

Social Problems
SOC 1020-CRN#23345
Utah State University
Spring 2017

Instructor: Elham Hoominfar
Class: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10:30 am to 11:20 am
Room: Old Main 304
Office: Old Main 215
Office Hours: Mondays 11:30 am to 1:00 pm, Wednesdays 11.30 am to 1:00 pm (by appointment)
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Course Description

This course is an introduction to “social problems”. We will learn the basic concepts and sociological perspectives of social problems and will investigate how social structures and conditions came to be defined social problems. Moreover, we will know about the role of policymakers, social supporters/ activists, and the media, in formation of defining social problem.

Sociology Course Objectives

Sociology courses contribute collectively to form major goals of the Sociology Program. Students will learn to:

1. Communicate effectively.
2. Think critically, analytically, and reason logically about social issues and/or social problems.
3. Understand and use sociological principles, concepts, and theories to examine social behavior and issues.
4. Understand and evaluate the application of sociological methods to social behavior and issues.

Specific Course Objective

1. To gain sociological knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) to social problems;
2. To study how public opinion about a social problem has been shaped;
3. To know how social problems are presented to society; and

4. To learn how to apply theories to the real cases.

Course materials

- **Best, Joel (2016) Social Problems.** W.W. Norton & Company. 3th Edition. New York-London
- Required articles are available on the Canvas

Course Evaluation and Grading

Students are expected to complete all required readings and assignments on time in order to receive a passing grade. The evaluation will be weighted as follows:

- Class participation & attendance 10 %
- Team work 20%
- Three exams 30%
- Short paper 25%
- Weekly assignments 15%

The instructor will assign final grades following the USU standard (see table below):

A	100%	to 94%
A-	< 94%	to 90%
B+	< 90%	to 87%
B	< 87%	to 84%
B-	< 84%	to 80%
C+	< 80%	to 77%
C	< 77%	to 74%
C-	< 74%	to 70%
D+	< 70%	to 67%
D	< 67%	to 61%
F	< 61%	to 0%

- **Class participation & attendance:** Students are required to attend each class to learn this course through lectures, class discussion, team works, activates and video presentations. Attendance will be taken periodically and if you are marked down for more than 5 missed classes without prior excuse from the instructor or a written medical excuse, your attendance and participation grade will be zero. (As USU Policy)
If you miss a class session, you are responsible for getting notes and handouts. Neither the instructor nor her teaching assistant will lend their notes or handouts to students. We will have quiz weekly to be sure that you are ready for each week.

- **Team work:** We will have almost weekly exercises in the class in the different groups. Each student should be in a group and do the exercises in collaboration. After the first and second exams the members of groups will be changed and students will be in a new group. Each group has its own responsibility and creativity for organization and presentation of their own team work. In the first week of the semester the instructor will explain the team work in the class.

- **Three exams:** We will have two in-class exams during the semester. The first exam is scheduled for Monday, February 1st, and the second exam for Friday, March 24th, and the third exam for Monday, May 1st. They include true/false, multiple choice, short answer and essay questions derived from the course readings, discussions and videos. Please note that there will be no make-up exams except for those students who miss the exam due to serious illness (this requires submitting a doctors' note).

- **Short paper:** Each students will work on a project individually. Students can select one of these projects: 1. To choose a social problem in the United States (or even Logan) and to develop it based on the class materials; 2. To select a film that discusses about a social problem in the United States and to write a review paper of the film that deals either explicitly or implicitly with issues related to social problems.
 The paper should be only 4 or 5 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 point font). Students should submit one page outline for their short paper including the topic of your choice, the literature and concepts used and a brief summary of their plan for the paper. The deadline will be Friday, February 24th.
 The full paper will be due on Friday, April 21st; and it should be submitted on Canvas. During last week of the course, students are required to discuss their papers in the class. We will have some questions for final exam from these presentations.

- **Weekly assignments:** For your success in the course and having easy exams, you should finish your reading material stated in the class syllabus (available on Canvas) before attending each class session. You should submit three multiple choice questions regarding your readings every Thursday before midnight, on Canvas.

Classroom behavior

According to university guidelines and policies, students are expected to respect other students and views and be sensitive to the values and beliefs of others in the classroom. Also please do not disrupt the class by coming in late and leaving early. You do not have permission for using your cellphones in the classroom. Using cellphones or other electronic instruments during the exams are forbidden.

If you need to use laptops or tablets to take notes in the class you need to talk with the instructor within the second week of class. If approved, you need to sit in the first or second rows.

Late submission of works

Late submission for weekly assignments are not accepted after the due date. Late submissions of final projects will be penalized 10% of the grade for each hour that is submitted late.

Students with disability

Students with disability including physical, sensory, emotional or medical impairments will likely require some accommodation. The students must contact the instructor and let her know how she can assist them to be successful in the class; and also they should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in Room 101 of the University Inn, (435) 797-2444 voice, (435)797-0740 TTY, or toll free at 1-800-259-2966. You should contact DRC during the first two weeks of the semester.

Academic dishonestly

We will follow university guidelines regarding the academic dishonesty policy. Students who participate in academically dishonest activities will receive an F for the course at the minimum.

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<http://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=265>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Day Date What's going on and what you need to prepare:

Section 1: Sociological approach to social problems

Week#1

M	Jan.9	Introduction to the course
W	Jan.11	Mills. C. W. "the promise". The sociological imagination (on Canvas) Design groups for team works/ guidelines
F	Jan.13	What is social problem? Documentary. The presentation first team work.

Section 2: The Anatomy of a Claim (Chapters 2 & 3)

Week#2

M	Jan.16	Holiday. Martin Luther King
W	Jan.18	Chapter 2. Claims
F	Jan.20	Chapter 2 continued

Week#3

- M Jan.30 Chapter 3. Activists as Claimsmakers
- W Feb.1 Chapter 3 continued
- F Feb.3 Chapter 3 continued

Section 3: Inequality and Discrimination

Week#4

- M Feb.6 Racism and prejudice p. 222- 243 (on Canvas)
- W Feb.8 Racism: p. 243-252 & gender and Sexuality: p. 258-276 (on Canvas)
- F Feb.10 Gender and Sexuality: p. 276-291 (on Canvas) + Review for exam

Section 4: Main factors (chapter 4, 5)

Week#5

- M Feb.13 **Exam#1**
- W Feb.15 Chapter 4. Experts as Claimsmakers
- F Feb.17 Chapter 4 continued

Week#6

- M Feb.20 (President Day; change to Tus) Chapter 5. The Media and Claims
- W Feb.22 Chapter 5 continued
- F Feb.24 Chapter 5 continued

Section 5: Reactions

Week#7

- M Feb.27 Chapter 6. Public Reaction
- W Mar.1 Chapter 6 continued
- F Mar.3 Chapter 6 continued

Week#8

M Mar.6 Spring Break
W Mar.8 Spring Break
F Mar.10 Spring Break

Week#9

M Mar.13 Chapter 7. Policymaking
W Mar.15 Chapter 7 continued
F Mar.17 Chapter 7 continued

Week#10

M Mar.20 Chapter 8. Social problems work
W Mar.22 Chapter 8 continued –review exam
F Mar.24 **Exam#2**

Week#11

M Mar.27 Chapter 9. Policy outcomes
W Mar.29 Chapter 9 continued
F Mar.31 Chapter 9 continued

Week#12 Environmental Problems (on Canvas)

M Apr.3 Technology and Environment
W Apr.5 Technology and Environment continued
F Apr.7 Technology and Environment continued

Week#13

M Apr.10 Chapter 10. Claims across Space and Time
W Apr.12 Chapter 10 continued
F Apr.14 Chapter 10 continued

Week#14

M Apr.17 Chapter 11 the uses of the constructionist stance
W Apr.19 Chapter 11 continued
F Apr.21 Review exam- Guideline for Presentations

Week#15

M Apr.24 Presentations of your short paper
W Apr.26 Presentations of your short paper
F Apr.28 Presentations of your short paper

Final Week

Monday May.1 **Exam#3**