

SYLLABUS

| Sociology 2020: CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS | |
|--|--|
| Term: | Fall 2015 |
| Section: | 007 |
| Meeting Time: | online |
| Instructor: | Nicole Trujillo-Pagán, Ph.D. |
| Email: | npagan@wayne.edu |
| Office Hours: | Tuesdays, 2-5 pm or by appointment |
| Office Location: | 3315 FAB |

Description

In this course, we will learn through many examples that social problems are conditions that undermine the well-being of some or all members of a society and are usually a matter of public controversy.¹ We learn that the way claims are made about social problems often imply the particular type of solution we should adopt. We also learn that what we consider a social problem changes over time.

In addition to standard examples used in many social problems courses across the nation, we will apply the sociological terms, concepts and theories we learn to the contemporary civil rights movement. More specifically, many scholars understand the public controversy surrounding Ferguson, police brutality, sentencing laws, racial profiling and similar phenomena as a part of the resumption of the civil rights movement. We will read the critically-acclaimed and award-winning book, *The New Jim Crow*, and analyze her claims about the revised “racial caste system.”

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.

¹ Macionis, John. 2015. *Social Problems*. Pearson. P. 5.

- 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.

Avoid plagiarism [misrepresenting the words, ideas or work of others as your own] and cheating [copying from another student's term papers and exams, **knowingly sharing information or answers of exams to be turned in for evaluation and grading**, taking an exam for another student, using unauthorized notes during exams, 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.

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.

5. 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 Fridays at 11:59 pm. Only one session is available at a time. Materials within the session (text-related slides, supplemental resources, discussion boards, quizzes) are made available and unavailable according to the table below.

Each weekly session consists of the following activities:

| Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|--------|--------|---|-----------|----------|--|
| 1. Review the syllabus (course outline) for weekly assignments, | | | 5. Review discussion board and participate by posting and responding to other student's posts. | | | 6. Complete any scheduled quiz , which will be available on blackboard from 12am-11:59pm. |
| 2. Read the assigned chapter(s) in the required texts, | | | | | | |
| 3. Review text-related slides and supplemental resources. | | | | | | |
| 4. Post to discussion board. | | | | | | |

Weekly session materials **will not be reposted** after they are pulled down, but two exceptions are:

- 1) Our first week, which 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.

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 on one quiz will be dropped*): 60%
- Discussion board posts: 30%
- One final exam: 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

Two new discussion **threads** will be created **for each chapter** covered in a particular week.

For each chapter, identify:

1. one (1) example of how a problem covered in the readings is manifested in your neighborhood and/or the Detroit metro area.²
2. One (1) example of how a problem covered in the readings is covered in the news (print/internet newspaper or television news program).³

You should post twice a week:

1. Between Saturday-Monday, make at least one (1) **original** post, e.g. a new idea that starts a conversation about a particular topic.
2. Between Tuesday-Thursday, **respond** at least once to another student’s post.

As indicated in the course outline, two chapters may be covered in some weeks. In these cases, four (4) discussion threads will be available.

| No. of chapters required in week | Thread 1: how problem manifested in your neighborhood and/or Detroit metro | | Thread 2: how problem covered in the news | | Total no.of posts |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | <i>Sat.-Mon.</i> | <i>Tues.-Thurs.</i> | <i>Sat.-Mon.</i> | <i>Tues.-Thurs.</i> | |
| 1 | One (1) original | At least one (1) response | One (1) original | At least one (1) response | 4 |
| 2 | One (1) original | At least one (1) response | One (1) original | At least one (1) response | 8 |

² You should be creative in your posts. Students are encouraged to use a variety of media, including self-recorded video, to explain how the problem is manifested in their neighborhood and/or the Detroit metro area.

³ Your posts must be guided by the reading, but don’t need to reference the same problem. For example, your posts for the week we are covering gender inequality might address 1) the number of domestic shelters in Detroit compared to other cities (relative to population size) and 2) how Hillary Clinton was represented in a particular news story.

Remember that the definition of a social problem always involves some controversy. Our objective is to use the discussion boards in order to engage in these controversies, understand how they unfold and potentially ways they may be resolved.

In order to receive full points:

- **avoid duplicating other student’s posts.** Where two or more posts within a particular thread are similar, the subsequent post(s) may receive 0 points.
- Avoid grammatical and typographical errors or shorthand, i.e. “lol” or “smh”.
- Avoid criticisms that are in any way personal, i.e. “all women think that”, etc.
- Your response to another student’s post should either add to and/or challenge the points previously made by the original post and/or subsequent responses. In other words, your response **must move the discussion forward** rather than merely echo what has already been said in the discussion.

Your **grade for each discussion thread** is assigned on a scale of 0-3 points, according to the following distribution⁴:

| | |
|---|--|
| 0 | Did not meet requirements outlined above |
| 1 | Submitted one original post between Saturday and Monday that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. corresponded with the social problem addressed in the chapter’s reading and 2. did not duplicate another student’s post. |
| 2 | Met requirements outlined above, including submitting at least one response to another student’s post AND moved the discussion forward. |

At the end of the semester, your grade for discussion threads will be averaged and assigned a letter grade corresponding with the following scale⁵:

| | |
|----|----------------------------|
| A | 2.0+ |
| A- | 1.9, <i>e.g. 1.91-1.99</i> |
| B+ | 1.8 |
| B | 1.7 |
| B- | 1.6 |
| C+ | 1.5 |
| C | 1.4 |
| C- | 1.3 |

⁴ Student questions about points on a discussion thread will only be answered in person. The instructor is available to meet during office hours or by appointment to review the nature of your contributions to the thread. Some students may earn up to three (3) points where their post demonstrates exemplary leadership in online discussion. Students can rate each other’s posts.

⁵ You will NOT have the opportunity to submit posts late and earn credit, but extra credit opportunities may be available during the semester to add up to 4 points to your discussion board grade. So, for instance, if you missed posting to the discussion board entirely in a week where there were two assigned chapters, you would have only posted in 42 out of 46 possible threads. For the purposes of this example, let’s assume you earn 84 points (42 posts @ 2 points each), or an average of 1.8 (84/46). This is equivalent to a B+ for your discussion board grade. If you earned 4 points through extra credit assignments, however, you could earn an A- for your discussion board grade ((84 points + 4 extra credit points)/46).

Quizzes

...include true/false, multiple choice, short answer (word), and short essay questions. Unless indicated otherwise, quizzes cover the required readings and discussion for the week in which they are scheduled.

...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 Exam

The final exam is cumulative. It will be available online. It will include true/false, multiple choice and essay questions.

Required Books

1. *Social Problems*, 6th edition, by John J. Macionis⁶
2. *The New Jim Crow*, by Michelle Alexander⁷

⁶ Available as an etextbook for less than the new printed version. Also available in loose leaf format. See <http://www.mypearsonstore.com/bookstore/social-problems-9780133909593>

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

⁷ also available electronically through WSU library at <http://elibrary.wayne.edu/record=b4201233>

| COURSE OUTLINE | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Week | | Reading | Evaluation |
| 1 (9/2-4) | INTRODUCTIONS, SYLLABUS AND BLACKBOARD REVIEW | | EC Quiz (open through 9/18 ⁸) |
| <i>Social Constructions, Claims Making and Social Movements</i> | | | |
| 2 (9/5-9/11) | STUDYING SOCIAL PROBLEMS <i>New Jim Crow (NJC)</i> | 1 Intro. | |
| <i>Inequality as a problem</i> | | | |
| 3 (9/12-9/18) | POVERTY AND WEALTH | 2 | |
| 4 (9/19-9/25) | RACIAL AND ETHNIC INEQUALITY | 3 | Quiz 1 (covers ch. 1-3) (9/25) |
| 5 (9/26-10/2) | URBAN LIFE EDUCATION | 14 13 | Quiz 2 (10/2) |
| 6 (10/3-10/9) | GENDER INEQUALITY | 4 | |
| 7 (10/10-10/16) | SEXUALITY | 7 | Quiz 3 (covers ch. 4 and 7) (10/16) |
| 8 (10/17-10/23) | FAMILY LIFE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH | 12 9 | Quiz 4 (10/23) |
| <i>We're all in it together...</i> | | | |
| 9 (10/24-10/30) | ECONOMY AND POLITICS | 10 | |
| 10 (10/31-11/6) | WORK AND THE WORKPLACE AGING AND INEQUALITY | 11 5 | Quiz 5 (covers 5, 10, 11) (11/6) |
| 11 (11/7-11/13) | WAR AND TERRORISM POPULATION AND GLOBAL INEQUALITY | 17 15 | Quiz 6 (covers ch. 14, 13, 11) (3/12) |

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all quizzes are activated (made available) on Thursday at 11:59pm. They close on Friday at 11:59pm. Please attempt to take the quiz as early as you can once it becomes available. In the worst case scenario where you must take a quiz/exam at the end of the day, be sure to allow yourself an adequate opportunity to complete the quiz and not get locked out!

| <i>Close-up on the Life and Death Consequences of Inequality at Home</i> | | | |
|--|---|--------|---|
| 12 (11/14-11/20) | ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE | 8 6 | Quiz 7 (4/2) |
| 13 (11/21-11/27) | <i>New Jim Crow (NJC)</i> <i>Happy Thanksgiving!!!</i> | 1-2 | Quiz 8 <i>Remember to post to the discussion board early this week (will close 11/26)</i> <i>Quiz will remain open from 11/27 through 11/29 (inclusive) in order to accommodate Thanksgiving</i> |
| 14 (11/28-12/4) | <i>NJC</i> | 3-4 | Quiz 9 (12/4) |
| 15 (12/5-12/11) | <i>NJC</i> | 5-6 | Quiz 10 (12/11) |
| | | | Quiz 11 (optional) on <i>NJC</i> available 12/12 - 12/13 |
| 12/18 - 12/19 | <i>Final Exam available on blackboard</i> | | |