

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Sociology 01:920:103:01
Fall 2015
MW 2:15-3:35pm
Office hours: M, 1-2pm or by appointment
Office: 43 Davison

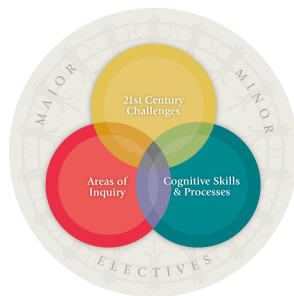
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Classroom: 20 Loree
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The best way to reach me is by email. Please write “Soc 103” in the subject line so that I recognize your email quickly. Don’t forget to sign your name in the email.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We are asked to confront “social problems” every day: those issues, situations, behaviors and ideas, which are perceived and labeled as problematic and for which a solution is seen as possible and necessary. In this class, we will be learning about some of these social problems. But we will also be learning about what constitutes a social problem. Who, for example, defines what a social problem is? Why do some social problems receive so much attention, while others are ignored? And what are the impacts of defining social problems in a particular way? We will examine these questions drawing on case studies of contemporary issues, like inequality, health care, and climate change.

CORE CURRICULUM LEARNING GOALS



This course meets the following core curriculum requirements:

- Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.
- Identify and critically assess ethical issues in social science and history.
- Apply concepts about humans and social behavior to particular questions or situations.

REQUIRED READINGS

1) Joel Best, Social Problems. WW. Norton & Company. 2nd Edition, 2012. ISBN 978-0393918632

2) I have required articles that are available on the course website (sakai). These articles are identified with below with an asterisk.

Textbook is available at the Rutgers University Bookstore and on reserve at Douglass Library.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

LECTURES & READINGS

The course is organized around readings, lectures, films, and current event presentations. Lecture time is used to clarify the reading material, to present additional material related to the readings, screen films, and hold in-class exercises. Lectures are designed to explain and complement the reading materials, but you will be tested on reading material even if we do not cover it in class. Assigned material must be read prior to class. It is highly unlikely that you can do well in the course without attending lectures. Powerpoint presentations will be posted to the course website, but these will only provide an outline of the day's lecture. If you do miss a lecture, please ask a classmate for notes.

This is a large class and I will be lecturing much of the time. I do, however, encourage discussion. My questions during lecture are not rhetorical and I encourage you to participate in class discussion and group work.

Social problems are often controversial and inevitably somebody will voice an opinion that you find disagreeable or even offensive. In this classroom, we will agree to respect each other, even if we don't like what each other has to say about the world. That means that we can disagree, but we must do so respectfully.

The films listed on the syllabus will be shown as time permits. Only films shown in class will be included in test material. If you miss a film during class, you may view the film in the media center at Mabel Smith Library on Douglass Campus. Films will be on hold for one week after the date shown in class.

ASSESSMENTS

Your grade will be determined by your performance on three noncumulative exams throughout the semester and a short book report. The exams will cover all course material, including lecture and reading material, films shown in class, and guest lectures. Please bring pencils and Rutgers RUID to all exams. No additional time will be granted if you are late to exams.

Make up exams will only be allowed under extraordinary circumstances. See below. Cheating will result in a failing grade on the exam and a referral to the appropriate Dean's office. I will hold an online review session before each exam. Time will be announced in class and via email.

Book Report: Sociologists have written thousands of excellent books on a great variety of social problems. In this class, you will read and write a short report on one such book, chosen from a short, curated list. This report will be graded with a check, check plus, check minus system. The sakai gradebook can't handle "checks," so these grades will be translated into sakai as numbers: either 100 (check plus); 80 (check); or 60 (check-

minus). Late papers will not be accepted. **The book report will be due November 13th. Please submit it as an assignment on sakai.**

GRADES

Grade Allocation

Exam 1	300 points
Exam 2	300 points
Exam 3	300 points
Book report	100 points
Total	1000 points

Extra credit: Twenty additional points will be given to students who miss three or fewer classes over the course of the semester. No other extra credit will be given.

Grades (as a percentage)

A	90-100
B+	86-89
B	80-85
C+	76-79
C	70-75
D	61-69
F	60 or below

Final grades are *non-negotiable*.

EXCUSED ABSENCES FROM EXAMS

No makeups will be given unless there are severe, extenuating circumstances. Personal holidays, broken alarm clocks, weddings, jobs, exams in other courses, and the Rutgers bus system are not acceptable reasons for missing an exam. If there are conflicts between exam days and your personal schedule, you should withdraw from the course. There will be no opportunity for extra credit.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend all classes. An attendance sheet will be distributed 15 minutes after class has started. You may not sign the sheet if you come late. Students who leave early will have to sign out and will be counted as absent.

Students who miss 3 or fewer classes will be given a 2% increase (6 points) to their final grade.

COMMUNICATION

Please feel free to ask me questions during and after class. I also encourage you to schedule appointments with me by email. When corresponding by email, please make

sure that you write “Soc 103” and your name in the subject line. If you do not do this, your email may get lost.

Please do not email me at the last minute, as it may take me up to 48 hours to respond to your email.

CLASS CONDUCT AND GROUND RULES

The Department of Sociology encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Thus, behavior that distracts students and faculty is not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, discourteous remarks, and other behaviors specified by individual instructors. Courteous expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is, of course, permitted and strongly encouraged.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I follow the Rutgers University’s policy on academic integrity. You can familiarize yourself with this policy at this website:

http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and I am obligated to report such conduct and violations of this policy to the Undergraduate Director of the Sociology Department and the Dean of your college.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

Sep 2: Introduction to the Course

Sep 8: The Sociological Imagination

*C Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination

*Aziz Ansari, Ch. 1 Searching for Your Soulmate. *Modern Romance*.

Part I What is a Social Problem?

Sep 9: Social Problems as Claims

Best, Chapter 1, pp. 3-28

*Peter Parilla on Cell Phone Use While Driving: Defining a Problem as Worth of Action

Sep 14: Feb 2: Social Construction of Social Problems

*Barry Glassner on Black Men as Criminals and Victims

Part II: Claims

Sep 16: The Anatomy of a Claim

Best, Chapter 2

Sep 21: Analyzing a Claim: “Anyone can make it in America if they work hard enough”

*Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel & Dimed* on the working poor

Sep 23: Film: Waging a Living

*Janny Scott and David Leonhardt on Shadowy Lines that Still Divide

*Robert Perrucci and Earl Wyson on Social Class in America

Sep 28: How is social class maintained?

*Annette Lareau on Unequal Childhoods

Sep 30: **MIDTERM ONE**

Oct 5: Guest speaker – Lisa Smith, Coordinator for Domestic Violence Services, Rutgers Department of Sexual Assault Services and Crime Victim Assistance on Domestic Violence Gender Inequality in the United States

Part III: Claimsmakers

Oct 7: Claimsmakers

Best, Chapter 3

Oct 12: How Do Social Movements Gain Attention and Support?: Gay marriage

*Verta Taylor, et al, Culture and Mobilization: Tactical Repertoires, Same-Sex Weddings and the Impact on Gay Activism

Part IV: Inequality and Discrimination

Oct 14: Gender Wage Gap

*Barbara Risman, “Gender as Structure”

*Karen Cerulo and Janet Ruane, “You’ve come a long way, baby”

Oct 19: Racial Discrimination

Do: Take the demonstration test called “Race ('Black - White' IAT)”

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/>

Complete survey on sakai with your results.

*Kirschenman and Neckerman, “We’d Love to Hire Them, But...: The Meaning of Race for Employers”

*Chris Mooney, "Across America, Whites are Biased and they Don't Even Know It."

Oct 21: Mass Incarceration and #Blacklivesmatter

*Victor Rios, The Hyper-Criminalization of Black and Latino Male Youth in the Era of Mass Incarceration

*Deadly Force in Black and White

Oct 26: Film discussion

For class: Watch “The House we Live In”

Rent from Netflix; Stream from Amazon for \$.99; watch on reserve at

Douglass Library.

Part V: Media

Oct 28: The Media as Claimsmakers

Best, Chapter 5

Nov 2: Natural Disasters and the media

*Eric Klinenberg on Spotlighting Disaster

Nov 4: **MIDTERM 2**

Part VI: Experts as claimsmakers

Nov 9: Experts as Claimsmakers

Best, Chapter 4

Nov 11: Climate Change

*Sheldon Ungar, “Selling Environmental Problems”

Recommended (Not on exam)

*Naomi Oreskes, “How do we know we’re not wrong?”

Film: Merchants of Doubt

Book report due November 13th, 2015

Nov 16: Medicalization and the pharmaceutical industry

*Peter Conrad, “Shifting Engines of Medicalization”

Part VII: Policymaking

Nov 18: Policymaking

Best, Chapter 7

Nov 23: Class cancelled

Nov 30: Health Care – The uninsured, the underinsured

*David Mechanic, “Setting Fair Limits,” *The Truth About Healthcare*

*Kaiser Family Foundation, *The Uninsured: A Primer*

Dec 2: Film: Unnatural Causes

*Laura Abraham, *Mama Might Be Better Off Dead*

Dec 7: Health and inequality

*David Mechanic, “Treating Individuals or Populations,” *The Truth About Healthcare*

*Michael Marmot, *How Will the Financial Crisis Affect Health?*

Dec 9: Homelessness

*Malcolm Gladwell, *Giving Homes to the Homeless*

Final exam

December 18th, 8am-11am, <http://finalexams.rutgers.edu/>