



**SOCIOLOGY 1306.901 U.S. SOCIAL PROBLEMS
COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2014**

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Class time: MW 12:36-2:15 PM
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I am always available via email

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Textbook(s) Required:

Macionis, John J. 2010. Social Problems (4th edition). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Additional Readings will be given to you via ecollege.

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 the United States and 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 use 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.
5. Look at current research and mass media information on particular social problems.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance

Routine attendance is highly encouraged. As a college student, you will be responsible for all materials covered in lectures, discussions, and assigned readings.

Participation: If you are not in class, it is difficult to participate. There are different types of learning styles: hands-on learning, visual, auditory, ect. We will attempt to utilize as many as possible.

Exams 3 (100 points each)

There will be Three exams during the course of the semester. They will be multiple choice and given in class. Each exam is worth 100 points each.

Writing 3(100 points each)

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 100 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 DROPBOX. I will not accept papers via email. 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 50 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 50% of the final grade. After that, I will not accept them. It should be noted that I am primarily focused on the content of your papers and mainly critiquing your ideas and application of theories and other resources.

You are allowed to opt out of one of the following three papers. When opting out, you still need to turn in a paper via DROPBOX stating your full name and the paper topic you are dropping.

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.

Social Problems NPR Article Analysis and Journal—November 19, 2014

During the first several weeks of the course, you should listen or read NPR articles about U.S. social problems. You are responsible for writing sociological analysis using the framework provided in this syllabus, over 8 articles.

Each article should be about 2-4 pages double spaced. Your work should be turned in as a hard copy in a folder and organized according to date of article analysis.

Attach all of the appropriate URLs and proper citations in your reference page(s). This counts as 200 points of final grade.

Guest Speaker Series—

We will have guest speaker(s) throughout the semester. The guest speakers represent various civic groups and or political groups. Each speaker will bring awareness of different social problems and how their organization approaches the issues.

You are responsible for being prepared and being an engaging listener by asking questions and discussing with the speaker.

Scavengers Hunt

Two times this semester we will gather in table groups and search for current news pertaining to the designated topic. This is worth 50 points each. The table group will locate, read, and fill out a web analysis for each find. Each table group is in charge of locating 3 websites and turning in three analyses. Thirty minutes will be given for sharing finds. Scavengers Hunt will be graded for completion. 10 points for each analysis and 20 points for articulating findings.

Group Discussions and Planning

Group Discussions and Planning (GDP) revolve around having teams' discussions to speak about a given social problem and develop a strategy to aid understanding of the condition. The GDP will start a few classes and be discussed aloud for thirty minutes of the end of class. You will follow the general analytical framework to structure your discussions.

Semester Project—

You will select one topic, issue, or problem to investigate utilizing the course materials, relevant external research, and the Analytic Framework. You are encouraged to gather data first-hand, as well as to utilize secondary sources.

Agency Interview: Interview at least two different agencies which are handling the same social problem. You should determine their history and organization, client profiles, services provided, staff characteristics, successes, current concerns, and controversies. Analyze the information using the Analytic Framework with a focus on solutions. Compare and contrast the agencies.

Survey Research: Design or replicate and execute a survey to test attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of people toward a social problem. Incorporate the Analytic Framework.

All students must have topic approval before undertaking it. A one page, double spaced proposal of project shall be turned in on 10/1. Each student will share an informal, oral summary of his/her final project with the class. The final write-up is due not later than the scheduled last day of the class. The write-up should be 4- 6 pages excluding tables, references. This counts as 200 points of final grade.

We will reserve two days at the end of the semester for presentations and further analysis at the classroom level of your social problem. Your presentation may include, homemade video, handouts, a Powerpoint presentation collage, or whatever you feel necessary for helping others to learn and understand your social problem. You should plan on “presenting” your social problem to the class by standing in front of class and guiding everyone through your social problem. You will have up to 15 minutes for your presentation. Please address the following in your presentation:

City Council Meeting—Extra 100 points

One of the task this semester is to learn how politics and society are related. For extra credit, you are to attend a Melissa, Texas City Council Meeting. You have the responsibility to be politically active. Politically active does not mean you must run for office. It means you are active with and in your environment. Melissa, Texas holds its City Council Meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6pm. You must write a double spaced 4-5 page reflection on the evenings subjects using the Analytical Framework provided in this syllabus. You will also need a major's or city representative's signature.

Analytic Framework

- 1) What is the problem? Specific major problem, sub-problems;
- 2) Analyze the problem.
 - a) What is the history or background, the facts?
 - b) What are the manifest and latent functions of this problem?
 - c) What individuals, groups, organizations, social institutions are involved?
 - d) What values, beliefs, norms, and issues by whom are involved?
 - e) What stand and (political) ideology are taken by whom?
 - f) What social factors (causes) are involved by level? (Who says so? research done?)
 - g) What sociological perspectives are involved? (Theory).
 - h) What stage in the life course of a social movement is the problem in? (Macionis pp. 7).
 - I) What solutions are proposed and by whom (individuals, groups, perspectives)? Which causes are addressed and which are not?
 - j) What solutions have been tried? Research support!
 - k) What additional problems do the solutions raise?

What conclusion(s) can you draw about the problem? What are your reactions now that you have analyzed the social problem? What do you think would be the best solution? Why?

Grade Ruberic						
Exams	3 X(100)=300 points					
Writing Assignments	3X(100)=300 points					
NPR Articles	200 Points					
Scavengers Hunt	2X (50)=100 points					
Semester Project	1X(200)=200 points					
	1350 points					
A=1350-1080	C=808-538	F=266 Below				
B=1079-809	D=537-267					

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 our 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.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

E college 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 college course.

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@tamuc.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).

All Materials Shall Be Read Before the Assigned Class Date
Read the Chapter (under Topic) before coming to class.
All extra readings will be given to you.
Subject to Change

WEEK ONE
August 25

Introduction/Group Social Problems List

August 27
Read: Macionis Chapter 1
Mills “The Promise”

WEEK TWO
September 3

Read: Macionis Chapter 2
Read: Ehrenreich “Nickel and Dime”

WEEK THREE

September 8

Read: Macionis Chapter 3

September 10

Read: McIntosh “White Privilege”
Watch: TEDX
Review: Policies
GDP

WEEK FOUR

September 15
Read: Macionis Chapter 4

September 17
Watch: Tough Guise2

Writing Assignment ONE Due

WEEK FIVE

September 22

GUEST SPEAKER- RICHARD AMORY (NORTH TEXAS FOOD BANK)

September 24

EXAM ONE

WEEK SIX

September 29

Read: Macionis Chapter 5

October 1

GDP

SEMESTER PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE

WEEK SEVEN

October 6

SCAVANGER HUNT ONE

October 8

Read: Macionis Chapter 6

J L Simmons Deviant List

WEEK EIGHT

October 13

Read: Macionis Chapter 8

Read: Macionis Chapter 9

Read: Rosenhan: "On Being Sane in Insane Places"

WRITING ASSIGNMENT TWO

WEEK NINE

October 20

Read: Macionis Chapter 10

GDP

October 22

Read: Macionis Chapter 11

WEEK TEN

October 29

Read: Macionis Chapter 12
GDP

WEEK ELEVEN

November 3

Work Day

November 5

EXAM TWO

WEEK TWELVE

November 10

SCAVENGER HUNT 2

November 12

Read: Maconis Chapter 13

WEEK THIRTEEN

November 17

Read: Macionis Chapter 15

November 19

NPR Articles are Due

WEEK FOURTEEN

November 24-26 (Holiday)

WEEK FIFTEEN

December 1

Work Day

WRITING ASSIGNMENT TRHEE

December 3

EXAM THREE

WEEK SIXTEEN

December 8-10

Presentations