

Spring 2006 Sociology 202 “Social Problems” Syllabus

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Class Hours: 12:30-1:50 Tuesday & Thursday

Office Hours: 515 Clark Room 20 Wednesday 8-11

Virtual Office Hours: Evenings before tests: 5-6 PM

I. OVERVIEW

The study of social problems is an ambitious title for a 200 level course. We have 10 weeks to cover a wide range of issues.

“Social problems” examines the perceptions, theories, arguments, and proposed solutions to some of the most expensive and vexing social issues. Many of these issues are controversial, as different groups in societies have different opinions about which issues are problems. The problems vary over time in cost, benefits, recognition, and legal status.

Explanations of these problems can be grouped into micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. Sociologists studying social problems often emphasize the macro and meso levels of analysis, and emphasize social, political, and economic contexts.

Each week we will examine a new (for us) type of social problem. There are further sets of courses, faculty, libraries, think tanks, and academic societies dedicated to dealing with each problem. In addition, for the last 100 years some researchers have examined the overlap between different social problems.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, you should demonstrate a command of :

- Competing theoretical approaches to social problems
- Competing methodological approaches
- Competing prescriptions for resolving problems
- An appreciation for the possibilities and difficulties inherent in a wide variety of social problems

III. READINGS

There is one required text:

Social Problems, Second Edition by Joel Charon & Lee Garth Vigilant. Thompson Wadsworth 2006

I will be adding **required** articles to BlackBoard course through the quarter. Please remember to check BlackBoard at least weekly.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING POLICY

Northwestern University has a very clear vision of its academic mission. The integrity and honesty of each member of the community is at its core. The policy is stated as follows: “Academic integrity at Northwestern is based on a respect for individual achievement that lies at the heart of academic culture. Every faculty member and student, both graduate and undergraduate, belongs to a community of scholars where academic integrity is a

fundamental commitment.” I have promised to uphold these standards as a member of the faculty. And I am responsible for promptly reporting cases of suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of the Dean. If you have questions concerning the University’s standards and policy, please see the Undergraduate Academic Conduct Committee’s web site:

<http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/>

Grading Point System

Each requirement or assignment is worth a number of points; these are noted on the syllabus and on the grade sheet that is accessible via Blackboard. There are 100 possible points.

Grades are based on two multiple choice exams (2 @ 45 points), up to 4 pop quizzes (4@1 point each), and class participation (6 points). Grades, readings, and assignments will be posted on Blackboard.

1. Exam format: multiple choice. This is not my favorite style, but the size of the class makes essays difficult to manage.

Multiple choice requires that you select the *best* answer from a list of possible answers. I strongly discourage make up exams. They are grossly unfair to fellow students who have managed their time well, a major distraction to students and the professor, and a pain to write. If you believe you absolutely must have a make-up, please discuss this first with your college advisor. If they believe your situation is serious enough to warrant a make-up exam, have them email me a PDF version of a signed letter on Northwestern stationary for my files.

2. There will be 4 pop quizzes (@ 1 point each). The quizzes are designed to check on attentiveness. One question will address the previous class lecture, the second will address the scheduled readings. I often give these when I think that some students are falling behind in the readings.

3. Class participation is worth 6 points. Participation includes intelligent statements and sincere questions. NB: This is clearly *not* the same as attendance.

4. Regular attendance is a given. You are responsible for lectures, class interactions, and readings.

Final Grades: Conversion to Letter Grades

At the end of the quarter, I will total up the number of points for each student. The student may view the total on the grade sheet from Blackboard. The grade conversion scale is as follows:

94 -100 A
90 - 93.9 A-
86 - 89.9 B+
82 - 85.9 B
80 - 81.9 B-
76 - 79.9 C+
72 - 75.9 C
70 - 71.9 C-
60 - 69.9 D
less than 60 F

The only circumstances under which the University allows me to change a final grade are in the case of a clerical or computational error. The Faculty Handbook stipulates: “Grade changes involving the submission of extra work by a student, reexamination of a student, or reevaluation of a single student’s work after the grades for all other students in the course have been determined and submitted for record are not permitted.”

READING SCHEDULE

This is the tentative reading schedule.

Unanticipated events may affect the schedule. Please check BlackBoard for updates.

WEEK # 1 March 27 Introduction`
C Wright Mills. on “The Sociological Imagination”
Part I

WEEK # 2 April 3 Inequality & Poverty
Part II

WEEK # 3 April 10 Work & Unemployment
Part III

WEEK # 4 April 17 Race & Ethnic inequality
Part IV

WEEK # 5 April 24 Crime & Drugs
Part VI

WEEK # 6 May 1 Family
MID-TERM MAY 2nd
Part VII

WEEK #7 May 8 Health Care
Part IX

WEEK # 8 May 15 Institutions & Terrorism
Part XI

WEEK # 9: May 22 Environment
Part XII & Conclusion

WEEK # 10 May 29 Reading week (no classes, usual office hours)

WEEK # 11: FINAL EXAM FRIDAY JUNE 9 @ 3-5 PM