



SOCIOLOGY 1306 US SOCIAL PROBLEMS COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2012

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COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Textbook(s) Required: Social Problems: A Down to Earth Approach by James M. Henslin, Tenth Edition.

Any additional readings will be provided for you.

Course Description:

A critical discussion of the sociological perspectives on studying descriptions, causes, and prevention of social problems such as crime, mental illness, drug abuse, environmental degradation, poverty, terrorism, and declining quality of life in today's world.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to identify what a social problem is, as well as what it is not.
2. Students will learn why social problems occur, with the used of applied sociological theory and critical thinking.
3. Students will learn coping techniques for social problems, meaning that we will explore ways of preventing them, learning from them, and realizing that they are a reality, and can never be completely solved.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic sociological terminology and concepts as they relate to social issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

Attendance

I will take attendance every class period by passing around a roster for you to sign. It is your responsibility to get to class on time to sign the roster before it is taken up. You will receive 2 points for each class you attend. Literally, you will receive points just for showing up; I would advise you to take advantage of this. Do not be late for class. I understand that sometimes being late is unavoidable, but I will not tolerate habitual tardiness. If you cannot make it on time for most of

the semester, then you should reconsider taking this class. Coming in late when class has already begun disrupts other students, so be considerate.

Exams

There will be FOUR exams during the course of the semester. They will be multiple choice and given in class. Each exam will be worth 100 points each and each will have an extra credit opportunity. These exams will require that you bring with you a blue scantron. I will not provide a scantron for you; this is your responsibility. They can be purchased in the campus bookstore. Makeup Exams will only be given in EXTREME situations, such as the death of a family member, or something similar. The replacement exam will be an essay format and students with valid excuses will be allowed to take it in the sociology department at a time the instructor and student agree on.

Assignments

Over the course of the semester, you will be given the opportunity to express your ideas by writing 3-5 page essays concerning the material we cover. There will be a total of 3 of these assignments at 50 points each. Don't miss the opportunity to share your thoughts and to improve your grade at the same time! Not turning in these papers will hurt your grade significantly, so please take them seriously. Papers are due before class begins on the designated days on your course outline. You may turn in a hard copy or via e-college. I will not accept papers via e-mail. If for any reason you are unable to turn your paper in on the day in which it is due, I will accept it the next class day with a point deduction. For example, if the paper is due on Thursday and you do not have it completed, you may turn it in to me by the next Tuesday, and I will deduct 10% of the final grade. After that, I will not accept them.

It should be noted that while I am primarily focused on the content of your papers and mainly critiquing your ideas and application of theories and other resources, I will also be grading grammar and syntax. Being able to write a well-formed and grammatically correct paper will prove to be an invaluable asset for the rest of your college career.

Specifically, these assignments will be:

Paper 1

Once we have discussed what a social problem is, I ask that you analyze an issue going on in our society right now. You may write about poverty, terrorism, or anything that is a social problem. Explain to me how this is a social problem, why it exists, how we can apply sociological theory to it, and what we can do to make it better (I'm not asking you to change the world; only that you TRY to). Remember to be as realistic as possible. This paper should be 3-5 pages long. Always cite every source that you use, in whichever format you are the most comfortable with.

Paper 2

For this assignment, you are expected to pick a topic or story in the mainstream media and write a 3-5 page paper critically analyzing it. This can include a book, movie, cartoon, television show, or others approved by me. The goal is to identify and describe sociological themes found in your book, movie, ect. Students will be graded on the usage of theories and concepts discussed in your text book and in class. Always cite every source that you use, in whichever format you are the most comfortable with.

Paper 3

For this assignment, I ask that you write a 3-5 page essay explaining a topic discussed in your textbook. You may choose any concept in the book, as long as we have already discussed this topic, and as long as it is discussed fully, so that you can write a sufficient explanation. I do not want you to restate what the textbook says, but rather show that you have gained an understanding of the concept. You can do this by using your own words, using examples, and using outside sources to support your main thesis. Always cite every source that you use, in whichever format you are the most comfortable with.

Class Discussions

The class will be largely a lecture format, however, there will be designated days which you will debate issues with each other and I will act primarily as the mediator. You will know when these discussions will take place beforehand. It is not only suggested, but demanded, that students conduct themselves with civility. If anyone becomes hostile or attacks another student, they will be removed and points will be deducted from their final attendance grade. We will be discussing controversial topics, so please treat others with maturity. And also, keep in mind that the point of these discussions is not only for you to express your own opinion, but also to hear the opinions of others, to understand each side of an issue, and to formulate a new opinion or strengthen your previous one. Don't miss this opportunity to interact with your classmates and learn from them by being hostile or shut down to new ideas. I expect each and every one of you to approach these topics with openness. You'll miss out if you don't!

Each discussion will be worth a total of 20 points (10 for your participation, and 10 for the writing assignment that will follow). After each discussion, I will assign a question relevant to our discussion topic for you to answer. I expect these to only be one page, and they may be handwritten, as long as they are legible.

Extra Credit

At the end of each test, I will leave one open-ended short answer essay question for you to answer for extra points added to your test grade. You can earn two points for each question. There are ample opportunities for you to earn your points with the attendance policy, the number of tests, papers, and with class discussions, so this will be the **ONLY** form of extra credit I will allow. There will be

no opportunities to do extra work for more points, so don't ask. If you take your tests and assignments seriously, then you won't need it anyway.

Grading

Exams (4 @ 100 pts each)	400 pts
Papers (3 @ 50 pts each)	150 pts
Discussions (4 @ 20 pts each)	80 pts
Attendance	50 pts
Total	680 pts

Grading Scheme

612 - 680 pts =	A
544 - 611 pts =	B
476 - 543 pts =	C
408 - 475 pts =	D
0 - 408 pts =	F

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

This is primarily a face-to-face course. Course handouts, instruction, assignments, powerpoint lectures, and study guides will be posted on ecollege as a supplement rather than a requirement of the course. In order to access ecollege, students will need the following:

- Internet Connections-high speed recommended
- Word processor (Microsoft Word 2003 and newer)

All students should have access to email, as periodic announcements and reminders will be made using this format.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

Ecollege technical concerns: Please contact the ecollege HelpDesk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by sending an email directly to helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. You may also reach the HelpDesk by calling (866) 656-5511, or through online chat by clicking on the "Live Support" tab within your ecollege course.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

The most effective way to communicate with me will be to come to class. I will be in my office during posted office hours and by appointment. Outside of office hours and class time, you may contact me through email. I check it often, so please don't hesitate to email me.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Academic Honesty

Cheating and Plagiarism: Every student is expected to do his/her own work. Plagiarism (the use of other's words, phrases, and ideas in your own writing without giving credit to the original author) is a form of cheating and not only violates academic ethical standards, but it is against the law.

Any student found to be in violation of University rules will receive an "F" on the exam or assignment involved. ALL instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Department Head. This office may choose to pursue further disciplinary action through the University.

Grades of Incomplete

I do not assign grades of incomplete in this course. All coursework must be handed in to me by December 7th. Your grade will be assigned based on the points you have earned from all completed work at that time. It is your responsibility to finish assignments prior to their due dates or to make alternate arrangements for their completion. Do not assume that I can or will extend due dates or course requirements for your individual needs or preferences. I will not drop any student from this course. If you feel this course is not for you, please take the necessary steps to remove yourself from the class. Simply not attending in hopes that I will remedy the situation for you will not happen. You are responsible for the consequences stemming from either class or not coming to class.

Extra Credit

From this syllabus it is very clear as to the number of assignments and the possible points to be attained in the course. You begin earning points on day one. Do not rely on friends' notes or on the professor to explain what the reading are about. It is your responsibility to read, listen, and comprehend the material. If you do not understand a concept or issue, please ask me to clarify, or stay after class for further elaboration.

I will not curve the grades of a class to conform to an artificial bell curve, so requests to do so will fall on deaf ears. I will assist the class by means of lectures, discussions, study guides, and reviews, but I do not manipulate your test score, drop a test score, or inflate your test score so that it will be more to your liking. An improvement of grades will come from your studying efforts and not from your instructor's generous grading, so please do not expect or ask for more, or extra credit points in the course.

Decorum

I ask that you please give this class your full attention for the entirety of it. Phone calls, texts, and talking to others can wait until after class. Please either turn your cellphones off, or put them on silent (NOT vibrate) before coming to class. All other electronic devices also need to be set to silent.

Because we will be dealing with controversial contemporary social issues, an open mind and a mature attitude are important requirements for this course. Students are expected to be polite and courteous at all times. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated.

University Specific Procedures:

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148**

StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu
[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct* from *Student Guide Handbook*).

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

I reserve the right to make changes to dates and/or assignments. Prior advance notice will be given in class. You are expected to read the relevant chapters before each class.

Week	Day	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	T	8/28/2012	Introduction to Class, Review of Syllabus	
	R	8/30/1012	Chapter 1: How Sociologists View Social Problems	
2	T	9/4/2012	Chapter 1 continued	
	R	9/6/2012	Chapter 2: Interpreting Social Problems	
3	T	9/11/2012	Discussion	
	R	9/13/2012	Exam 1	Turn in Discussion Question
4	T	9/18/1012	Chapter 3: Social Problems related to Sexual Behavior	
	R	9/20/2012	Chapter 4: Alcohol and Other Drugs	
5	T	9/25/2012	Chapter 5: Violence in Society: Rape and Murder	Paper 1 due
	R	9/27/2012	Chapter 6: Crime and Criminal Justice	
6	T	10/2/2012	Discussion	
	R	10/4/2012	Exam 2	Turn in Discussion Question
7	T	10/9/2012	Chapter 7: Economic Problems	
	R	10/11/2012	Chapter 7 continued	
8	T	10/16/2012	Chapter 8:Racial-Ethnic Relations	
	R	10/18/2012	Chapter 8 continued	
9	T	10/23/2012	Article TBA (Religion)	
	R	10/25/2012	Chapter 9: Inequalities of Gender and Sexual Orientation	
10	T	10/30/2012	Chapter 10: Medical Care: Physical and Mental Illness	Paper 2 due
	R	11/1/2012	Discussion	
11	T	11/6/2012	Exam 3	Turn in Discussion Question
	R	11/8/2012	Chapter 11: The Changing Family	
12	T	11/13/2012	Chapter 11 continued	

	R	11/15/2012	Chapter 12: Urbanization and Population	
13	T	11/20/2012	TBA	
	R	11/22/2012	Thanksgiving-University Closed	
14	T	11/27/2012	Chapter 13: The Environmental Crisis	
	R	11/29/2012	Chapter 14: War, Terrorism, and the Balance of Power	
15	T	12/4/2012	Chapter 14 continued	Paper 3 due
	R	12/6/2012	Discussion	
FINALS WEEK		12/8/2012- 12/14/2012	Final Exam	Turn in Discussion Question