



**Summer 2014 Syllabus
U. S. Drugs and Society
SOC 350.01W**

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Materials- Textbook

Drugs, Society, and Criminal Justice (3rd Edition) by Charles F. Levinthal

Course Description:

Our focus is the social reality of drug use, and drug users, within contemporary society. This focus includes a historical analysis of the social construction of drug use, drug users, abuse, and addiction. We will be investigating the complex relationships between individual and group behavior, and social structure. Central concepts such as social learning, labeling, power, and inequality; as well as socio-cultural definitions of drugs, behavior, and the people who use drugs will be the tools of our analysis. Special attention will be given to the complex legal history surrounding drug use, the link between drugs and crime, the impact of the medicalization of human behavior, and varying perspectives on "doing something about drugs."

Course Objectives:

The basic objective of this course is to provide a comprehensive survey of the development of sociological theories and analyses of drug use, focusing on images of drug use and the drug user as social constructs rather than as an intrinsically pathological behavior or identity. An additional objective of this course is to survey the current information and research on selected categories of drugs and the socially constructed reality that surrounds their use in contemporary society in order to understand a) the socio-cultural based definitions of drugs and b) the individual, group, and social structural dimensions of drug using behavior. This will include an analysis of the implications of these definitions and relationships for social policy and social control (legislation, prevention and treatment). These issues will be analyzed within the shifting legal and medical definitions that permeate the discussion of drug use in modern society.

Specifically, I expect you to:

1. Articulate the variety of social, individual, and bio-chemical factors that impact definitions of drugs, as well as how these factors influence a drug's effect.
2. Understand the process of the social construction of drug use as a social problem.
3. Develop a familiarity with the various biological, psychological, and sociological theories that seek to explain drug using behavior; including an analysis of their basic assumptions, limitations, and implications for social policy.
4. Be familiar with trends, patterns, and types of drug use in society.
5. Display knowledge of the various drugs, both legal and illegal, used in American society, as well as the social reality that surrounds their use.
6. Develop an analysis of the relationship between drugs, crime and socio-cultural definitions of drug using behavior.
7. Develop an analysis of the various social responses to drug use, displaying an understanding of the emergence of these responses being linked to particular cultural and social structural shifts.

Course requirements:

There are two exams in this course and you will be given 24 hours to complete each one. Each exam is worth **30 points**. There are also four threaded discussions which you will have to respond to. I will start a thread for a specific topic and you are required to comment on that post at least once and also respond to another student's post at least twice. I will start a thread the first week of class and you will have approximately one week (see schedule below) to participate. **Important: These posts must be thoughtful and written in a grammatically correct manner.** I do not set a length requirement for posts, but if it exceeds 500 words it is probably too long. Similarly, if your post is made up of a sentence or two, it is doubtful you have put much thought into it. Statements such as "I agree with her" are not a valuable contribution to a discussion. Each threaded discussion is worth **10 points**.

Schedule:

This schedule is **tentative** and I reserve the right to modify it, with notice, as needed during the semester. All alterations to the schedule will be announced by email and it is your responsibility to be aware of these changes. Important dates are listed below:

Week One	First day of class—Syllabus and course introduction Chapter 1, and 2, thread post number 1
Week Two	Chapters 3, 4, and 5, and thread post number 2
Week Three	First Exam (Wednesday June, 18) Chapters 7, and 8, and thread post number 3
Week Four	Chapters 9 and 10, and thread post number 4

Week Five

Second Exam (Tuesday July, 1), and Chapters 11 and 12

Make-up Policy:

Any make-up tests are allowed **only at the discretion of the instructor** and immediate notification from the student is imperative. **Note:** University policy does allow excused absences in certain situations such as: school sponsored events, jury duty, and military service. All of these excuses require proper documentation. Family emergencies, illnesses, births, deaths, incarceration or other events and calamities are **NOT** excused absences.

Academic Integrity and Dishonesty:

I take plagiarism and other forms of cheating very seriously. *All the work you do in this course is to be your own.* I encourage you to study with friends, but be sure that everything you turn in is your own, original work. Regarding references, anytime you use someone else's work and do not accompany it with a proper citation to the author, you have committed plagiarism regardless of whether or not you intended to do so. It is also inappropriate to use your own work for multiple classes and any such actions will be treated just like plagiarism. Do not copy anything off the internet, out of books/articles, from friends, or from any other source or person. This includes direct cutting-and-pasting, summarizing or quoting without citing, and changing the original wording just enough so that you think you can pass it off as your own. **If I find that you have engaged in plagiarism, you will receive an F in the entire course and I reserve the right to take further disciplinary action(s) at the university level. Do Not Do It!**

Students with Disabilities:

I am committed to assisting students with documented disabilities to succeed in this course. 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

Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Statement on Student Behavior:

As stated in the student handbook: “All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” (See Student Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, for more information)