SOC-1020-004: Introduction To Social Problems
Fall 2014, MWF 8:00 – 8:50 AM
AAB 325, Redwood Campus
Salt Lake Community College
(Tentative; Subject to Change)

Instructor: David Mathew Fields
Office Hours: Notify by email and by appointment before and after class
Email: david.fields@utah.edu or CANVAS

Course Summary and Objectives:

1. From a moral standpoint, social problems harm people.
2. From a democratic standpoint, social problems harm the well being of citizens.
3. From a societal standpoint, social problems threaten the productive functioning of society.

- This class attempts to answer questions we should ask concerning what is and what is not a 'social problem':
  - **What makes a problem a social problem?**
    - A social problem is said to exist:
      - A general perception that some "contradiction" exists in society (what then constitutes a ‘society’?).
        - This incongruity might be an inequality of some sort, an unsavory distribution of societal resources, violence (symbolic, structural, interpersonal), or an inefficient organizational system (e.g. too little attention and resources dedicated to enhancing social welfare).
        - That the cause of this inconsonance is social (what then constitutes the ‘social’?),
      - That an issue seriously harms a large number of people.
      - That the problem threatens the sustainability and perpetuation of society.
      - There is widespread agreement that some condition is wrong and must be changed.
  - **What causes a social problem?**
    - Do personal choices cause social problems?
    - Do ‘evil people’ (what then constitutes someone as being “evil”?) cause social problems?
    - Are social problems caused by material, biological, physical, or psychological phenomena?
    - From the sociological perspective, social problems are caused by the nature of society.
• Social structure (what constitutes ‘social structure’?), culture (what constitutes ‘culture’?), power (what constitutes ‘power’? social action (what constitutes ‘social action’?) foster the conditions for social problems and establish the value systems that define certain social situations as social problems.

○ What can be done about a social problem?
  ▪ By the end of the class, you should have the knowledge capacity, methodological tools, philosophy of praxis & sociological imagination to strive to resolve the inherent problem of the relationship between abstract phenomena and concrete realization, in order to effectively elucidate the underlying metaphysical, material, epistemological, ephemeral, and ontological qualities that altogether condition the human lived experience. This course will provide you with foundation to accumulate the requisite investigative lens and working concepts so as to construct the critical assessments and arguments that may, in the final instance, provide the effective challenges solutions to current predominant social problems.

Expectations:

1. Students will be able to discuss the nature and severity of selected social problems facing society using the major sociological perspective/theories: symbolic interactionism, structural functionalism, and social conflict – with added variants for emphasis.
2. Students will be able to identify the multiple causes and consequences of social problems.
3. Students will be able to critically evaluate the effectiveness of various social welfare strategies to alleviate the causes and consequences of social problems.
4. Students will be able to write more effectively.

Assignments:

6-10 small assignments posted on Canvas (accepted either via canvas or through email, instructor will notify students of assignments during the course of the semester) – just adhere to basic MLA, ASA, or APA guidelines on how to write position papers – if this accomplished, and content is lucid and coherent, the minimal grade you will get is 18/20 – depending on number of assignments – I will calculate the total points and determine the weight of the final exam, if I find that the assignments are well done and exceptional, I will chose to give the final exam less weight than the assignments – so, it’s up to your ability – my purpose is for you to LEARN/INCULCATE/THINK CRITICALLY, rather than regurgitate information.

Please refrain from using direct quotes of others and a use your own words to describe others’ ideas and give credit to the authors for the their ideas by citing
them in the text of the paper; do not extensively copy an author’s material verbatim or with minor changes; this is technically cut-and-paste plagiarism and is profoundly unacceptable

Final Exam:

At end of class, which covers basic topics covered in class (instructor will inform students on what to expect, SO DO NOT FRET!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>372-400</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>292-307</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>360-371</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>280-291</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>348-359</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>268-279</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>332-347</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>252-267</td>
<td>63-66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>320-331</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>240-251</td>
<td>60-62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>308-319</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>0-239</td>
<td>0-59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADA Statement:

If you have a disability, including a learning disability, for which you request an accommodation, please contact The Office of Student Affairs, so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodation must provide documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Support Services counselor.
-Instructor will make every attempt to notify students if emergency matters should arise.

Course Trajectory:

Part I: Sociology’s Basic Approach

Chapter 1 Sociology: Studying Social Problems

Introduction
Basic Premises

Optional Supplemental Reading:


Part II: Problems of Social Inequality

Chapter 2 Poverty and Wealth

Optional Supplemental Reading:


Chapter 3 Racial and Ethnic Inequality

The Melting-Pot Theory
The Mixed Race Population
Redlining: Institutional Discrimination Among Minorities
Racial Segregation
Social Stratification Among Immigrants
"Color-Blind Privilege"

Optional Supplemental Reading:


Chapter 4 Gender Inequality

Gender Stratification in Wealth, Power, and Privilege
Income Inequality by Gender
Men and Women in the Workforce in Cities and Rural Areas
Gender Stratification in Wealth, Power, and Privilege

Optional Supplemental Reading:

Chapter 5 Aging and Inequality

The "Graying of the United States"
Lifespan Differences Between Men and Women
Poverty Among the Elderly
Where are the Elderly?

Optional Supplemental Reading:


Part III: Problems of Deviance, Conformity, and Well-Being

Chapter 6 Crime, Violence, and Criminal Justice

Labeling and Control Theory, Association Theory and Social Conditions Increases in Prison Populations
The Criminal Justice System
Explaining Crime: Sociological Theories

Optional Supplemental Reading

Chapter 7 Sexuality

Sexual Orientation
Sex: A social, cultural, and moral issue

Optional Supplemental Reading:


Chapter 8 Alcohol and Other Drugs

Apply the sociological imagination to see why the use of some drugs but not others is defined as a social problem
Drugs and Culture Drugs, race, and ethnicity
The war on drugs: safer streets or police state?

Optional Supplemental Reading:

Chapter 9 Physical and Mental Health

Health and Illness: a global perspective
Health Policy: Pay for Care
Health: class, race, ethnicity
Mental health: poverty, social inequality, violence and trauma

Optional Supplemental Reading


Part IV: Problems of Social Institutions

Chapter 10 Economy and Politics

Economic Systems: Defining Justice, Defining Problems
Capitalism
Socialism
Mixed System
Problem of US Political Economy
Austerity America (video on canvas)

Optional Supplemental Readings


Chapter 11 Work and the Workplace

Structural Changes in the US Economy
Alienation
Occupational Safety
Globalization
Unemployment and Underemployment

Reading: “The Changing Face of Labor, 1983-2008 -

Optional Supplemental Reading:

Chapter 12 Family Life

What is Family Life
Controversies over Family Life
Family, Race, Poverty
Child Care
Conflict between work and family
Divorce
Theories of Families

Optional Supplemental Reading:

Chapter 13 Education

Education Extremes and Income Levels
Patterns of Privilege in Public and Private Schools

Readings: Schooling in Capitalist America -
http://tuvalu.santafe.edu/~bowles/SchoolCapitalistAmerRevisit.pdf

Optional Supplemental Reading:


Chapter 14 Urban Life

The Industrial Revolution and Urbanization
Urban and Rural Patterns
Urban Decentralization and the Rise of Suburbs

Optional Supplemental Reading:


**Part V: Global Problems**

**Chapter 15 Global Inequality**

****TBD****

**Chapter 16 Technology and the Environment**

***TBD***

**Chapter 17 War and Terrorism**

***TBD***