

Social Problems

SOC 102
Summer
2013
Syracuse
University

Instructor

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Department of
Sociology
Email: tlpeterc@syr.edu
Office Hours:
Weds 12:30- 1:45pm
& by appt
Location: 400N Eggers

CLASS MEETINGS:

Mon, Tue, Wed & Thur
2 PM – 3:45 PM
105 Hall of Languages

COURSE DESCRIPTION

As individuals, we generally encounter social problems in two main ways. First, we learn about social problems through media and the “news worthy,” attention-getting stories news corporations communicate to the masses. We view these problems from a distance and learn of them through the filtered viewpoint of the news media. The second way we encounter social problems is through our own firsthand lived experiences. This includes our own personal troubles, life experiences and circumstances that our friends and families encounter. In this sociology course, you will be challenged to critically examine the links between public issues in society and personal troubles by developing your own sociological lens to view social problems through. You will be building your own analytical toolkit through lectures, readings, assignments, and classroom activities. By the end of this course you will be able to better identify, interpret, examine, and critically discuss a wide variety of social problems in our society, challenging the many taken-for-granted assumptions about social life.

The lectures, in-class activities, and assignments for this course are vitally linked to your weekly reading assignments, which I have carefully selected to illustrate each social problems topic. We will also be reflexive in our study of social problems by questioning the ways these social problems have been represented by the media and in academia, such as their framing, how they were researched, and whose voices and bodies are (in)visible. Finally, you will be continuously challenged to connect the course material and macro-level investigation of social problems to your own knowledge, life experiences, and interpretation. At times you may be asked to share and discuss them with others in class so that we may learn from each other and gain a fuller appreciation of our diversity and our similarities.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance in this course is mandatory. Especially because this is a summer session six week course, your presence in the classroom each day is necessary and taken very seriously. Five unexcused absences will constitute possible failure of this course and more than two unexcused absences will be detrimental to your class participation grade. Arriving to class more than 15 minutes late constitutes an unexcused absence. I will excuse an absence if it has been negotiated with me in advance and is verified by a legitimate source. Please note that whenever you miss a class, for whatever reason, it is always your responsibility to catch up on the material

Learning Objectives

By the completion of this course you should be able to:

Identify and critically analyze a variety of social problems

Rely upon your developed conceptual sociological toolkit

Demonstrate improved analytical writing skills

Understand and thoughtfully engage with sociological research

Confidently discuss issues such as income inequality, low wage labor, racial discrimination, gender inequality and criminal justice

Think in a sophisticated manner about strategies for addressing social problems

Requirements	% of Grade
Participation	20%
Assignment 1	10%
Assignment 2	10%
Assignment 3	10%
Assignment 4	10%
Assignment 5	10%
Final Paper	30%
Total	100%

Grade Scale

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	<60

that we have covered by checking Blackboard and contacting other students in this course, not myself. I will not reply to emails asking what was missed in class. Please use the space below to write down the names, numbers and email addresses of two classmates you can turn to for notes and assistance:

1. _____

2. _____

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Weekly Readings

You are required to download and read an assortment of academic and journalistic literature each week, which is available via the course's Blackboard site and located under the tab labeled "Readings". You will also be required to bring these readings to class (via hard copy or electronic on your laptop) for class exercises, which I will notify you of in advance. This course will be conducted under the assumption that students are keeping up with the required readings each week. There is no legitimate excuse for failing to read the assigned material, so if you find yourself having difficulty with them for whatever reason, contact me ASAP -- communication is key.

Blackboard

You are expected to follow the Blackboard site for this class daily. If you are officially enrolled in this course, you should have automatic access to the SOC 102 Summer site. Please notify me immediately if at any point you are unable access this site. I will use Blackboard as a means for updating the syllabus, making announcements, posting readings and resources and collecting assignments. This course utilizes a function within Blackboard called TurnItIn, which automatically screens each uploaded assignment for plagiarism. You will be required to upload each of your assignments to Turnitin.

Class Participation

Your presence and participation is absolutely imperative. All students are expected to be active, attentive and respectful participants in class discussions and activities. This means coming to class prepared, having done the required readings, and ready to learn and discuss the material by regularly and respectfully sharing your thoughts, questions, and observations. In small groups or discussions you are expected to interact with your peers, ask questions and share insights as you collectively grapple with the material and assignments. Finally, I encourage each student to visit

during my office hours (Wednesdays, 12:30-1:45 PM in 400N Eggers, or by appointment). My office hour time is a great opportunity for us to get to know each other better and for you to ask any questions related to the class, specifically, or your educational career, more generally. If you cannot make it to my regularly scheduled office hours, please send me an email request for a meeting and I will be happy to work something out with you. You are more than welcome to come to office hours in pairs or groups.

Assignments

The list of weekly reading assignments are provided below in the “Course Outline and Readings” section of the syllabus. You are required to keep up with these readings and may be asked in advanced to bring one or more of them to class to engage in a classroom activity. Over the course of this summer session, you will be required to complete five weekly two-page writing assignments that constitute 50% of your course grade. Course writing assignments are deliberately varied, aimed towards helping you achieve the learning objectives listed and will require you to critically engage with the course readings and lectures. Each assignment will be provided in class and posted on Blackboard Monday and due via Blackboard Turnitin Friday, after the topic(s) has been covered for the week in class. Final grades will be calculated as indicated on the sidebar on the previous page. If you seek to contest a grade, you must provide me with a written rationale, explaining in specific terms why you believe your grade should be reconsidered. Upon further review of your work, I may adjust your grade up or down.

Final Paper and Presentation

For your final paper (5-7 pages), you are required to select (and get approved) a specific social problem of particular interest to you that may or may have not been covered in this course and write a sociologically critical academic essay on the topic. You will also give a short presentation on your topic the last week of this course, consisting of a Powerpoint presentation (approximately 10 min.) followed by a brief Q&A session. Detailed guidelines for your presentation and final paper will be distributed and discussed during week 3 of the course.

COURSE POLICIES

Do's and Don'ts

- I am permitting the use of laptops in this course but reserve the right to revoke my decision if laptops become a distraction and are used for recreation rather than academics.
- The use of cell phones/texting in class is strictly prohibited. If I notice you texting, Facebook(ing), Twitter(ing), shopping or doing other disturbing, disrespectful actions with your technology you will be warned verbally once, and if the action(s) continue, asked to leave class and given an unexcused absence for the day. Therefore, if you need to use your phone, quietly exit the room for a moment, but be mindful of the time you are gone.
- You may not audio or video record class sessions without my informed consent.
- Food and beverages are permitted so long as the smells and sounds are not distracting others in the classroom.
- I consider sleeping/dosing in class to be extremely disrespectful and it is absolutely prohibited. If I notice this, you will be immediately asked to leave and given an unexcused absence for the day.

Accommodations

Our community values diversity and seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Syracuse University is committed to your success and to supporting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This means that no individual who is otherwise qualified shall be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or

be subjected to discrimination under any program or activities solely by reason of having a disability. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), located at 804 University Avenue, Room 309, or call 315-443-4498. The ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities "Accommodation Authorization Letters," as appropriate, which you should then give to me. Accommodations are not provided retroactively; therefore, you must plan for accommodations as early as possible. For more information, see: <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>.

Academic Integrity

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions will result from academic dishonesty of any sort. *Students found to have plagiarized will receive an F for the course and be reported to the Dean.* For more information and the complete policy, see: <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

Religious Observance

Syracuse University recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For more information, see: http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm.

COURSE OUTLINE & READINGS

Week 1: Thinking About Social Problems Sociologically

Readings for Monday, July 1 through Wednesday, July 3:

1. "The Promise" by C. Wright Mills (1959) Pp. 1-12
2. "The Forest and the Trees" A. Johnson (1997) Pp. 7-36

Thursday, July 4 – NO CLASS! Happy July 4th!

**** Assignment 1 due Friday, July 5 via Blackboard Turnitin****

Week 2: Income Inequality & Labor

Readings for Monday, July 8 through Thursday, July 11

1. "Welfare Reform in the United States" M. Abramovitz (2006) Pp. 198-211
2. "Jobless Poverty" W. J. Wilson (1998) Pp. 229-239
3. "Warning: This Is a Rights-Free Workplace" B. Ehrenreich (2000)
<http://www.barbaraehrenreich.com/workersrights.htm>

**** Assignment 2 due Friday, July 12 via Blackboard Turnitin****

Week 3: Racial Stratification, Privilege and the Matrix of Domination

Readings for Monday, July 15 through Thursday, July 18

1. "Understanding Oppression and Privilege" D.R. Samuels (2009) Pp. 139-145
2. "Capitalism, Class, and the Matrix of Domination" A. G. Johnson (2001) Pp. 32-37
3. "Race Didn't Cost Abigail Fisher Her Spot at the University of Texas" N. Hannah-Jones (2013)
<http://m.theatlanticwire.com/national/2013/03/abigail-fisher-university-texas/63247/>

- **Final Paper Guidelines will be distributed this week**

**** Assignment 3 due Friday, July 19 via Blackboard Turnitin****

Week 4: Sex/Gender Inequality

Readings for Monday, July 22 through Thursday, July 25

1. "Reviving Lolita?" D. Merskin (2004) Pp. 97-103
2. "What About the Guys Who 'Gay Stereotype'?" M. Dusenbery (2013)
<http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/05/what-about-the-guys-who-do-fit-the-gay-stereotype/276407/>
3. *The Gender Book* M.R. Hill & J Mays (prepublication) – Read at least 5 pages of your choice.
http://issuu.com/thegenderbook/docs/the_gender_book/1?e=3293111/2661900

- **Final Paper topic proposal must be submitted via Blackboard by Thursday**

**** Assignment 4 due Friday, July 26 via Blackboard Turnitin****

Week 5: Crime & Criminal Justice

Readings for Monday, July 29 through Thursday, August 1

1. "Crime" M. Tonry (2005) Pp. 244-253
2. "The Prison Industrial Complex" E. Smith & A. Hattery (2006)
<http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v42/prison.htm>
3. "Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex" A. Davis (1998)
http://www.colorlines.com/archives/1998/09/masked_racism_reflections_on_the_prison_industrial_complex.html

**** Assignment 5 due Friday, August 2 via Blackboard Turnitin****

Week 6: Final Paper Presentations

In-class presentations conducted Monday, August 5 through Thursday, August 8

**** Final Paper due Tuesday, August 13 via Blackboard Turnitin****

Disclaimer: I reserve the right to make any alterations to this syllabus I deem necessary at any point throughout this course.