Sociology 1306.001 Social Problems  
Spring 2013

Instructor: Cori Holden, B.S.—Graduate Assistant Teacher (GAT)
Office Location: Ferguson Social Science Building 206
Class Time & Location: TR 9:30AM-10:45AM @ BA346
Office Hours: TR 8AM-9:15AM & 11AM-12PM; other times by appointment
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Materials—Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook Required:
2] Reserve reading (which will be posted on ecollege and/or handed out in class)

Course Description:
A critical discussion of the sociological perspective 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] To enable students to learn about social problems by using the “sociological imagination.” That is, to facilitate students to understand that social problems are not simply a problem of individuals, but embedded within a larger social context and environment.
2] Students will explain and describe how social problems are complex, and there are many connected, intersecting problems undergirding any one issue (for example, high school dropout rates are related not just to school performance but to race, social class, gender, family circumstances, etc). So just as there are no simple problems, there are no simple solutions.
3] To understand that a student’s social position influences and biases their view of a social problem. In this course, a student will view a social problem from a number of different perspectives that differ and challenge their own viewpoint.
4] Students will apply, write, and discuss sociological concepts and theories to analyze these problems rather than relying solely on personal opinions and values.
5] To discuss current strategies to combat social problems as well as alternative policy
direction that may or may not be pursued.
6] Students will have an opportunity to, through discussing and sharing ideas, evaluate and
critique existing problems and their solutions, as well as provide a linkage between the
abstract theory of sociology and its real world, practical applications; thus demonstrating
“critical thinking” skills.

Course Format:
The textbook will be used to provide definitions and descriptive background information
of each topic discussed. Additional provided readings, lectures, discussions, videos, writing
assignments, and other materials will be utilized for application and critical thinking. I highly
recommend that students take notes on all reading assignments. This will help you prepare for
class discussions and also keep the readings separate in your mind. The following questions will
help to critically read each assignment:
1] What is the main idea, point, or argument of the reading?
2] List three important facts or sources of evidence to support the main idea
3] What concepts or ideas from class lecture are also discussed in this
4] List any new terms or concepts introduced in the article with a brief definition.
5] Are there any problems or points I disagree with in the main point of the reading? That is,
are there alternative explanations or theories that could also explain these phenomena?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Requirements:
1] Exams
   a. There will be FOUR exams during the semester. The format of each exam will be
      multiple choice, true/false, matching, and short answer.
   b. Each exam will be 100 points.
   c. The final exam will be TBA. The final will NOT be comprehensive. The format
      of the final exam will be similar to the three exams given earlier in the semester.
   d. Exams will NOT be accepted late for any reason. See “Makeup Exams” under the
      Course and University Procedures section.
2] Papers
   a. Over the course of the semester, students will take an active part in the class by
      applying lectures and discussions to the real world. A total of TWO major papers
      will be assigned throughout the semester.
   b. Papers will be turned in via ecollege. Papers will be due before class begins on the
day that they are due. I will not accept them without penalty after the class begins
on the day they are due. NO assignments will be accepted more than two days late
(this does NOT mean two class days; this is two calendar days). The late penalty
will be a deduction of 5% from the project’s original value.
   c. Students will not be allowed to do any extra paper for extra credit, nor will they
be allowed to re-do any of the papers once handed in.
   d. The papers are worth 50 points each.
3] Attendance and Participation
   a. Regular class attendance is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of materials covered during the semester. While you can borrow another student’s notes, there is no way to gain all needed information without regular attendance. Therefore, attendance will be taken and recorded regularly. Points will be earned for each class attended.
   b. Attendance is worth up to 60 points of your grade.
      Note: Please come to class on time! If you arrive after attendance has been taken, it is your responsibility to come sign the attendance sheet. Lateness reflects a “don’t care” attitude, and also is extremely disruptive. Repeated tardiness will not be tolerated and will show in your attendance grade. If you cannot come to the class on time, DROP THE COURSE!
   c. Participation in class discussions is not optional. Attention will be paid to those who speak as well as to those who do not. Points will be awarded on perceived effort, integration of theoretical ideas, and a clear sociological understanding of the issues discussed during lecture. Emotional responses are NOT sufficient nor are “Just because” nor “I was raised to think…. ” Responses should be thoughtful and coherent. Name calling or rudeness will NOT be tolerated! Participation throughout the semester will be worth up to 40 points in total.

4] Extra Credit
   a. Don’t ask. There won’t be any. There are two types of students who want to do extra credit: those who want an even higher A and those who are failing. In either case, extra credit makes no sense. Put in the time, energy, and effort on the regular work and you will not need any extra credit.

5] Grading:
   a. A total of 600 points are attainable in this course. The breakdown of points is as follows:
      Four tests @ 100 points each =400 points
      Two major papers @ 50 points each =100 points
      Attendance = 60 points
      Participation = 40 points
      600 points

   This translates into the approximate point totals for each final grade:

   A  540+ points [90%-100%]
   B  480-539 points [80%-89%]
   C  420-479 points [70%-79%]
   D  360-419 points [60%-69%]
   F  359 points and below [59% and less]
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:
  o Internet Connections—high speed recommended
  o 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 1-866-656-5511, 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 the professor will be to come to class. I will be in my office during posted office hours and by appointment. Email is the best way to reach me outside of class as I check it daily.

I expect each of you to be active and thoughtful participants within our classroom and learning community. You are to expect the same of me. This includes completing our readings related to the course topics, individual written assignments, and completion of exams.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

I. Course Specific Procedures:
   a. Makeup Exams
      I understand that situations that cannot be predicted or avoided will happen. If an exam is missed for any reason, the student will then be required to take a makeup exam during finals week that will be comprehensive. Students can only miss ONE exam per semester.
   b. Academic Honesty
      Cheating and Plagiarism: It should go without saying that 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! Do not do it! At minimum 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.
c. **Grades of Incomplete**

I DO NOT ASSIGN GRADES OF INCOMPLETE IN THIS COURSE. All coursework must be handed in to me by May 10th. 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 I can or will extend due dates or course requirements for your individual needs or preferences. I DO NOT DROP STUDENTS FROM MY COURSES. If you feel Sociology 1306 is not the course 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 coming to class or not coming to class.

d. **Extra Credit and Curving**

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.

e. **Attendance**

If you are late, it is your responsibility to make sure you sign the attendance sheet. Do not sign in a friend as if they were present when they were not. I will consistently check signatures for consistency and there will be serious consequences if I discover this practice occurring.

f. **Decorum**

I ask that you choose to come to class, and that you give me your undivided attention for 75 minutes—phone calls, texts, and gossip can certainly wait until after class. If you would rather participate in these activities instead of listen to lecture and participate in class discussion, please do not bother to come to class.

All cellular phones, and other electronic devices should be turned off or set to silent (not vibrate) before entering the classroom. Also, DO NOT FALL ASLEEP IN MY CLASSROOM! This is not nap time 😊

**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.**
II. University Specific Procedures
   a. 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@tamuc.edu

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

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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 assigned material prior to class!

*The tentative course calendar will be made available to students on ecollege on the first day of class.*