SOC 2020: Social Problems

Section 003 CRN: 11224

Wayne State University Fall 2016

Class Days/Time: Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:45am to 1:10 pm

Classroom: State Hall 0218

Instructor: Professor Kaleema Annie Sumareh

Office: 2264 FAB

Email: [ksumareh@wayne.edu](mailto:ksumareh@wayne.edu)

Tel: 313-577-2930

Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm or by appointment

Text: Social Problems 6th Edition, John J. Macionis

Other readings will be posted on Blackboard

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course we will explore and engage in the consideration of major contemporary social problems which reveal structural strains, value conflicts, deviations and changes in society. We will engage in an analysis of socio-cultural factors creating problems and of possible solutions.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

* Identify, understand, analyze and evaluate social issues.
* Identify, understand, analyze and evaluate the process of how social issues become recognized and legitimized or not as social problems.
* Apply sociological theories, perspectives and research methods to the investigation of social problems.
* Provide opportunities for students to read and analyze peer reviewed articles from Sociology Journals.
* Examine role of media in framing of social issues and social problems.

**EVALUATION**

Your final grade will be determined by (information will be provided on how to complete the assignments)

* Three think quizzes
* Mid-term exam
* Final exam
* A six-page research paper
* Participation in class discussions
* Plagiarism Assignment

**SOME GENERA RULES AND EXPECTATIONS**

**Electronic devices.** Please silence or turn off electronic devices. You may use laptops for note taking; any other use will cause a deduction in participation points.

**Course Withdrawals.** You must formally withdraw from a course, otherwise you will receive a failing grade (and this may affect your funding). Please review the University’s course withdrawal policy at <http://reg.wayne.edu/Withdrawing_From_a_Course.php>

and <http://reg.wayne.edu/students/information.php#dropping>.

**Incompletes.** See instructor– but please note, incompletes will not be provided to students who are failing the class. [**http://reg.wayne.edu/faculty/incomplete\_contract.php**](http://reg.wayne.edu/faculty/incomplete_contract.php)**.**

**Course Ground Rules.** Please be respectful of the classroom and your colleagues. Controversial topics will be discussed in the course; difference of opinion are to respected. The common ground rule is that in the end, we agree to disagree (or agree) as everyone’s participation is to be valued.

**Problems with Writing?** For help, please visit Wayne State University’s Writing Center at 2310 Undergraduate Library (313-577-2544). There is also a page of writing resources posted on the sociology department’s website that might help you: <http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/Sociology/WritingResources>

**Student Disability Services.** If you are a student with a disability or condition (physical, emotional, or other) that might affect your performance in this course, you should inform me of this as early as possible. Students with a range of disabilities can also receive help from Student Disability Services, located in the Undergraduate Library (phone number: (313) 577-1851; email: studentdisability@wayne.edu; website: <http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/> ).

**Plagiarism & Cheating.**  All university rules about plagiarism and cheating are in effect during this course (see Academic Integrity at <http://www.doso.wayne.edu/academic-integrity.html>)

Additionally, students are required to complete the plagiarism assignment. Students must complete the plagiarism test on Indiana University’s website <https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/certificationTests/index.html>. Don’t wait until the last minute to complete this assignment as you may need to take the certification more than once to pass. **Passing certificates are due to the instructor by October 4, 2016.**

**Class Cancellations.**  You will be notified of any class cancellations through email and the Blackboard site. Notice of class cancellation will be posted on the classroom door, State Hall, Room 0218.

**Attendance.**  It is to your advantage to attend each class session. If you miss more than two classes, your final grade may be affected. Please notify the instructor if you are going to be absent from class, while some assignment can’t be made-up, others can, and only with proper notification to the instructor.

**Information in this syllabus is subject to change**. Please pay attention to course announcements each week so that you are informed of any changes. The instructor will provide in class announcements as well as Blackboard announcements of changes to the syllabus.

**Instructor Contact.** The best contact is through email, [ksumareh@wayne.edu](mailto:ksumareh@wayne.edu). I will respond within 48 hours in most instances. At any rate, I will send a receipt notification to you. I will only respond to emails sent through wayne.edu. Please do not send email to the instructor using other email systems.

**COURSE SCHEDULE/September and October**

**I. Sociology’s Basic Approach: Studying Social Problems - what are social problems/inequality/social institutions /deviance/major theories?**

* Sociological perspective – sociological imagination
* Inequality/ Global Inequality
* Social Institutions
* Sociological Theory/Perspectives: functionalism, conflict, symbolic interactionism, feminist, critical race, social constructionism
* Social Research

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**Text:**  Macionis *Social Problems*, Chapter 1.

**Blackboard:**

Blumer, Herbert. 1971. “Social Problems as Collective Behavior.” *Social Problems* 18(3): 298

306.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Burawoy, M. (2005). 2004 ASA Presidential Address: For Public Sociology. *American*

*Sociological Review,* *70*(1):4-28. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/stable/4145348

**II. Social Inequality- Group/Identity Positions**

* Gender - family, education, economy, government, religion/culture
* Race - family, education, economy, government, religion/culture
* Ethnicity - family, education, economy, government, religion/culture

**Discussion Questions:** What is inequality--- what kinds of social problems result?

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**Text:** Macionis *Social Problems* Chapter 3 and 4.

**Blackboard:**

Martin, Patricia. 2003. Gender as a Social Institution. *Social Forces* 82(4): 1249-73.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/stable/pdf/3598436.pdf?_=1469886660091>

Blumer, Herbert. 1958. “Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position.” *The Pacific*

*Sociological Review* 1 (1): 3-7.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the*

*1960s to the 1990s* (Second Edition). New York: Routledge.

Johnson, Allan G. 2006 (2001). Chapter 2: pages 12-40. *Privilege, Power and Difference*.

New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

**Section III - Poverty/Wealth, Family Life/Aging/Sexuality**

* Poverty and Wealth (Speaker TBA)
* Family Life
* Aging
* Sexuality

**Discussion Questions:**  What kinds of social problems result from poverty, income gaps, wealth and income inequalities? What kinds of social problems are faced by the elderly, family, youth? What kind of solution are proposed? How would you evaluate the various proposals?

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**Text:** Macionis  *Social Problems* Chapters 2 ,12, 5, 7

**Blackboard:**

Lopata, Helen Z. and Judith A. Levy. 2003. “The Construction of Social Problems across the

Life Course.” Pp. 3-14, in *Social Problems across the Life Course*, edited by Helena Z. Lopata and Judith A. Levey. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publisher, Inc.

SCOTUS Blog. 2015. Marriage Equality Decision. Obergefell v. Hodges <https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf>

Rank, Mark Robert.2005.“Poverty as a Structural Failing.” Pp.49-82, in *One Nation*

*Underprivileged: Why American Poverty Affects Us All*. New York: Oxford University

Press.

Anderson, Lynda et al (2012). Aging in the United States: Opportunities and Challenges

for Public Health. Accessible with Wayne State ID at

<http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300617?journalCode=ajph>

**COURSE SCHEDULE/November and December**

**Section IV - Economy/Politics, Workplace, Education, Health Care**

* Economy and Politics
* Workplace
* Education
* Health Care

**Discussion Questions:** What is the relationship between the economy and social problems? What kinds of social problems result from education and employment inequalities/access/gaps? Does student debt contribute to income/wealth inequality? How might student debt be seen as a social problem? What are the arguments for and against the welfare state (the social safety net); universal health care insurance and access --- single payer, Medicare for all, Medical savings accounts, others?

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**Text:**  Macionis  *Social Problems* Chapters 10, 11, 13, 9

**Blackboard:**

Johnson, Allan G. 2006 (2001). Chapter 3: pages 41-53. *Privilege, Power and Difference*.

New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

McCabe, Janice and Brandon A. Jackson. 2016. “Pathways to Financing College: Race and Class

in Students’ Narratives of Paying for School.” *Social Currents* 3(1):1-19.

<http://scu.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/content/early/2016/03/07/2329496516636404.full.pdf+html>

Quadagno, Jill. 2010. “Institutions, Interest Groups, and Ideology: An

Agenda for the Sociology of Health Care Reform. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51(2):125-136.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/stable/pdf/27800376.pdf?_=1470676417109>

*Additional articles will be posted in Blackboard.*

**Section V- The Social/Physical Environment**

* Population and Global Inequality
* Social Environment: Urban Life, Suburban Life and Rural Life - National/Global
* Alcohol and Other Drugs
* Physical Environment (Speaker TBA – Environmental Justice)

**Discussion Questions:**  How is location (region, urban/suburban/rural) and inequality/privilege experienced through class, gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality? What specific social problems arise out of social location, within specific physical locations (city/urban, suburban, rural – global and national). Substance abuse: how are addictions racialized, classed and gendered?

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**Text:** Macionis  *Social Problems* Chapters 15, 14, 8, 16

**Blackboard: Additional articles to be posted.**

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. “The Case for Reparations.” <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

*Additional articles will be posted in Blackboard.*

**Section VI Problems of Deviance, Conformity, Fear, Violence, And Civil Liberties**

* Deviance
* Fear, Crime, and Criminal Justice
* Violence
* War and Terrorism – domestic, international (Speaker TBA)
* Civil Liberties as a social problem?

**Discussion Questions:** What is deviance? By what process does deviance (behavior, ideas and thoughts) become or lead to social problems? What is crime? What social problems arise from crime, injustice? What is criminal justice, retributive justice, restorative justice? What is violence? What is war? What is terrorism? How does violence differ from terrorism? How does terrorism differ from war? What are civil liberties? What are thought crimes? By what process does terrorism and war contribute to social problems – domestically, globally?

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**Text**: Macionis  *Social Problems* Chapters: 6, 17

**Blackboard:**

Jackman, Mary.2002. “Violence in Social Life.” *Annual Review of Sociology*. 28(2002):387-415.

Granham, Fred P. 1969. “A Contemporary History of American Crime.” Pp. 485-504 in *The*

*History of Violence in America: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence,* edited by Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Brown, Richard Maxwell. 1969. “Historical Patterns of Violence in America.” Pp. 45-83 in *The*

*History of Violence in America: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence,* edited by Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

*Additional articles will be posted in Blackboard.*

**Evaluation Schedule**

* October 4 Midterm Review

**Midterm, Tuesday, October 11, 2016; 11:45 am-1:10 pm**

* December 8 Final Exam Review – *Last Day of Class*

**Final Exam/Friday, December 16, 2016, 10:40 am-1:10 pm**

<http://reg.wayne.edu/finals/final_exam_schedule_fall_2016.pdf>

* 3 Think Quizzes September 29, October 25, November 22
* Plagiarism Assignment Due October 4, 2016
* 6-page Research Paper Due December 1, 2016

**ASSIGNMENT VALUES 400 Total Points**

* 6-page Research Paper 30 points
* 3 Think Quizzes (15 points each) 45points
* Midterm Exam (50 questions) 100 points
* Final Exam (100 questions) 200 points
* Participation 20 Points
* Plagiarism Assignment 5 points

**Grading Scale**

100-93 A 400-372 Points 69-67 D+ 279-268 Points

90-92 A- 371-360 Points 66-63 D 267-252 Points

89-87 B+ 359-348 Points 62-60 D- 251-240 Points

86-83 B 347-332 Points 59-0 E 239 Points and Below

82-80 B- 331-320 Points

79-77 C+ 319-308 Points

76-73 C 307-292 Points

72 -70 C- 291-280 Points