

Case Western Reserve University
Division of Social Sciences
Course Syllabus for SOCI 113, Social Problems
Th 8:30am-9:45am, Clark 309
Fall 2009

Instructor: Christine Schneider

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Office Hours: Before or after class as needed, via email 7 days a week, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Catalog Description:

Analysis of contemporary American social problems such as race, poverty, drugs, sex, violence, crime and delinquency. Sociological approach used to understand underlying factors and history of problems, and to evaluate individual and societal solutions.

Credit Hours: 3

OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES:

Upon satisfactory completion of SOC 113– Social Problems, the student should be able to perform the following outcomes and supporting objectives:

- A. Apply major sociological theories and concepts to analyze the scope of social problems.
 1. Analyze micro, macro, and mid-level social issues.
 2. Explore ways in which social problems are identified and become accepted in society.
 3. Analyze the link between personal problems and public issues.
 4. Compare and contrast specific social problems in cross-cultural context.
 5. Describe the advantages and limitations of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of social problems.
 6. Describe the historical and contemporary forms and functions of social problems.
 7. Describe the impact of technology and the post-industrial society on the study of social problems.
 8. Apply sociological research methods to the study of social problems.
 9. Write critical analysis of at least one social problem and the societal attempts to resolve the problem.
 10. Use computer technology to assess and manipulate information.
- B. Evaluate local, state, national and cross-cultural solutions to social problems in the United States.
 1. Discuss why attempts at social control have generally been insufficient.
 2. Discuss the role of diversity in the identification and approach to social problems.
 3. Describe the limitations of research and data in the field.
 4. Analyze the social, ethical, and moral issues related to social problems, social control, and social engineering.
 5. Discuss the manifest and latent consequences of various attempts to resolve specific social problems in society.
 6. Analyze the impact of social structure in generating social problems.

7. Discuss the process through which social problems are identified, legitimized, and addressed.
8. Analyze the influence of social movements and social policies on maintaining and/or eliminating social problems.

COURSE CONTENT

- A. Sociology and the study of social problems
 - a. Defining social problems
 - b. History of social problems and their study
 - c. Interdisciplinary approaches to studying social problems
- B. Theoretical explanations of social problems
 - a. Structural-functionalism
 - b. Conflict theory
 - c. Symbolic interactionism
 - d. Cross-cultural perspectives
- C. Social scientific research methods to study social problems
 - a. The research process
 - b. Limitations of research and data in the field
- D. Mechanisms of social control and their efficacy
 - a. Government regulation
 - b. Government protection
 - c. Social order
 - d. Social control
 - e. Economy and work changes in structure
- E. Values, social policies, programs, and dilemmas
 - a. Cultural values' influence on definition and responses to social problems
 - b. Social activism and social movements
 - c. Cross-cultural solutions
- F. Problems of inequality, intragroup, and intergroup relationships
 - a. Poverty and affluence
 - b. Racial, ethnic and immigration inequality
 - c. Gender and sexual orientation inequality
 - d. Age inequality
 - e. Physical, mental and emotional health inequalities
- G. Behavioral social problems
 - a. Crime, violence, delinquency and social justice issues
 - b. Alcohol and substance abuse
 - c. Sexual behavior and sex trade issues
- H. Environmental problems
 - a. Urbanization and housing issues
 - b. Population changes
 - c. Climatic and ecosystem changes
 - d. Pollution and resource depletion
 - e. Environmental justice

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Social Problems (3rd ed) by Macionis from Pearson
- Taking Sides: Clashing views on Controversial Issues (13th ed) by Finsterbusch

What I expect from you:

- To be on time AND come to class
- To be prepared with assignments read in advance (homework will be collected BEFORE class on the day it is due)
- To be willing to give and receive constructive criticism to/from your classmates
- To ask for help (from me or fellow classmates) if you ever feel confused, lost, or frustrated
- To contribute to discussions and listen respectfully to others
- Integrity and honest work

What you can expect from me:

- To be on time
- To be available via email 7 days a week (or face-to-face by appointment)
- There will be no surprises in this course. Any deviations from the syllabus will be discussed in advance and approved by the class
- I will take attendance and participation into account when giving out midterm/final grades

GRADING SYSTEM

Your grade will be determined based on your performance in the following areas:

1. Issue Debates (50 points): Each of you will present/debate an issue from the Taking Sides supplemental text. You CANNOT make up a missed presentation.
2. Take Home Exams (100 points each; 200 points total): You will have two take-home exams in this class. Exams will be in the form of essays and will incorporate information gained from lectures, readings, and films shown during class.
3. Research Project (200 points): This is an opportunity to explore a social problem of your choice more in-depth using the knowledge you gain from class and your textbook.
4. In-Class Exercises (50 points): We will be incorporating current events and other aspects tied to the social problems process. You will need to come to class prepared to contribute to the group assignment.

Extra Credit: There may be opportunities to earn extra credit in this course. If it is offered, you may earn *up to* 15 points of extra credit. It is up to you to take advantage of these opportunities and I encourage you to not wait until the last minute to participate in the activities, as there may not be as many opportunities at the end of the semester.

Grading:

- 450-500 points = A
- 400-449 points = B
- 350-399 points = C
- 300-349 points = D
- 299 points or less = F

Emailing:

Feel free to email me anytime regarding any questions you have regarding the course. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours. Additionally, in the subject line of your email, please include the CRN and/or course name. You also may feel free to call me or text me. My phone number is listed under staff information on BB.

Withdrawal:

Students who cannot complete a course must officially withdraw from that course. The last day to withdraw from this class is September 5, 2009. Please see me before you do this.

Student Conduct & Academic Honesty:

It is expected that you will comply with the Student Conduct and Academic Honor Code in this course. No disrespect of fellow students or the instructor will be tolerated. If behavior inconsistent with the Student Conduct and Academic Honor Code (including threats, cheating, plagiarism, and disrespect) is observed, you will be dismissed from the class at the instructor's discretion. Refer to College Policies 40.040.045 and 40.040.046 for further information.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

Please contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange the necessary accommodations. You must be registered with the ACCESS office or requests will be automatically denied. The ACCESS office is located in B 102 or call ext. 5079.

Tentative Schedule

Week #/Date	Topic(s) Covered	Assigned Readings
1 8/25 & 8/27	Introduction to Course and Sociology Review	
2 9/1 & 9/3	Studying Social Problems	Chapter 1 Issue 1 & 2
3 9/8 & 9/10	Poverty and Wealth	Chapter 2 Issue 8 & 9
4 9/15 & 9/17	Race/Ethnic Inequality	Chapter 3 Issue 10 Topic/Statement of Problem Due
5 9/22 & 9/24	Gender Inequality	Chapter 4 Issue 4 & 5
6 9/29 & 10/1	Aging and Inequality *****EXAM 1	Chapter 5 Outside Assignment
7 10/6 & 10/8	Crime and Criminal Justice Violence	Chapter 6 & 7 Issue 16
8 10/13 & 10/15	Sexuality	Chapter 8 Issue 6
9 10/20 & 10/22	Alcohol and Drug use	Chapter 9 Issue 17
10 10/27 & 10/29	Physical and Mental Health ****EXAM 2	Chapter 10
11 11/3 & 11/5	Reading and Research	Rough Drafts Due 11/3 Via email 11/5 12pm
12 11/10 & 11/12	War and Terrorism	Outside assignment Issue 18
13 10/17 & 11/19	TBD	

14 10/24 & 11/26	TBD	
15 12/1 & 12/3	Reading and Research	
16	Final Papers due	Via email: Cms80@case.edu 5pm 12/5