

Social Problems (SOAN 215)

Spring 2024
MC209, MWF 12:30-1:20
Office: MC 227
Office Hours: MWF 2:30-3:30 (and by appointment)

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Course Overview

This course presents an in-depth conceptual framework for the study of contemporary social problems. Utilizing the major sociological theories to concentrate on the causes and consequences of social problems, the class will investigate the formal structures and interactive processes that contribute to these societal concerns. Special attention is given to how theoretical orientations intersect with economics and politics to affect problems, their definitions, and their amelioration. Broad substantive areas of study include problems associated with inequality, crime, age, race, gender, healthcare, and education, as well as possible remedies and solutions to these problems. As a 200-level class in the sociology track of the major, this course is designed to help build critical-thinking skills.

Readings

We will begin every week with an academic/theoretical reading for Monday on a specific social problem. On Wednesday we will read a more popular/accessible article (like from *Harper's* or the *New Yorker*), and on Friday we will read a personal narrative or account. All readings for this course will be posted to Brightspace.

Assignments and grades

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
40 reading responses (1 pt each)	40
40 participation responses (1 pt each)	40
Class discussion leader (2 times, 5 points each)	10
Running stack (2 times, 5 points each)	10

Grades are calculated out of a total of 100 points: 90-100 points is an A, 80-89 is a B, 70-79 is a C, and 60-69 is a D. Fewer than 60 points is an F. Successful completion of all assignments is required to receive credit for this class.

Reading responses: Post a comment, question, response, or reaction for each daily reading to the discussion board on Brightspace by midnight the day before each class period. 1 pt each, 40 pts total.

Participation: After each class period, post to the discussion board on Brightspace a summary of what contributions you made to classroom discussions for that day. Due by midnight the night before the next class period. 1 pt each, 40 pts total.

Class discussion leader: For each class period, one student will sign up to lead the discussion (organize the reading responses into a logical flow) and another to moderate discussion (run

stack) to assure that everyone has equal space to speak. Sign up two times to lead discussion and two times to moderate the discussion (“running stack”) at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AyCjPA2EaGQXCynl-8II9eBsKGxyiBj0bw-tuaQ4dGY/edit?usp=sharing>. 4 times, 5 pts each, 20 pts total.

Suggestions: Do you have a social problem you would like to discuss in class, or a reading that you think would work particularly well for this class. Please either let me know or drop your suggestions in this google document: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bOF6bDJwnLBCKHcK2YhNexD81tZXuNkGg6fWr-nry7o/edit?usp=sharing>

Class Schedule

Wed, Jan 17: Introductions

Fri, Jan 19

Reading: James DeFronzo and Jungyun Gill, “The Sociology of Social Problems,” in *Social Problems and Social Movements* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 1-24.

Following is our preliminary schedule. A preliminary schedule and readings for the rest of the semester is at

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1j7CIhghUGjNFjm8bOEj4k4ZubBSz6hr90oMQjMBIMXU/edit?usp=sharing>. All readings will be posted to Brightspace.

Wk1: Jan 17/19: Intro

Wk2: Jan 22-26: Racism

Wk3: Jan 29-Feb 2: Inequality

Wk4: Feb 5-9: Trump indictments

Wk5: Feb 12-16: Voting rights

Wk6: Feb 19-23: Reproductive rights

Wk7: Feb 26-March 1: LGBTQ/Trans rights

Wk8: March 4-8: Prison abolition

Wk9: March 18-22: Gun violence

Wk10: March 25-29: Drug abuse

Wk11: April 3-5: Housing/Homelessness

Wk12: April 10-12: Immigration

Wk13: April 15-19: Student debt

Wk14: April 22-26: Climate/Environment (earth day April 22)

Wk15: April 29-May 3: Culture Wars

Final Exam: Friday May 10 (11:30 a.m.-1:20 p.m.)