

“The history of all hitherto existing societies is a history of...struggle.”

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Spring, 2012
DR. LYN HUXFORD
CARNEGIE 110

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 9: 30-10:30; Friday 11:00-12:00. Other times by appointment.

Phone: 537-6901 or ext. 6901. If you cannot reach me leave a voice mail message or call 537-6808 and leave a message with the secretary.

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Texts: Eitzen, D. Stanley and Zinn, Maxine Boca. 2011. Social Problems. 12th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Feel free to meet with me throughout the semester to discuss lectures, readings, assignments, or other matters relevant to the course. If you cannot meet during my office hours, call to schedule a time convenient to both of us. If you are having difficulty in the course it is especially important that you meet with me early in the semester. Tutors for the course are available through the Learning Center

Blackboard: Course handouts and relevant course materials can be found at the Blackboard site for this course. During the semester you can track your progress through the online grade book. Any changes made to the syllabus will also be posted on Blackboard.

Course Description:

A critical sociological analysis of the social problems confronting contemporary societies, particularly the United States, and the process by which they become identified as social problems. We will explore the structural causes of social problems from a critical power-conflict perspective. This is not a lecture course. Class time will be spent discussing the readings, analyzing relevant audio-visual materials, and engaging in activities designed to increase your understanding of the material.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop an understanding of the sociological perspective and how it can help us to gain a critical understanding of the structural sources of social problems.
2. To examine “the centrality of class, race, gender, sexuality and disability as sources of division, inequality, and injustice” (Eitzen & Zinn: xvi)
3. To encourage broader vision, engagement with community and commitment to responsible citizenship.
4. To assess how sociological data can be utilized in public policy decisions.
5. To provide an opportunity to firsthand observe some of the problems discussed in class by participating in community based learning.
6. To improve critical thinking and writing skills through classroom discussion and writing projects.
7. To have fun discussing a lot of interesting topics from a sociological perspective.

Course Requirements:

Think of this course as a journey in which we are exploring the social world in which we live. I am your guide, and as such, I am responsible for helping you to get the most out of your experience. You, however, are ultimately responsible for your survival and what you accomplish. I expect an active partnership. My job is to facilitate discussion, develop meaningful assignments, and evaluate your work. Your task is to come to class prepared, to complete assignments, and to participate in activities. **Assigned readings need to be completed prior to class.** Keep in mind reading is more than just passing your eyes over a page, it means reading and possibly re-reading until you understand and are able to critically think about what you have read. Take notes regarding things you do not understand and ask questions. It is my job to help you.

Learning includes both understanding and communicating ideas. Discussion will not only make the class more fun, it will also enable you to think out your ideas, express them to others, and learn from others. I hope you will raise questions, make comments, and level criticisms at ideas that do not make sense to you. **We will engage in intellectual discourse demonstrating civility and respect for diversity of viewpoints. in which everyone can express his/her ideas without fear of ridicule (the exception being racist, sexist, homophobic, or any other prejudiced comments).**

Attendance is required. Your grade may be lowered ten points for every unexcused absence. If you are involved in extra-curricular activities it is up to you to request an excused absence in advance. Much of the learning in this course takes place during classroom discussions. There is no way to get this without being present. Also, everyone's ideas are important, so we need everyone present. If you must miss a class it is up to you to find out what you might do to make it up.

Late work will not be accepted.

Quizzes:

Group quizzes will be given for each chapter I cover in class. No make-up quizzes will be available.

Worksheets:

During the course of the semester you will be asked to write a one page response to a discussion question I assign. The response should be word processed, double-spaced, thoroughly proofread and typed in Times font size 11. Each response is worth a maximum of 10 points.

Community Based Learning Project:

One of the assignments for this course is to spend time in the community observing first hand aspects of one of the social problems we are studying. You need to identify a social issue in which you are interested and complete 10 hours of community-based learning at a nonprofit agency in the community. You need to have an approved contract before you begin your hours. Each hour of observation is worth 5 points. A series of 4 short essays describing your experiences from a sociological perspective are worth 25 points each. Guidelines will be distributed. Each time you go to your service site you must have someone in charge sign verifying your hours. No scratch outs are accepted.

Presentations:

Each of you will be teamed with at least one other person to prepare a PowerPoint presentation on one of the chapters I will not be presenting in class. The maximum points achievable for this assignment are 100. You will be graded as a group unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Use visual images, engage the class in a discussion, and include the following in your presentation:

What are the most significant problems in this area?

How serious are the problems we face?

How can the problems be explained from a system blaming perspective?

What approach do you recommend for addressing these problems, both as individuals and in terms of social policy?

Do Something:

Your final exam will consist of an action you take to address a social problem of particular concern to you. This might consist of a letter to your representatives asking them to take action. It might be a presentation to a city council in your community. It could be organizing a political action. You choose, but you must document and present to the class your action and explain why and how you carried it out.

Grading:

Presentation	100	A = 460-500	C+ = 390-399
Worksheets	100	A- = 450-459	C = 360-389
Service	150	B+ = 440-449	C- = 350-359
Quizzes	100	B = 410-439	D = 300-349
Do Something	<u>50</u>	B- = 400-409	F = Below 299
	500 Total		

This course is not going to be easy. You have a lot of work to do and my expectations are high. Your final grade hinges on how much you demand of yourself. If you know your writing skills need improvement now is a good time to get help from the Writing Center. All of you will do yourself a favor if you leave plenty of time for revision and editing your work.

Grading Scale: Remember—grades are earned not given. If you want a high grade the quality of your work must be above average.

- A = Superior work - demonstrates excellent command of the sociological perspective & principles discussed.
- B = Good work - demonstrates good command of the sociological perspective & principles discussed in the course.
- C = Adequate work - demonstrates reasonable command of subject matter.
- D = Poor work - demonstrates less than adequate command of subject matter.
- F = Unacceptable - demonstrates a lack of command of subject matter.
- I = Incompletes will not be granted except in cases of national emergency or personal catastrophe.

Academic Honesty:

Any form of cheating will result in failure in the test or assignment involved, and may result in failure in the course. Plagiarism is a form of cheating! Please consult the McKendree University Catalog for the University’s policy on Academic Dishonesty.

Writing Center – this is an important resource available on campus. Trained staff will assist you in improving your writing skills. The Center is located on the 3rd floor of Clark Hall.

Classroom Etiquette:

Class starts promptly at the designated time. Be in class ready to start.

Cell phones should be turned off and out of sight. No texting!

No studying for other classes during my class.

Once class begins, I expect all of us to be fully engaged in the learning process. This means no chatting, no reading, no doing homework, and no sleeping in class. If you must eat, no Doritos---eat "quiet" food.

No laptops.

*****WARNING SOCIOLOGY IS HAZARDOUS TO CLOSED MINDS.**

*****SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED.**

COURSE OUTLINE:

Week 1	Introduction Chapter 1: Sociological Approach to Social Problems
Week 2	Chapter 2: Wealth & Power Video: Is Walmart Good for America?
Week 3	Chapter 3: World Population & Global Inequality
Week 4	Chapter 3 con't Video: Stolen Childhoods
Week 5	Chapter 6: Urban Problems in the U.S. Video; East St. Louis Story
Week 6	Chapter 7: Poverty
Week 7	Chapter 7 con't Video: Waging A Living
Week 8	Chapter 8: Race & Ethnic Inequality Video: Skin Deep
Week 9	Chapter 9 : Gender Inequality
Week 10	Chapter 9 con't Video: Tough Guise
Week 11	Chapter 10: Sexual Orientation Video: Tying the Knot
Week 12	Chapter 11: Disability & Ableism Video: Without Pity
Week 13	Chapter 4: Environment and Chapter 5: Demographic Changes Chapter 12: Crime and Justice and Chapter 13: Drugs
Week 14	Chapter 14: Work and Chapter 15: Families Video: In Debt We Trust
Week 15	Chapter 16: Education & Chapter 17: Health Care Conclusion: Chapter 19