

SOC 2020: Social Problems

Section 004
CRN: 22570

Winter 2015

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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. This is not a difficult course, unless you fall behind. Course expectations are straightforward and it is easy to do well.

Goals and objectives for the course: To understand the discipline of sociology and its role in contributing to our understanding of social reality, such that you will be able to: (a) describe how sociology differs from and is similar to other social sciences and to give examples of these differences; (b) describe how sociology contributes to a liberal arts understanding of social reality; and (c) apply the sociological imagination, sociological principles, and concepts to her/his own life. This semester you will be introduced to basic concepts in sociology and their fundamental theoretical interrelations, so you will be able to define, give examples, and demonstrate the relevance of culture; social change; socialization; stratification; social structure; institutions; and differentiations by race/ethnicity, gender, age, and class. Finally, you should be able to see how culture and social structure operate to: (a) show how institutions interlink in their effects on each other and on individuals; (b) demonstrate how social change factors such as population or urbanization affect social structures and individuals; (c) demonstrate how culture and social structure vary across time and place and the effect is of such variations; and (d) identify examples of specific policy implications using reasoning about social-structural effects. Finally, you will be able to describe: (a) the significance of variations by race, class, gender, and age; and (b) will know how to appropriately generalize or resist generalizations across groups.

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. In all matters of disagreement, this syllabus is the final arbiter. It is up to the student to make sure they have the most recent version of this syllabus—which will always be on Blackboard.

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 send 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 in the schedule at the end of this syllabus 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. The discussion rules determining how you get your points are as follows:

- Your first post **MUST** be made by Tuesday 11pm;
- If you only post twice during the discussion period, they **MUST** be on **SEPARATE** days;
- Your post should be at least 3 sentences long, and "I agree" is not a sentence;
- You can post as often as you like—I even encourage it—but generally you will only receive a maximum of 2 points per week.

To recap: the Discussion Board opens 8AM Monday and closes 5PM Friday each week, after which I will post your grade for that week's posts. Requests to post after the board closes will not be accepted. You should go back and check your post was published appropriately, it is up to you to find out why if it did not (I have no control—all inquiries should go to C&IT). During the first week of class there will be an introductory period (see below).

Preliminary Discussion Period: Starting Monday, January 12th at 8AM until midnight on January 16th, 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). In this first post I ask you to indicate clearly that **you have read the syllabus and understand all of the course's requirements**.

Initial Evaluation: There will also be a *non-graded* assessment everyone will need to take during this first week. Its only purpose is to tell me something about your basic knowledge and the assumptions you bring to this course. This is mandatory, but in no way will it impact on your final grade. There is no "correct" score. I will send out a reminder during this first week.

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 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. Provide me with your determination as soon as possible so I can make arrangements for quizzes and exams.

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. 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.

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. You will be graded for the week, with 1 point awarded for each post made in a timely manner. All points will be awarded after the Discussion Board closes for the week, on **Fridays at 5pm**.

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.

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. **This gives a total of 20 possible points** awarded for actually posting, not based on the content of your post. I reserve the right to award extra points to anyone who routinely posts more than twice a week. This is not automatic, but depends on the quality of the posts overall.

Quizzes: There will be two quizzes during the semester. These online quizzes, the first worth 5 points, the second 10 points, represent **a total of 15 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** on the first day noted in the syllabus, ending **11PM** last day; the first starts Feb 18th and ends on the 20th and the second Mar 11th ending on the 13th. 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. Those who have technical difficulties (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 three examinations during the semester (Feb 1-4, Mar 29-Apr 1, and Apr 22-26), available from 8AM the first day and 11PM last day. **The first exam is worth 10 points, the second exam 20 points, and the third is worth 35 points** towards your final grade. The questions on each exam covers all the material assigned to that point; the last one covers the full semester, more heavily weighted with questions on the course material from the latter part of the course. Examinations and quizzes are on 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 over several days. 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 by Blackboard.

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. 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, extension, or rescheduling 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. 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, answers provided and correct answers will appear on Blackboard's Grade Center after the assessment period ends. *If no grade appears, you should contact me immediately* since there may have been a technical problem. If that happens, I will discuss alternative arrangements (probably offering you a chance to retake). You cannot state several weeks later that you took the quiz or exam but somehow no grade was 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, 15 points for the quizzes and 65 points from the two 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 Jan 26th. After that date, be mindful that the last day to withdraw from the course is Mar 29th, 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

Jan 26: Last day to withdraw with full tuition refund
Feb 1-4: First exam
Feb 18-20: First quiz
Mar 11-13: Second quiz
Mar 29-Apr 1: Second exam
Mar 29: Last day to withdraw from the course with a “W” grade
Apr 22-26: Third exam

DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT ME IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS

**[NOTE: I GENERALLY WILL NOT ANSWER EMAIL QUESTIONS
IF THE ANSWERS ARE FOUND IN THIS SYLLABUS]**

WINTER 2015 COURSE OUTLINE

<i>Week of</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>READING</i>
Jan 11	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE Blackboard Introductions / Mandatory Non-credit Assessment	
Jan 18	1. Studying social problems	Chapter 1
Jan 25	2. Social inequality and poverty-- budget	Chapter 2
Feb 1-4 ➔ FIRST EXAM ←		
Feb 8	3. Race and ethnic inequality	Chapter 3
Feb 15	4. Gender inequality and sexuality [Quiz One available 18-20 February]	Chapters 4 and 7
Feb 22	5. Aging and health	Chapters 5 and 9
Mar 1	6. Economy and politics	Chapter 10
Mar 8	7. Work and the workplace [Quiz Two available 11-13 March]	Chapter 11
Mar 15-21	Spring Break	
Mar 22	8. Family life and education	Chapters 12 and 13
Mar 29-April 1 ➔ SECOND EXAM ←		
April 5	9. Urban society	Chapter 14
Apr 12	10. Global inequality; the environment	Chapters 15 and 16
Apr 19-21	Study material distributed, study days	
APR 22-26 ➔ THIRD EXAM ←		