

# Social Problems - SOC 102

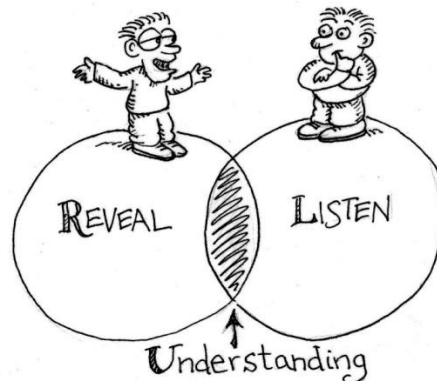
Syracuse University, Summer Session II  
M,Tu,W &Th from 2:00 - 3:45 PM in Hall of Languages 105  
June 30 - August 7, 2014

**Instructor:** Tracy Peterchak

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 1:00-2 PM & by apt.

**Email:** [tlpeterc@syr.edu](mailto:tlpeterc@syr.edu)

**Location:** 400 L (PARCC) Eggers Hall



## COURSE DESCRIPTION

We experience social problems in two main ways. First, we learn about them through the media and the kinds of “newsworthy,” attention-getting stories communicated to the masses. We view these problems from a distance, gaining our information through the filtered, often politicized, viewpoint of news conglomerates and paid journalists. The second way we encounter social problems are through real-life personal experiences. This may be the circumstances we were raised under, troubles we have faced, or the struggles we have witnessed our friends, family, or local community go through.

In this sociology course you will be challenged to critically examine the links between personal (micro) troubles and public (macro) issues in society by developing your own sociological imagination. The lectures, readings, assignments, and classroom activities you will experience will assist you in developing your own analytical toolkit, or “sociological lens,” which you will hopefully continue to cultivate and rely upon after this course. In our classroom you will be encouraged to think deeply about how the structures and institutions of our society are socially constructed, by and for whom they are constructed to privilege, and as a result, the social problems that have been generated. By the end of this course you will have acquired the skills necessary to 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.

Lectures, in-class activities, and assignments are vitally linked to the course readings, which I have carefully selected to illustrate and explain the social problems topics covered in this course. I encourage you to be a reflexive thinker throughout these activities, questioning the ways that each social problem is being represented, both by the media and from within academia. Consider, for instance, how the problem is framed, how it has been researched, and whose voices and bodies are involved [(in)visible]. You will also be challenged to apply the course materials and our macro-level investigation of social problems to your own lives, examining your beliefs, assumptions, previous knowledge, life experiences, and interpretations of the literature I assign. Please be open to challenging yourself, and perhaps even changed, by the materials that we study, the voices speaking to us through the readings/media clips, and by the very people who sit amongst you in our classroom community.

I seek to make my lectures interactive and engaging, and regularly pose open-ended questions to the class in order to encourage students' participation. In this way we all work together to generate a welcoming and open environment, creating a safe space in which we can comfortably discuss the topics covered in this course. This generates an active, engaging, and communal style of learning, an experience that will be as rewarding for you as you help make it. By sharing and acquiring insights and knowledge from each other, we will develop a fuller appreciation of our classroom's diversity, our collective values, and the valuable knowledge and insights that each of you has to offer to this course.

## Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course you will have acquired the tools to...

- ✓ Clearly identify and analyze social problems within U.S. society and beyond
- ✓ Understand and apply an abundance of sociological concepts to everyday life
- ✓ Perform critical thinking within your analytical writing
- ✓ Comfortably and sensitively discuss social problems on a daily basis
- ✓ Skillfully inform others on the topics covered in this course
- ✓ Investigate, imagine, develop and implement strategies that address social problems

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance in this course is of the utmost importance. Your presence in our classroom each day is necessary, beneficial, and academically invaluable. Four unexcused absences (one full week of class) will constitute possible failure of this course if you are unable to provide a legitimate excuse. Absences will be detrimental to your participation grade, which I am at liberty to determine at the end of this Summer Session. I will excuse an absence if it has been negotiated with me in advance and/or is verified in writing by a legitimate source. If you anticipate missing a class, email me immediately informing me of the circumstances. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the material that was covered in class by checking Blackboard and contacting other students in this course to see what you missed, not myself. I do not reply to emails where an absent student asks me to be informed of what they missed in class, unless there are exceptional circumstances. You should rely upon your classmates to gain this kind of detailed information. Use the space below to write down the names, phone numbers, and/or email addresses of two classmates you will rely upon for notes and assistance, should you be absent:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Weekly Readings

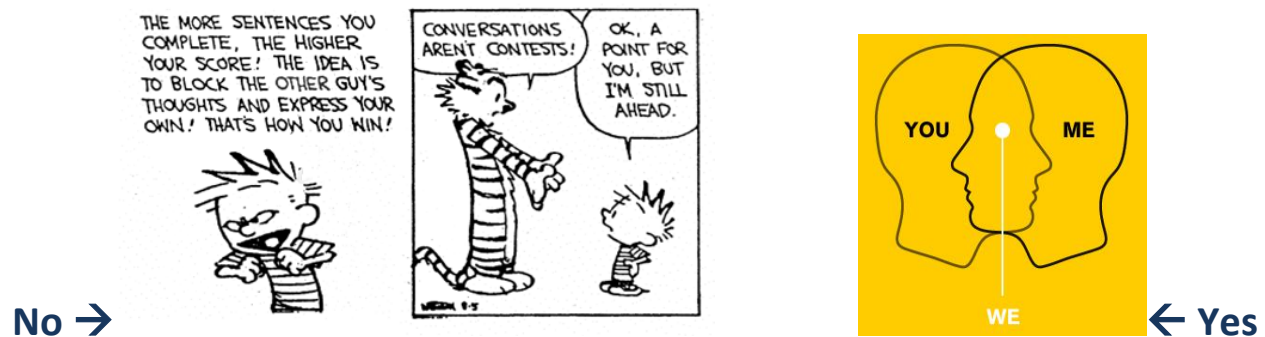
You are expected to read all of the required reading materials posted under the "Readings" tab of our Summer Session II SOC 102 Blackboard page, unless otherwise notified by me. This course is conducted under the assumption that students are keeping up with the required readings, and there is no legitimate excuse for failing to read the assigned materials. If you find yourself struggling with any of the readings, please notify me ASAP. I suggest bringing your readings to class with you (via hard copy or electronic) to reference during lectures or class discussion, though it is not required. I will notify you in advance if you must bring a specific reading to class to utilize for an in-class exercise.

## Blackboard

You are required to log in to the Blackboard site of our course on a regular basis. If you are officially enrolled, you should have access to this site. Please notify me immediately if at any point you are unable access our course page. Blackboard will be the source used to communicate course announcements, store all readings and lecture slides, upload and post your assignments, write in your private online journals, and create discussion board threads. I will also maintain your grades via blackboard for you to view.

## Class Participation

Your active engagement and lively participation is absolutely critical for this course to be an enjoyable, stimulating experience for all. Students are expected to be alert, 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 interact. 5% of your final course grade is based on your attendance to class and 5% is based on your in-class participation. Successful participation means voluntarily engaging in questions I pose to the class, working diligently when you are in groups, and openly sharing insights and/or asking questions when you have them.



## Blackboard Journal

10% of your final course grade will be determined by your journal entries, which I will regularly monitor and, at times, privately reply to your entries. Your journal is a private space where you will record your personal thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the readings, lecture topics, and discussions in class. You are free to write as much as you wish, but the minimum requirement is two paragraph (at least 5 sentences per paragraph) every week. Your journal is a space for you to deeply confront your own identity, values, opinions, and emotions in light of the topics and materials studied in this course.

## Essay Assignments

The essay assignments for this course are structured to focus on sociological analysis. You must complete 4 out of the 5 essay assignments I assign in this course, which will constitute 40% of your course grade. In other words, you may skip one essay assignment during this course. Essay assignments are tailored to the topics covered and aimed at helping you achieve the learning objectives listed in this syllabus. Each assignment will require you to critically engage with specific course readings. The page length requirement for essays are 3-4 double-spaced pages. Essay assignments will be provided in class and also posted on Blackboard under the "Assignments" tab. You will submit each assignments via the Turnitin tool on Blackboard, located under the "Assignments" tab, by the required deadlines indicated in this syllabus. Late submissions are accepted as follows: 1 day late = -1 point; 2 days late = -2 points; 3 day late = -3 points. At the end of the third day (11:59 PM) the submission link on Turnitin will completely close and late papers will no longer be accepted, resulting in a score of 0.

TurnItIn screens essays for plagiarism, filtering them through all web pages and papers submitted to university utilizing the Turnitin tool. To plagiarize is to do a disservice to yourself, hindering your own intellectual development. Furthermore, you will likely be caught and suffer detrimental consequences; as indicated in the Academic Integrity section of this syllabus. Therefore, please write your own assignments, citing all direct quotes that are 3+ words in a row within quotation marks, followed by the author and page number in parentheses. Example: "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (Mills, p.29).

If for some reason you experience an error while uploading your assignment to Turnitin, **immediately** email me your paper so it is received on time, then try uploading your paper again later.

I truly love helping students grow and improve as writers. If you would like to make an appointment with me at any time during this semester to discuss how to actively improve your writing skills, please approach me after class or email me.

### STAGES OF WRITING: DON'T TRY THIS ON CAMPUS



"If I waited till I felt like **writing**, I'd never write at all."

- Anne Tyler

#### Final: In-Class Presentation and Paper

Your final will consist of an in-class presentation and final paper, where you will select a topic in advanced and, upon my approval, research a specific social problem of interest to you. You will give a short (10-15 minute) presentation on your topic the last week of class, followed by a brief (3-5 minute) Q&A session. You will also submit a sociologically relevant analytical report (5-7 pages) on the topic you have researched. Detailed guidelines for your presentation and final paper will be distributed and discussed during Week 3 of this course.

Your final grade will be calculated through the weighted grade system indicated in the table on the next page. If you seek to contest any grade you receive, you must schedule a meeting with me and also provide a short 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.

Requirements	% of Grade
Participation	10%
Journal	10%
Assignment 1-4	50%
Presentation	10%
Final Paper	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

## COURSE POLICIES

### Do's and Don'ts

- + I do permit the use of laptops in class for the purpose of note taking. If laptops become a distraction and are used for recreation rather than academics, I will prohibit them.
- + I do permit light snacks and beverages in the classroom.
- The use of cell phones/texting in class is strictly prohibited. If you must use your phone, quietly exit the room and return in a timely manner. Students using their phones in class will be verbally warned, then asked to leave and marked absent if the behavior continues.
- You may not audio or video record class sessions without my informed consent.
- I consider sleeping/dosing in class to be extremely disrespectful and it is absolutely prohibited.

### Accommodations

If you have a Accommodation Authorization Letter from Disability Services, you must provide it to me within the first week of this course so that the appropriate accommodations can be made. Our community values diversity and seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Syracuse University is committed to your success and ensuring that 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 may need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 315-443-4498. 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 any work in this course 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>

## **COURSE OUTLINE & READINGS**

### **Week 1: Thinking About Social Problems Sociologically**

#### **Readings for Monday, June 30 through Thursday, July 3:**

1. "The Promise" C. Wright Mills (1959) Pp. 1-12
2. "Exploring Critical Sociological Thinking" Grauerholz & Bouma-Holtrop (2003) Pp. 485-496
3. "The Forest and the Trees" A. Johnson (1997) Pp. 7-36
4. "Social Problems As Collective Behavior" (1971) Pp. 298-306

**\*\* Assignment 1 due Saturday, July 5 via Blackboard Turnitin\*\***

### **Week 2: The Capitalist System & Structural Income Inequality**

#### **Readings for Monday, July 7 through Thursday, July 10:**

1. "Inequality: Poverty and Wealth" in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 1-19
2. "The Specter of Slavery: Workfare and the Economic Citizenship of Poor Women" J.L. Collins Ch. 7. Pp 1-11.
3. "Welfare Reform in the U.S.: Gender, Race and Class Matter" Mimi Abramovitz (2006)
4. From the book *Experiencing Poverty: Voices from the Bottom*  
"Theories of Poverty" Pp. 13-17  
"One Step Away" Pp. 43-45  
"On the Margins" Pp.51-56  
"The Dynamics of the Welfare Stigma" Pp. 91-98

**\*\* Assignment 2 due Friday, July 11 via Blackboard Turnitin\*\***

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

#### **Readings for Monday, July 14 through Thursday, July 17:**

1. "Race & Immigration" in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 43-57
2. White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" P. McIntosh Pp. 1-4
3. Select chapters: *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* by B. D. Tatum (1997)
4. From the book *Rethinking the Color Line*  
"Racial Formations" Pp. 21-27  
"Racialized Social System Approach to Racism" Pp. 46-53

**\*\* Assignment 3 due Friday, July 18 via Blackboard Turnitin\*\***

### **Week 4: Dismantling Binaries: Gender, Sexualities, and Families**

#### **Readings for Monday, July 21 through Thursday, July 24:**

1. "Doing Gender" C. West & D.H. Zimmerman (1987)Pp. 125-151
2. "Undoing Gender" F.M. Deutsch (2007) Pp. 106-127
3. "Building Boxes and Policing Boundaries" B. Lucal (2008) Pp. 519-535
4. "Gender Inequality in Labor Markets: The Role of Motherhood and Segregation" (2005) Pp. 264-288

Additional (fun) resource: The Gender Book (online)

[http://issuu.com/thegenderbook/docs/the\\_gender\\_book/1?e=3293111/2661900](http://issuu.com/thegenderbook/docs/the_gender_book/1?e=3293111/2661900)

**\*\* Assignment 4 due Friday, July 25 via Blackboard Turnitin\*\***

### **Week 5: The Era of Mass Incarceration**

**Readings for Monday, July 28 through Thursday, July 31:**

1. "The Prison Industrial Complex" E. Smith & A. Hattery (2006)  
<http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v42/prison.htm>
2. "Globalism and the Prison Industrial Complex: An Interview with Angela Davis" (1999) Pp. 145-157
3. "Families and Incarceration" D. Braman (2003) Pp. 117- 135
4. The Prison Industrial Complex is... [an infographic]  
<http://chicagopiccollective.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/finaldraftpiczine4-13-11.pdf>

**\*\* Assignment 5 due Friday, August 1 via Blackboard Turnitin\*\***

### **Week 6: Final Presentations**

**In-class presentations conducted Monday, August 4 through Thursday, August 7**

**\*\* Final Paper due Tuesday, August 12 via Blackboard Turnitin\*\***

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