**SYLLABUS**

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| **Sociology 2020: CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS** | |
| Term: | Fall 2016 |
| Section: | 007 |
| Meeting Time: | online |
| Instructor: | Nicole Trujillo-Pagán, Ph.D. |
| Email: | [npagan@wayne.edu](mailto:npagan@wayne.edu) |
| Office Hours: | Wednesdays, 10-1:30 pm or by appointment |
| Office Location: | 3315 FAB |

**Description**

In this course, we will learn through many examples that social problems are conditions that undermine the well-being of some or all members of a society and are usually a matter of public controversy.[[1]](#footnote-1) We learn that the way claims are made about social problems often imply the particular type of solution we should adopt. We also learn that what we consider a social problem changes over time.

**Course Policies**

1. *The Syllabus and Outline*

The syllabus represents a contract between the instructor and the student. Students should read it carefully and ask the instructors any questions she/he may have. The student is ultimately responsible for obtaining any clarification and/or answers to any questions she/he may have about the course **before** the end of the add/drop period. The student's decision to remain in the course beyond the add/drop period represents her/his understanding and acceptance of the expectations and requirements laid out in the course syllabus.

1. *Communication*

This course requires blackboard proficiency.

* All course information will be posted on Blackboard.
* Any revisions to this syllabus will be posted on Blackboard.
* Emails are directed to students through blackboard. If you use a non-WSU email account, you are responsible for ensuring emails are correctly forwarded.
* Written assignments *must* be submitted through blackboard.
* You can learn about Blackboard at: <http://computing.wayne.edu/blackboard/>

1. *Academic Protocol*

Wayne State University **severely penalizes plagiarism, cheating, making up false information for papers, and copying from other students.** If you are caught doing any of these, you may fail the specific assignment, fail the class, referred to the University administration for further academic discipline including, but not limited to, losing your eligibility for scholarships, being dropped from special programs at the University, and/or being expelled from the University.

Avoid plagiarism [misrepresenting the words, ideas or work of others as your own] and cheating [copying from another student's term papers and exams, **knowingly sharing information or answers of exams to be turned in for evaluation and grading,** taking an exam for another student, using unauthorized notes during exams, etc.] Cutting and pasting a sentence and/or paraphrasing the content from books, journals and/or the internet without appropriate in-text citation and bibliography represent forms of plagiarism.

1. *Assignments* (participation on discussion boards, exams)

There are **no make-up opportunities** for missed assignments.

**Exception**: If you have a documented excuse for missing an assignment deadline, you must submit a signed and dated doctor’s note indicating your lack of availability during the time the assignment was scheduled. In other words, the note cannot indicate illness a day before or after the due date. The medical note may be scanned and emailed to the instructor, placed in her box in the Sociology Department, or mailed to her attention at the Sociology Department. You have one week from the due date of the assignment to contact and provide documentation to the instructor. In the case of a quiz missed with a valid doctor's note, your alternate assignment will consist of writing a 3 page summary of each chapter covered in the quiz.

You will have **only one access attempt** on blackboard to complete an online exam.

You should locate a secure internet connection that will be available for completing your assignment. Campus locations include the Undergraduate Library Computing Room.

You should also consider attempting to **complete the quiz early in the day** in order to allow yourself time to get help if you experience technical difficulty.

1. *Differently-Abled Students*

If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TTY: telecommunication device for the deaf; phone for hearing impaired students only). Once you have your accommodations in place, you or SDS should contact me via email to discuss your needs. Student Disability Services' mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University.

**Course and Instruction Design**

Each **weekly session** during the semester is activated and deactivated on Fridays at 11:59 pm. Only one session is available at a time. Materials within the session (text-related slides, supplemental resources, discussion boards, quizzes) are made available and unavailable with each session.

**Grading Criteria**

* Discussion board posts: 50%
* Exams (2): 40%
* One final paper: 10%

*Grading Scale*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A | 100-93 |
| A- | 92.9-90 |
| B+ | 89.9-87 |
| B | 86.9-83 |
| B- | 82.9-80 |
| C+ | 79.9-77 |
| C | 76.9-73 |
| C- | 72.9-70 |

Any curve that may be applied to grades will be calculated at the end of the semester.

*Discussion Board*

On Saturday mornings, the instructor will post new discussion threads. The threads may pose a question and/or ask you to complete an activity or exercise and reflect on your experience. Keep in mind that activities may include watching a film or reading an article. You should schedule enough time to complete your post *before* the cutoff.

Please complete all of your posts **in response to the instructor** by Monday night (11:59pm).

From Tuesday through Thursday night, you should review the thread(s) and **respond to another student’s** post at least once per thread.

You will receive one (1) point per post per thread (maximum 2 points per thread).

In order to receive full points:

* You are required to post at least twice per thread according to the schedule outlined above.
* **avoid duplicating other student’s posts**. Where two or more posts within a particular thread are similar, the subsequent post(s) may receive 0 points.
* Avoid grammatical and typographical errors or shorthand, i.e. “lol” or “smh”.
* Avoid criticisms that are in any way personal, i.e. “all women think that”, etc.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A | 2.0 |
| A- | 1.9*, e.g. 1.91-1.99* |
| B+ | 1.8 |
| B | 1.7 |
| B- | 1.6 |
| C+ | 1.5 |
| C | 1.4 |
| C- | 1.3 |

* Your response to another student’s post should either add to and/or challenge the points previously made by the original post and/or subsequent responses. In other words, your response **must move the discussion forward** rather than merely echo what has already been said in the discussion.

At the end of the semester, your grade for discussion threads will be averaged and assigned a letter grade corresponding to the following scale.

*Exams*

…include true/false, multiple choice, short answer (word), and short essay questions. Unless indicated otherwise, exams **cover only the required readings**. Each exam covers the seven (7) weeks up to and including those assigned for the week in which it occurs.

…are **timed**. Exams vary in length and are set to allow you no more than two (2) minutes per question. If you “time out” while taking the exam, you will NOT be allowed to retake it. As a result, you should answer the questions you find easiest first.

…open at 12:00 am and close at 11:59 pm on blackboard on the day in which they are scheduled (see course outline).

*Final Paper*

Despite significant controversy about whether social media activism is effective, people nonetheless use apps like Twitter to shape the debate around a social issue. One of the most tweeted issues involves discrimination and freedom from discrimination.

For your final project, you will use Twitter to analyze **one** of the social issues we did not cover during the semester (Covered in chapters 4, 10, 11 and 13 of the text). You will use your textbook to outline the structural foundations of the social issue, e.g. what social structures cause the problem to exist? Then, using the data you obtained by reviewing at least 25 Twitter posts relating to **one** issue, explain how public debate reframes the issue in ways that differ from that of the textbook. In other words, what does the textbook “miss” about the issue?

For example, let’s say you want to work on a social problem related to the environment (Ch. 4). You read the chapter and are particularly interested in learning about the problem of “deforestation”. You search Twitter using this keyword and identify 25 posts that you want to analyze. For the purposes of this example, let’s say you’ll notice (and be interested in) the buzz around “palm oil.” In your paper, you’ll use the textbook’s discussion of economics to explain why deforestation happens. Then, your paper will outline what you learned about palm oil and how it causes deforestation in Africa. Your discussion will also talk about how the public debate around this issue focused on sustainable agriculture, which the textbook did not discuss.

**Format**: Your paper should be double-spaced and cite the textbook pages, as appropriate. Be sure to copy and paste the 25 Twitter posts as an appendix to your paper.

**Required Books**

1. Social Problems, 13th edition (2013), by D. Stanley Eitzen, Maxine Baca Zinn, and Kelly Eitzen Smith[[2]](#footnote-2)

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** |  | **Reading** | **Evaluation** |
| 1  (8/31-9/2) | INTRODUCTIONS, SYLLABUS AND BLACKBOARD REVIEW |  |  |
| 2  (9/3-9/9) | STUDYING SOCIAL PROBLEMS | **1** |  |
| 3  (9/10-9/16) | WEALTH AND POWER | **2** |  |
| 4  (9/17-9/23) | WORLD POPULATION AND GLOBAL INEQUALITY | **3** |  |
| 5  (9/24-9/30) | DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN THE US | **5** |  |
| 6  (10/1-10/7) | PROBLEMS OF PLACE | **6** |  |
| 7  (10/8-10/14) | POVERTY | **7** |  |
| 8  (10/15-10/21) | RACIAL AND ETHNIC INEQUALITY | **8** | **Exam (10/21)** |
| 9  (10/22-10/28) | GENDER INEQUALITY | **9** |  |
| 10  (10/29-11/4) | CRIME AND JUSTICE | **12** |  |
| 11  (11/5-11/11) | THE ECONOMY AND WORK | **14** |  |
| 12  (11/12-11/18) | FAMILIES | **15** |  |
| 13  (11/19-11/25) | EDUCATION | **16** |  |
| 14  (11/26-12/2) | HEALTHCARE | **17** |  |
| 15  (12/3-12/9) | NATIONAL SECURITY | **18** | **Exam (10/21)** |
| 12/16 | ***Final Paper Due*** | | |

1. Macionis, John. 2015. *Social Problems.* Pearson. P. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. If you use an earlier edition of the text, you are responsible for ensuring chapters and materials are comparable. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)