

SOC 2020: Social Problems

Section 012
CRN: 16178

FALL 2014

Professor: David Fasenfest
Email: david.fasenfest@wayne.edu
Office: 3229 FAB
Tel: 313-577-2930
Hours: by appointment

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 web course has core lectures available on Blackboard, as will be a discussion board and all quizzes and course exams. One final comment: this is an accelerated course covering 14 weeks of work in 7 weeks. Consequently you will be required to make more of an effort on your part to keep up. This is not a difficult course, unless you fall behind. Course expectations are straightforward and it is easy to do well.

Consultation: The best way to communicate your questions about the course is via email. Please note that I 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 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 should be available at the WSU Barnes and Noble Bookstore. You can also find this book through online vendors. 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 about and material used on the assessments are based on the contents of the assigned chapters in the schedule below. [NOTE: Not having a copy of the text is no excuse for not doing well.]

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 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. I am not able to help with technical issues related to your access to Blackboard. You **MUST** contact the C&IT Help Desk to figure out what is wrong, and how to get access to the course. Any appeal regarding missed assignments 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 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 any notices, revisions of 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 topic indicated in the schedule below I will post a lecture, to appear 8AM on the date indicated, that will discuss the main points of this topic, relate it back to the readings, and add any additional material I deem necessary. These lectures are supplemental to the reading, provide additional perspectives, and are integral part of the course material. Exams and quizzes will 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 for each lecture (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). The first comment must be your response to each of the week's lectures and readings. Your additional posts 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 look 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 points for your posts. Your initial reaction comment for each lecture, to that lecture and assigned reading, must be made before the next lecture is posted on Blackboard. The other reaction comments should be posted no later than Saturday by 11PM of that week, before the close of the Discussion Board. To recap: the Discussion Board opens 8AM Monday and closes 11PM Saturday each week, after which I will post your grade for that week's posts (either for one or two lectures). Requests to post after the board closes will not be accepted. During the first week of class there will be an introductory period (see below).

Preliminary Discussion Period: Starting Sunday, August 31st at 8AM until midnight on September 6th, there will be a non-graded Discussion Board available, on which you will be asked to introduce yourselves, let us know something about what you are studying, or any other

information you wish to share (see my introductory comments for suggestions). There will also be a non-graded assessment everyone will need to take during this period. Its only purpose is to tell me something about your basic knowledge and the assumptions you bring to this course. In this first post I ask that you indicate clearly that **you have read the syllabus and understand all of the course's requirements.**

Initial Evaluation: For the purpose of measuring level of understanding and charting one's progress over the full course of the semester, there will be a non-graded evaluation you are required to take during this preliminary period (August 31st to September 6th). This is mandatory, but does not in any way impact on your final grade for the course. There is no "correct" score. I will send out a reminder during this first week of the semester.

Challenging Grades: On occasion, exam answers will contradict material in the text (poor copy editing often results in different or competing statements in two separate places in the course textbook). As a rule, I add points for everyone 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 somewhere else in the text. You do not need to contact me unless this happens to you often.

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.

Decorum: You are expected to comply with all University regulations and requirements concerning proper behavior in class, 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: During the week we will have one or two topics for discussion (outlined below). Along with the assigned chapters in Macionis, I will post a lecture and additional material on Blackboard that relate to the topic at hand. You are expected to read and then post at least two comments per lecture. Think of these comments as replacing in-class participation. This permits students who might otherwise not speak in class to express their views or opinions.

One post is in response to the lecture and must appear before the next lecture. The other post should be additional reactions to the lecture, readings or your classmates and can appear by the end of that discussion period. You will be graded for the week, with 1 point awarded for each

post made in a timely manner. All points (as many as 4 points in some weeks) will be awarded after the Discussion Board closes for the week, on **Saturdays at 11pm**.

Be sure to check back and see if your comments posted. It is impossible, after the fact, to figure out what happened or accept “missing” posts on the discussion board. You may need to consult with the Help Desk to figure out why you cannot post on the Discussion Board.

IMPORTANT: 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 properly respectful. 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, I will impose a 5 point penalty for each transgression. Persistent abusive posts are unacceptable and can lead to a student’s removal from the course.

In all, there are 10 class lectures and reading assignments about which you will have to comment. That means you are expected to submit a minimum of 20 comments (2 per lecture topic) during this course to get full credit (and no, submitting 4 comments by the end of any given week does not meet the course requirements). **This gives a total of 20 possible points** awarded for posting, not for the content of your post (unless all you say is “I agree” resulting in my sending you a caution that this is not sufficient).

Quizzes: There will be two short quizzes during the semester. These online quizzes, worth 10 points each, represent **a total of 20 points possible**. The quizzes are my way of making sure you are keeping up with the reading. Each quiz will be available on Blackboard, appearing at **8AM** Sunday and must be completed by **11PM** Weds, the first available Oct 19th, and the second Nov 16th. These cannot be made up unless you have a prior arrangement with me, explaining why you could not take the quiz as assigned. Once you open the quiz you will need to complete it in the time allotted. Blackboard will enter your grades, providing you with a report of how you responded and which of these were incorrect. Those who have technical difficulties (on occasion you may drop your Internet connection, for example) will be given the opportunity to retake the quiz provided you contact me immediately and within the timeframe of that quiz. I will then reset the quiz for you, but understand any answers already entered will be lost.

Examinations: You will have two examinations during the semester (Sept 28th and Dec 10th). The **first exam is worth 25 points, the second exam 35 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 covers the full semester, more heavily weighted with questions on the course material from the second half of the course. The two quizzes assess the material presented between the two exams. Examinations are in the schedule, and are announced on Blackboard.

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 and exams, as noted above, will be available **starting at 8am on Monday and ending at 11pm Wednesday for quizzes and Thursday for exams**. 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. Please note—if I have to reset the quiz or exam, all answers already provided will be voided.

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; 75 minutes for the first exam, and 2 hours the second exam. It is **your responsibility** to take these assessments when they are scheduled; requests to reschedule a quiz or the first exam must be made prior to their being given. There can be **NO** waiver or extension for the second exam.

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, I reserve the right to PENALIZE you 1 point for every 3 minutes you go past the time limit if I feel you have ignored the clock. 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). At some point, Blackboard will end the assessment automatically because time has expired.

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, and after taking the assessment 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 screen print 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 20 points available for participating online, 20 points for the quizzes and 60 points from the three examinations. **Your final grade will be calculated on a total of 100 points possible for the course, as follows:**

<u>Points Earned</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points Earned</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

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, at my discretion if you

regularly get 2 points for each discussion board but for one or two weeks (especially early in the course) you only got 1 point, 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 a class of 60 people 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 should remind me of a problem or special circumstance that may result in a changed grade 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. Quiz and 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 by Sept 10th. After that date, be mindful that the last day to withdraw from the course is Nov 9th, and to withdraw later you will have to appeal to the Registrar. Students must be marginally up to date and passing the course to get a **WP**, those generally absent most of the semester and have not done any of the work for the course will get a **WN**, and otherwise you should expect a **WF**.

IMPORTANT DATES

- Sept 10: Last day to withdraw with full tuition refund
- Sept 28-30: First exam
- Oct 19: First quiz
- Nov 9: Last day to withdraw from the course with a “W” grade
- Nov 16: Second quiz
- Dec 10-12: Second exam

DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT ME IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS

FALL 2014 COURSE OUTLINE

<i>Week of</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>READING</i>
Aug 31	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE Student Blackboard introductions Mandatory non-credit Assessment	
Sept 7	1. Studying social problems	Chapter 1
Sept 14	2. Social inequality and poverty--budget	Chapter 2
Sept 21	3. Race and ethnic inequality	Chapter 3
Sept 28-30 → FIRST EXAM ←		
Oct 5	4. Gender inequality and sexuality	Chapters 4 and 7
Oct 12	5. Aging and health	Chapters 5 and 9
Oct 19	First QUIZ	
Oct 26	6. Economy and politics	Chapter 10
Nov 2	7. Work and the workplace	Chapter 11
Nov 9	8. Family life and education	Chapters 12 and 13
Nov 16	Second QUIZ	
Nov 23	9. Urban society	Chapter 14
Nov 30	10. Global inequality; the environment	Chapters 15 and 16
DEC 10-12 → SECOND EXAM ←		