

Fall 2007
Social Problems in American Society
Sociology 102 - Section 002
Mondays 4:30 – 7:10 Bolton B92

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INTRODUCTION

This course examines several pressing social problems that are recognized features of American society. Social problems are often controversial and highly problematic for several reasons. One reason is that there is no simple way to establish what a social problem is. For example, for some poverty is a serious social problem because it greatly affects one's life chances and is considered the result of denied opportunities to those who hold less power in society; for others, poverty is considered a natural outcome that reflects the distribution of economic rewards for intelligence and motivation in a highly competitive, stratified society.

The primary focus of this course, then, is to examine what we could call a set of social problems. However, perhaps a more important objective of the course is for you to think critically about the social problems we discuss and be able to identify the underlying assumptions, interests, and institutional arrangements that shape our understanding of and ability to address different social conditions in American society.

General Education Requirements

Sociology 102, Social Problems in American Society, meets university-wide General Education Requirements (GER) for the following reasons listed below. In this course:

- a) We examine the intrapersonal, interpersonal and social-cultural factors associated with individual behavior, collective action, and societal development.
- b) We study human collectivities, organizations, institutions, and cultures, their infrastructures and interrelationships.
- c) We discuss and use methodologies designed for conducting inquiry into human behavior, collective action, societies and cultures.
- d) And, we consider multiple theoretical frameworks to offer meaningful explanations of social phenomena.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

Lecture

The main purpose of the course lectures is to provide a historical and theoretical framework for examining the many different issues and problems that form the subject matter of the reader. Some of the lectures will draw on specific readings but the point of the lectures will be to supplement and integrate the material from the reader, not to review them. It is extremely important that you come to class having carefully read all the assigned material and be prepared to discuss the readings.

Note: To do well in this course it is necessary to take careful and complete lecture notes.

In-Class Exercises

In addition to lecture, there will be several small group exercises in which your class participation will be graded. Typically, I will ask you to get into a small group to answer some questions about a film, discuss a reading, or complete an exercise. In some cases, I may ask you to come to class with something prepared to discuss with your group. Afterward, we will often discuss your responses with the class as a whole. These in-class assignments will be turned-in and graded. The point of these kinds of exercises is to draw on the experiences and knowledge of your peers and for you to learn in ways that are collaborative and active. Your preparation and class participation are critical for these kinds of exercises to be successful.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

Your performance in this class will be based on a variety of evaluation techniques: exams, in-class exercises, paper assignments, and your overall participation in the class. Each of these assignments is aimed at developing your academic skills. By the end of the course you should not only have a better knowledge of sociology and social problems, but improved your ability to express yourself orally and in writing, and to apply your learning beyond the classroom.

Exams

There will be two exams in this course. The exams will draw on lectures, discussions, readings, and films. There will be an extra credit assignment posted on the course D2L site to help you prepare for each exam.

Note: A make-up exam will be given only for the most serious circumstances such as a death in the family or a medical emergency which must be verified with appropriate documentation. I must also be notified before the exam. Missing the exam for any other reason will result in a score of zero. Conflicts with work, sports, etc. are not sufficient reasons to exempt you from this policy, i.e. everyone must take the exam at the scheduled time. If for some reason the day of a scheduled exam is canceled for snow or any other reason, the exam will be given during the next regularly scheduled class session.

Response Papers

Each student will complete four separate response/critique papers of assigned readings; and, with at least one of these readings you will make a brief report to the class. Two of the response papers must come from the first half of the semester (i.e. before 10/29). These papers should be between 1 and 2 pages long, double-spaced and typed with normal margins and fonts. The point of these papers is not to summarize the reading, but rather to: 1) relate the material to the course in some way; 2) react to the content; and 3) critique the article. I will provide an example on D2L to serve as a model. These papers should be submitted to the D2L dropbox the day the reading is assigned.

Elective Assignments

There will be one assignment set that will be handed out six weeks into the semester and due on the last day of class. Each student will choose to do one of the 3-4 offered assignments in the set. I will provide more detailed information about these assignments shortly. In general, the assignments will be relatively small projects/papers that relate to some aspect of the course. The point of these assignments is: 1) to give students greater control over the work they do in college; 2) to ensure students' academic strengths are more fully assessed; 3) and, to provide for richer and more varied exposure to course content.

Grades will be distributed as follows:

1) Mid-term and final exams, 100 and 150 points	250
2) In-Class Exercises	50
3) Response Papers	50
4) Elective Assignment Set	100
5) Class Participation	50
Total Points	<u>500</u>

Readings

We will be using a reader by Jerome Skolnick and Elliot Currie, **Crisis in American Institutions, 13th edition**, which is available at the UWM bookstore and is also on two-hour reserve in the library under my name. Assigned readings are denoted in the syllabus by their chapter numbers, e.g. #3 corresponds to chapter 3 in the reader. In addition, **there are a few materials placed only on RESERVE**. These materials may either be accessed electronically, using **E-Reserve**, or by checking them out on two-hour reserve. Electronic reserve materials are available from campus computer labs or off campus computers; two-hour reserve materials are available for check out from the reserve room on the first floor of the east wing of the library. To locate reserve materials, go to the library page (<http://www.uwm.edu/Library/>) and click on the reserve/e-reserve link.

*Any student with a SAC VISA should schedule an appointment to meet with me by email or phone.

Course Policies

Misconduct: Any students found guilty of academic misconduct (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) will be given a grade of “0” on the relevant assignment and disciplined according to the UWM Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures (see attached list of “University and Department Policies”).

Cell phones: Per department policy, students cannot answer calls during lecture or lab and phones must be turned off.

CLASS SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READINGS</u>
9/10	Introduction/Sociology of Social Problems	
9/17	Ideology, Economic Interests & the Media Social Inequality	Introduction #2, 9, 12
9/24	Poverty Race and Ethnic Inequality	#10 #16
10/1	Discrimination and Residential Segregation	#13,14,15
10/8	Gender Socialization and Inequality	#17,18,19
10/15	Gender in Advertising	Reserve “The Beauty Myth”

10/22	MID-TERM EXAM	

10/29	The Global Economy & the “Great U-Turn” Assignment Set handed-out	#7, 27
11/5	Work and Wages in the Service Economy	#5, 6
11/12	Monopoly Capitalism and Corporate Power Urban Sprawl	#1 Reserve: “How to Heal Our Cities”
11/19	U.S. Politics and Corporate Influence White-collar and Corporate Crime	#3 #42
11/26	The State of Education in the U.S. Health Care Assignment Set Proposal Due	#36,37 #31
12/3	Health Care cont’d Global Inequality	#32 Reserve “Explanations for Underdevelopment”
12/10	Population Growth Environmental Problems ***Assignment set due***	Reserve “Growing, Growing, Gone” #24, 25

12/17	FINAL EXAM Monday, 4:30-6:30 P.M.	

Students are responsible for any changes in this syllabus that are announced in class

UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that web page is: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>

Students with Disabilities. Verification of disability, class standards, the policy on the use of alternate material and test accommodations can be found at the following:

<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf>

Religious Observances. Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to religious observance are found at the following: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm

Students called to active Military Duty. Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty are found at the following: <http://www3.uwm.edu/des/web/registration/militarycallup.cfm>

Incompletes. You may be given an incomplete if you have carried a course successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond your control, have been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of course work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing the course for just cause as indicated above.

The conditions for awarding an incomplete to graduate and undergraduate students can be found at the following: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S31.pdf

Discriminatory Conduct (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policies regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S47.pdf

Academic Misconduct. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Policies for addressing students cheating on exams or plagiarism can be found at the following:

<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html>

Complaint Procedures. Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policies may be found at:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S49.7.htm

Grade Appeal Procedures. Procedures for student grade appeal can be found at the following:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm

Final Examination Policy. Policies regarding final examinations can be found at the following:

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S22.htm

Book Royalties. In accord with Department of Sociology policy, the royalties from the sale of faculty-authored books to students in their classes are donated to a UWM Foundation/Sociology Account to support future awards and activities for UWM students in Sociology.