

Social Problems

SOC 102
Fall 2013
Syracuse
University

Instructor

Tracy Peterchak
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Office Hours:
Weds 1:00 - 2:00 PM
& by apt.
Location: 400 L
(PARCC) Eggers Hall

CLASS MEETINGS:
Mon & Wed
2:15 PM – 3:35 PM
Whitman (SOM) 004

COURSE DESCRIPTION

As individuals, we tend to encounter social problems in two main ways. First, we learn about them through the media and what “news worthy,” attention-getting stories news conglomerates select to communicate to the masses. We view these problems from a distance and gain our information through the filtered, often politicized, viewpoint of corporate heads and journalists. The second way we encounter social problems is on a personal level. This includes the circumstances we have been raised under and the various troubles we, and our friends, family and local community have experienced.

In this sociology course you will be challenged to critically examine the links between public issues in society (macro) and personal troubles (micro) by developing your own sociological lens to view social problems through. The lectures, readings, assignments and classroom activities you will experience in this course will help you develop your own analytical toolkit to carry with you into the “real world,” equipping you with a nuanced understanding of social issues. You will be encouraged to think deeply about how the structures and institutions of our society have been socially constructed, by and for whom, and as a result, the social problems that have been generated. 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 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 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, or (in)visible. Finally, you will be continuously encouraged to apply the course materials and macro-level investigation of social problems to your own previous assumptions, knowledge, life experiences and interpretations, consciously acknowledging and charting your intellectual journey.

I often pose open-ended questions to the class, with no single “correct” answer in order to encourage students’ participation in active learning, not only from me, but from each other. You may be asked to voluntarily share and discuss your perspective, understanding or experiences with others in class so that we can acquire insights from each other and develop a fuller appreciation of our class’s diversity, as well as our similarities.

Learning Objectives

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

- Identify and critically analyze a variety of social problems in society
- Utilize the sociological conceptual toolkit you have developed in your everyday life
- Demonstrate improved analytical writing skills
- Comprehend and thoughtfully discuss sociological research and theoretical concepts
- Develop a thorough understanding of the topics covered in this course
- Think in a sophisticated manner about strategies for addressing 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. Six unexcused absences (three weeks of class) will constitute possible failure of this course, while more than three unexcused absences will be detrimental to your class participation grade, which is determined at the end of the semester. 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 see the Course Policies section of this syllabus for information on religious observances. If you do miss a class, for whatever reason, it is always 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 asking what was covered 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. _____

Requirements	% of Grade
Participation	20%
Assignment 1	10%
Assignment 2	10%
Midterm	20%
Assignment 3	10%
Assignment 4	10%
Final	20%
Total	100%

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Weekly Readings

You are expected to keep up with the readings in your required textbook – the *SOC 102 Course Reader*, only available for purchase at the SU Bookstore. You will also be required to download and read an assortment of academic and journalistic literature that I will make available via the course’s Blackboard site, located under the tab labeled “Readings”. 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 any assigned materials. If you find yourself struggling with the readings, contact me ASAP -- communication is key. You may be required to bring one or more readings to class (via hard copy or electronic on your laptop) to utilize during lectures or class exercises. I will notify you in advance whenever you are expected to bring specific readings with you.

Blackboard

You are required to closely follow the Blackboard site for this course on a regular basis. If you are officially enrolled you should have automatic access to the SOC 102 Fall 2013 course site. Please notify me immediately if at any point you are unable access this site. I use Blackboard as a means for updating the syllabus, making announcements, uploading readings and resources, collecting assignments and posting grades.

<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

This course utilizes a function within Blackboard called TurnItIn, which automatically screens students' assignment for plagiarism. You will be required to submit all of your assignments through the Turnitin tool. If for some reason you experience an error while uploading your assignment, immediately email me your paper so it is received on time, then try uploading your paper again later.

Class Participation

Your active engagement in this course and embodied participation is absolutely imperative if this course is 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. Your final participation grade depends upon your attendance (10%) and your classroom engagement (10%). Successful in-class participation means voluntarily engaging in class discussion or group work, sharing insights and/or asking questions as you grapple with the course materials and concepts. I encourage students to visit during my office hour. Office hour time is a great opportunity for us to get to know each other better and for your to ask questions related to class or your educational career, more generally. If your schedule conflicts with my regularly scheduled office hour, please email me to request for an appointment. I will be happy to negotiate a time to meet with you. Also, you are more than welcome to come to office hours in pairs or groups if you feel more comfortable.

Assignments

The complete list of weekly reading assignments for this course are provided below in the "Course Outline and Readings" section of the syllabus. During this semester you will be assigned four writing assignments that constitute 40% of your course grade. You will write no less than 3 double-spaced pages per assignment. Your course writing assignments will be deliberately varied, aimed towards helping you achieve the learning objectives listed in this syllabus. Each will require you to critically engage with the course readings assigned and lectures in class. Each assignment will be provided in class a week prior to its submission deadline, as well as posted on Blackboard under the "Assignments" tab. You will then submit your assignments via the Turnitin tool on Blackboard located under the "Assignments" tab before the deadline. Late submissions are accepted as follows: 1 day late = -1 point; 2 days late = -2 points; on the third day the submission link on Turnitin will completely close and late papers will no longer be accepted, resulting in a score of 0.

I highly encourage all of you to utilize SU's Writing Center to assist you in your editing and improving your course assignments. It is an incredibly useful resource that will likely result in improving your own writing and your assignment scores. Please see <http://wc.syr.edu/> for more detailed information on SU's Writing Center, to email your papers or to schedule an appointment. Remember, to make use of the Writing Center you will need to draft your paper a day or two in advanced of its submission deadline.

Midterm and Final Exams

As indicated in the "Course Outline and Readings" section of the syllabus, you will be given a **Midterm Exam on Wednesday, October 16** and a **Final Exam on Friday, December 13**. The information you will be tested on for these exams will be drawn directly from the course readings, lectures, in class activities and films/media we watch. They will test your basic knowledge of the course material as well as engage your analytical and critical thinking skills. More detailed information will be provided to you as these exam dates approach.

Final grades will be calculated as indicated on the "Requirements" table located to the left of page 2 in this syllabus. If you seek to contest a grade you have received on an assignment or exam you must meet

with me and also provide 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.

COURSE POLICIES

Do's and Don'ts

- I am permitting the use of laptops in this course for the purpose of note taking, 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), 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 kind of activity you will be warned verbally, but if it continues, you will be asked to leave the classroom 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 the Fall semester, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class. For more information, see: http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm

COURSE OUTLINE & READINGS

(B) = located on Blackboard

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Introduction: Thinking About Social Problems Sociologically

Readings for August 26 – September 4:

1. “The Promise” C. Wright Mills (1959) Pp. 1-12 (B)
2. “The Forest and the Trees” A. Johnson (1997) Pp. 7-36 (B)
3. “Finding Out How the Social World Works” M. Schwalbe (1998) Pp. 59-68 (B)
4. “Media and Technology” in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 63-77

August 26 (M) & August 28 (W)

September 2 (M) – Labor Day, NO CLASS!

September 4 (W)

The Capitalist System & Structural Income Inequality

Readings for September 9 – September 25:

1. “Inequality: Poverty and Wealth” in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 1-19
2. From the book *Experiencing Poverty: Voices from the Bottom* (B)
 - “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
3. “Economy and Work” in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 81-95

September 9 (M) & 11 (W) Assignment 1 distributed

September 16 (M) & 18 (W)

Assignment 1 due Friday, September 20 via Blackboard Turnitin

September 23 (M) & 25 (W)

Racial Stratification, Privilege and the Matrix of Domination

Readings for September 30 – October 14:

1. “Race & Immigration” in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 43-57
2. From the book *Rethinking the Color Line* (B)
 - “Sorting by Color: Why We Attach Meaning to Race” Pp. 5-6
 - “Racial Formations” Pp. 21-27
 - “Racialized Social System Approach to Racism” Pp. 46-53
3. “Color-Blind Ideology and the Cultural Appropriation of Hip-Hop” J. Rodriguez (2006) Pp. 645-68 (B)
4. “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” P. McIntosh Pp. 1-4 (B)

September 30 (M) & October 2 (W) Assignment 2 distributed

October 7 (M) & 9 (W) Assignment 2 due Friday, October 11 via Blackboard Turnitin

October 14 (M)

October 16 (W) – Midterm Exam

Dismantling Binaries: Gender and Sexuality

Readings for October 21 – November 6:

1. "Gender" in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 25-37
2. "What It Means to Be Gendered Me" B. Lucal (1999) Pp. 781-797 **(B)**
3. "Penn State: The Mother of All Teachable Moments for the Bystander Approach" J. Katz (2011) Pp. 1-11 **(B)**
4. "Deep Down Where the Music Plays" Tey Meadow (2011) Pp. 725-742 **(B)**
5. "Building Boxes and Policing Boundaries" B. Lucal (2008) Pp. 519-535 **(B)**

Just for fun: The Gender Book M.R. Hill & J Mays (browse freely)

http://issuu.com/thegenderbook/docs/the_gender_book/1?e=3293111/2661900

October 21 (M) & 23 (W)

October 28 (M) & 30 (W) *Assignment 3 distributed*

November 4 (M) & 6 (W)

Assignment 3 due Friday, November 8 via Blackboard Turnitin

The Era of Mass Incarceration

Readings for November 11– December 4:

1. "Criminal Justice" in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 101-113
2. "The Prison Industrial Complex" E. Smith & A. Hattery (2006)
<http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v42/prison.htm>
3. "Building a Prison Economy in Rural America" T. Huling (2003) Pp. 197-213
4. "Families and Incarceration" D. Braman (2003) Pp. 117- 135
5. "Still Doin' Time" G. Purser (2012) Pp. 397- 412

November 11 (M) & 13 (W)

November 18 (M) & 20 (W) *Assignment 4 distributed*

November 25 (M) & 27 (W) –Thanksgiving Break, NO CLASS!

December 2 (M) & 4 (W) Last week of class!

Assignment 4 due Friday, December 6 via Blackboard Turnitin

December 13 (F) Final Exam from 3:00PM-5:00 PM