

**SOC 102: Contemporary Social Problems
Spring 2017**

THE PROFESSOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines contemporary social problems and the process by which competing groups make claims to define phenomena as social problems. Emphasis includes understanding these problems on the societal level, the group level, and from the standpoint of the individual. (C-ID SOCI 115)(CSU, UC)

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. *Define and apply the basic concepts of sociology including culture, status, roles, norms, institutions, social class, race, gender. (ILO2, ILO3, ILO4, ILO5)*
2. *Distinguish different major sociological theoretical perspectives that explain social behavior. (ILO2, ILO4, ILO5)*
3. *Read, summarize and evaluate peer-reviewed empirical studies. (ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4)*
4. *Demonstrate the ability to make oral presentations that are organized, rely on evidence and engage the audience. (ILO1, ILO2, ILO4)*

Course Objectives:

1. Define a social problem and be familiar with the key components of the definition.
2. Identify health care as a social problem and explain what constitutes adequate health care in society.
3. Analyze the extent of mental illness in America and the nature of mental illness as a social problem.
4. Analyze alcohol use and abuse in the United States, as well as other patterns of drug use.
5. Recognize the types of crime and criminals in addition to the conditions and causes of crime.
6. Describe the extent of poverty in American society and identify the relationship.
7. Identify the origins of prejudice and discrimination and the consequences of each.
8. Describe the significance of world population growth and immigration that stress the environment.
9. Describe the changing family structure in America and the effects on society.
10. Analyze the success and failures of the American educational system and compare it to other countries.

THE MAJOR ASSUMPTIONS OF THE COURSE

• We are not simply individuals with complete autonomy and self-determination, but rather social beings who both shape and are shaped by the social world in which we live. (This isn't just an assumption of the course but it is also the primary argument I will be making to you throughout the semester. In the end, you may or may not "buy" the argument but you will be asked to *understand and apply* it.)

• Sociology is an integral part of the kind of general education that makes us thoughtful and effective human beings. A sociological analysis of the world is useful, valid and worth developing.

- Social justice is worth striving for. Therefore, it is important to study social structures that create inequalities of race, class, and gender. By studying these structures, we can figure out how to disrupt them. (You will not be required to agree with this assumption in order to pass the course; however, you will be asked to understand sociological analyses of inequality.)
- Education doesn't have to be painful in order for us to learn. Learning can be fun; in fact, we probably learn best when our minds and bodies are actively engaged in the learning process. (One caveat--we are so used to school being drudgery that we may devalue classroom activities that are enjoyable by assuming that they don't "count." You will be tested on the fun things as well as on the not-so-fun things.)
- Active and peer learning not only improves your critical thinking skills but research shows they improve your grades.

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS COURSE

- Curiosity about social life and an open mind.
- Participate to your fullest ability and in diverse ways.
- Work hard and strive to improve.
- Be respectful of others, yourself, and the professor.

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT FROM ME

- Understand your needs as students.
- Be available, on time, and motivated to help you learn.
- Create clear and engaging class sessions.
- Grade your work with respect and with the highest academic standards.

I hope that by the end of the term, you will have learned to ask questions about the social world. It is the asking of questions, rather than the finding of answers, that is the most joyous part of the sociologist's job.

COURSE TEXTS/MATERIALS

Social Problems (15th Edition) 15th Edition

by [William Kornblum](#) (Author), [Karen T. Seccombe](#) (Author), [Joseph Julian](#) (Author)

ISBN-13: 978-0133974584 ISBN-10: 0133974588

Other reading materials will be posted on Canvas and/or distributed during class.

Stapler: Yes, you read correctly! Invest in a small stapler. Your work won't be accepted unless the pages are stapled together.

HOW THIS COURSE IS ORGANIZED

I believe that students learn best when presented with a variety of teaching strategies. The class will consist of lectures given by me. As much as is possible given the constraints of time and room setup, classroom activities will be organized with a hands-on approach, asking students to engage in some of the day-to-day activities of sociologists (including reading, writing, discussion, analysis, and empirical research).

Students will be expected to read and *digest* course materials; the reading load will be manageable and interesting. Discussions, exercises and demonstrations, debates, small group work, paired work, in-class writing assignments, lectures, and reading will be used to explore the major course themes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grading Based	Total Points	Grading Scale
Quizzes (5) @ 20 points	100	A 400-360 points
Analytical Paper @ 100	100	B 359-320points
Participation	100	C 319-280points
Current Event Journal	100	D 279-240 points
Total Points	400	F 239 and below

PARTICIPATION. Research shows that people learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process.

What counts towards participation?

- **In-class Activities & Lectures.** While introductory courses often utilize a textbook to guide students through the course, for this course the lectures, in-class activities, and short assignments will provide the framework for the course and guide you through the readings. You should plan to attend all classes.
- **The “Box”.** There will be a green box in class where you can put your comments. Be sure to date them and put your name on them. I welcome your comments, your questions, and your criticisms. However, you need to be responsible for them. Don't put anything in the box you aren't willing to sign.
- **Course Preparation.** Students are expected to complete all the required readings and to come to class prepared to participate. We will frequently utilize assigned reading in class. Students are expected to complete all the required readings and to come to class to participate. The university operates under the Carnegie unit rule for academic work, which assumes two hours of study for each hour of lecture/discussion.

Analytical Papers. Writing is a life skill that you will use the rest of your life; therefore, this class provides you some opportunity to write beyond the multiple-choice exams. During the semester, we will be looking at a variety of social problems through popular culture mediums such as films, television, and print. Following the Analytic Framework attached to the syllabus, you will write two 5-7 pages analytical papers about the topic of your choosing—see me to discuss appropriate topics. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to apply the sociological perspective to the materials presented in class and to your own experience.

Please note the following due dates for the papers:

Analytical Paper 1 due **Monday April 10, 2017** at the beginning of class.

Note: Each student's capacity to read, write, and take notes at a college level is assumed. In addition your written work will be graded not only for mastery of course materials, but for clarity, structure, and presentation (e.g., syntax, style and precision of expression, spelling, punctuation, etc.). The Writing Center has been established especially to assist students with writing projects. Contact them early for help with your assignment.

Current Events Journal

The purpose of this assignment, which will continue throughout the semester, is to encourage you to think in a sociological manner and learn to apply sociology and social theory to events in everyday life. Each week of the semester, you will locate at **least one current event item** in popular culture venue

(e.g., newspaper, magazine, television, internet) related to the chapter being discussed each week, and write a short 1-2 page essay. You will *only* need to bring the copy of the current event to class every **Monday** starting the second week of the semester. Keep these media sources (a Xeroxed copy is adequate) and essays together in a folder or three ring binder. You will turn the journal at the end of the semester. It is important to keep your journal current and complete as you will be required to give updates to the class about your current events journal to the class, as well as a final presentation in the last two weeks of class. I will grade your journal based on the depth of your reflections and organization. You can make this journal your own use your creativeness!

Extra Credit. You will have opportunities to earn extra credit throughout the course. I will announce extra credit opportunities during class and if you are absent on the day I make the extra credit announcement do not ask me, as I will not repeat it for you.

OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES

Attendance. The instructor as of the first official meeting of that class will drop a student who fails to attend the first meeting of a class. Should readmission be desired, the student's status will be the same as that of any other student who desires to add a class. It is the student's responsibility to drop or officially withdraw from the class. See [General Catalog](#) for details. Regular attendance in all classes is expected of all students. A student whose continuous, unexcused absences exceed the number of hours the class is scheduled to meet per week may be dropped. Absences attributed to the representation of the college at officially approved events (conferences, contests, and field trips) will be counted as 'excused' absences.

Late work will not be accepted. Exceptions will be made only in cases of severe and documented hardship. You must contact me *as soon as* you realize you will not be able to get an assignment in on time. I will review the legitimacy of your petition and decide whether to accept the late work.

Plagiarism. Any evidence of cheating or present the words or ideas of others as your own will result in a failing grade for that assignment and possibly a failing grade for the course or being expelled from the university. See me if you have any questions about what exactly constitutes plagiarism. Please see our library home page for examples of what is and what is not plagiarism. Please learn and use the American Sociological Association citation style.

The usual rules of classroom etiquette apply.

- If you plan to use a laptop in class, you are required to sit in the front row of the class.
- Late arrivals to class are strongly discouraged. If a late arrival is unavoidable, please enter as quietly and as unobtrusively as you can so that you do not disturb your fellow classmates. If it starts to become a habit (e.g., more than 3 late arrivals), you will lose points off your participation grade. Think of it this way: You are starting the semester with a solid "A" in participation. For each late arrival, talking out of turn, disturbing the class, etc., that "A" gets eroded. For every time you show up to class, participate, and respect others, you sustain that solid "A."
- Do not plan to use time in class to read the newspaper, do crossword puzzles, make your grocery lists, plan your weekend, do homework for other classes, write letters, sleep, flirt, text message friends, or catch up with friends. Mentally "checking out" of class in this way will make it difficult to do well in the course. In addition, I will find it highly annoying. I will sanction such behavior by taking points off your participation grade. If you have a pressing need to do these things during scheduled class time, do yourself, your classmates and me a favor: do not come to class.
- "R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me." Classroom discussion should remain civil. We are here to learn from each other. It is difficult to learn from someone who is yelling at you, rolling her/his

eyes, grumbling under his/her breath, ignoring you, interrupting you, or engaging in other dismissive behaviors. I do not expect that any of us will be tempted to behave so rudely but it doesn't hurt to spell out that these things are out-of-bounds in the classroom.

You are expected to read before coming to class. In order to be an active participant in the classroom, you must come to lecture and section prepared--even if being prepared means simply having questions about what was utterly confusing to you in the readings! I understand that outside responsibilities and the need to "have a life" often get in the way of finishing your reading. For this reason, I have tried to choose readings that are interesting and to assign a reasonable number of pages per week.

How to use office hours. I enjoy office hours because it is time devoted to working with students one-on-one or in small groups.

Examples of how students use office hours are: asking questions about the paper assignments, bringing in paper drafts or just ideas for your paper, sharing personal examples that relate to the class, complaining about something not going well in our class, clarifying your status in class, telling me what learning styles work for you, getting feedback from wanting to know about graduate school, wanting to know about other sociology classes, and wanting to know about career options with a soc major. As you can see, every one of you has a good reason to come to office hours!

Some of the least effective ways to use office hours is asking "what happened in class" because you missed – if this is the case, get the notes from a classmates and come to me with specific questions and comments.

I am here to help you. If you have outside responsibilities or other potential barriers to completing the work for this course, please come talk to me as soon as possible. **Do not wait until it is too late to get help.**

If you have any disability, either temporary or permanent, which might affect your ability to participate fully in the course, please let me know right away. We can figure out what accommodations will be necessary to provide for equitable participation. Any student with a documented disability who may need educational accommodations should notify the instructor or the [Disabled Student Programs and Services](#) (DSP&S) office as soon as possible. The DSP&S office is located in Building 2100, telephone 760-355-6313. Please contact them if you feel you need to be evaluated for educational accommodations.

Don't be a stranger! I would like to learn a little bit about all of you, including your names. Feel free to chat with me before or after class. Visit me during my office hours. Getting to know you is the best part of my job.

**Spring 2017 Contemporary Social Problems
Class Calendar**

Date or Week	Topic	Reading and Due Dates
Week 1 February 13/15	Syllabus & Introduction The Sociological Imagination	Syllabus
Week 2 February 20/22	February 20 NO CLASS HOLIDAY! What is a social problem?	Chapter 1
Week 3 Feb 27-March 1	Population and Immigration	Chapter 13 Quiz #1 -3/1/17 (Bring Scantron)
Week 4 March 6/8	Poverty amid Affluence	Chapter 6
Week 5 March 13/15	Crime and Violence	Chapter 5 **Journal Update **
Week 6 March 20/22	Racism, Prejudice and Discrimination	Chapter 7 Quiz #2 - 3/20/17 (Bring Scantron)
Week 7 March 27/29	Sex and Gender	Chapter 8
Week 8 April 3/5	The Changing Family	Chapter 10 Quiz # 3- 4/10/17 (Bring Scantron)
Week 9 April 10/12	Problems with Education	Chapter 11 Analytical Paper # 1 Due 4/10/17
Week 10 April 17/19	ENJOY SPRING BREAK !!!!	
Week 11 April 24/26	Problems of Health and health care	Chapter 2 ***Journal Update***
Week 12 May 1/3	Problems of Mental Illness and Treatment	Chapter 3 Quiz # 4- 5/3/17 (Bring Scantron)
Week 13 May 8/10	Alcohol and Other Drugs	Chapter 4
Week 14 May 15/17	Problem of Work and The Economy	Chapter 12
May 22/24	May 24 NO CLASS!	Quiz # 5 -May 22, 2017 (Bring Scantron)
Week 15 May 29/31	May 29 NO CLASS HOLIDAY! Current Event Journal Presentations	
Week 16 June 5/7	Current Event Journal Presentations	

NOTE: This course outline should be considered tentative since some minor changes may be made according to the needs of class, changes will be announce during class.