Instructor: Rachael Schmid  
Class time: MW 12:36-2:14 PM  
Email: rachaelschmid@hotmail.com  
I am always available via email

## COURSE INFORMATION

### Materials Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Textbook(s) Required:  
Additional Readings will be given to you via ecollage.

### 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, etc. 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 2 (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 2 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 Wednesday and you do not have it completed, you may turn it in to me by the next Monday, 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.

The papers are evaluated using the grading rubric provided in this syllabus.

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, I ask that you write a 3-5 page discussing your research into one civic group. You may choose any organization. Include the following: 1) What is the civic group? 2) What is the social problem? 3) Highlights of the civic group 4) Location of the civic group 5) Why is this civic group important to you? 6) Incorporate one theory to explain your perspective of the civic group’s purpose. 7) What is the group’s political stance?

Include a reference page.

Semester Project: There is an App for this!

During the first several weeks of the course, you should listen or read current (this year, this fall 2015 semester) NPR articles about U.S. social problems. You are responsible for writing an analysis using the provided rubric. Remember to use one theory (structural functional, social conflict or symbolic interactionism).

Your chosen articles do not need to pertain to one social problem or use one theory. 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 400 points of final grade.

First four articles are due on September 30, 2015 at the first of class. Final product is due on December 1, 2015.

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.

Group Discussions and Planning 5 (100 points= 500 points)

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 take allotted class and be discussed aloud for twenty minutes of the end of class. You will follow the four stages in the life course of a social movement on page 7 of Macionis to frame your group’s ideas.
Include the social change process, include all possible information about existing social problem, include any existing laws pertaining to the group’s target social problem, and incorporate one theory to explain your groups’ ideas about your group’s chosen social problem topic.

The GDP will be graded using the grading rubric found in this syllabus.

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.

Melissa City Hall
3411 Barker Avenue
Melissa, TX 75454-9501
Call (972) 838-2520
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Weak</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thesis</strong></td>
<td>Thesis is debatable and clearly presented in the opening and concluding</td>
<td>Thesis is debatable and is evident in the argument, but is not clearly</td>
<td>Thesis is unclear, and it takes work for the reader to fish it out of</td>
<td>There is no evident thesis.</td>
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<td>10 pts</td>
<td>sections of the paper.</td>
<td>stated.</td>
<td>the text. Or, thesis is self-evident and not debatable.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Argumentation</strong></td>
<td>Argument is presented clearly and logically. Logical points build</td>
<td>Argument is presented clearly and logically, but points do not necessarily</td>
<td>Argument is rambling, and there are contradictions left unaddressed.</td>
<td>There is no discernable argument, or no alternative interpretation is presented.</td>
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<td>20 pts</td>
<td>directly upon the thesis and prior points.</td>
<td>build on each other. Counter arguments are addressed, but many are left</td>
<td>Counter arguments may be presented, but are left unaddressed.</td>
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<td>Counter arguments are addressed, dismantled, and folded into the main</td>
<td>hanging or are dealt with inadequately.</td>
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<td>argument of the paper.</td>
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<td><strong>Originality</strong></td>
<td>Argument is original and creative. Goes substantially beyond points</td>
<td>Argument is strong and interesting, but plays it safe and does not push</td>
<td>Argument is expository rather than analytical. Concepts are</td>
<td>Argument is weak and incoherent.</td>
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<td>20pts</td>
<td>raised in lecture and readings. Concepts are related to each other in</td>
<td>boundaries. Concepts are put in conversation with each other.</td>
<td>described, but dealt with separately and not explicitly related to</td>
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<td>interesting and creative ways.</td>
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<td>each other.</td>
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<td><strong>Use of Evidence</strong></td>
<td>Each logical point is backed up by one or more examples. Evidence is</td>
<td>Each logical point is backed up by one or more examples. Evidence</td>
<td>Several points of the argument are left without evidence. Evidence</td>
<td>A few pieces of evidence are thrown in here or there, but not used to defend the main argument.</td>
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<td>20 pts</td>
<td>strong and sufficient to advance the argument. Potential counterarguments</td>
<td>advances the argument, but it may not be sufficient. Potential</td>
<td>is insufficient.</td>
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<td>are accounted for and addressed with evidence.</td>
<td>counterarguments are accounted for, but may not be sufficiently</td>
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<td><strong>Application of Readings</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates solid understanding of the major themes of the course, using</td>
<td>Concepts are defined, but the author does not demonstrate a solid</td>
<td>Course readings are used. Concepts are left undefined, or poorly</td>
<td>Paper mentions course readings, but there is little demonstration of how the paper relates to</td>
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<td>/Concepts DEMONSTRATES</td>
<td>readings and lectures to define concepts. Argument is placed within the</td>
<td>understanding of the major themes of the course relevant to the</td>
<td>defined. Little broader framework is used.</td>
<td>the course.</td>
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<td>30 pts</td>
<td>broad discussions outlined in the course.</td>
<td>argument.</td>
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<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Points</td>
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<td>Writing Assignment</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>NPR Articles</td>
<td>400</td>
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<td>Group Discussions</td>
<td>500</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1400</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Possible Extra Credit</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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**Grading Scale**:  
- A = 1400-1040  
- B = 1039-779  
- C = 778-518  
- D = 517-257  
- F = 256 Below
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@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).
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 24

Introduction

August 26
Read: Macionis Chapter 1
Mills “The Promise”

WEEK TWO
August 31

Read: Macionis Chapter 2

September 2
Read: Ehrenreich “Nickel and Dimed”
Website: Living Wage Calculator

GDP ONE

WEEK THREE

September 9
Read: Macionis Chapter 5

WEEK FOUR
September 14
Read: Macionis Chapter 3
Read: McIntosh “White Privilege”
Watch: TEDX

September 16

Watch: Film “Crash”
Discussion Questions

Writing Assignment ONE Due
WEEK FIVE

September 21
Review: Macionis Chapter 5
GUEST SPEAKER- Amanda Collin County Committee on Aging

September 23
EXAM ONE

WEEK SIX

September 28
Read: Macionis Chapter 7
GDP TWO

September 30
Film: Tough Guise
First Four NPR Articles Due

WEEK SEVEN

October 5
Read: Macionis Chapter 6
J L Simmons Deviant List

October 7
“Sidewalk” Duneier
Discussion Questions

WEEK EIGHT

October 12
Read: Macionis Chapter 8

October 14
Read: Macionis Chapter 9

WEEK NINE

October 19
Read: Macionis Chapter 10
GDP THREE

October 21
Read: Macionis Chapter 11
Writing Assignment TWO DUE
WEEK TEN

October 28
Read: Macionis Chapter 12

WEEK ELEVEN

November 2
Slated Guest Speaker Collin County Advocacy Center
If no guest speaker, we will look into the social problem of child abuse.

November 4
EXAM TWO

WEEK TWELVE

November 9
GDP FOUR

November 11
Read: Macionis Chapter 13

WEEK THIRTEEN

November 16
Read: Macionis Chapter 15

November 18
NPR Work Day

WEEK FOURTEEN
November 24-26 (Holiday)

WEEK FIFTEEN

December 1
Read: Macionis Chapter 16
Semester Project NPR Articles are Due
December 3
GDP FIVE

WEEK SIXTEEN

December 8
EXAM THREE