

SOC 2020: Social Problems

Section 200
CRN: 13840

FALL 2013

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Hours: Mondays, 3:30-4:30

This course deals with a broad array of social problems, where they come from, how we define them, and the degree to which programs and policies are designed to alleviate them. In addition, we will discuss how, at times, the solution to one set of problems may well create another set of problems. Students are expected to do all the course reading in preparation for class discussion, come on time, and participate in the class. This will be a “web-assisted” course, which means that core lectures will be available on Blackboard, as will be all quizzes and course exams. Class periods will be used to elaborate on the material in the lectures and chapters, and for exercises and projects that will illustrate the topic under discussion.

Office hours: Many of you are not near or on campus, so in addition to the office hours posted above, I will see students by appointment (made in advance). Also, please note that I reply to email within 24 hours and most often sooner. This is the very best way to contact me with any questions. Consider that if you did not get a response from me your email did not arrive, so please resend your question.

Required Reading: The required textbook and supplement for this class is:

Social Problems, John Macionis (5th edition)
ISBN-13: 978-0-205-88207-6
Publisher: Pearson

All chapters that are listed in your course syllabus refer to the most recent edition of the Macionis text. Books will be available at Marwill Bookstore (www.marwilbookstore.com). Earlier editions are available and if you decide to use an earlier (and cheaper) used edition it is your responsibility to make sure chapter numbers and contents are comparable—all expectations and material on the tests are based on the contents of the assigned chapters in the schedule below.

Since the study of sociology is a growing, ever changing, discipline, the instructor reserves the right to assign additional reading material throughout the semester.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE

Blackboard: This course will be organized via Blackboard, which can be accessed at (<http://computing.wayne.edu/blackboard/>). You are required to learn how to use Blackboard; there are good tutorials on the website. This means this syllabus, all lectures and any subsequent readings will be posted there. Blackboard provides a Discussion Board area we will use, as well as an on-line grade book which will permit you to monitor your own progress in the course.

Communication: All course information will be broadcast via the Internet, posted through Blackboard. Each of you have been assigned an email account by WSU and if you decide to use a different email address be sure you figure out how to forward any email on your own. I will post study guides, notices, revisions on this syllabus, and other information on or through Blackboard. Blackboard uses your WSU account and I cannot change that. Not checking or not getting your WSU email is no excuse for missing assignments or other information relevant to this course. Do not ask me to use an alternative address to communicate with you.

Lectures: For each week's topic as indicated in the schedule below I will post a lecture by 8 AM Sunday Morning that will discuss the main points of this topic, relate it back to the readings, and add any additional material I deem necessary. Consider these lectures as supplemental to the reading augmenting arguments or providing additional perspectives, and as an integral part of the course material. Exams and quizzes may be based on material found in the text, in my lectures, and in my online comments.

Discussion: You will be expected to make at least two separate comments in the discussion area each week (you are welcome to make as many comments as you want, and from past experience many students end up engaging in lots of interactions through the discussion boards). These could initiate new threads, ask general questions, or respond to comments by other students. I will monitor the discussions, making comments as I feel appropriate, and in general looking to see that a proper level of communication is established for the course. If I feel your comments are too terse (for example, simply posting "I agree" does not cut it) I will first send you a reminder to get you to be more engaged. Repeating this behavior could result in your not receiving any points for your posts. Your first comment must be made by Tuesday 8PM of each week which I expect to be your reaction to the lecture and readings. The second comment should be a reaction posted no later than Thursday 11PM. One last point: the Discussion Board for each week is open during the stated posting period and then closed at the end of the week (Thursday evening). Requests to post after the board closes will not be accepted.

First Discussion Post: In the first week of class (weeks begin on Sunday, the first week starts September 1st) you will be asked to introduce yourselves (ungraded) and let us know something about what you are studying, or any other information you wish to share. The purpose of this first week is to let students who have not used Blackboard's Discussion Boards very much become more familiar with it since it is so central to our course. Each one of you should also indicate clearly that you have read the syllabus and understand the terms of this semester's course.

Challenging Grades: On occasion, exam answers will contradict material in the text (poor copy editing often results in different answers in two separate places in the course textbook). As a rule, I add generic points (usually 5-10) at the end of the semester to deal with those instances when you are marked incorrect and but the answer you provided can be found in the text. You do not need to contact me unless this happens to you a lot of the time.

Disability: 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.

Learning Objectives: This course provides an overview of social problems, and students will be expected to gain competency in this substantive area. Quizzes, discussions and tests will assess the students basic knowledge of the field.

Decorum: You are expected to comply with all University regulations and requirements concerning proper behavior, plagiarism and any form of cheating. In an online course, that extends to the way you communicate in the discussion boards. If you do not comply with norms of respectful communication you may be blocked from participation for a specified period. Excessive abuse may result in dismissal from the class, and should you violate those norms, you can be sanctioned and otherwise punished pursuant to the University policy in place.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Discussions: Every week we will have a topic for discussion (outlined below). Along with the applicable chapters in Macionis I will post a lecture for that week (and additional material you find on Blackboard that I post to augment each week's lecture). You are expected to read prior to each week's lecture, and then you must post at least two comments during the week. Think of these comments as your "in-class" participation. In my experience, it permits students who might otherwise not speak to express their views or opinions.

The posts reacting to the lecture and readings should be made as noted in this syllabus. You will be graded for the week, with 4 points awarded for each post made in a timely manner. All points will be awarded after the week's Discussion Board closes (**Thursdays at 11pm**).

NOTE: Some of the topics in the course may generate strong opinions and sharp differences among class members. One can disagree with others, or take an unpopular position, with no risk of offending so long as the tone is proper. I will not tolerate "flames" or other forms of personal attacks for views posted by classmates. Name calling or dismissive comments are considered offensive. In the first instance of such a post I will send you a private warning, and ask you to

follow-up with a conciliatory comment. After the warning each post will result in a 5 point penalty for each transgression. Persistent abusive posts can lead to removal from the course.

In all, there are 10 class lectures and reading assignments about which you will have to comment (weeks of January 15th through April 9th inclusive). That means you are expected to submit a minimum of 20 comments (2 per week) during this course to get full credit (and no, submitting 4 comments in a given week does not count for missed comments in an earlier week). **This gives a total of 80 possible points** (up to 8 points for weekly comments over 10 weeks).

Quizzes: There will be five short and random quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes altogether represent **a total of 50 points possible** (10 points for each quiz), and will be given online when I feel we have covered enough material. The quizzes are my way of making sure you are keeping up with the reading. Each quiz will be available on Blackboard. They will “pop” up on any given Sunday, appearing at **8AM** at the same time the lecture appears, and must be taken by **10AM** on Tuesday. As a rule they cannot be made up unless you have made some prior arrangement with me explaining why you could not take the quiz. Those who have technical difficulties will be given the opportunity to take the exam. Obviously, those who first check course material on Tuesday may have missed the quiz for that week! I will announce the first quiz to get you started, but future quizzes will randomly appear on Sundays. It is your responsibility to monitor our course area in Blackboard to watch for all quizzes.

Examinations: You will have three examinations during the semester (see schedule for dates). The **first exam is worth 20 points** towards your grade, **the second exam 30 points**, and the **third exam is worth 70 points** towards your final grade. The questions on the first exam covers all the material assigned to that point (lectures 1 to 3); the second cover chapters 1-6 with most of the questions from the last three lectures, and the third exam will be more heavily weighted with questions on the course material from the second half (lectures 7 to 11) but all of the semester’s material will be tested. Examinations are in the schedule below, plus I will announce each exam.

For the quizzes and exams, you will be instructed on how much time you are allotted and will be reminded that once you begin you cannot suspend and return to the evaluation later. Quizzes, as noted above, appear in random weeks and will be available from **8am Monday to 10am Tuesday**. All exams (per the schedule) will be available for several days, **starting at 8am on Monday and ending at 9pm Thursday**. This will permit you to take these assessments at a convenient time. The exams and quizzes cannot be rescheduled, but I will reset them during the exam period if you encounter technical problems.

All quizzes and exams will be given on Blackboard, with a start time and a limited duration. You will be able to start the quiz at your convenience, but once you start you must finish taking the exam or quiz. Once you exit you cannot return. You will have to finish in the time allotted—I will generally give you 20-30 minutes to answer 10 multiple choice questions on a quiz; 90 minutes for the first exam, and 2 hours the second exam. It is **your responsibility** to monitor what is posted on Blackboard; not checking the class space is no excuse for missing a quiz.

NOTE: each quiz and exam has a time limit and there is a clock letting you know how much time is left. For quizzes and exams, you are potentially PENALIZED 1 point for every 3 minutes you go past the time limit. I will know because Blackboard asks me to validate a quiz or exam grade that exceeds the allowed time (you will see a green square with an exclamation mark).

Final comment...the exams and quizzes will be graded immediately and the grade will appear on Blackboard's Grade Center. Please go back and check after 24 hours. *If no grade appears you should contact me immediately* since there may have been a technical problem after taking the assessment and your responses were not recorded. If that happens, I will discuss alternative arrangements (probably offering you a chance to retake). It is helpful if you print out your answers each time, just in case (and as "proof" you took it as required). You cannot come back several weeks later and say you took the quiz or exam but somehow no grade is posted.

I reserve the right to make changes in the course or this syllabus, if needed, as the semester progresses! Please pay attention to email messages containing any course modifications.

COURSE GRADE

Taken together, your grade for the course will be based on the total of 80 points available for participating online, 50 points for the quizzes and 120 points from the three examinations. **Your final grade will be calculated on a total of 250 points possible for the course, as follows:**

<u>Points Earned</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points Earned</u>	<u>Grade</u>
235 – 250	A	185 – 192	C+
225 – 234	A-	175 – 184	C
215 – 224	B+	165 – 174	C-
202 – 214	B	125 – 164	D
193 – 201	B-	Less than 125	F

It is my past practice to allow for "slippage" on totals; that is, if you are very close to a higher grade, and the reason you are not doing as well as you like is because of one poor early showing, I will consider moving you up to the next grade level. For example, if you regularly get 8 points for each discussion board but for one or two weeks (especially early in the course) you only got 4 points, I might add the points needed to get you over to the next grade.

To anticipate your question, no I do not curve the final course grades. My philosophy is that you all should be able to get an A but if no one does the work you all can get a D. Curving is a process where grades are distributed by percentages—for example assigning the top and bottom 5% an A and F, etc -- but then only 3 out of the 60 people in this class can get an A and at least 3 people will have to fail. That seems too arbitrary to me.

Unless you can demonstrate that I failed to give you credit when credit was due, or that I made a mistake converting your total points to a letter grade, all decisions are final. If, during the semester, I indicated that you can remind me of a problem or special circumstance that may result in a changed grade you should check to make sure I adjusted your final grade.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this course or its requirements. Below is the course schedule of topics and exams. Discussion Boards will be graded for lectures numbered 1 – 10 below. There will be a final Discussion Board after week 11 for anyone wishing to continue a discussion as the course comes to a close. The timing of a quiz is random and at my discretion. Exam dates are posted on the course schedule below.

The best way to contact me during the semester is by email. Any message not getting a response should be resent (I can't control technology). Calling my office number will get you to the Department, where you can leave a message.

You can drop this course with no tuition owed if done so by September 11th. After that date, be mindful that the last day to withdraw from the course is Nov 9th, and any effort to withdraw after that date will require an appeal to the Registrar. To cut down on the numbers of students who withdraw quickly from courses without thinking about the consequences, Wayne State is implementing a new withdrawal program as of this Fall 2013 semester. Students withdrawing from courses will have to meet with a general adviser in the Welcome Center before being allowed to withdraw from any course. This is supposed to ensure that students understand both the academic and financial consequences of their decisions.

Students must be marginally up to date (Blackboard records when you last visited the course) and be passing the course (that is, made an effort to keep up with the work to that point) to get a **WP**; those students generally absent most of the semester and have not done any of the work for the course will get a **WN**; all others should expect a **WF**.

IMPORTANT DATES

September 11: Last day to withdraw with full tuition refund

September 29: First exam

October 27: Second exam

November 9: Last day to withdraw from the course with a "W" grade

November 27: Thanksgiving--no class that week

December 8: Third exam

DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT ME IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS

FALL 2013 COURSE OUTLINE

<i>CLASS</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>READING</i>
9/1	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE—Blackboard introductions	
9/8	1. Studying social problems	Chapter 1
9/15	2. Social inequality and poverty--budget	Chapter 2
9/22	3. Race and ethnic inequality	Chapter 3
9/29	➔ FIRST EXAM ←	
10/6	4. Gender inequality and sexuality	Chapters 4 and 7
10/13	5. Aging and health	Chapters 5 and 9
10/20	6. Economy and politics	Chapter 10
10/27	➔ SECOND EXAM ←	
11/3	7. Work and the workplace	Chapter 11
11/10	8. Family life and education	Chapters 12 and 13
11/17	9. Urban society	Chapter 14
11/24	Thanksgiving Break	
12/1	10. Global inequality; the environment	Chapters 15 and 16
12/8	➔ THIRD EXAM ←	