

SOC 2020: Social Problems
Spring/Summer 2015
Tuesday/Thursday 2:15pm – 5:05pm
Wayne State University
0123 State Hall

Instructor: Jennifer Haskin
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Office Hours: TTH 11am – 2pm
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Course Description. In this course, we will learn about major contemporary social problems that reveal structural strains, value conflicts, deviations and changes in society. We will also analyze socio-cultural factors creating problems and of possible solutions.

Required Text/Additional Readings

Macionis, John. 2013. *Social Problems*. 5th edition. Pearson.

Additional weekly readings will be posted on Blackboard – pay attention to weekly announcements

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

The Basic Learning Outcomes for SOC 2020 include, but are not limited to:

- Analyze social problems through the discipline of sociology and have an understanding of some of the key debates/problems in the nature of social life
- Articulate some of the central challenges facing our society and the world in the 21st century and be able to evaluate them
- Engage more critically in discussions about your own role as a citizen and propose ways to alleviate the major social problems facing society today

Course Policies and Other Important Information

General Course Expectations

- Attend all class meetings and actively participate in class.
- Be responsible for what you have missed should you be absent from class.
- Read and complete all required assignments **prior to** coming to class.
- Ask questions right away if you do not understand an assignment!
- Get additional help from the The David Adamany Undergraduate Library Writing Center if necessary.
- Respect everyone in the classroom. This includes, but is not limited to, respectful means of communication, not disrupting class by using phones or other technology in ways that is not related to class, and quiet consumption of food & beverages.

- Don't procrastinate! This goes both for assignments and in contacting me with questions or concerns.

Contact Information. The **best** way to contact me is via email: dv7064@wayne.edu. You can also leave a message in the office at your own risk (chances are I will not get it in a timely manner). I will respond to email within 24 hours. If you do not get a response from me within 24 hours, assume that I did not receive your email and send it again.

Communication. All course information will be broadcast via the Internet, posted on Blackboard. Each of you has been assigned an email account by Wayne State University and if you decide to use a different account, it is up to you to forward your WSU email to that alternative account. I will do my best to post **a weekly announcement** on Blackboard. I will also post any revisions to the syllabus, articles of interest, and other information on Blackboard. **Choosing not to check your email, or Blackboard is not an excuse for missing assignments or other information relevant to this course.** You can learn about Blackboard at: <http://computing.wayne.edu/blackboard/>.

Missed Classes. The student is responsible for all announcements made during class, as well as all readings, all of the information from lectures, and all films/video clips we may view in class. Major announcements will be posted to the blackboard. It is the student's responsibility to get class notes from another student and to seek clarification about the nature of the missed material from me.

Late Work Policy. Late work is not accepted unless you have a VERIFIABLE excuse e.g. a note from your physician documenting your illness, including a date of return.

Challenging Grades. If you believe that you have been graded unfairly on any assignment, you must first contact me via email and see if this is a simple mistake or oversight. If this does not resolve your question you must then address your concerns to me in writing. You should provide specific points...for example if you believe that a multiple-choice question was graded incorrectly, you must provide evidence from the course book(s) to document your statement. Once I have reviewed your request for a grade change, one of several things may happen. If you are able to show that you are correct your grade will be changed. I may request an in person meeting if I need more clarification on your argument. If you still feel after this process that your grade is not reflective of your effort, your next line of appeal would be through the Sociology Department. Be advised that challenged grades can result either in an increase, a decrease or no change in one's grade.

Incomplete/Withdrawal Policy. I do not give Incompletes unless there is a VERIFIABLE case of medical or other qualifying emergency. Information on Wayne State policies can be found at <http://reg.wayne.edu/students/information.php> - [dropping](#). The withdrawal system at WSU is student-initiated, so if you are hoping to withdraw from the course you must do so yourself via pipeline. Students who do not formally withdraw from the course but stop attending and do not complete the course requirements will receive a failing grade in the course. Note that **July 8, 2015** is the last day to drop a class with tuition cancellation and **August 5, 2015** is the last day to withdraw from a class.

Cell Phones, Pagers, iPhones, iPads, iTouches, etc. All phones, pagers, and other electronic devices should be turned off (or turned to a silent ringer option) before you enter the classroom and before the class period begins. Students should also refrain from texting, facebooking, tweeting, or surfing the web during class time. If you are using a laptop during class time, please use it for note-taking purposes only, and sit in the front row of the classroom. I reserve the right to lower students' participation and attendance grades if students are disruptive in class because they are online or on their devices during class time.

Academic Dishonesty: Assignments must be clearly distinguishable from those of other students or sources. Plagiarism is considered cheating; any quoted material must be placed in quotation marks with proper references to the author included. If you think you might be plagiarizing, then you probably ARE! Copying entire paragraphs from sources is not appropriate even if citations are provided. Evidence of cheating or plagiarizing will result in automatic failure of the test/assignment and possibly the course. Please see the student code of conduct for more information on WSU's policies regarding student conduct <http://doso.wayne.edu/assets/codeofconduct.pdf>

Extra Credit. I do not give extra credit, extra assignments, or other extra opportunities for improving grades. Moreover, I do not negotiate grades, except when you believe there is an explicit error in the grading procedures. No grades will be determined by a curve. Students earn grades; they are not given.

Advisement and Office Hours. I am always willing to discuss the results of an assignment, as well as readings or lectures that you may be struggling with to understand. It is your responsibility as a student to come to me if you have any questions, concerns, or comments relating to the class and your work in that class! Therefore, it is always your responsibility as a student to ask if you are concerned about your grade. **Do not wait until the last week or so of the semester to try to do something about a failing grade.** At that point it is just too late. You should always ask whenever you have a question about how you are doing in the class instead of ignoring the situation. Again, if you are having any difficulties, I strongly recommend you discuss those immediately with me.

Syllabus. This syllabus is your guide for the semester. The schedule is fairly set and little if anything will change. However, I reserve the right to modify the program if it is necessary. If you have any questions about when an assignment is due, what the reading is, what the course policies are, or how your grade is calculated and what percentages each assignment is worth, you should consult this document. **I will not use valuable class time to repeatedly explain the details that are already outlined in the course syllabus.** Thus, if you do not understand something that is written on the syllabus, you should send me an email or stop by my office. This same policy follows for all assignments. You will always receive all assignments written in detail and I do not intend on using class time to review these and address questions where the answers are found in the written assignment.

Changes to the Syllabus. I reserve the right to make adjustments to this syllabus throughout the semester. Please pay close attention to all announcements in class and on blackboard.

Academic Accommodation. If you need an academic accommodation because of a disability, please advise me and make an appointment as soon as possible to verify the disability and arrange for accommodation. [Student Success Services](#).

Course Requirements

Your grade for the semester will come from Participation/Attendance, a Reading Journal, Discussion Leads (2), Current Events papers (4), a Midterm Exam, and a Final Exam. There are a total of 425 points possible for this course.

- Participation/Attendance: 25 points
- Reading Journal: 50 Points
- Discussion Lead (2): 50 total points
- Current Events Papers (4): 100 total points
- Midterm Exam: 100 points
- Final Exam: 100 points

Participation/Attendance. There are a total of 13 class meetings for this course. You may miss one (1) class during the semester, no questions asked. After this absence, every subsequent absence will affect the final course grade. There are NO exceptions to this policy, unless you have a VERIFIABLE emergency and we work something out **prior to** your absence. If you are absent due to medical reasons, I will need to see a doctor's note. Attendance will be recorded at ALL class sessions, starting on July 2, 2015, and ending on August 20, 2015. Students are responsible for making sure that I have recorded them as "present" on any given day. Additionally, all students are required to **participate** actively during discussion. This is part of all students' grades. It is not enough to simply attend class. We will dedicate

time to group activities, discussion of lecture material, and course assignments, and all students should be prepared for those discussion times.

Reading Journal. Each week after reading the assigned chapters and/or articles and before coming to class, all students are required to write a journal entry that answers at least three (3) of the following questions:

- (1) What are the major points in at least one reading assigned for this week? Summarize.
- (2) How are this week's readings relevant or related to your field of study (i.e., your interests in sociology or whatever your field is)? Explain.
- (3) What is the most important point you took away from the readings for this week and why? Explain.
- (4) What is the most confusing or most boring part of the readings for this week and why? Explain.
- (5) Did you learn anything new this week about social problems? If so what? Explain.
- (6) How are this week's readings different or similar (or both) to previous week's readings? Explain.

This assignment is something that you will do on your own time and I will collect your written journal entries three or four times throughout the semester. You will receive credit for having an entry in your journal for each week of class and for answering at least three of the above questions in each of your weekly writings. There is no required length of this assignment but my suggestion is that you write approximately one paragraph for each question you answer each week. I don't care whether you buy a notebook, keep a computer file (if you do this, you will have to turn in a thumb drive), or use scrap paper for your journal but you need to bring your entire journal with you to every class meeting (just in case I decide to collect it that week). Your first journal entry should be for July 7th, and your journal entries should continue through August 18th, for all weeks that there are assigned readings. You should have seven (7) journal entries by the end of the semester and follow the above directions to receive full credit for this assignment.

Discussion Lead. Over the course of the semester, you will be charged TWICE with leading class discussion. Your discussion question(s) must be related to the topic of that class period, and **MUST be emailed to me AT LEAST 24 hours prior to your scheduled date.** Failure to do so may mean that you lose out on these points. Keep in mind that you can include a video clip for the class to discuss...**in fact I encourage it!** Just send me the link to it along with your discussion question(s). NOTE: this is not a major presentation, and you do not have to stand up in front of the class, however you must be in class to get these points. **25 points each.**

Current Events Papers. As we wrap up each unit, students will be discussing in small groups, and turning in a short, 2-3 page paper (see below for formatting requirements) on a current event in the news. There are a total of four (4) current event papers due over the course of the semester. Students must consult AT LEAST two different news sources that cover the same issue. This current event also must be related to the specific unit we have just covered. You must be in class to get these points. **25 points each.**

- In the first part of your paper, briefly summarize the current event.
- Next, compare and contrast the different news media sources.
- Third, I want you to reflect on the ways in which the current event you have chosen relates to concepts in the unit we have covered (since the previous CE paper), and the theories we have learned in the course.

- Finally, students need to develop one discussion question that they will present to their small groups (and/or the class).

Midterm and Final. You will have a **midterm** and a **final** for this course. These exams will consist of short essay questions and will be administered on Blackboard, and must be completed within the allotted 4-hour timeframe. No exceptions. You will be given a list of possible exam items at least one (1) week prior in order to help you study. Note: there are **no make-ups** for missing a midterm or final exam unless you have a VERIFIABLE medical excuse. In the event that such an emergency occurs, you must provide sufficient evidence (a note from your Doctor). Exams must be made up during my office hours as soon as the student is released from a doctor's medical care. See schedule for assessment dates. **100 points each.**

Assignment Format. Current events assignments should be typed in 12-point Times Font, 1-inch margins all around. Note: **I do not accept electronic submissions** – all written assignments must be printed and turned in. You must provide citations for any and all resources you consult in your work.

Final Grading Scale

93-100% A	87-89.9% B+	77-79.9% C+	67-69.9% D+
90-92.9% A-	83-86.9% B	73-76.9% C	63-66.9% D
	80-82.9% B-	70-72.9% C-	60-62.9% D-
			Below 60% F

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Date	Assignment Due*	Reading - DO THIS BEFORE CLASS	Topic	In Class
7/2/15		Syllabus & Chapter 1 of Textbook Blackboard Reading	Syllabus, Introductions, Sociology - Studying Social Problems	Ice Breaker Activity Ranking Social Problems
7/7/15		Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Blackboard Readings	Poverty and Wealth Racial and Ethnic Inequality	"Life Happens" Budget Activity
7/9/15	Current Event Paper #1		...continued from 7/7	Small Groups: Current Event Paper #1
7/14/15		Chapter 4 Chapter 7 Blackboard Readings	Gender Inequality Sexuality	Hand out Midterm Review Sheet
7/16/15	Current Event Paper #2		...continued from 7/14	Small Groups: Current Event Paper #2
7/21/15		Chapter 5 Chapter 9 Blackboard Reading	Aging and Inequality Physical and Mental Health	Review for Midterm
7/23/15	Midterm Exam (via Blackboard) available at 2pm and is due by 6pm			
7/28/15		Chapter 10 Chapter 11 Blackboard Reading	Politics and Economics Work and the Workplace	
7/30/15	Current Event Paper #3		...continued from 7/28	Small Groups: Current Event Paper #3
8/4/15		Chapter 12 Chapter 13 Blackboard Reading	Family Life Education	
8/6/15	Current Event Paper #4		...Continued from 8/4	Small Groups: Current Event Paper #4
8/11/15		Chapter 14 Chapter 15 Blackboard Reading	Urban Life Population and Global Inequality	
8/13/15			...continued from 8/11	Hand out Final Exam Review Sheet
8/18/15		Chapter 16 Blackboard Reading	Technology and the Environment	Review for Final Exam
8/20/15	Final Exam (via Blackboard) available at 2pm and is due by 6pm			
****Students should always be prepared to turn in their reading journals****				