

Sociology 102: Contemporary Social Problems

Ms. Laura Semmes, M.A.

Fall Semester, 2013

Course time: MW 8:35-10:00 am

Location: 413

Semester units: 3.0

CRN: 10826

Office hours: by appointment only

Contact info: laura.semmes@imperial.edu.

Required text: Kornblum, William & Julian, Joseph, Social Problems, 2012. 14th Edition. Pearson

“Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both” – C. Wright Mills

Course description:

This course is designed to introduce you the main sociological theories and perspectives regarding various social problems facing the world today. This course examines various social problems from both a scientific viewpoint regarding why we have social problems and also from an applied viewpoint regarding how social problems affect humans in society. Topics include physical and mental health, alcohol and drug problems, crime, violence, poverty, racism, prejudice and discrimination, sex roles and inequality, the changing family, education problems, and work and economy problems.

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are:

- 1) To critically think about and gain knowledge of the main theories and concepts of each of the various social problems that affect the world today
- 2) To leave this course with a basic understanding of how contemporary social problems affect our daily lives

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Analyze the interconnectedness of social problems in society.
2. Identify the various social problems and their causes.
3. Identify potential solutions to a social problem.

Course Format

This course will use a combination of lectures, class discussion, assigned readings, videos, assigned papers, and performance on exams. Tests are done on Scantron forms. Lecture notes

can be found on Blackboard under the resources tab. If you need any assistance with this, please ask me **anytime**. I will also put study guides on Blackboard a week before the test is scheduled.

Tentative Course Schedule

If you know you are going to be absent for an exam, notify the professor **a week** before to make arrangements. This must be done before the test day. If you miss the exam day without making arrangements, there will be no make-ups. The following is the tentative schedule for this class; however it is subject to change.

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
8/19-8/21	Social Problems	Chapter 1
8/26-8/28	Problems of Health and Health Care	Chapter 2
9/2	Labor Day: NO CLASS	
9/4-9/9	Problems of Mental Illness	Chapter 3
9/11-9/16	Review and Exam #1 (9/16)	
9/18-9/23	Alcohol and Other Drugs	Chapter 4
9/25-9/30	Crime and Violence	Chapter 5
10/2-10/7	Poverty amid Affluence	Chapter 6
10/9-10/14	Review and Exam # 2 (10/14)	
10/16-10/21	Racism, Prejudice and Discrimination	Chapter 7
	<i>~Group Projects~</i>	
10/23-10/28	Gender and Sexuality	Chapter 8
	<i>~Group Projects~</i>	
10/30-11/4	The Changing Family	Chapter 10
	<i>~Group Projects~</i>	
	Thought Paper due 11/4	
	NO CLASS 11/11 VETERANS DAY	
11/6-11/13	Review and Exam #3 (11/13)	
11/18-11/20	Problems of Education	Chapter 11
11/25-11/27	Problems of Work and the Economy	Chapter 12

Grading System

A: 90-100%	4 Exams @ 100 pts.	400 pts.
B: 80-89%	1 Thought Paper @ 50 pts.	50 pts.
C: 70-79%	Participation:	25 pts.
D: 60-69%	Group Project:	50 pts.
F: 59% and lower		

Total: 525 pts.

Participation

Regular attendance in all classes is expected of all students enrolled. Instructors are expected to take a student's attendance record into account in computing grades. Any student who misses the first class will be dropped. Students may be dropped at instructor's discretion if they miss more than a week of class hours continuously. Please make arrangements with the instructor or a fellow student to keep up with all assignments in case you cannot attend a class session for any reason.

Participation is part of your grade, and you must be in class to participate. There will also be in-class activities that will be counted as part of your participation grade. These cannot be made up. **Please check your e-mail regularly** so you are informed of any changes to the class, for example if the instructor will be unable to make it to class that day. This will help you stay informed about the status of the class.

Please note that participation means being fully engaged in class discussion. This means you are listening attentively, involving yourself in class activities and discussion, and most importantly, not disrupting your fellow students. Disruptions include (but are not limited to) talking to others during lecture, taking your cell phone out and talking/texting, applying makeup, etc...

Participation points WILL BE taken away from you each time you disrupt class in any way.

So....**please turn off cell phones or put them on vibrate before coming to class!** I will not tolerate texting or any use phones in class. It is a distraction to the learning process for everyone.

Thought Paper

The thought paper is a specific assignment that should incorporate several chapters of our text. Your assignment is to answer the following question: **How would you solve the crime problem given unlimited resources?** Remember you have unlimited financial resources; budgets aren't an issue. You have control of the decision-making. We will be learning about many kinds of crime and their effects on society. In writing your paper, I want you to consider many different angles on the crime issue. What are your theories about crime? How is crime learned? Would you change any laws? How would prevent crime from happening in the first place? How would

you punish people convicted of a crime, and how would that punishment differ for different types of crimes (property, violent, corporate, public-order crimes, organized crime, cybercrime, hate crimes, etc...)? How would you build a more just society?

You also want to consider that some current methods of crime control have not been efficient in solving the crime problem. How would you change those, and which are they? How would the philosophy of the criminal justice system change, if at all?

This paper will be worth 50 points, so make sure it is thorough and thought out. Points will be distributed on the following schedule:

Critical thinking: 15 points

Communication Skills: 10 points

Personal Responsibility: 5 points

Information Literacy: 10 points

Global Awareness: 10 points

For critical thinking, don't contradict yourself and be aware of the facts. For communication skills, be clear; what is it you're trying to say? Personal responsibility means you turn it in on time and have met all the requirements of the paper. Information literacy means you are aware of the information in your textbook and your paper shows you kept those essentials in mind. Global awareness means you are considering other cultures in making your policies. Do other societies have more effective solutions that we could incorporate here?

Academic dishonesty

Imperial Valley College's regulations regarding cheating and plagiarism are clear:

“If cheating or plagiarism is discovered, a student may be dropped from the course with a grade of ‘F’.”

This guideline will be strictly adhered to out of respect for those students who put in the effort and do the work for themselves. Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated.

Special Accommodations

Any student with a documented disability who may need educational accommodations should notify the instructor and the Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSP&S) office as soon as possible.

DSP&S Room 2117

Health Sciences Building

(760) 355-6312

SOCIOLOGY PROJECT AND PRESENTATION

Understanding inequality in a variety of societies or communities is integral to this course. Please submit the following assignment **24 hours before class**:

Document two (2) different communities and highlight aspects of inequality with photography, video or audio recorded interviews. The documentation should be a 20 minute or photographic power-point presentation illustrating aspects of inequality between the two communities. Each person in your group should speak 3-5 minutes about some aspect of your project. Look for inequality in resources and/or physical facilities. What are the consequences of widespread inequality in the affected community as you can see? **Select which theoretical perspective will help to explain the documented inequality.**

EXAMPLES

1. Record interviews with citizens in the Imperial Valley and contrast with interviews from undocumented immigrants to illustrate difference in employment/residential/education opportunities. Ask your subject(s) about work opportunities/barriers as well as educational and health access based on citizenship.
2. Document how facilities are gendered. Perhaps the gyms (facilities) for girls and boys vary. Make sure pictures include the conditions of restrooms and/or locker areas, etc...
3. Document neighborhood park amenities. Can you identify differences between low-income neighborhoods and wealthier ones in terms of recreation? Use photographs to document.
4. Document residential neighborhoods. Can you identify differences between varying neighborhoods in the Imperial Valley, El Centro and Brawley? Use photographs to document.
5. Document laundry facilities, grocery stores, and retail businesses and illustrate how they vary along social class lines.

The assignment is worth 50 points

Presentations are evaluated on content and knowledge of information, meeting the 20 minute time requirement, submitting the assignment to the instructor on time, appropriate application of a theory, all group members' participation and communication with each other, eye contact and tone. All students in the class should be prepared to evaluate each group's presentation to help assist in grading.