

SOC 2033 – Social Problems

Instructor	Patricia Snell Herzog	Phone	574-631-2695
Office	218 Old Main	E-mail	socuark@gmail.com
Office Hours	TBD or by appointment	Web	http://learn.uark.edu

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the study of social problems, such as problems associated with economic inequality and poverty, education, race and ethnicity, immigration, crime and deviance, drugs and alcohol, families, domestic violence, consumerism, and politics. Course discussions will be designed to answer the questions: What defines a social problem? What do we know about social problems? How can we measure them? What, if anything, can be done to overcome social problems?

The goal of this course is to show students the impact of social institutions and social interactions on human behavior in the development of or response to social problems. The course will include an overview of concepts and main theoretical perspectives used in sociology and an application of these theories to the study of social problems. This course will require development of critical analysis skills in viewing multiple social problems in the United States.

Objectives:

It is my goal that upon completion of this course, students will gain the following skills and abilities:

- Development of an increased awareness and understanding of social problems.
- Examination of societal problems by applying the "sociological imagination."
- Deepening of ability to think critically, in general, and with regards to social problems.
- Hearing and understanding the strengths and weaknesses in your and others' arguments.
- Improvement of oral communication skills by being able to clearly defend one's positions.
- Refinement of writing and comprehension skills in thorough written analyses.

The methods we will use to achieve our course objectives will include class participation, examinations, unannounced quizzes, and a term paper. Each method is explained in greater detail in the following sections of the syllabus.

Goals:

This class centers on the essentials of critical thinking: (1) the ability to shift in and out of multiple perspectives and glean knowledge from each perspective; (2) the ability to apply knowledge gleaned from each perspective; (3) the ability to hear and be respectful of diverse viewpoints; (4) the ability to gather and work with different sources of knowledge and information, and (5) the ability to avoid engaging in distractive, non-scholarly activities in the classroom.

For me, education is an important cornerstone of empowerment. To this end, class discussion will center on the application of learning materials to day-to-day important social issues. The ability to apply knowledge is the key to empowering individuals with knowledge. This class is a journey of doing sociology, which I see as the application of a theoretical perspective in the analysis of social life—what social forces are at work? What's the history of the issue? How do factors such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, political orientation, etc. affect the subject matter?

Required Readings:

The assigned articles, book chapters, and reports are available in Concourse. Altogether, the required readings average to approximately 25-40 pages per week. See the Course Schedule below for the required reading timetable.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based upon attendance, class participation, pop quizzes, two exams, and a term paper as follows:

1. Class Participation: Regular attendance and participation are expected and required for this course. You are expected to show up on time, turn off cell phones, and in general, engage in forward thinking scholarly activities. Be it thinking, thoughtfully responding, writing, group activities—whatever the task, I will assume that you are in this class to engage in learning. Please come to class on time and prepared; that is, having completed your assignments, and ready to participate in the learning process, which may include lectures, discussions, classroom activities, videos, and/or films.

Quality (not quantity) class participation makes the class richer and is essential to active learning. **Missing more than 1-2 excused classes during the semester** (for pressing doctor's appointments, family problems, etc.) **will count against one's final grade.** Students who are absent from classes are responsible themselves to get any handouts, lecture notes, or discussion or movie materials from any missed classes. Participation will count as 10% of the final grade.

2. Pop Quizzes: There will be a number of unannounced quizzes throughout the semester. **No makeup quizzes will be given, but I will drop each of your lowest quiz grade of the semester.** The goals of the quizzes are to 1) reward attendance and participation and 2) help ensure progression in the assigned readings. Quizzes will count for 10% of the final grade.

3. Exams: The first exam will be given during the scheduled class meeting time on **February 26**, and the final exam is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 5, from 8:00am to 10:00am**. Exams will cover all materials from class meetings and readings assigned for the time period which the exam covers, per the schedule below. Exam questions will likely be a combination of short answer, multiple choice, and possibly essay questions. The professor will distribute exam prep guides ahead of time. Altogether, the exam scores will count toward 50% of the final grade. The first exam will count for 20% and the final exam for 30% of the final grade.

Important Info re exams: Students must take the exams at the time scheduled. The only exceptions might be instances of severe illness or family tragedy, in which case the student must contact and make alternative arrangements with me before the scheduled exam and officially document the extenuating circumstances. **No after-the-fact exam make-ups will be given.**

4. Term Paper: The term paper is designed to help you improve your professional writing and analytical skills as well as provide you with a fun and engaging way to grapple with a social problem of personal interest. The paper will require integration of the assigned readings, lectures, discussions, and a selected reading (options will be provided). A well-written paper will require the application of knowledge and information of issues considered to be social problems.

As part of the term paper, you will have an experiential class day in the community. We will discuss this further in class. For now, the general premise is that you will be given class time to visit a local organization that relates to the social problems we cover in class. **You will need to sign up for one of the organizations from the list I provide and visit it during the assigned time.** Your term paper will include a response to the visit.

The term paper needs to be **typed** in **Times New Roman 12-point** font, **double-spaced**, with **1 inch margins** on all sides and be **between 5 and 6 pages** in length **plus references** in American Sociological Association (ASA) format. I reserve the right to subtract points for papers more than a few lines under 5 pages or over 6 pages. *The term paper will be due at the beginning of class on April 12 and will count for 30% of the final grade.*

Final Grades

Semester grades will be calculated based on the following distribution:

Participation = 10% Quizzes = 10% Paper = 30% Exams = 50%

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

94-100% = A	87-89 % = B+	77-79 % = C+	60-69 % = D
90-93 % = A-	84-86 % = B	74-76 % = C	<60 % = Fail
	80-83 % = B-	70-73 % = C-	

Honor Code

All provisions of the University Honor Code—which prohibits giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on graded course work—will be in effect for all exams and assignments. You will be required on each exam to sign your name to the Honor Code. If you have any questions about the application of the Code in a specific situation, please come and talk with me. Please study ND's Honor Code information at: <http://www.nd.edu/~hnr/code/docs/studentguide.pdf>.

Special Notices

Please respect your fellow classmates and your instructor by turning off cell phones before entering the classroom. You cannot learn and text at the same time, and it may also distract someone sitting near you. I do not want you texting during class.

You may use laptops to take notes, but NOT to check email, social networking sites, or to surf the web. Non-class laptop activity often distracts others who are trying to learn. If students start abusing laptops in class, I will ban all laptops from class. Please also begin by putting away *The Observer* or other newspapers, books, etc. prior to the start of class. **I reserve the right to dock class participation points for cell phone usage of any type, inappropriate laptop use, and any other distractions during class time.**

If you develop any worries, confusion, frustrations, logistical difficulties, or other problems related to this course, please, please, please come talk me in time to take constructive action. You can send me an email at any time, and I am also happy to set up times to meet with you in person either during my scheduled office hours or by appointment.

Written Assignment Grading Criteria:

1. Clarity of Focus: The writer's purpose is limited, clear, and relates to a social problem.
2. Content: The thesis and argument is developed with sufficient supporting details.
3. Word Usage: The writer chooses words and idioms appropriate to the topic and audience.
4. Author Awareness: The writer establishes her or his own voice and author identity.
5. Audience Awareness: The writer addresses possible questions and objections from readers.
6. Organization and Style: The ideas are developed in a logical, sequential order. The paragraphs are fully developed and unified with smooth transitions between paragraphs. Sentence structures are reasonably varied. Each paragraph begins with an introductory sentence. All sentences in the paragraph pertain to the topic introduced in the first sentence.
7. Mechanics: The writer demonstrates quality English grammar, punctuation, and spelling.