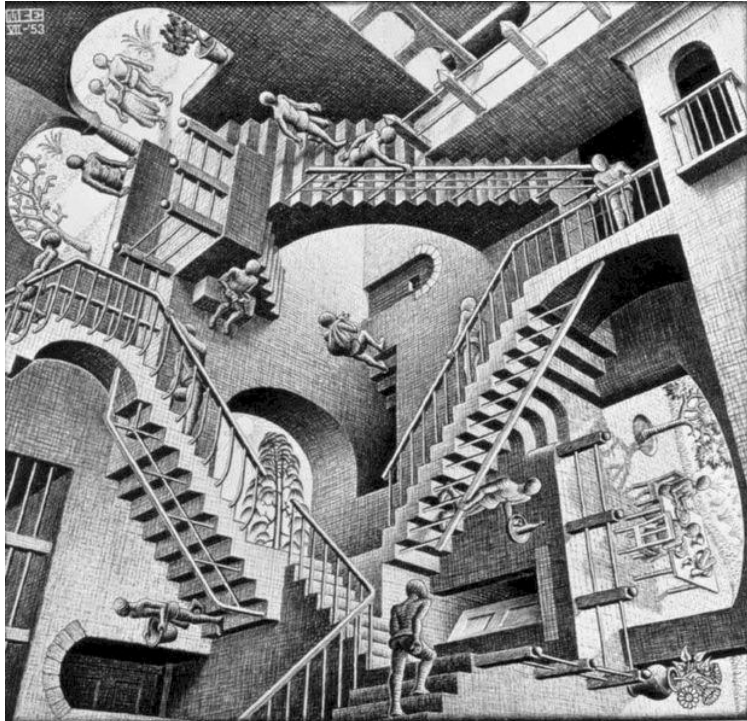


# **SOCIAL PROBLEMS - SOC 102**

**SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, SPRING 2014**

**TUESDAYS, 6:30-9:15PM IN MAXWELL HALL 111**

**Instructor:** Tracy Peterchak; [tpeterc@syr.edu](mailto:tpeterc@syr.edu) **Office Hours:** Fridays. 1:00 - 2:00 PM & by apt.  
**Location:** 400 L (PARCC) Eggers Hall



**Relativity, M.C. Escher (1953)**



**Hand with Reflecting Sphere, M.C. Escher (1935)**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

We experience social problems in two main ways. First, we learn about them through the media and what “newsworthy,” attention-getting stories are 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 our 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, and 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,” to take with you into the future. 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 benefit, 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 [or (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 open yourselves to being challenged, and perhaps changed, by the materials we will study and the voices speaking to us through the readings, media clips, and within our classroom community.

I often pose open-ended questions to the class in order to encourage students' participation. Together, we will work to generate a welcoming, safe, and open environment for the discussion topics covered in this course. Our collective goal is to create an active, engaging, and communal learning experience. This experience will be as rewarding as you help make it, so please come to class energized and prepared. 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 have to offer to the class.

### 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
- ✓ Understand and apply an abundance of sociological concepts to everyday life
- ✓ Communicate critical thinking through your analytical writing
- ✓ Comfortably and sensitively discuss social problems on a daily basis
- ✓ Skillfully inform others about the topics covered in this course
- ✓ Imagine, test, and implement sophisticated 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. Four unexcused absences (one full month of class) will constitute potential failure of this entire course. More than two 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/or is verified in writing 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 an absent student missed in class. Please use the space below to write down the name, phone number, and/or email address of the two classmates you will look to for notes and assistance when you are absent:

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

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Weekly Readings**

You are required to read all of the materials posted under the “Readings” tab of our SOC 102 Blackboard page and below listed in this syllabus, unless otherwise notified. This course is conducted under the assumption that students are keeping up with the required readings. There is no legitimate excuse for failing to read any assigned materials. If you find yourself struggling with the readings, please speak with me ASAP. I suggest bringing your readings to class with you (via hard copy or electronic) to reference during lectures or class discussion. I will notify you in advance whenever you must bring specific readings with you to utilize for an in-class exercise.

Required books for this course:

1. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* by Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997), available for purchase at the SU bookstore, OR new or used on Amazon, click [here](#) to buy now (recommended)
2. *Reinventing the Family: In Search of New Lifestyles* by Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002), available for purchase at the SU bookstore, OR new or used on Amazon, click [here](#) to buy now (recommended)
3. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander (2012), available for purchase at the SU bookstore, OR new or used on Amazon, click [here](#) to buy now (recommended)

### **Blackboard**

You are required to closely follow the Blackboard page for this course on a regular basis. If you are officially enrolled in SOC 102- Spring 2014 you should have automatic access to our Blackboard page. Please notify me immediately if at any point you are unable access this site. Blackboard will be used to communicate announcements, post course readings and lecture slides, write in your journals (if you choose this option), upload your assignments, and post grades.

### **Class Participation & Journal**

Your active engagement and embodied participation is absolutely imperative 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. 10% of your final grade depends upon your attendance and in-class participation. Successful in-class 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 as you grapple with the course materials and concepts.

Your journal will be a private space for you to record your personal thoughts, reactions, feelings, and questions about the readings, lecture, topics, discussion, and experience of taking this course. You are free to write in whatever style you choose and as much as you wish. This is a space to communicate and grapple with your own identity, values, opinions, and emotions in a way that course assignments do not permit, since they are much more structured towards sociological analysis. Journals will make up 10% of your final course grade. I will monitor journals about every 2 weeks and, at times, speak back to your entries. A space has been provided to you on Blackboard to keep an electronic journal. However, if

you prefer keeping a handwritten journal (my personal preference) please purchase any type of journal or notebook you feel comfortable writing in. It does not matter how simple or fancy it is. What matters is that you write in it regularly. Those of you who choose the physical journal option will be asked to bring your journals to class about every 2 weeks for me to collect, read, and return to you.

### Assignments

During this semester you will be assigned five writing assignments that constitute 40% of your course grade. The required page length will be indicated in each assignments' instructions, but generally be 4-5 double-spaced pages. These writing assignments will be deliberately varied and aimed towards helping you achieve the learning objectives listed in this syllabus. Each assignment will require you to critically engage with the course readings assigned and topics that the lectures cover in class. As indicated in the Course Outline and Readings section of this syllabus, your assignments will be provided in and also posted on Blackboard under the "Assignments" tab. You will submit your assignments via the Turnitin tool on Blackboard located under the "Assignments" tab by the required deadline. Late submissions are accepted as follows: 1 day late = -1 point; 2 days late = -2 points; 3 day late = -3 points, where 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.

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.

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 feel comfortable to approach me after class or email me.

### Midterm and Final Exams

As indicated in the "Course Outline and Readings" section of the syllabus, you will be given a **Midterm Exam on Tuesday, March 4** and a **Final Exam on Tuesday, May 6**. 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 be higher-level written exams that test your knowledge, understanding, and application of the course materials, requiring you to engage your analytical and critical thinking skills. More information will be provided to you as these exam dates approach.

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 on an assignment or exam this semester, 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 1-5	40%
Midterm	20%
Final	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'm permitting the use of laptops in this course for the purpose of note taking, but will 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, 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. If you need to use your phone, quietly exit the room or wait until our break time.
- You may not audio or video record class sessions without my informed consent.
- This is an evening class that takes place during dinner time. While I do not encourage full meals to be regularly eaten in our classroom, it is important that you ingest the necessary sustenance to power your brains and bodies through this class. Therefore, I will tolerate noshing and beverages in the classroom.
- I consider sleeping/dosing in class to be extremely disrespectful and it is absolutely prohibited.

### 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 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>

### **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 Spring 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](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm)

## **COURSE OUTLINE & READINGS**

### **Introduction: Thinking About Social Problems Sociologically**

**ASSIGNMENT 1: Distributed January 14, Due Friday, January 24 via Turnitin on Blackboard**

#### **Readings for January 14 & 21**

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. "Finding Out How the Social World Works" M. Schwalbe (1998) Pp. 59-68
5. "Media and Technology" in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 63-77

### **The Capitalist System & Structural Income Inequality**

**ASSIGNMENT 2: Distributed January 28, Due Friday, February 14 via Turnitin on Blackboard**

#### **Readings for January 28 February 4, 11**

1. "Inequality: Poverty and Wealth" in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 1-19
2. "Encountering Poverty: Space, Class, and Poverty Politics" V. Lawson and S. Elwood (2013) Pp. 1-20
3. "The Specter of Slavery: Workfare and the Economic Citizenship of Poor Women" J.L. Collins Ch. 7. Pp 1-11.
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

#### **Optional Readings:**

1. ["The Negro Family: The Case For National Action"](#) Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor (1965)
2. "Jobless Poverty: A New Form of Social Dislocation in the Inner-City Ghetto" by William Julius Wilson (1998)
3. "Occupational Employment Projections to 2018" T. A. Lacey and B. Wright (2009, 2010) Pp. 82-123
4. "Welfare Reform in the United States: Gender, Race and Class Matter" by Mimi Abramovitz (2006)
5. "Economy and Work" in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 81-95

## Racial Stratification, Privilege and the Matrix of Domination

**ASSIGNMENT 3: Distributed February 18, Due Friday, March 7 via Turnitin on Blackboard**

**Readings for February 18, 25, March 4**

1. White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” P. McIntosh Pp. 1-4
2. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* by B. D. Tatum (1997)
3. From the book *Rethinking the Color Line*  
“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

**Optional Readings:**

1. “Color-Blind Ideology and the Cultural Appropriation of Hip-Hop” J. Rodriguez (2006) Pp. 645-68
2. “Race & Immigration” in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 43-57

**No Class March 11 → Spring Break Sunday, March 9 - Sunday, March 16**

**Tuesday, March 18 Midterm Exam**

## Dismantling Binaries: Gender, Sexualities, and Families

**Assignment 4: Distributed March 25, Due Friday, April 11 via Turnitin on Blackboard**

**Readings for March 25 April 1, 8**

1. 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)
2. “What It Means to Be Gendered Me” B. Lucal (1999) Pp. 781-797
3. “Building Boxes and Policing Boundaries” B. Lucal (2008) Pp. 519-535
4. *Reinventing the Family: In Search of New Lifestyles* by Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002)

**Optional Readings:**

1. “Gender” in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 25-37
2. “Penn State: The Mother of All Teachable Moments for the Bystander Approach” J. Katz (2011) Pp. 1-11

## The Era of Mass Incarceration

**Assignment 5: Distributed April 15, Due Friday, May 2 via Turnitin on Blackboard**

**Readings for April 15 22, 29:**

1. “The Prison Industrial Complex” E. Smith & A. Hattery (2006)  
<http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v42/prison.htm>
2. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander (2012)
3. “Families and Incarceration” D. Braman (2003) Pp. 117- 135

**Optional Readings:**

1. “Criminal Justice” in the Soc 102 Reader Pp. 101-113
2. “Still Doin’ Time” G. Purser (2012 ) Pp. 397- 412
3. “Building a Prison Economy in Rural America” T. Huling (2003) Pp. 197-213