

`SOCIOLOGY 102: SOCIAL PROBLEMS [SSCI]
SECTION 01, FALL 2016
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Instructor: Jake Hammond
Office: 242 Wilson-Short Hall
Office Hours: Wed 1-3 and by appointment
E-mail: jacobs.hammond@wsu.edu

Credits: 3
Days: MWF
Time: 11:10am-12:00pm
Location: Wilson-Short Hall 13

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This course introduces you to a wide-breadth of issues known in sociology as social problems. Generally speaking, social problems are “conditions that somehow harm society” (Best 2013:3). However, as we will discuss, this definition largely fails to explain why some conditions that cause a great deal of harm are not considered social problems, while other conditions that cause little or no harm are considered major social problems. As such, this course will “focus on how and why particular conditions come to be constructed as social problems” (Best 2013:14).

This course has three learning outcomes as an Inquiry in Social Sciences course at Washington State University– (1) critical and creative thinking; (2) quantitative reasoning; and (3) information literacy. Through independent research, writing and in-class discussions, you will improve their critical and creative thinking and communication skills. You will also refine your “sociological imagination” and improve your ability to identify the underlying processes that drive what a society defines (or fails to identify) as a social problem. I hope you will develop breadth, depth, and integration of learning for the benefit of yourself, your communities, and for society at large.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Best, Joel. 2013. Social Problems. 2nd Edition. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

Silver, Ira. 2007. Social Problems: Readings. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

(Available at the Bookie and online to rent or buy)

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM ME?

- Student centered instruction. My primary goal is for you to gain an understanding of the material. There will be regular opportunities for you to engage with the material and bring your own unique contributions to the course.
- Prompt feedback on graded assignments. Larger written assignments and exams will be returned within one week of being submitted. Smaller assignments may be returned more quickly.
- Prompt response to student inquiries. I check my email between 8 am and 4 pm, Monday through Friday. If you email me during those times, I will respond within 24 hours. Outside of those hours, I will try to respond within 48 hours. I check my email sporadically on the weekend, and it will take me longer to respond if you contact me during that time.
- Availability during office hours. I will be available during my scheduled office hours, barring any unforeseen circumstances. If I need to adjust my office hours, I will let the class know as far in advance as possible.

WHAT DO I EXPECT FROM YOU?

- Respect for others. During this course we will be discussing a variety of topics which course members will undoubtedly have different experiences with or opinions on. I expect you to show respect for the other students in the class, regardless of whether you agree with them or not. It is an important life skill to be able to disagree with another person intellectually, while at the same time maintaining functional relations with them. (Please see the “Respect for Others” section below for more information).
- Attendance and participation. This means that you have prepared for class by completing assigned readings for that day, are actively engaged in class, and complete in-class assignments in a thoughtful manner. Arriving on time and staying for the duration of class are also expected unless you have previous permission from the instructor.
- Using electronic devices is not allowed during class. In order to create an environment which is focused on the material at hand, I ask that you silence and put away your cell phones and other electronic devices for the duration of our class period. If you are unable to follow this guideline, your participation grade will be docked and you may be asked to leave the class. If you are asked to leave, you must meet with me before you will be allowed to attend class again.

Please note: Compliant with the new email policy all correspondence regarding academic activities will be sent to the student’s official @wsu.edu email account. Be sure to check this account (and the BlackBoard course space) regularly!

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Participation:

Attendance and participation are integral parts of this course. *You are allowed three absences without penalty.* Beyond that, every day of class missed which is not a university excused absence will result in a lower final grade. Attendance will constitute 10% of your final grade. Class participation is worth 10% of your final grade and is based largely on two participation logs. One participation log is turned in at midterm, and the other is due at the end of the course. I may adjust this grade up or down based on my own observations. Failure to adhere to course policies will result in a deduction in the participation score. An additional 10% of the participation grade is based on a variety of small assignments you will complete throughout the term. These assignments are not noted in the course calendar, but will instead be announced in class or via email. Total = 30%

Papers:

You will write five papers during the course which will prompt you to apply what we learn about social problems as a process to a social problem of your choosing. Each paper is worth 7% of your grade. Total = 35%

Exams:

There will be two exams – one midterm and the final exam. Exams will not be cumulative per se, however, several themes introduced in earlier sections will remain relevant throughout the course. The midterm is worth 15% of the course grade; the final is worth 20%. Total = 35%

GENERAL GRADING CRITERIA

Timely Submission of Assignments: Due dates for each assignment are noted on the course calendar. Criteria for each assignment is posted on Blackboard. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on their respective due dates. **No late assignments will be accepted.**

Grade Questions: Students can direct any questions they have about a grade to the instructor. However, students must allow 24 hours to pass before they ask their question(s). Once these 24 hours have passed, students must provide the instructor with a written response to the grade, documenting where the student feels inaccurately graded on the course assignment. Students should be advised, however, that reconsideration of an assignment grade may result in more points being taken off of the assignment if additional flaws are found in the assignment during re-evaluation. It is your responsibility to keep track of your grade and graded assignments.

University Grades and Grade Points: Students' final grades will be a percentage (0 to 100%) of the total 100 points possible on the course assignments. Participation will be worth 30 of these points, papers 35 and exams 35. I will use the following grading scale to convert the percentage of points earned to a final letter grade:

Letter Grade

A 93-100	B- 80-82	D+ 67-69
A- 90-92	C+ 77-79	D 60-66
B+ 87-89	C 73-76	F 0-59
B 83-86	C- 70-72	

Please note that an "I" or "incomplete grade" will only be given for students who, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to complete their course work in a timely manner. Additional information on the incomplete grade and the procedures the professor will follow for processing such grade can be found at <http://www.registrar.wsu.edu/Registrar/Apps/Acadregs.ASPX/#90>. Students who anticipate that they will not complete the course assignments in a timely manner for reasons beyond their control are advised to convey that to the professor, their academic advisor, and any other pertinent university personnel immediately to determine the best course of action for the student.

ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If a student has a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, the student should either visit or call the Access Center (Washington Building 217; 509-335-3417) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the Access Center. For more information, students should contact a Disability Specialist at the Pullman campus at 509-335-3417; <http://accesscenter.wsu.edu>; Access.Center@wsu.edu.

Academic Integrity: Each student must turn in original work. No copying will be accepted. Students who violate WSU's Standards of Conduct for Students will receive an F as a final grade in this course, will not have the option to withdraw from the course and will be reported to the Office Student Standards and Accountability. Cheating is defined in the Standards for Student Conduct WAC 504-26-010 (3). It is strongly suggested that students read and understand these definitions. Safety and Emergency Notification: Washington State University is committed to enhancing the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It is highly recommended that students review the Campus Safety Plan

(<http://safetyplan.wsu.edu/>) and visit the Office of Emergency Management web site (<http://oem.wsu.edu/>) for a comprehensive listing of university policies, procedures, statistics, and information related to campus safety, emergency management, and the health and welfare of the campus community.

Adding or Dropping the Class: Students are encouraged to contact the Registrar's office for guidance on adding or dropping the class this semester. The Registrar can be contacted at 509-335-5346 or registrar@wsu.edu.

Respect for Others: This course is supposed to spark lively conversation on a diverse set of viewpoints and practices. Everyone in the course is expected to respect each other's thoughts in class by not cutting anyone off and not belittling anyone for a comment. If a hurtful or inappropriate comment is made, the instructor will handle it according to class, departmental, and university policy. Also, students cannot begin packing up while someone is talking or finishing a point before the end of class, as doing so is extremely disrespectful, annoying, and disruptive to the class. Likewise, students must turn off or silence all modes of electronic communication—for example, cell phones, pagers, and e-mail—prior to coming to class.

Attendance Policy: Students who have not attended class meetings during the first week of the semester may be dropped from the course by the Sociology Department; students should not assume that they have been dropped without verification from the Sociology Department or Registrar's office. After the first week of class, students who showed up to class more than 20 minutes late or left the class more than 20 minutes early are considered absent. Students who need to leave class early or who will arrive late should sit closest to the class entrance/exit as possible to not disrupt class. Students must submit an assignment prior to missing class. A student should not e-mail the instructor to ask if the student has missed something important from class during an absence, as everything covered in class will be important. If a student is absent, it is incumbent upon the student to find out from a classmate what he or she may have missed in class.

Bathroom Breaks: Each class meeting is 50 minutes long. Please prepare yourself by using the bathroom before class. If you absolutely must use the bathroom during class, you do not need to ask, just do so. However, try to be conscientious and not disrupt the class when coming and going. This should only occur under exceptional circumstances. Regular trips out of the classroom without legitimate rationale may diminish your participation score.

Office Hours: While I am always available during office hours, if you would like to meet with me, I would appreciate an email in advance letting me know when you will be stopping by. This is proper etiquette for professional workplaces. Additional office hours may be arranged via email for a mutually available time if it is not possible for you to make my regularly scheduled hours. I require a 24-hour advanced notice for office hours set up via email.

Course Changes: Course content and schedule as stated on this syllabus may change at the discretion of the instructor. Such changes will be communicated to the class via e-mail and in class as soon as they are made.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1: Background, Introduction, and the Sociological Imagination

Mon. 1/9: Cancelled

Wed. 1/11: Introduction, Syllabus

Reading: None

Fri. 1/13: What are Social Problems?

Read: Syllabus (on Blackboard)

Week 2: Theory and Inequality

Mon. 1/16: Martin Luther King Day – **No Class**

Wed. 1/18: Sociological Imagination

Video: Sam Richards, TED Talk, “The Wisdom of Sociology,” available online at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWD6g9CV_sc

Due: Student Information Assignment

Fri. 1/20: Gender Inequality, Guest Lecturer: Eric Allen

Reading: None

Week 3: Inequality Continued

Mon. 1/23: Sociological Imagination and Social Construction of Reality

Reading: None

Due: Name Tent

Wed. 1/25: Race and Ethnicity, Guest Lecturer: Jesse Mendiola

Video: Gladwell talk, ‘Why Human Potential is Being Squandered,’ available online at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kspphGOjApk>

Fri. 1/27: The Social Construction of Race

Reading: “Teaching Diversity: The Science You Need to Know to Explain Why Race Is Not Biological.”
Kay Young McChesney

Week 4: Introduction to the Social Problems Process

Mon. 1/30: The Social Problems Process Lecture – Course Overview

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 1 – The Social Problems Process

Due: Name Tent

Wed. 2/1: Discussion

Readings: Social Problems Readings Reading 5, “Making Road Dangers Invisible” by Malcolm Gladwell

Fri. 2/3: Claims Lecture

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 2 – Claims

Week 5: Claims

Mon. 2/6: Statistics in Claims, Guest Lecture: Darcy Hauslik

Reading: None. Work on Paper 1!

Wed. 2/8: Claims Discussion

Readings: Social Problems Readings Reading 10, “The Horrors of Child Abuse” by John M. Johnson

Fri. 2/10: Guest Speaker, Marisa Cervantes, Topic: Intimate Partner Violence

Readings: None. Finish drafting Paper 1!

Due: Paper #1: Identification and Overview of a Social Problem

Week 6: Claimsmakers

Mon. 2/13: Lecture – Activists as Claimsmakers

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 3 – Activists as Claimsmakers

Wed. 2/15: Lecture – Experts as Claimsmakers

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 4 – Experts as Claimsmakers

Fri. 2/17: Discussion

Readings: Social Problems Readings Reading 19, “Selling Environmental Problems” by Joel Best, Reading 6, “Getting Fat on Misinformation” by The Center for Consumer Freedom

Week 7: Media

Mon. 2/20 – President’s Day – **No Class.**

Wed. 2/22: Lecture – The Media

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 5 – The Media and Claims

Due: Paper #2: Claims and Claimsmakers

Fri. 2/24. Media Continued/Discussion

Readings: Social Problems Readings Reading 7, “ Making School Shootings More Thinkable” by Lionel Shriver

Week 8: Midterm

Mon. 2/27: Media Continued

Readings: TBD

Due: Participation Log #1

Wed. 3/1: Review and Catch Up Day

Fri. 3/3: Midterm Exam

Week 9: Public Reaction

Mon. 3/6: Lecture – Public Reaction

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 6 – Public Reaction

Wed. 3/8: Public Reaction Continued

Fri. 3/10: Discussion

Readings: Social Problems Readings Reading 14, “Black and Undeserving: Exposing Myths about America’s Poor” by Martin Gilens

Week 10: Policymaking

Mon. 3/20: Guest Speaker, Katie Bittinger, Hanford Nuclear

Reading: TBD

Wed. 3/22: Lecture – Policymaking

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 7 – Policymaking

Fri. 3/24: Discussion

Readings: Social Problems Readings Reading 27, “The War on Terror and a Terrified Public,” by Dawn Rothe and Stephen Muzzatti

Due: Paper #3: The Media and Public

Week 11: Social Problems Work

Mon. 3/27: Lecture – Social Problems Work

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 8 – Social Problems Work

Wed. 3/29: Social Problems Work Continued

Fri. 3/31: Discussion

Readings: Social Problems Readings Reading 25, “Catastrophes That Count,” by Hendrik Hertzberg

Week 12: Policy Outcomes

Mon. 4/3: Lecture – Policy Outcomes

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 9 – Policy Outcomes

Wed. 4/5: Policy Outcomes Continued

Fri. 4/7: Discussion

Readings: Social Problems Readings Reading 29, “Providing Free Housing to the Homeless,” by Malcolm Gladwell

Due: Paper #4: Policy and Work

Week 13: Documentary

Mon. 4/10: TBD

Wed. 4/12: Continued

Fri. 4/14: Continued – Class Discussion

Due: Paper #5: Policy Outcomes

Week 14: Claims across Space and Time

Mon. 4/17: Lecture – Claims across Space and Time

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 10 – Claims across Space and Time

Wed. 4/19: Discussion

Readings: Social Problems Readings Reading 17, “Stalking as a Danger Potentially Menacing All Women” by Kathleen Lowney and Joel Best

Fri. 4/21: Discussion

Week 15: Wrapping Up and Moving Forward

Mon. 4/24: Lecture – Uses of the Constructionist Stance

Reading: Social Problems Chapter 11 – The Uses of the Constructionist Stance

Wed. 4/26: Class Wrap Up Discussion

Due: Participation Log 2

Fri. 4/28: Last Class: Final Exam Review

Tues. 5/2 Final Exam 3:10-5:10pm in Wilson Hall 13

Wed. 5/10 Final Grades Submitted