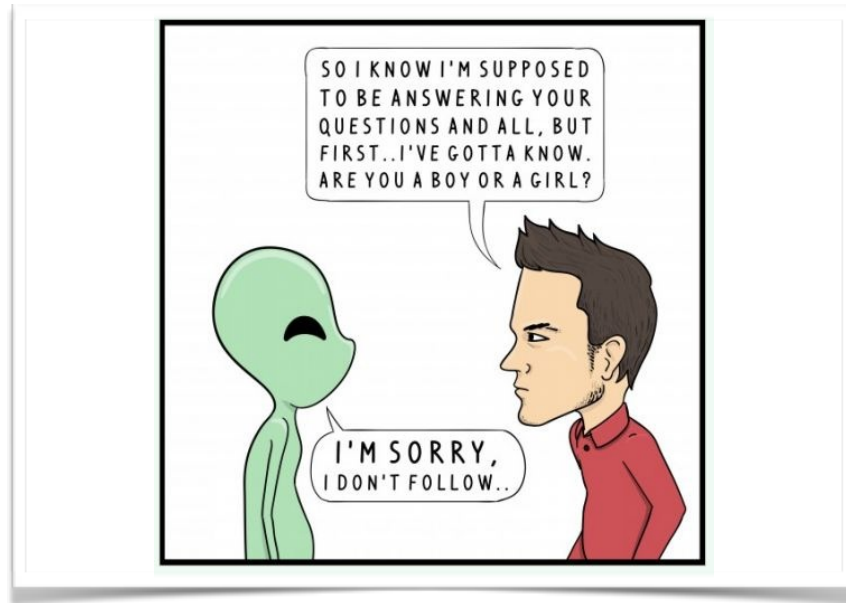


INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS



Course Description

This course will introduce students to the sociological study of contemporary social problems in the United States. Through participation in class discussions and reading the course materials, students will gain an understanding of how social actors play a role in the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of specific social problems. This course fulfills a Behavioral and Social Science CORE requirement or a Distributive Studies History and Social Sciences General Education requirement.

Course Objectives:

1. To examine social problems, including social conflict and social inequality, while understanding social constructions and patterns.
2. To understand systems of power and how they intersect to create social problems. How social problems are part of the organization of society.
3. To view ourselves as social actors and catalysts for social change.
4. To critically analyze media representations of specific social problems. Learning to critically analyze both the information presented and the agents presenting the information is an valuable tool for becoming a more informed citizen.

Required Readings:

There are no required texts for this class. All readings (and video/audio) will be available via ELMS (<https://myelms.umd.edu>). Please refer to the course schedule for reading assignments and due dates.

Canvas/ELMS:

Students must access ELMS (<https://myelms.umd.edu/login>) for document submissions, grades, course material, and videos. If you have any technical issues in Canvas, contact UMD's The Division of Information Technology Learning Technologies at elms@umd.edu as soon as possible. It is important you give yourself enough time to correct any issues should they arise and complete/submit the assignments on time. It is your responsibility to ensure that assignments are submitted in a timely matter. Please see <http://elms.umd.edu/page/help> for additional details.

Class Policies:

Contacting me:

E-mail is the best way to contact me. I will respond to email between once daily between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm. Please put "SOCY 105" or "Social Problems" in the subject line. When composing an email please keep email etiquette in mind. Spell out your words, address me at the beginning, and sign your name at the end of your e-mail. You can also talk with me before class and/or during my office hours. If you are unable to attend the office hours specified, an appointment can be arranged via email.

Etiquette:

Some of the material that we will cover during this course will be challenging to both our identities & our world views. That said, it is important to attend each class meeting with an open mind & imagination. It is also important to think before you speak & to respect other classmates' thoughts, perspectives, & world views. Disagreements will occur. However, we can disagree in a very respectful way, which will take the form of peaceful dialogue & discussion. Any personal attacks &/or offensive remarks – i.e., racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, etc. remarks – will not be tolerated in our class meetings.

Disruptive Students:

It is university policy and my policy that students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to show civility with one another or myself will be subject to being referred to the Office of Student Conduct or to Campus Police. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct. See www.jpo.umd.edu for further information.

Religious Observances:

In accordance with university policy on religious observance students must provide me with a written request for a make up assignment or exam if I have indicated a date on this syllabus that you are unable to

make due to a specific religious observance (specify) on a specific date. Please refer to the Online Undergraduate Catalog Policy on Religious Observance.

Inclement Weather:

If campus is closed due to inclement weather or other campus emergencies, and assignments and/or exams are scheduled during the closure, the assignments and/or exams are due the next time our class meets.

Accommodations for students with learning, emotional, psychological, and physical disabilities:

In accordance with university policy, every effort will be made to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office (0126 Shoemaker Hall) and who provide me with a DSS Accommodation form that has been updated for the Summer 2014 semester. *This form must be e-mailed to me by the second week of class.* For more information, please visit their website, <http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/>.

Honor Code:

You are required to follow the Code of Academic Integrity set in place by the University of Maryland Student Honor Council. The standards of this code hold you accountable for:

- a. Cheating: Intentional use of unauthorized information to aid you in class assignment or exam.
- b. Fabrication: Intentionally falsifying or inventing citations or other information.
- c. Facilitating Academic Dishonesty: Knowingly assisting another student to engage in cheating, fabrication, or plagiarism.
- d. Plagiarism: Knowingly using someone else's words as one's own without correct citation methods. This includes using another text and changing a word here or there without proper citation.

The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination." For more information visit <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html>

Grading and Assignments

Assignment	Percentage	Due Date
Media Analysis Assignments	10%	Turn in at least 5 (see dates below)
Attendance & Participation	15%	Every Class
Reflection Posts	25%	Weekly, <i>PRIOR TO</i> Sunday at 11:59pm
Midterm Exam	25%	October 24th, in class
Final Paper	20%	December 12th, in class
Abstract for Final Paper	5%	December 19th, before 10am
TOTAL	100%	

Media Analysis Assignments (10%):

There will be 10 media analysis assignments due throughout the semester. You are required to **complete 5 of the 10** (no extra credit will be awarded for completing any more than the 5 required). You will choose a media piece (image, meme, ad, song, news article, etc.) that you feel adequately reflects the topics discussed that week. You should use the skills acquired in this course to analyze your media piece sociologically. Your analysis should be around 125 words (approximately 2 paragraphs). You should provide a description, your rationale for choosing this media piece, explain how it is related to the material covered in class, and an attachment of the media piece you are analyzing (for songs, the title and artist name will suffice).

Attendance & Participation (15%):

Attendance and class participation are **required**. University policy excuses the absences of students for illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of university, or compelling circumstances beyond the student's control. Students who miss a single class for a medical reason are not required to provide medical documentation, but students who are absent more than once are responsible for providing various forms of documentation, depending on the nature of the absence. If you are absent, you are responsible for anything you miss in class. (Contact your classmates with respect to notes/discussion and the like.)

If applicable, a list of official university athletic activities must also be provided to me within two weeks of the beginning of the semester in order to make appropriate adjustments for assignments you may miss. You must provide official documentation for all official athletic activities.

Reflection Posts (25%):

Students will submit 125-word reflection posts on the ELMS Discussion board weekly, prior to Sunday at 11:59pm. This requires students to complete the readings we will be discussing that week before class.

These reflection posts will encourage students to react critically to the material. They should not be summaries of the readings but rather a space to raise critical questions about the assignment and develop opinions. For example, What is the author's argument and what evidence does the author present to support it? What are the strengths and weaknesses? Do you agree with the author and why? What are the implications? Students are allowed to miss **three** without penalty.

Midterm Exam (25%):

Students will be given an in-class midterm exam **on October 24th**. This exam will ask multiple choice and short answer questions on information from the beginning of the semester to that point.

Final Paper (20%) and Abstract (5%):

Students will submit a 5-7 page research paper **in class on December 12th** using material covered in this course. Possible paper topics will be discussed throughout the semester. Students will submit a one-page summary of your paper topic and potential sources **on November 21st** for approval. Students will be expected to use readings from class along with additional readings as sources for their papers. You will be expected to use ASA Style Citations. Students will submit a 125-word Abstract for their final research paper **on ELMS before 10 am on December 19th**.

Grading Guidelines

Turning in work via ELMS:

All assignments will be turned in via ELMS, on time. Students are responsible to ensure that assignments are uploaded on time. Failure to do so will result in **0 points**.

Re-Grading:

If you think you deserved a higher grade on an assignment, I will accept e-mailed rebuttals **no later than 3 days** after the assignment has been returned to you. You need to explain what the assignment was, why you think you received the grade you did, and specifically why you think you deserved a higher grade. This does not mean I will automatically raise your grade. Once my decision regarding your rebuttal is made, it is final.

Late Work/Make-ups:

Assignments must be turned in on time. If you do not turn in your assignment on time you will automatically receive 0 points. Make-ups or extensions for assignments are only granted for emergency situations (illness, family emergencies, etc.) and must be accompanied by documentation.

Extra Credit:

There is absolutely no extra credit for this course. Whatever your grade is at the end of the semester is the grade you have earned. There are no extra points given to bump your grade up and there are no opportunities to make up past assignments.

Incompletes:

Incompletes will only be given when you are passing the course but due to unforeseen circumstances are unable to complete your work. You will need to complete the incomplete contract and we will agree upon a due date for your work. If you fail to complete the incomplete contract and/or your work you will receive a zero for any assignments not turned in.

Grading Scale (Note, there is no GPA difference between an A and an A+):

A+ = 97 to 100	B+ = 87 to 89	C+ = 77 to 79	D+ = 67 to 69	F = 59 and below
A = 94 to 96	B = 84 to 86	C = 74 to 76	D = 64 to 66	
A- = 90 to 93	B- = 80 to 83	C- = 70 to 73	D- = 60 to 63	

Class Schedule

Subject to Change

Week 1 (September 2nd - September 5th)

Topic: Introductions/Review of the Syllabus

Readings: Course Syllabus

Week 2 (September 8th - September 12th)

Topic: Developing a Sociological Lens

Readings: C Wright Mills *The Sociological Imagination* excerpt

Karen Cerulo and Janet Ruane "The Sociological Perspective"

Week 3 (September 15th - September 19th)

Topic: Power, Privilege, and Oppression

Readings: Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore "Some Principles of Stratification"

Melvin Tumin "Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis"

Marilyn Frye "Oppression"

Peggy McIntosh "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

Week 4 (September 22nd - September 26th)

Topic: Economic Inequality

Readings: David Shipler "Connecting the Dots"

Annette Lareau "Unequal Childhoods"

Diana Kendall "Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America"

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Week 5 (September 29th - October 3rd)

Topic: Gender and Sexuality I

Readings: Candace West and Don Zimmerman "Doing Gender"

Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Messner "Sex and Gender Through the Prism of Difference"

Connell excerpt from *Masculinities*

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3

Week 6 (October 6th - October 10th)

Topic: Gender and Sexuality II

Readings: Jonathan Katz "The Invention of Heterosexuality"

Patricia Hill Collins "Prisons for Our Bodies, Closets for our Minds: Racism, Heterosexism, and Black Sexuality"

Rebecca Juro "Why Transgender Identity Matters"

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 4 DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10

Week 7 (October 13th - October 17th)

Topic: Racial and Ethnic Inequality I

Readings: Howard Winant "Race and Race Theory"

Thomas Shapiro "The Hidden Cost of Being African American"

Joe Feagin "The Continuing Significance of Race"

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva "The Linguistics of Color Blind Racism"

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 5 DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17

Week 8 (October 20th - October 24th)

Topic:	Racial and Ethnic Inequality II
Readings:	Andres Villarreal "Stratification by skin color in contemporary Mexico" Ariel Dulitzky "A Region in Denial: Racial Discrimination and Racism in Latin America"

Midterm Exam: Friday, October 24th

Week 9 (October 27th - October 31st)

Topic:	Immigration
Readings:	Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut excerpt from <i>Immigrant America: A Portrait</i> Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway excerpt from <i>Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age</i>

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 6 DUE WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29

Week 10 (November 3rd - November 7th)

Topic:	Health Inequality
Readings:	Janny Scott "Life at the Top in America Isn't just Better, It's Longer" Robert Bullard "Environmental Justice in the 21st Century: Race Still Matters"

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 7 DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Week 11 (November 10th - November 14th)

Topic:	Education Inequality
Readings:	Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee "Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality" John Larew "Why are Doves of unqualified, unprepared kids getting into our top colleges? Because their Dads are Alumni" Jonathan Kozol excerpt from <i>Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools</i>

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 8 DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Week 12 (November 17th - November 21st)

Topic:	Crime and Punishment
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Readings: Mary Beth Oliver "African American Men as 'Criminal and Dangerous': Implications of Media Portrayals of Crime on the 'Criminalization' of African American Men"

Devah Pager and Bruce Western "Race at Work: Realities of Race and Criminal Record in the NYC Job Market"

Angela Davis "Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex"

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 9 DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Final Paper Topic Due Friday, November 21st

Week 13 (November 24th - November 28th)

Topic: Discussing Final Paper Topics

Thanksgiving Break November 27th to November 30th

Week 14 (December 1st - December 5th)

Topic: Responses to Social Problems/Inequalities

Readings:

MEDIA ASSIGNMENT 10 DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5

Week 15 (December 8th - December 12th)

Topic: Contemporary Realities and Alternative Futures

Readings: Marx and Engels *Manifesto of the Communist Party*

Final Paper Due in class on Friday, December 12th

Abstract due via ELMS by 10am Friday, December 19th