

Professor: Dr. Tracy Vargas
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Office Hours: M W F 10:00 - 11:00 AM,
Tu Th, 12:15- 1:15 PM, or by appointment

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(accessible by stairs only)
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Contemporary Social Problems (SOC 110 010)

Fall 2018

M W F 12:00 PM-12:50 PM Room DF 100

Required Course Textbook & Online Materials



(1.) Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* (2nd Edition) ISBN: 9780205125623

(2.) PDFs on D2L: Academic readings and journal articles will provide more detailed information on specific concepts, research topics, and theories introduced in your textbook. The easy-to-read magazine articles will inform on recent current events, research, and happening that pertain to topics covered in class.

Course Description

As individuals, we tend to encounter social problems in two main ways. First, we learn about them through the media and what are deemed “news worthy” attention-getting stories. We view these problems from a distance and gain our information through filtered, often politicized, sources. The second way we encounter social problems is experientially. This includes the circumstances we have been raised under, the troubles we face, and the struggles we see our friends, family, and communities go through.

In this sociology course you will be challenged to critically examine the links between personal troubles (micro-level) and public issues (macro-level) in society. You will work on developing your own “sociological lens,” an analytical toolkit that will provide you with a nuanced understanding of social issues. You will investigate the structures and institutions of our society, explore how they have been socially constructed, and consider who they benefit and who have been left vulnerable. We will cover a variety of topics this semester, including economic, racial, and gender inequality, sexuality, urbanization, mental health, crime, politics, and so on. As you study these topics, I challenge you to rethink many of the taken-for-granted assumptions and biases that surround social life.

Your main objectives for this course are to:

- ✓ Understand and apply core sociological concepts and theories to the study of social problems
- ✓ Develop a multidimensional perspective when considering the causes and effects of social problems
- ✓ Identify, interpret, and analyze data that informs on social problems
- ✓ Critically evaluate various strategies that may alleviate or solve social problems
- ✓ Advance your social problems solving and communicative skills while working collaboratively with your peers

Student Evaluation

Grades will be assessed based on Kutztown University policy and available on D2L.

A = 93% or above A - = 90 – 92% B+ = 87– 89% B = 83– 86% B - = 80–82%
C+ = 77– 79% C = 70– 76% D = 60– 69% F = 60% or below

Grades will never be discussed via email. You must come to my office hours or see me after class if you would like to discuss grading for the course.

Online Exams (40%)

You will be given **two (2)** online exams in D2L, a Midterm and a Final. These exams are non-cumulative. The information you will be tested on will be terms, concepts, ideas, and theories you learn about through the course textbooks, classroom lectures, and discussion. Exam format will include true/false, multiple choice, and short answer. You will be locked out at exactly 11:59 PM on the exam date according to the server's clock. More information on exams will be provided during in-class review sessions.

Online Discussion Board (30%)

As the Course Schedule outlines, I will create **five (5)** Online Discussion Board Forums on D2L this semester. Within each forum, you are required to make three (3) separate posts. When a new forum is created, it will begin with me posting a question to the entire class. In response, you will **(1)** post a concise answer to my question using 200-400 words and **(2)** reply to a minimum of two other posts that your classmates have made using 100-200 words. Replies to your classmates' posts must not be contained within your original answer to my question. *Posts will no longer be accepted for a grade once we have moved on to a new chapter and topic.* I will provide a detailed rubric with instructions and grading criteria as the first Online Discussion Board date approaches.

Breakout Session Assignments (20%)

You will be assigned a group early in the semester and together will complete a total of **three (3)** classroom Breakout Session Assignments. Each assignment will be graded according to its accompanied rubric and receive a group score. Near the end of the semester, you will also evaluate the performance of the peers in your group. If you miss a Breakout Session Assignment, it is your responsibility to make up the missed assignment on your own, which will be available on D2L. Late assignments will be docked two points per day and not accepted beyond one week, unless otherwise approved by me. You will receive more information on each breakout session as these dates approach.

Attendance (10%)

It is your responsibility to sign in at the beginning of each class as the class sign-in sheet circulates throughout the room. If your signature is not marked next to your name, there will be no record of your attendance. **Six (6)** unexcused absences will be permitted during the semester, equaling two full weeks of class. Recurring absences beyond the allotted limit, habitual tardiness, or leaving early will be detrimental to your final grade. If you miss a class, I recommend that you keep in contact with two reliable classmates who can provide you with class notes. *I do not respond to student emails asking, "What did I miss last class," or similar inquiries.* Please select two reliable classmates and record their information in the space provided:

Name 1 _____ Email 1 _____

Name 2 _____ Email 2 _____

Communication with your Instructor

The quickest way to reach me is by email. When emailing me, please include your full name and indicate which class and section you are in (Example: Matt Shawley, 8 AM Contemporary Social Problems SOC 110 010). I encourage you to visit during my office hours to discuss your progress in this course. You may also schedule a meeting with me outside these hours, upon request.

IMPORTANT!!! If at any point during the course you find that you are not doing as well as you hoped or expected, immediately contact me to schedule a meeting. Please do not wait until the end of the semester because it will likely be too later for any intervention.

Classroom Etiquette

- ✓ This course covers a series of sensitive sociological topics. While I welcome the sharing of your ideas, opinions, and experiences in the classroom and online, there is a zero tolerance policy for offensive language, hate speech, derogatory words, or threatening behaviors. We will collectively establish a list of Classroom Culture Guidelines during the first week of class and abide by them throughout the semester.
- ✓ The responsible uses of electronic devices ARE permitted during class for academic purposes only, such as viewing your textbook or taking notes. If I observe your devices becoming a distraction, you will receive a warning. If the behavior continues, you will be asked to leave and marked as absent.
- ✓ You DO NOT have permission to digitally record within the classroom without my prior consent using cell phones, laptops, iPads, notepads, voice recorders, or any other audio or video equipment.

Academic Honesty

At your earliest convenience, please take time to read the entire Academic Honesty Policy.

<http://app.kutztown.edu/policyregister/policy.aspx?policy=ACA-027>

Academic dishonesty involves any attempt to obtain academic credit or influence the grading process by means unauthorized by the course instructor. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to the following situations and examples:

1. Providing or receiving unauthorized assistance in course work and lab work, or unauthorized assistance during examinations or quizzes.
2. Using unauthorized notes, materials, and devices during examinations or quizzes.
3. Plagiarizing the work of others and presenting it as one's own without properly acknowledging the source or sources. At its worst extreme, plagiarism is exact copying, but it is also the inclusion of a paraphrased version of the opinions and work of others without giving credit. It is not limited to written materials. It includes the wrongful appropriation in whole or in part of someone else's literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, or computer-based work.
4. Presenting material to fulfill course requirements that was researched or prepared by others (such as commercial services) without the knowledge of the instructor.
5. Falsifying or inventing data to be presented as part of an academic endeavor.
6. Gaining unauthorized access to another person's or the University's computer system. Violations include tampering with or copying programs or data or access codes associated with coursework.
7. Possessing or arranging for someone else to possess course examination or quiz materials at any time without the consent of the instructor.
8. Altering or adding answers on exercises, exams, or quizzes after the work has been graded.
9. Making fraudulent statements, excuses, or claims to gain academic credit or influence testing or grading.
10. Taking examinations or quizzes for someone else or arranging to have someone take examinations or quizzes in place of the person registered for the course.

Student Accommodations

If you anticipate the need for any reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, please contact the Disability Services Office located in 215 Stratton Hall. If you are currently receiving accommodations, is your responsibility to provide me with an official accommodations letter and meet with me privately to discuss these accommodations. My office, which is on the 4th floor of Old Main, is not accessible by elevator. If you have a physical disability that prevents you from climbing stairs, please let me know. I will arrange to meet with you in an accessible location. More information is available at: [https://www.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/disability-services-\(dso\).htm](https://www.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/disability-services-(dso).htm)

CASA Services

The Center for Academic Success & Achievement (CASA) provides a variety of free services for students, including individualized academic success plans, study skills support, tutoring, and connections to campus resources. I encourage you to stop in the bottom of Rohrbach Library (Room 26), email them at casa@kutztown.edu, call to set up an appointment (610) 683-4007, or check out their webpage for more information: <https://www.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/center-for-academic-success-and-achievement.htm>.

Course Schedule

*Course readings are listed according to the first date they will be covered in class.
Breakout session dates are tentative, but subject to change.*

Week 1: The Study of Social Problems

M 8/27, W 8/29, F 8/31

Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* Chapter 1 (pp. 2-19)

D2L: "The Promise," C. Wright Mills (1959)

Week 2: The Study of Social Problems

M 9/3 Labor Day – NO CLASS

W 9/5, F 9/7

D2L: "Finding out How the Social World Works," Michael Schwalbe (1998)

"Who Shared it? How Americans Decide what News to Trust on Social Media,"
Media Insight Project (2017)

Online Discussion Board: Forum #1 Open

Week 3: Inequality: Poverty and Wealth

M 9/10, W 9/12, F 9/14

Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* Chapter 2 (pp. 20-37)

D2L: "Encountering Poverty, Space, Class and Poverty Politics," Lawson & Elwood (2013)

"My Generation was Supposed to Level America's Playing Field," Steven Brill, *Time*
May 2018

Week 4: Inequality: Poverty and Wealth

M 9/17, W 9/19, F 9/21

D2L: "Welfare Reform in the United States," Mimi Abramovitz (2006)

"States of Vulnerability," Wes Moore, *Time* February 2018

Breakout Session #1

Week 5: Politics

M 9/24, W 9/26, F 9/28

Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* Chapter 8 (pp. 112-125)

D2L: "Why is the GOP Touting New Gun Restrictions after Parkland?" Elliott & Hennigan,
Time March 2017

"The Young and the Relentless," Charlotte Alter, *Time* April 2018

Online Discussion Board: Forum #2 Open

Week 6: Wrap-up, Review and Exam

M 10/1, W 10/3

F 10/5: **Online Midterm Exam** (lock-out at 11:59PM)

Week 7: Criminal Justice

M 10/8 Fall Break – NO CLASS

W 10/10, F 10/12

Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* Chapter 14 (pp. 200-213)

D2L: “Employees or Suspects?” Tracy Vargas (2017)

“President Trump Is Officially Proposing That We Give Drug Traffickers the Death Penalty,” Maya Rhodan, *Time* March 2018

Week 8: Race and Immigration

M 10/15, W 10/17, F 10/19

Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* Chapter 3(pp. 38-53)

D2L: “The Criminalization of Undocumented Migrants,” Golash-Boza (2010)

“Barriers to a Border Wall” (map) *Time* May 2017

“‘Bye Dad, I Love You’: American’s Immigration Policy,” Haley Sweetland Edwards
Time March 2018

Online Discussion Board: Forum #3 Open

Week 9: Race and Immigration

M 10/22, W 10/24, F 10/26

Textbook:

D2L: “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Peggy McIntosh (2005)

“Rebirth on Campus: A New Era of Protest,” Maya Rhodan *Time* June 2018

“Super Powered: Black Panther Marks a Major Milestone for Culture,” Jamil Smith
Time February 2018

Breakout Session #2

Week 10: Urbanization: Social Problems from the Growth of Cities

M 10/29, W 10/31, F 11/2

Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* Chapter 16 (pp. 228-243)

D2L: “Cities and the Creative Class,” Richard Florida (2003)

“Everything is Gentrification Now but Richard Florida Isn’t Sorry,” Oliver
Wainwright *The Guardian* October 2017

“Who Owns the Right to the City? Moving Towards Urban Inclusivity,” Chendan
Yan, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

Week 11: Gender

M 11/5, W 11/7, F 11/9

Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* Chapter 4 (pp. 54-67)

D2L: “Kate Upton Shines a Light on Fashion's Biggest Problem with her #MeToo Story,”

Eliana Dockerman, *Time* February 2018

“How Diversity Training Infuriates Men and Fails Women,” Joanne Lipman, *Time* February 2018

“Why We Spend More on Mom than Dad” (infographics) *Time* May 2018

Week 12: Sex and the Social Problems Related to Sexuality

M 11/12, W 11/14, F 11/16

Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* Chapter 12 (pp. 170-185)

D2L: “This Man wants to be on Male Birth Control,” Alexandra Sifferlin, *Time* June 2018

“Beyond ‘He’ or ‘She:’ The Changing Meaning of Gender and Sexuality,” Katy Steinmetz *Time* March 2017

“Inside Sex Offender Therapy,” Eliana Dockerman *Time* May 2018

Online Discussion Board: Forum #4 Open

Week 13: Sex and the Social Problems Related to Sexuality

M 11/19

D2L: “Sociological Perspectives on Sex Work and Human Trafficking,” Lerum & Brents (2016)

“In Plain Sight: Human Trafficking” ONLINE VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0MeBhjjugE>

“Sold in America: The Trafficking” ONLINE VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Empxdrk7UuA>

Breakout Session #3

W 11/21 Thanksgiving Recess – NO CLASS

F 11/23 Thanksgiving Recess – NO CLASS

Week 14: Physical and Mental Health Care

M 11/26, W 11/28, F 11/30

Textbook: *THINK Social Problems* Chapter 10 (pp. 140-153)

D2L: “Psychopathy and the Face of Control in Supermax,” Lorna Rhodes (2002)

“Depression on Campus,” Katie Reilly, *Time* April 2018

“Her Mother's Mind,” Susanna Schrobsdorff *Time* February 2018

Online Discussion Board: Forum #5 Open

Week 15: Wrap-up and Review

M 12/3, W 12/5, F 12/7

Week 16: Finals Week

W 12/12 Online Final Exam (lock-out at 11:59PM)