

SOC 1020: Social Problems

Section 001
CRN: 17322
Fall 2018

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Hours: Wednesdays 12:00-2:00, by appointment only

What do we mean by social problems? Are they a reflection of the way we interact as individuals, are they structural constraints the privilege some people and disadvantage others?

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. At times, the solution to one set of problems may well create another set of problems. Everyone is opposed to all sorts of inequality, so in this course we will discuss how, to solve our social problems. More specifically, you will get a chance to propose ways to make the world you will be inheriting a better place to live in. This is not a difficult course, unless you fall behind. Course expectations are straightforward and it is easy to do well.

Goals and objectives for the course: This course has two goals. The first is to help you know more about the discipline of sociology and its role in contributing to our understanding of social reality. You will be able to: (a) describe how sociology differs from, and is like, other social sciences and to give examples of these differences; (b) describe how sociology contributes to a liberal art understanding of social reality; and (c) apply the sociological imagination, sociological principles, and concepts to her/his own life. You will be introduced to basic concepts in sociology and fundamental theoretical perspectives to be able to demonstrate the relevance of culture; social change; socialization; stratification; social structure; institutions; and differentiations by race/ethnicity, gender, age, and class.

The second goal of this course is to examine how people deal with the social problems they experience, and what sort of organization occurs to both alleviate the immediate negative impact of each problem, and in the end help develop the kind of society that does not routinely create these sorts of problem. In other words, even as we explore social problems, we will also examine social solutions: how do we create the world we want to live in, not just accept the world as we find it.

At the end of this course, you should be able to see how culture and social structures operate in the way institutions affect each other and impact on individuals. You will be able to demonstrate how factors such as population or urbanization affect social structures and individuals, and how culture and social structure vary across time and place. Finally, you will be able to understand the significance of race, class, gender, and age in the way we frame, and then deal with, problems in society.

Consultation: The best way to communicate your questions about the course is via email or bring them up at the beginning of each class period. Please note that I usually reply to email within 24 hours and most often sooner. If you do not get a response from me, perhaps your email did not arrive, so please resend your question.

Required Course Materials:

Macionis, Social Problems, 7th edition, available at the WSU bookstore (you may use earlier editions if you find it used, but make sure you read the correct chapter as numbering often changes). There are also weekly lecture notes, articles I may upload and other printed material, and links to websites for additional information found on Canvas.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE

CANVAS: This course will be organized via CANVAS, which can be accessed at (<http://canvas.wayne.edu>). You are required to learn how to use Canvas; there are good tutorials available. All students are enrolled in *Student Basic Training*. The syllabus and lectures will be posted there. Note that I am not able to help with technical issues related to your access to CANVAS. You **MUST** contact the C&IT Help Desk to figure out what is wrong. Any appeal because of technical issues should be accompanied by your communication from C&IT that they were resolving your issue.

Communication: All course information will be broadcast via the Internet, posted through Canvas. 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 send any notices, revisions of this syllabus, and other information on or through Canvas, which uses your WSU account. I cannot change that. Not checking or not getting your WSU email (if you forward to another account) 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.

Course material: For each topic indicated in the schedule below I will post lectures and a link to additional material on Canvas at **8AM Thursday morning for the week that follows** (for example, on Sept 6 for the week of Sept 9), relating to that week's topic.

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 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 provide the forms as attachments as soon as you have one.

Decorum: You are expected to comply with all University regulations and requirements concerning proper behavior, plagiarism and any form of cheating. That extends to the way you communicate in any discussions on-line. If you do not comply with norms of respectful

communication you may be blocked from participation. Excessive abuse may result in dismissal from the class, or otherwise punished pursuant to University policy.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

IMPORTANT: By September 1st, *OR WITHIN 5 DAYS OF REGISTERING FOR THIS COURSE* if the semester has already begun, you must send me an email to me to david.fasenfest@wayne.edu with the subject heading “COURSE RESPONSIBILITY” and in the message copy the following sentences (and mean them!):

“I have downloaded and reviewed the course syllabus. I know what is expected of me and will send an email requesting clarification when I am in doubt.”

That email allows me to verify that you are in the class. Once I have verified your student participation, you are required to go into the Student Resources section, select Student Participation, and actively affirm your enrollment. If not WSU will drop you from this course.

Weekly Discussion Posts (30%): For 10 (ten) weeks, due as indicated by “Discussion Wk#” in the syllabus schedule, provide a discussion of some aspect of the readings. The discussion area for each week will become available on Tuesday morning; you must post your contribution no later than 5pm on Friday (e.g. available Sept 11, post due Sept 14). Here you elaborate on some aspect of the material, making specific reference to at least 3 (three) articles or essays found on some news outlet online (provide the link). You may certainly disagree or otherwise contest the material in the readings. Your post should be at least 250 words—typically, one page of text double spaced using normal margins (hint—it is probably better if you type your response first, then copy it into the discussion board). Each post will be worth 3 points awarded for contributing. There is no “correct” or “right” perspective, so the content will not be evaluated.

Quizzes (10%): There will be 2 (two) random quizzes announced during the semester. These will be relative short quizzes of 10 multiple choice questions, with each quiz worth 5 *points*. You will have 20 minutes to answer the questions, and the quiz will be available from 5pm on the first day, until 5pm the following day. Quizzes will be announced at the beginning of the week in which they appear, to be determined as the semester progresses. At least one of the quizzes will be given prior to the first exam.

Examinations (60%): There will be three online exams available from 8pm on the first date to 8pm on the last date as noted below in the syllabus. The first one (September 25-27) is worth 10 *points* and will involve 20 multiple choice questions in a 45-minute exam, the second (October 30-November 1) is worth 20 *points* and will involve 40 multiple choice questions in a 90-minute exam. The last exam (December 12-14) is worth 30 *points* and will involve 60 questions in 120-minutes. The combined scores contribute towards your final grade. You must complete the exam once you begin—you cannot stop and resume as there will be an internal timer, ending the exam and submitting your grade earned to that point when time is up. Those who have provided an accommodation on time will be treated accordingly.

Quizzes and Exams will be based on both the lectures and the topics in the assigned readings.

COURSE GRADE

Your grade for the course will be a composite of your scores on discussions, quizzes and exams, and is a function of your total points earned. There will be NO extra credit opportunities.

Your final grade will be calculated on your overall point totals, as follows:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>
94 – 100	A	74 – 76	C+
90 – 93	A-	70 – 73	C
86 – 89	B+	66 – 70	C-
81 – 85	B	50 – 65	D
77 – 80	B-	Less than 50	F

Additional Comments:

1. To anticipate a common 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. That seems too arbitrary to me.
2. The best way to contact me during the semester is by email (including meeting during office hours). 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.

IMPORTANT DATES

September 12:	Last Day to Drop with Full Tuition Refund
September 25-27:	First Exam
September 26:	Last Day to Drop without Permission, Tuition Charged
September 28:	Degree Applications Due if Graduating this Semester
Oct 30- Nov 1:	Second Exam
November 11:	Last Day to Withdraw from Course with Permission
December 12-14:	Second Exam

**DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT ME IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT
THE COURSE OR THE INFORMATION IN THIS SYLLABUS**

FALL 2018 COURSE OUTLINE

<i>Week of</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>DESCRIPTION</i>
Aug 29	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE Learn to use CANVAS	
Sept 2	1. Social problems (Chapter 1)	How do we define a “social problem” and when does a solution to one problem generate a new problem?
Sept 9 Discussion Wk1	2. Economic inequality (Chapters 2 & 10)	They say money can’t buy happiness, but it goes a long way, and without it you get lots of pain.
Sept 16 Discussion Wk2	3. Race and Ethnicity (Chapter 3)	What is race, really, but a system of division that rarely considers cultural differences.
Sept 23	ONLINE EXAM #1 AVAILABLE 25-27 SEPTEMBER	
Sept 30 Discussion Wk3	4. Gender/Sexuality (Chapters 4 & 7)	Does one’s sex determine our roles in society, can a male “mother” a child, a female be the “breadwinner”?
Oct 7 Discussion Wk4	5. Education (Chapter 13)	Do we really learn new things, or are we taught what to believe? What is the real purpose of an education?
Oct 14 Discussion Wk5	6. Aging and Health (Chapters 5 & 9)	As societies grow older, it is obvious that there will be health effects...but do we really deal with that?
Oct 21 Discussion Wk6	7. Work (Chapter 11)	What sorts of jobs do we do, how does it affect our society, and how has work changed over time?
Oct 28	ONLINE EXAM #2 AVAILABLE 30 OCTOBER - 1 NOVEMBER	
Nov 4 Discussion Wk7	8. Urbanization (Chapter 14)	Cities are complex organizations functioning in society—but what happens if we all live in cities?
Nov 11 Discussion Wk8	9. Globalization (Chapter 15)	What kind of world do we live in, and how do global issues affect us in our country?
Nov 18	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
Nov 25 Discussion Wk9	10. Environment (Chapter 16)	The world is ever smaller; we get to destinations faster and we share values and tastes—is that a good thing?
Dec 2 Discussion Wk10	11. Political Economy (Canvas readings)	What sort of economy do we have, will we have, and what is the consequence—who benefit, who loses?
Dec 10	ONLINE EXAM #3 AVAILABLE 12-14 DECEMBER	