

“Another world is not only possible; she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”
Arundhati Roy

Social Problems

SOC 2020

Wayne State University

Detroit, MI

Winter 2017

3 Credit Hours

Tues/Thurs 11:30am – 12:45pm

State Hall, Room 0306

Instructor: Michael Sabbagh

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Kik: MichaelSabbaghWSU

Campus Office Hours:

Tues/Thurs: 10am – 11am & by appointment

Office Location: 2264 Faculty Administration Building

Office Phone: 313-577-2930

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Social Problems: Continuity and Change

Free online textbook found at <http://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/>

NOTE: Students that prefer a physical book are welcome to purchase any addition of *Social Problems* by John Macionis (Pearson Publishing), but be advised that the course will be following the online text book listed above. The texts are reasonably similar, but not exact. Really any textbook with “social problems” in the title will suffice, but make sure it was published after 2009 or so.

Additional readings to be passed out in class or available on Blackboard.

GOALS

Students who successfully complete this course will develop a rich framework for a sociological understanding of social problems. This course is not focused on purely “factual” learning, or learning facts for the sake of facts. Rather, the focus will be on “conceptual” learning. It is more important that you walk away from this class understanding the complex relation of concepts than being able to recite the facts. This course takes a neutral position towards the various social problems discussed. Instead, we will focus on *why* they are considered social problems, competing theories on how to address them and those theories strengths and weaknesses.

There are many times that we will problematize the definitions that we are learning to understand the concepts for their strengths and some of their weaknesses. How have these concepts changed through the years in different places?

Learning outcomes for this course

1. Understand what sociologists mean by “social problems,” how they emerge and how they are understood
2. State and illustrate how the sociological imagination can assist in understanding social problems
3. Articulate the usefulness of sociological theory and research in the explanation and amelioration of social problems
4. Analyze how social structure operates, intensifies and impacts social problems, and what role individual choices play as well
5. Understand the consequences of proposed “solutions” to social problems, historically and contemporarily
6. Recognize the importance that racial, ethnic, class and gender diversity play in our society and globally; and the way certain groups are impacted by social problems more so than others
7. The capacity to evaluate the dynamics between cultures, the economy, politics and marginalization
8. Proficiency in reading and comprehending scholarly texts
9. Hone research techniques and presentation skills
10. Develop internet and computer skills needed for college-level work
11. Ability to construct complex ideas and to “connect the dots” of concepts
12. Develop critical thinking skills and be able to think deeply about our social lives
13. And, above all, enjoy yourself while accomplishing the above tasks

EXPECTATIONS

Overview of Student Expectations:

1. The core of all expectations for this course is **respect**. I expect that you will respect yourself, your fellow classmates, ideas presented in the classroom, diversity, the instructor and any guests to the classroom. Likewise, I pledge to respect you and your ideas.
2. I consider this classroom to be a safe space free of any types of hate. Any form of racism, sexism, misogyny, classism, ableism, fat/homo/transphobia or other kind of bigotry will NOT be tolerated.
3. You are expected **to actively attend each scheduled class**. This means that you are to prepare thoroughly for each class, participate in the class discussion, actively listen and take notes.
4. **You will write your own assignments and cite all external sources.**
5. **All assignments will be completed with care and scholarly diligence.** Please use complete sentences, and run spelling/grammar check before turning in any assignments.

If you are to miss a class, you are expected to get notes from a fellow student. Room is provided at the bottom of group project handout to take down the contact information of your classmates.

Note on Opinions vs. Facts

There may be times in class where it seems like we are having simple political conversations, just like one might have with their friends at the bar or while casually hanging out. In this class, you *are not* entitled to opinions; you *are* entitled to empirical facts with evidence. Often our common-sense understandings of various social problems are, in fact, misaligned with reality (see: recent story

where Fox News stated food stamp fraud was at all-time high, when in fact it is historically low). It is natural to have blinders towards others' struggles, which is something we all have to work to actively dismantle. I ask that you always stay open-minded to look at the issues discussed from different angles than you may be used to.

Instructor Expectations:

I pledge to:

1. Be respectful of myself, students, ideas presented in class and classroom guests
2. Always be prepared for every class
3. Offer a wide array of opportunities for students to be successful in this course
4. Exude excitement for topics presented in the course
5. Present, and be respectful of, differing viewpoints that I may disagree with
6. Offer my support
7. Be fair and reasonable
8. Be flexible when needed
9. Give more than adequate feedback on your performance in the class

Attendance Policy

According to the Norwegian pop band D'Sound, "Bein' there is half the walk." Class discussion in this course is just as important as the readings and assignments, and, alas, if you are not in class, you cannot participate in class discussions. Students are expected to be in class on each day, on time. Keep in mind that each week of this course costs you around \$100 – \$200 in tuition, depending on your fee schedule. I do not take that responsibility lightly and have planned each class session to compliment the readings and work towards the learning outcomes mentioned earlier. An attendance sheet will be passed out in the beginning of class, which is your responsibility to sign. You will be allowed to miss four class sessions throughout the semester without excuse; any further and you **will not be allowed to take the final exam**. Any further absence from class will require consultation with Student Disability Services (see below).

Early Academic Assessment (EAA)

As this course is lower than 4000 level, I am required to enter your grade during week seven of the semester by the date listed below. You will receive an email notification if the grade entered is a C- or lower. I will not enter your grade if you have a C or better since you are able to track your grade easily as we are going along through the semester through Blackboard's *My Grades* function.

WSU Course Participation Confirmation

Starting in Fall 2016, WSU now requires instructors to report student attendance during the first two weeks of class. If a student's attendance is not confirmed, the registrar will administratively remove the student from the class and their financial aid will be adjusted accordingly. Since this class has a maximum of 75 students, the instructor will be handling the confirmation requirements. For more information, please visit <http://reg.wayne.edu/gotoclass.php>

Number of Preparation Hours

As with any undergraduate course you will take, the calculation to determine the amount of time you need to spend on a course to be successful is to spend two hours outside of class for every hour in class. This is a three credit hour class, which means students should expect to spend around six hours per week outside of class on readings, studying, assignments and journals.

TECHNOLOGY

Blackboard and Email

The use of Blackboard and Email is mandatory for this course. Using Blackboard, students are required to watch videos, read articles, listen to podcasts, post on the discussion board and check for notices from the instructor. Likewise, WSU email is the primary way I will communicate with you between class sessions. Please let me know if you have trouble with either of these platforms.

Cell Phones

Don't be annoying. Put your phone on vibrate or turn it off during class. Don't even think about FaceTiming during class, though I may allow a stray selfie here and there. It is obvious when you're texting or looking at cat photos online with your phone in your lap. Please don't. It is annoying and disruptive. Please leave the classroom if you must make or receive a call.

Laptops and Tablets

I do not encourage students to bring laptops or tablets to class. This isn't because I am opposed to technology in general, but computers can be flirtatious monsters, inviting students to engage in non-class activities such as visiting other websites or checking e-mail, which can distract you and the people around you from what's going on in the classroom. Plan on bringing a pen or pencil and paper to class to take notes, just as students have done for hundreds of years. I will ask students to put away laptops and tablets at the beginning of class out of respect to me, the class and fellow classmates.

Voice Recorders

Personally I do not mind lectures being recorded, but you will need to notify me before class starts if you'll be recording. This way, I can check with the other students in attendance that day to ensure they are comfortable being recorded. This is because class discussions can get personal in nature, and some students may not feel comfortable being recorded.

OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

If you are having difficulty in any stage of writing an essays, it is highly suggested that you use the resources the WSU campus has to offer. Please visit the Writing Center in the David Adamany Undergrad Library for assistance with your research assignment.

Writing Center

David Adamany Undergrad Library

Second Floor, Room 2310

Website (hours and scheduling info): <http://www.clas.wayne.edu/writing>

Reflection Essays

Students are expected to write four, one – two page reflective essays throughout the class, due on the dates indicated in the course schedule below. You can either submit the essays in class or via Blackboard (no emails please). It can be about anything relating to the readings, lectures, personal anecdotes, what you liked or didn't like and so on. I will accept these essays late with a two point

per day penalty. The essays are worth 20 points each, so it is in your best interest to get them in on time. Think of these essays as a journal tracking your progress through the course, or as a space to develop ideas for your final paper.

Group Presentation Project

You will be given an assignment this semester where you will lead the class discussion. This will be a group project, and group members are responsible for their own part of the presentation. See separate handout for details. I recommend getting to know your group members early on and to constantly stay in touch as we're going through the semester.

Plagiarism Assignment

Students must complete the plagiarism test on Indiana University's website and send the certificate showing they passed the test by the due date noted below. Do not wait until the last minute to complete this assignment. It may seem easy, but unless you have an in depth understanding of plagiarism, you will need to read the material on the website, take the practice exam and then complete the certification. You may need to take the certification more than once to pass. Further information can be found here: <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/test.html>

Final Exam

There will be one exam-of-sorts during the semester. The exam will be cumulative, meaning that it will require you to be able to refer to any information discussed throughout the entire term prior to that exam.

The final exam will be an in-class group project and will be graded by other members in class during the final week. Only students that have not missed more than four class sessions will be allowed to participate (see: attendance policy). Further details on the final exam will be provided after spring break.

Final Paper

This assignment will be a research paper about a social problem that you want to explore further. You will write a 1,000 – 1,200-word essay (four – five pages, double spaced) with four to seven sources. Four of the sources must come from scholarly articles, preferably sociological journals. I expect about one citation per page. Use block quotes sparingly. My general rule is one block quote for every four pages of text.

Format: APA is my preferred formatting but MLA or others are fine as long as you're consistent. If in doubt, stick with APA. Reference the Purdue Owl (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>) or visit the writing center to get help with formatting citations. Bibme.org is a good resource to use when making a reference page.

The final paper will be turned in on the date noted below, and will be submitted through Blackboard using Safe Assign. Further instructions will be given in class.

Extra Credit

Students have several options for earning extra credit in this course. Please note that no extra credit is accepted the final week of class, and I typically do not accept essays for extra credit without prior consultation.

1. Students may bring in a newspaper or journal article related to the topic of the day with a short (1-2 paragraph) explanation of how it is relevant to that day's discussion.
2. Attend an activity, presentation or exhibition on a class topic. Then, write up a 1-2 page review on this activity, presentation or exhibition that must be submitted within 72 hours of the event.

Note that other forms of extra credit may be offered throughout the semester. Students can submit a maximum of two extra credit assignments, worth up to 10 points each. I will accept extra credit up to day the final reflective essay is due (see below).

EVALUATIONS

Your performance in this course will be evaluated in the following manner:

Reflection Essays: 20 points each / 4 essay	80 points total
Plagiarism Assignment	20 points
Group Presentation	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Final Paper	100 points
Total	400 points

Grading Scale

100% - 90%	A	72% - 70%	C
89% - 86%	A-	69% - 66%	C-
85% - 83%	B+	65% - 63%	D+
82% - 80%	B	62% - 60%	D
79% - 76%	B-	59% - 51%	D-
75% - 73%	C+		

Anything below this threshold will receive a failure for the course.

I will be diligent about getting grades up on Blackboard in as timely of a fashion as possible. It is up to each student to keep track of her or his marks as the semester goes on. Please contact me if you have concerns about your point total or if you are having problems in the course. Do not wait until the last minute to inquire about your grade.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Accommodation Statement

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 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special 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.” Please refer to the SDS website for further information about students with disabilities and the services we provide for faculty and students:
<http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/>

Plagiarism Statement

Assignments that have been copied from another student or another source will not be scored. All final papers will be run through the SafeAssign plagiarism system which detects attempts at copying text. “Academic misbehavior means any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution or subvert the education process. All forms of academic misbehavior are prohibited at Wayne State University, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.” (*WSU Dean of Students Office Statement, 2014*). The following website gives the university’s full policy on academic integrity: <http://doso.wayne.edu/academic-integrity.html>

I understand there are many gray areas when it comes to plagiarism. Don’t hesitate to contact me or stop by during office hours if you have questions or need guidance.

A Final Note:

Due to the nature of the topics in this course, some points discussed in class may be controversial, uncomfortable or lead to heated debates. Learning something new isn’t always comfortable and often our personal judgments cloud our ability to learn to the fullest. Please try to keep those judgments outside of the ‘classroom’ and focus on gaining new knowledge while in class or reading the assigned texts. If you have strong feelings about anything brought up in class by either your fellow classmates or me, please feel free to make an appointment to come speak with me or stop by during office hours. I’m always available and committed to listening to your concerns.

The instructor may make changes to this course outline as needed during the course. Please be attentive for modifications and regularly check your Wayne State email.

COURSE TIMELINE

DATE	TOPIC	READING/ASSIGNMENT
Tues Jan 10	Syllabus Review + Group signup	<NONE>
Thurs Jan 12	Understanding and studying social problems	Chapter 1
Tues Jan 17	Poverty	Chapter 2
Thurs Jan 19		
Tues Jan 24*	Race & Ethnic Inequality	Chapter 3
Thurs Jan 26		
Tues Jan 31*	Gender Inequality	Chapter 4
Thurs Feb 2	Sexual Orientation & Inequality	Chapter 5
Fri Feb 3		1st Essay Due
Tues Feb 7*	Sexual Behavior	Chapter 9
Thurs Feb 9	Cultural Misogyny, Patriarchy & Sexual Assault	Readings on Blackboard
Tues Feb 14*	Drugs & Alcohol	Chapter 7
Thurs Feb 16		
Fri Feb 17		2rd Essay Due
Tues Feb 21	Crime & Criminal Justice	Chapter 8
Thurs Feb 23	Know Your Rights training	<NONE>
Tues Feb 28*	Schools & Education	Chapter 11
Thurs Mar 2		
Tues Mar 7*	Work, Capitalism & The Economy	Chapter 12
Thurs Mar 9		
Fri Mar 10		Plagiarism cert. due
<i>SPRING BREAK: MARCH 13 – MARCH 19</i>		
Tues Mar 21*	Health & Health Care	Chapter 13
Thurs Mar 23	Mental Health	Readings on Blackboard
Tues Mar 28	Population & Indigenous Rights	Chapter 15
Thurs Mar 30	Final paper brainstorm/sharpening research skills	Readings on Blackboard
Fri Mar 31		3th Essay Due
Tues Apr 4	Urban & Rural Problems	Chapter 14
Thurs Apr 6	Detroit's Urban Crisis	Readings on Blackboard

Tues Apr 11*	War & Terrorism	Chapter 16
Thurs Apr 13		
Fri Apr 14		4th Essay Due
Tues Apr 18	Final Exam	
Thurs Apr 20	Group Final Marking	
Fri Apr 26	Final Paper Due via Blackboard	

* Denotes days when there will be group presentations

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY DATES

January 16 th	University closed: Martin Luther King Day
January 23 rd	Last day to drop course without tuition penalty
February 5 th	Last day to drop course without instructor approval
February 20 th	Early Academic Assessment (EAA) grades due
March 10 th	Midterm Exam
March 13 th – March 18 th	University closed: Spring Break
March 26 th	Last day to drop course with instructor approval

ASSIGNMENT DATES

February 3 rd	First essay due
February 17 th	Second essay due
March 10 th	Plagiarism certification due
March 31 st	Third essay due
April 14 th	Fourth essay due/last day to submit extra credit
April 26 th	Final paper due