

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

SOCI 314, Section 503

Fall 2018 – Syllabus

TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY

Location: Harrington

Education Classroom
Building (HECC) 204

Class Days: Mon/Wed

Class Times:

4:10pm-5:25pm

Prerequisites: None

Course Credit Hours: 3

Required Materials:

There is no textbook for this course. Required readings will be available on *eCampus*.

Instructor

Stephanie M. Ortiz, MA

Email

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Office Location

Academic Building

Room 436

Office Hours

Monday 2pm-4pm

Thursday 10am-11am

And by appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the study of social problems in the United States from a sociological perspective. Sociologists suggest that the origins of social problems lie largely outside of individuals, even though the effects of such problems may be reflected in individuals' behaviors. We will examine how sociologists define, study, interpret, and establish the prevalence of various social problems. In addition, we will focus on how sociological theories shape the ways we understand the causes and consequences of, and approaches to these problems.

Course Goals

As a result of taking this course, students will develop a sociological imagination and the ability to distinguish between what they feel, what they think, and what they *know sociologically*. Students will gain multiple lenses through which to understand the causes and implications of social problems. Students will learn to form and evaluate arguments about social issues, and will develop writing skills to effectively articulate their positions.

Learning Outcomes

Texas A&M University has identified student learning outcomes that describe our institutional commitment to your educational goals. These include the ability to demonstrate critical thinking, effective communication, and social, cultural, and global competence. After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ⇒ Distinguish between personal troubles and public issues
- ⇒ Describe and evaluate theoretical explanations of social problems
- ⇒ Analyze and interpret empirical data to develop an informed position on social issues
- ⇒ Express ideas related to social problems effectively in writing
- ⇒ Use sociological concepts to explain current national events

Course Requirements: Check your TAMU email daily, because important information regarding this class may be emailed to you. I am not perfect and I may err, so please keep copies of all completed assignments and graded work until final grades are posted. Also discuss grade posting omissions and errors with me immediately. **Please be aware that the amount of reading will average between 50 and 80 pages per week.** Your success in this class will be determined by the amount of time and attention you devote to completing assigned readings, attending lectures, participating in classroom discussion and completing quizzes and exams. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, students are not to collaborate on graded work.

Reading Quizzes – 100 points/20% of course grade

I will post 12 quizzes throughout the semester, however, only **10** will be graded. This means that you may miss or choose not to take two of the quizzes and your grade will not be impacted. Consequently, I do not offer make-up quizzes unless (1) you have already missed more than 2 quizzes and (2) University-approved documentation is provided for all quizzes you have missed. Similarly, you may take all 12 quizzes, and I will drop your two lowest scores. University rules related to excused and unexcused absences are located on-line at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>.

The quizzes will assess your understanding of the required readings, which will help me learn which concepts, theories, or social problems the class may be having difficulty understanding. This will allow me to intervene before exams. Thus, I urge you to complete the readings, seek my help when you need clarification, and try your best on quizzes. The format of quizzes will be multiple choice and/or short answer questions, and you will be given 15 minutes to complete each quiz. These quizzes will be posted on *eCampus* on Friday morning and will be due on Friday 8pm.

Critical Responses – 100 points/20% of course grade

Critical response papers are opportunities to more deeply engage with the course topics. Each week, I will post a general question pertaining to that week's topic. You must choose **two** prompts throughout the semester to respond to; each prompt has a specific due date. One paper must be submitted by Week 8, and the second paper must be submitted by Week 14. It is your prerogative which two papers you choose to complete, however, I encourage you to choose the prompts that most resonate with you. Papers must be between 500 and 550 words and uploaded to *eCampus* by the due date. The rubric and additional guidelines for this assignment will be posted on *eCampus*.

Scheduled Exams – 300 points/60% of course grade

Three exams (100 points each) will be administered in this course. Each will consist of short answer and essay questions. All material you are exposed to for this class will be “free game” for exams, including readings, class discussion, lectures, and videos. Each exam is comprehensive, meaning that all material provided up until the exam day may appear on the exam. Exams will be in-class. **Students will please bring a writing utensil and bluebook to each exam.** If you arrive late and a student has already completed the exam and left the room, you will be required to provide official documentation for your lateness before you can take a make-up exam.

Attendance

The University views class attendance as the responsibility of an individual student. Attendance is essential to complete the course successfully. Students are expected to attend class regularly and to arrive on time. If you cannot make it to class, you are responsible for finding out what was discussed. I do not give "private lectures," so you must obtain missing lecture notes from another student. Rescheduled exams will be given only to those students who provide documentation of excused absences. University rules related to excused and unexcused absences are located online at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>. You are also responsible for rescheduling missed exams in a timely fashion. As a general rule, exams should be rescheduled within no more than 24 hours of your return to classes, and must be taken no more than a week after you return to class. Make-up exams will consist of different questions, but will maintain the same format as scheduled exams.

Grading: All grades in this course must be earned. Absolutely no curving will be done and no extra credit offered. A grade of "Incomplete" (I) will only be given in cases of emergencies late in the semester, and when official documentation is provided. Please inform me of any difficulties or hardships negatively affecting your class performance as soon as possible to maximize the amount of time available to manage the problem. Grades can be accessed on *eCampus*. It is against university policy and federal law to discuss grades using email, so if you have specific questions or concerns, please visit during office hours.

<u>Grade Component</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Reading Quizzes	100	20%
Critical Response #1	50	10%
Critical Response #2	50	10%
Exam #1	100	20%
Exam #2	100	20%
Exam #3	100	20%
TOTAL	500	100%

Letter grades will be assigned based on total points earned, as a percentage of points possible.

The grading scale is as follows

Course Grade	Point Range	Percentage Range
A	450 or more	90%-100%
B	400-449	80%-89%
C	350-399	70%-79%
D	300-349	60%-69%
F	0-299	0%-59%

Class Conduct and Expectations

I appreciate your cooperation with these important aspects of creating a class of which we all want to be a part!

Civility & Tolerance – I believe that learning should be an empowering process. I also understand that this process can be challenging or uncomfortable at times. In this course, we will address topics that often cause strong emotional responses. Further, we will learn about sociological explanations for social problems that you may challenge your beliefs. You will be expected to take an active role in the creation of a classroom culture in which all students feel comfortable participating in discussions and learning. To this end, you will respect your classmates and the instructor. This means that you will not attack anyone personally. You may challenge or assess claims; however, you must use critical evidence that does not rely on mere personal beliefs, anecdotes, or opinions.

Active Listening – Listening with the intent of *understanding*, as opposed to with the intent of responding, can lead to more thoughtful dialogue and discussion. I expect you to take notes, keep your hand down until others are finished speaking, and ask for clarification when needed. Please refrain from having side conversations with classmates.

Technology Use – silence your cell phone at the start of class. If you use your laptop during class, refrain from any activities not class-related. You may not record my lectures or photograph my slides. Students needing an accommodation involving an exemption to this rule must provide official documentation from Disability Services.

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy - “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” Upon accepting admission to Texas A&M University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code (above), to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor System. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the TAMU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor System.

Plagiarism: As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one’s own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you have the permission of that person. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest edition of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section “Scholastic Dishonesty.”

Americans with Disabilities Act: The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, contact Disability Services currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Subject	Readings
Week 1	Welcome to the Course!	
Aug 29	<i>Critical Thinking in the Study of Social Problems</i>	Best, J. (2012). <i>Damned lies and statistics: Untangling numbers from the media, politicians, and activists</i> . Univ of California Press. Chapter 5.
*Getting to Know You eCampus assignment due Friday Aug. 31 st 8pm		Chin, S. (2013). F*ck Political Correctness. https://www.facebook.com/notes/staceyann-chin/fuck-political-correctness-please-say-what-you-fucking-mean/10151356071526624/
Week 2	A Sociologist's Toolbox	
Sept 3	<i>The Sociological Imagination</i>	Mills, C. W. (2000). The sociological imagination. Oxford University Press. Chapter 2.
Sept 5	<i>The Art of Social Theory</i>	Nealon, J. T., & Giroux, S. S. (2012). The theory toolbox: Critical concepts for the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Chapter 1.
Week 3	Religion	
Sept 10	<i>How and Why Do Sociologists Study Religion?</i>	Hout, M. (2017). American Religion, All or Nothing at All. <i>Contexts</i> , 16(4), 78-80.
Sept 12	<i>Religious Extremism</i>	Juergensmeyer, M. (2017). <i>Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence</i> (Vol. 13). Univ of California Press. Chapter 2 pp. 19-30. Dobratz, B. A. (2001). The role of religion in the collective identity of the white racist movement. <i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i> , 40(2), 287-302. "Living Through Gay Conversion Therapy." (35:42) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wD4sWQG2DnQ
Week 4	Class	
Sept 17	<i>What is Class?</i>	Gilbert, D. L. (2017). <i>The American class structure in an age of growing inequality</i> . Sage Publications. pp 295-310

Week	Subject	Readings
Sept 19	<i>Poverty</i>	<p>Eppard, L. M., Chomsky, N., Rank, M. R., & Brady, D. (2017). On Culture, Politics, and Poverty. <i>Contexts</i>, 16(4), 8-11.</p> <p>Woodward, K. (2008). The multiple meanings of work for welfare-reliant women. <i>Qualitative Sociology</i>, 31(2), 149-168.</p> <p>Jaimie Johnson "Born Rich" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=km_JmxnzTvc [please watch the first 20 minutes]</p>
Week 5	Education	
Sept 24	<i>Educational Inequality</i>	<p>Downey, D. B., & Condron, D. J. (2016). Fifty years since the Coleman Report: Rethinking the relationship between schools and inequality. <i>Sociology of Education</i>, 89(3), 207-220.</p> <p>Duncan-Andrade, J. (2009). Note to educators: Hope required when growing roses in concrete. <i>Harvard Educational Review</i>, 79(2), 181-194.</p>
Sept 26	<i>Issues in Higher Education</i>	<p>Alon, S. (2015). Race, Class, and Affirmative Action. Russell Sage Foundation. Chapters 2 and 3</p> <p>Graham, M. J., Frederick, J., Byars-Winston, A., Hunter, A. B., & Handelsman, J. (2013). Increasing persistence of college students in STEM. <i>Science</i>, 341(6153), 1455-1456.</p>
Week 6	EXAM ONE WEEK	
Oct 1	In-class review	
Oct 3	Exam One	Please bring a bluebook and writing utensil.
Week 7	Race & Ethnicity	
Oct 8	<i>What is Race?</i>	<p>Morning, A. (2011). <i>The nature of race: How scientists think and teach about human difference</i>. Univ of California Press. Chapter 1 & pp. 22-32 of Chapter 2.</p>

Week	Subject	Readings
		Elias, S., & Feagin, J. R. (2016). <i>Racial theories in social science: A systemic racism critique</i> . Routledge. Chapters 1 & 2.
Oct 10	<i>What is Ethnicity?</i>	Nagel, J. (1994). Constructing ethnicity: Creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture. <i>Social problems</i> , 41(1), 152-161. Lopez, D., & Espiritu, Y. (1990). Panethnicity in the United States: A theoretical framework. <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i> , 13(2), 198-224.
Week 8*	Race & Ethnicity	
Oct 15	<i>Theories of Racism</i>	DiAngelo, R. & Dyson, M.E. (2018). <i>White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism</i> . Beacon Press. Chapter 5.
Oct 17	<i>Assimilation & Immigration</i>	Alba, R., & Nee, V. (2009). <i>Remaking the American mainstream: Assimilation and contemporary immigration</i> . Harvard University Press. Chapter 5.
*Deadline for 1st CR		
Week 9	Gender	
Oct 22	<i>What is Gender?</i>	West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. <i>Gender & society</i> , 1(2), 125-151.
Oct 24	<i>Theories of Gender & Sexism</i>	Brubaker, R. (2016). <i>Trans: Gender and race in an age of unsettled identities</i> . Princeton University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1 Salter, A., & Blodgett, B. (2017). <i>Toxic geek masculinity in media: Sexism, trolling, and identity policing</i> . Springer. Chapter 6
Week 10	Gender	
Oct 29	<i>Gender & Work</i>	Kang, M. (2003). The Managed Hand: The Commercialization of Bodies and Emotions in Korean Immigrant-Owned Nail Salons. <i>Gender & Society</i> , 17(6), 820-839.

Week	Subject	Readings
Oct 31	<i>Sexual Violence</i>	<p>Ridgeway, C. L. (2011). Framed by gender: How gender inequality persists in the modern world. Oxford University Press. Chapter 5.</p> <p>Hlavka, H. R. (2017). Speaking of stigma and the silence of shame: Young men and sexual victimization. <i>Men and Masculinities</i>, 20(4), 482-505.</p> <p>Wade, L., Sweeney, B., Derr, A. S., Messner, M. A., & Burke, C. (2014). Ruling out rape. <i>Contexts</i>, 13(2), 16-25.</p>
Week 11	EXAM TWO WEEK	
Nov 5	In-class review	
Nov 7	Exam Two	Please bring a bluebook and writing utensil.
Week 12	Media	
Nov 12	<i>Pornography</i>	<p>Salter, M., & Crofts, T. (2015). Responding to revenge porn: Challenges to online legal impunity. <i>New views on pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law</i>, 233-256.</p> <p>Fritz, N., & Paul, B. (2017). From orgasms to spanking: A content analysis of the agentic and objectifying sexual scripts in feminist, for women, and mainstream pornography. <i>Sex Roles</i>, 77(9-10), 639-652.</p>
Nov 14	<i>Gaming</i>	<p>Sternheimer, K. (2007). Do Video Games Kill?. <i>Contexts</i>, 6(1), 13-17.</p> <p>Gray, K. L. (2012). Intersecting oppressions and online communities: Examining the experiences of women of color in Xbox Live. <i>Information, Communication & Society</i>, 15(3), 411-428.</p>
Week 13	Health	
Nov 19	<i>Mental Health Disparities & Suicide</i>	<p>Horwitz, A. V., & Wakefield, J. C. (2006). The Epidemic in Mental Illness: Clinical Fact or Survey Artifact?. <i>Contexts</i>, 5(1), 19-23.</p> <p>Mueller, A. S., Abrutyn, S., & Osborne, M. (2017). Durkheim's "Suicide" in the Zombie Apocalypse. <i>Contexts</i>, 16(2), 44-49.</p>

Week	Subject	Readings
Nov 21	Reading Day – No Class	
Week 14*	Social Movements	
Nov 26	<i>Social Movement & Repression</i>	Meyer, D. S. (2003). How Social Movements Matter. <i>Contexts</i> , 2(4), 30-35.
		Ferree, Myra Marx. 2005. "Soft Repression: Ridicule, Stigma, and Silencing in Gender-Based Movements." Pp. 138-158
Nov 28	<i>Social Change</i>	Milkman, R. (2017). A new political generation: Millennials and the post-2008 wave of protest. <i>American Sociological Review</i> , 82(1), 1-31.
*Deadline for 2nd CR		
Week 15	Course Wrap-Up	
Dec 3	Redefined Day – no class!	
Dec 5	In-class review for Exam Three	

Exam Three: Monday, December 10 @ 3:30pm-5:30pm in HECC 204. Students will please bring a bluebook and writing utensil.