**SYLLABUS**

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| **Sociology 2020: CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS** | |
| Term: | Winter 2017 |
| Section: | 005 |
| Meeting Time: | Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10-11:15 am |
| Meeting Location: | 129 Main |
| Instructor: | Nicole Trujillo-Pagán, Ph.D. |
| Email: | [npagan@wayne.edu](mailto:npagan@wayne.edu) |
| Office Hours: | Tuesdays, 11:30-2 pm or by appointment |
| Office Location: | 3315 FAB |

**Description**

In this course, we rely on media as data in order to analyze how claims are made about social problems and the implications this framing has on suggesting particular solutions we should adopt. We define social problems as **conditions that undermine the well-being of some or all members of a society and area a matter of public controversy**. Through rigorous comparisons at the international, national and local levels, we will use classroom discussions to determine the nature of the social problem and the best methods we can use to intervene on and/or ameliorate the problem.

Because social problems involve controversy, it is very difficult to claim a position as “objective” or unbiased. The readings for the course were selected for their popularity. The course itself focuses on developing your ability to frame a social problem and engage a debate about it. It teaches you to think about social problems, but does not pretend to be objective.

**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.

1. *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.
* You can learn about Blackboard at: <http://computing.wayne.edu/blackboard/>

1. *Assignments*

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 an exam missed with a valid doctor's note, your alternate assignment will consist of writing a take-home essay.

1. *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.

**Grading Criteria**

* Participation (60%)
  + Two (2) Presentations: 20% each
  + Two controversial positions (posted): 10% each
* Midterm: 20%
* Final: 20%

*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.

*Participation*

*Required Reading*

We will refer to required reading in class. You should make notes on your reading, e.g. highlight sections, jot notes, etc. Please bring required reading to class.

*Presentation*

You are responsible for reviewing media to a) identify *how* claims about social problems are made and b) evaluate unique solutions for ameliorating them. Your presentation consists of an informal reporting on your findings when called on in class.

Bring the basis of the claim, e.g. evidence, ***or*** yourevaluation of a solution to class. Your assigned responsibility (claim or intervention, at appropriate geographic level) is identified at the end of the syllabus. The keywords in the course outline may help you, but do not feel restricted to them.

You will be graded based on a) the case you make that a social problem exists (your evidence) and b) the clarity of your in-class presentation. You must upload your source and notes for your presentation to blackboard *before* class.

*Controversial Positions*

You must learn how to present and defend a conversion position. You will be assigned to do this twice during the semester. You complete the assignment by posting a response (as assigned) presenting an alternate view or your challenge to the original post. For example, let’s say the original poster claimed white supremacy is a complex social problem that promotes residential segregation and its consequences, e.g. disparities in schools, police protection, etc. You might take a controversial positions that a) “white supremacy” is really about class disparities, or b) “whiteness” is always changing. The problem causing residential segregation is the lack of adequate, affordable housing, or c) any other idea you may have. Ultimately, your task in this assignment is not just to present/establish claim, but to explain why the claim is wrong and/or what it misses.

Grading Rubric

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Presentation | Controversial Position |
| A | 1. Presented on time, both online and in classroom discussion 2. Clearly presented. Able to answer questions about nature of problem. 3. Able to defend claim that a social problem exists. | Well explained (and cited) position that is a) free of typographical or grammatical errors and b) was submitted on time. |
| B | 1. Presented on time, both online and in classroom discussion   Missed either:   1. Clearly presentation. 2. Ability to defend claim. | See A, but not submitted on time OR has errors OR is not well explained (and cited) |
| C | Not submitted on time. Not clearly presented. | See A, has errors AND was not submitted on time AND is not well explained (or not cited) |
| F | Not submitted | Not submitted |

*Exams*

A significant degree of material will be covered in the classroom through lecture and discussion. This material will be represented on exams. Exams are timed, open-book and cumulative. They include true/false, multiple choice and short essay questions.

**Required Books**

1. *Evicted[[1]](#footnote-1)*
2. *The New Jim Crow*, by Michelle Alexander[[2]](#footnote-2)

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week | Topic | Readings | Keywords | Evaluation |
| 1  Jan.  9, 11 | Introduction: Syllabus and Blackboard Review |  |  |  |
| Claims Making and Social Movements | Intro.   1. Macionis (BB) 2. *The New Jim Crow*   *(available as ebook via WSU library)* |  |  |
| 2  16, 18 | *Wealth Inequality in America*, Lack of Economic Opportunity, Unemployment | *Economics in Wonderland* | 1%  Power Elite  Occupy Wall Street |  |
| 3  23, 25 | Poverty | Sections of *No One is Illegal (available as ebook via WSU library)* | Migration  Work  Workplace Regulation | See Presentations and Controversial Positions |
| 4  Jan 30  Feb 1 | Race/Ethnicity and Labor | Pt. 4 of *No One is Illegal (available as ebook via WSU library)* | Working Poor  Welfare  Corporate welfare  Psychological wage | See Presentations and Controversial Positions |
| 5  6, 8 | Institutionalized Racism and Criminal “Justice” | Ch. 2-4, *The New Jim Crow*  *(available as ebook via WSU library)* |  |  |
| 6  13, 15 | Government Accountability and Transparency, Corruption | Ch. 5-6, *The New Jim Crow*  *(available as ebook via WSU library)* |  |  |
| 7  20, 22 | Gender and Sexuality  TED Talk: We Should All Be Feminists | * Selections from *Nasty Women* * belle hooks: *Shaping Feminist Theory* * Rawa Statement[[3]](#footnote-3) | Global Indicators of Womens’ Development  “Me Too”  Sexual/Domestic Violence  Pornography  Transgender Issue | See Presentations and Controversial Positions |

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| 8  Feb 27  Mar 1 | Lack of Political Freedom, Political Instability, Large Scale Conflict and Wars | Ch. 1 in *Manufacturing Consent* | Refugees  Terrorism  State-Sponsored Terrorism | See Presentations and Controversial Positions |
| 9  6, 8 | Urban Design | Part 1: *Evicted* |  | Mid-Term  (Mar. 6) |
| 10  20, 22 | Housing | Part 2 - 3: *Evicted* |  |  |
| 11  27, 29\* | Lack of Education, Quality of Education | pp. 13-37, 237-263 from Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation* (UGL:  LC 212.62 .K69 2005) | Standardized Testing  Public Schools  Charter Schools  Bullying  Cost of Higher Education | See Presentations and Controversial Positions |
| 12  April  3, 5 | Health and Aging | *TBD* | Social Security  Elder Abuse | See Presentations and Controversial Positions |
| 13\*  10, 12 | Climate Change, Destruction of Natural Resources | Listen to podcast with author, *Full Planet, Empty Plates[[4]](#footnote-4)* | Sustainable Development  Animal Agriculture  Polar Bear Debate  Deforestation  Global Warming  Climate Change |  |
| 14  17, 19 | Food and Water Security |  | Food Deserts  Water contamination  Privatization of water |  |
| April 26  10:15-12:15 | | | | Final Exam |

Participation Presentations

1. International\_Claim\_Newspaper
2. International\_Claim\_Social Media
3. International\_Intervention
4. National\_Claim\_Newspaper
5. National\_Claim\_Social Media
6. National\_Intervention
7. Local (Detroit Metro)\_Claim\_Newspaper
8. Local\_Claim\_Social Media
9. Local\_Intervention

Week Assigned Students

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| 7  (upload by midnight, 2/19) | 1 |  |  |  |  |
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| 8  (upload by midnight, 2/26) | 1 |  |  |  |  |
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| 12  (upload by midnight, 4/3) | 1 |  |  |  |  |
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1. A copy will be held on reserve at UGL. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. also available electronically through WSU library at http://elibrary.wayne.edu/record=b4201233 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.rawa.org/mar8-04e.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.npr.org/2013/01/04/168613133/full-planet-empty-plates [↑](#footnote-ref-4)