

SYLLABUS

Sociology 2020: CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS	
Term:	Winter 2015
Section:	007
Meeting Time:	online
Instructor:	Nicole Trujillo-Pagán, Ph.D.
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Office Hours:	Mondays, 1-4 pm or by appointment
Office Location:	3315 FAB

Description

No society is without its problems. We study them to help us understand conditions we consider problems, define collectively-shared values, and develop solutions. This course examines contemporary social problems, which includes analyzing their causes, effects, and possible remedies or policies that could address these issues. Students will learn how to apply sociological terms, concepts and theories to social issues.

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.

2. *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/>

3. *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.

You should assume the instructor acts as a form of “safeassign” without using the software. Avoid plagiarism [misrepresenting the words, ideas or work of others as your own], cheating [copying from another student's term papers and exams, **knowingly sharing information or answers of exams and papers to be turned in for evaluation and grading**, taking an exam for another student, using unauthorized notes during exams, etc.], and fabrication [making up false information for papers, citing work you never actually read, 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.

Paraphrasing and/or cutting and pasting more than 15% of a paper's content, even with appropriate citation, is not acceptable in this course.

4. *Assignments* (participation on discussion boards, quizzes)

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 quiz/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.

A final submitted within 48 hours after it's due will automatically earn a 3 point penalty.

5. *Final Grades*

Missing assignments will default to a 0 upon final grade calculation, e.g. within 72 hours of the final.

Students with special circumstances who want to request an incomplete grade for the semester should contact the instructor at least one week prior to the final exam.

6. *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 Thursdays at 11:59 pm. (Only one session is available at a time.)
- Weekly session materials **will not be reposted** after they are pulled down.

Two exceptions are:

- 1) Our first week begins according to the academic calendar and will be active for two weeks.
- 2) The academic calendar's reference to "no classes" (Thanksgiving OR Spring Break) will overlap part or most of a weekly session. The course outline will accommodate this reference by reducing course-related activity.

Each weekly session consists of the following activities¹:

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
1. Review the syllabus (course outline) for details about current and upcoming weekly assignments, 2. Read the assigned chapter(s) in the required text as outlined on the course outline, 3. Review any text-related slides and supplemental resources.			4. Review discussion board and participate by posting (and responding to students posts) to all available threads (see below).		5. Complete any scheduled quiz , which will be available on blackboard from 12am-11:59pm.	

¹ Materials that accompany activities, such as slides and discussion boards, are activated/deactivated as we move out of one, and into the next, set of activities.

Grading Criteria

- Extra Credit (EC) Week 1 quiz on syllabus: up to 10 points applied to quiz 1
- Quizzes (10 out of 11; *lowest score dropped*): 60%
- Discussion board posts (15): 30%
- 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

New discussion boards will be posted weekly and will include between one and six discussion threads that address multiple aspects of the readings. You are expected to contribute **at least one original post per thread** at least once per week.

Threads may be focused on

1. a particular question identified by the instructor,
2. a reaction to a particular film clip,
3. examples of a current media depiction of a social problem, or
4. all of these.

Your **grade** for the discussion board is assigned weekly on a scale of 1-10 points, where the number of points are assigned according to the following distribution:

A	10
A-	9
B+	8
B	7
B-	6
C+	5
C	4
C-	3

The assignment of points is NOT automatic and is not calculated on a 1 post = 1 point basis. Instead, your weekly grade on the discussion board is an overall assessment of your participation across all available threads.

- Your grade is improved by submitting well-developed posts. It may be improved by submitting similarly thoughtful responses to other student's posts.
- You will *lose points* if
 - You do not post to **all** available threads at least once.
 - your posts (1 or more) is/are NOT original and/or reproduce what has already been said in the thread.
 - your post(s) do not contribute in a meaningful way to moving the discussion forward. Examples include:
 - simple expressions of *agreement/disagreement* that do not lay out an alternate argument or provide a reasonable basis for reconsidering the original post.
 - posts filled with typographical or grammatical errors and/or that cannot be easily read and understood by an average student.

Quizzes

...include true/false, multiple choice, short answer (word), and short essay questions. They cover the required readings and discussion for the week.

Where a particular quiz may be cancelled, the points and questions will roll over to the subsequent quiz.

...are **timed**. Quizzes may vary in length (10-20 questions), but you will have two (2) minutes per question. If you “time out” while taking the quiz, you will NOT be allowed to retake the quiz. As a result, you might answer those questions you find easiest first.

Students will have the opportunity to complete an optional quiz during the last week of the course. You are graded on 10 quiz scores and completing this optional quiz will enable you to drop the lowest quiz score you earned during the semester.

Final Paper

For the final paper, you will apply the lessons you learned this semester to analyzing the aftermath of the Ferguson case, including the "I can't breathe" movement.

Specifically, you will write a paper with three clearly defined sections. First, in your introduction, you will draft a clear thesis statement (make a claim) that defines a social problem. Second, in the body of your essay, you will marshal evidence to support your claim, including data provided in the text. In this discussion, recognize competing interpretations of that data. Finally, in the conclusion section of your essay, you will outline an appropriate intervention on the social problem and evaluate the merits of current interventions, including those that differ from the one you propose.

Each section of your paper should not be less than one, double-spaced, page. Your final paper must not be more than five (5) pages. As a result, you should be sure to read/review and edit your paper for submission.

Your grade is based on:

1. completeness: you've addressed all three of the concerns outlined above,
2. clarity: including the structure of your argument, and
3. persuasiveness: the degree to which your paper makes a convincing case about the social problem you define in the introduction.

Of the three, clarity is the most important and the one that students typically have the hardest time with. One strategy that will usually improve the clarity of your paper is to read it out loud to someone unfamiliar with the subject and use any feedback to improve any lingering questions.

You are encouraged to consider materials available beyond the required reading, but minimize references to internet sources, such as blogs and editorials, in favor of more concrete recording of events in newspapers, journal discussions, etc. You should also use your textbook appropriately and there should be at least one judicious reference. Be sure to cite your sources appropriately.

Formatting Instructions:

1. Students should use 12-point font, 1" margins, and clearly numbered pages.
2. Students should use in-text citations, e.g. author's last name, year of publication, and page number (ex. "Trujillo-Pagan, 2013: 377).
3. Students must include a bibliography. The specific format (APA, AMA, Chicago, etc) doesn't matter, but be consistent in using one style.
4. This bibliography should reference reliable, non-internet based, scholarship and/or data.

Required Books

1. *Social Problems*, 4e by John J. Macionis
2. *The New Jim Crow*, by Michelle Alexander

If you use a later/earlier edition of the text, you are responsible for ensuring chapters and materials are comparable.

COURSE OUTLINE				
Week		Reading (Ch. 1)	Sample Focus of Discussion Board Posts	Evaluation
1 (1/12-15)	INTRODUCTIONS, SYLLABUS REVIEW, BLACKBOARD REVIEW		1. Introductions	EC Quiz (1/16)
2 (1/16-22)	STUDYING SOCIAL PROBLEMS <i>New Jim Crow (NJC)</i>	1 Intro.	2. What are claims? Why are they important? How are they made? What claims does Alexander make in <i>NJC</i> and HOW does she make them?	Quiz 1 (1/23)
3 (1/23-29)	POVERTY AND WEALTH ECONOMY AND POLITICS	2 10	3.	Quiz 2 (1/30)
4 (1/30-2/5)	GENDER INEQUALITY SEXUALITY	4 7	4.	Quiz 3 (2/6)
5 (2/6-12)	AGING AND INEQUALITY FAMILY LIFE	5 12	5.	Quiz 4 (2/13)
6 (2/13-19)	PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS	9 8	6.	Quiz 5 (2/20)
7 (2/20-26)	RACIAL AND ETHNIC INEQUALITY <i>New Jim Crow (NJC)</i>	3 1	7. How do we distinguish racial from other types of inequality, particularly those surrounding wealth and power?	Quiz 6 (2/27)
8 (2/27-3/5)	URBAN LIFE	14	8.	
9 (3/6-12)	EDUCATION WORK AND THE WORKPLACE	13 11	9.	Quiz 7 (covers ch. 14, 13, 11) (3/13)

10 (3/13-19)	Spring Break	none	10. For this week, the discussion board will only be open from Friday through Sunday. You are asked to watch and discuss the movie “Selma”. What does the film misrepresent? Why/how are representations and misrepresentations significant to how we define and act on social problems?	
11 (3/20-26)	CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE <i>NJC</i>	6 2-3	11.	Quiz 8 (3/27)
12 (3/27-4/2)	<i>NJC</i>	4-6	12.	Quiz 9 (4/3)
13 (4/3-4/9)	POPULATION AND GLOBAL INEQUALITY	15	13. How have questions about population policy been influenced by racial and/or global inequality?	
14 (4/10-16)	WAR AND TERRORISM	17	14. How have questions about terrorism been influenced by racial and/or global inequality?	Quiz 10 (covers Ch. 15, 17) (4/17)
15 (4/17-23)	New Social Movements; Applying Lessons to Ferguson		15.	Optional Quiz 11 on NJC available on 4/24
Date: 5/1	<i>Final Paper Due on blackboard by 5pm</i>			