-132; D2L

SECTION 4: PROBLEMS OF GLOBALIZATION

Week Thirteen: 11/18- 11/22

PAPER DUE: FRIDAY 11/22

Topic: Population Growth and Aging

Readings: pp. 376-399; D2L

Week Fourteen: 11/25- 11/29
FALL BREAK

Week Fifteen: 12/2- 12/6
Topic: Environmental Problems
Readings: pp. 402-435; D2L

Week Sixteen: 12/9- 12/13
Topic: Conflict, War, and Terrorism
Readings: pp. 477-514; D2L

Final Exams Week
EXAM 3: TBA (our final exam date as provided by the University)