

Social Problems SOCI 1160
Instructor: Erin Echols
Monday and Wednesday; 3:00pm – 4:15 pm

Contact Information:

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Office Hours: 4:15pm to 5:15pm

Email is the best way to contact me. Please include “SOCI 1160” in the subject line of your email. If I do not respond to your email within 24 hours, please email me again.

Required Texts:

To reduce the cost burden of students, most readings for this course will be available on D2L. Using the course schedule, you are responsible for accessing and reading the texts before each class.

The only text not accessible on D2L is “Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools” by Jonothan Kozol. This book can be purchased for as low at \$5 and is also available electronically.

General Course Outline:

Sociology is the scientific study of human behavior in society. Sociologists take seriously the fact that all human behavior occurs within a social context and that context influences human behavior. Most of you will not become sociologists, just like most of you who take a chemistry class will not become chemists, but I expect you to be sociologists for the duration of the course. My goal for the course is for you to leave with an ability to see the world as sociologists do.

Specifically, this course will explore an array of social issues through sociological perspectives. We will begin by briefly explaining sociology and the study of social problems. Next, we will cover social problems related to global inequality and threats to the environment. We will then spend the middle of the course looking at problems related to social inequality (ex. poverty, race and ethnicity and gender). Next, we will explore social problems related to major social institutions such as prisons and the justice system, families, education and healthcare.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will examine social problems in a way that is consistent with a “sociological lens.” This involves taking a larger view of society than one’s own immediate experience, identifying and understanding patterns of social behavior and understanding how social problems are socially constructed
2. Students will think critically about social problems and evaluate potential solutions to these problems based on their effectiveness - using evidence from social science research.
3. Students will gain an understanding of the social forces that shape social problems and how social problems are interrelated.

4. Students will understand systems of power and privilege and how they interact to create social problems.

Class Format:

I will utilize a variety of teaching/learning formats for this course, including lecture, discussion, classroom exercises, and media (ex. newspapers, television, films, interactive data and various websites). I will also use the Desire2Learn course page to post information such as grades, test review questions, relevant websites, and course readings. Much of the information for this course will be communicated through in-class lectures, discussions and activities. Lecture information cannot be found in your textbook, so it is imperative that you come to class and participate by taking notes, joining discussion and completing in-class activities. Please take the importance of regular class attendance into consideration when deciding if you will remain in this course.

Course Expectations:

This course will require a reading commitment on the part of the students. You should expect to do some reading every other day for this course and plan your time accordingly. We will all have a better experience if you make this commitment, and I have designed the course so that your commitment will be clearly manifested in your grade.

I approach teaching as a cooperative relationship between teacher and student. This requires your full engagement and participation in the class. There are also expectations for classroom behavior that facilitate learning. I expect you to be in your seats ready for class to start when it is time and to refrain from rude distracting behavior. Students are welcome to use technology to aid their learning/note taking. However, it is your responsibility to use technology appropriately. You must be able to keep up with the lecture and class activities and refrain from using technology in ways that would be distracting to your own learning or to the learning of your fellow classmates. I reserve the right to (and will) ask students to leave if behavior becomes distracting. Having said this, if anything you plan to do may be misconstrued as distracting behavior, please discuss this with me in advance. If you have any questions or concerns regarding tardiness or anything else, please discuss these with me immediately.

Course Assignments:

1. **Tests:** (60%) There will be three multiple-choice exams during the semester. They are non-cumulative and worth 20% each. I will provide the scantrons. You will need to bring a #2 pencil.
2. **Social Problems Paper:** (20%) You will be assigned one paper for this course that asks you to explain a social problem that is important to you using course material that we have discussed in lectures, during in-class activities through readings and using academic research. More details about this assignment are attached to this syllabus. We will discuss these instructions together throughout the semester. A hard copy of the paper is due to my box in the Sociology department **by 5:00pm on April 23rd**. If you do not turn the paper into me during class, please have someone at the front desk of the Sociology office (GCB 1041) time stamp the paper for you before turning it in to my box. Be advised that the

Sociology office closes promptly at 5:00 each day, and papers slid under the door will be considered late. Information on late papers, emailing papers, etc. can be found in the policies section of this syllabus.

- 3. In-Class Activities/Class Participation:** (20%) There will be 6 graded in-class activities assigned periodically during semester on the lecture, assigned readings or discussion material. This includes stream of consciousness writing exercises, film responses, group work and reading review questions. Some of these activities will be announced while others will not. You may drop one of these 6 in-class assignments. I suggest you save this drop option for an emergency or illness that may prevent you from coming to class on a day an in-class activity is assigned. Because you are able to drop the lowest grade on one in-class activity, I will not allow make-ups on this assignment unless it is required by university policy.

Policies:

Course Readings – Students are expected to complete course readings before each class meeting. You are required to read the text carefully, think critically about the material and be prepared to engage in class discussion or activities on the material.

Attendance Policy – I will take attendance by passing around a sign-in sheet. You are responsible for making sure you sign it. Attendance is expected. If you are not in class, you cannot do assignments, get class participation, or be well prepared for the tests. For this reason, there is no part of your grade that you earn only by coming to class. However, you can receive bonus points for perfect attendance. Students who have not missed any classes will have one additional point added to their final grade. Perfect attendance includes arriving to class on time and not leaving early.

It is considered a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy to sign another student in on the roll sheet if they are not in attendance when the roll is passed. Do not sign in another student, or ask a classmate to sign you in.

Not all of the material on the test will be covered in your textbook; therefore, students who miss a class are responsible for getting that day's notes and assignments from a classmate if they wish to be successful in the course. Please notify me in advance if you will be missing a class for a reason covered under University policy guidelines (ex. a University sponsored event, legal obligations or religious observances) so that I can work with you to get you assignments or a make-up exam in advance.

Written Assignments – Students are to submit a hard copy of all assignments unless permission to e-mail an assignment has been requested and approved by the instructor *in advance of the assignment's due date*. If the file you send is corrupted or empty (or not attached at all), I will not consider the paper "turned in." Please allocate enough time for me to approve your request. If I have not approved your request by the due date/time, assume your paper will be considered late. Hard copies of all assignments should be in my possession before the class ends on the due date or they will be considered late. A one letter-grade penalty will be deducted from any late papers. Papers that are more than one day late will not be accepted. Extensions will only be granted when university

policy necessitates. Unless you have email correspondence from me that says otherwise, assume all papers received after the due date will be penalized for lateness.

Class Conduct: You are expected to contribute to class in a respectful manner. Controversy is inevitable in a class focused on social problems, but it is important that all students feel that they are respected in this classroom. While I do not anticipate this to be a problem, if you engage in speech or behavior that is threatening or demeaning of an individual or group of individuals, you will be asked to leave the class and will not be allowed to return until you and I have discussed your behavior. If the behavior continues, you will be removed from the course through the necessary University procedures.

Academic Dishonesty - I will apply the GSU's standards and penalties on cheating, plagiarism, buying of papers, etc. These rules are fully discussed in the student Handbook (section 409, available at <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwfhb/sec409.html>). Violation of the Academic Honesty policy will result in an F in the course and possible disciplinary action. All violations will be formally reported to the Dean of Arts and Sciences. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please see me. For your sake and for mine, I would prefer we discuss anything that may be unclear about academic dishonesty policies in advance.

Accommodations – Students who wish to request accommodations for a disability may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services, of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which an accommodation is sought, as we cannot retroactively apply accommodations.

Withdrawals - The semester midpoint, **October 15th**, is the last day to withdraw from a full semester class and receive a possible grade of W, except for hardship withdrawal. Students can use PAWS to withdraw before the midpoint. After the midpoint of the term, voluntary withdrawals cannot occur.

Course Assessment - Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

Grading Scale :

100-97	A+	86-83	B	72-70	C-
96-93	A	82-80	B-	60-69	D
92-90	A-	79-77	C+	59 and Below	F
89-87	B+	76-73	C		

Course Schedule*

Date	Readings	Assignments/Classwork
Jan. 13	First Day of Class – No Readings	
Jan. 15	Introduction to sociology and social problems: Mills. "Personal Experiences and Public Issues" Cerulo and Ruane. "Why do conventional wisdoms persist?"	
Jan. 20	MLK DAY – No Class	

Jan. 22	Chapter 3 World Population and Global Inequality	In-Class Activity
Jan. 27th	Chapter 4: Threats to the Environment	<i>*Come to class with a topic for your Social Problems Paper*</i>
Jan. 29th	The Working Poor: Ehrenreich. "Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By in America" Shipler. " <i>The Working Poor: Invisible in America</i> "	
Feb. 3	Income and Wealth Inequality: Ariely. "Americans Want to Live in a Much More Equal Country." Ronson. "Amber Waves of Green."	
Feb. 5	Inequality and Cultural Capital: Bourdieu - TBA	Film excerpt: Wife Swap Film excerpt: People Like Us Film companion site: http://www.pbs.org/peoplelikeus/
Feb. 10	Special Guest and Exam Review Day	<i>*If you want to do well on your Social Problems paper, attendance for the special guest lecture is important!</i>
Feb. 12	Exam 1	
Feb. 17	Racial Inequality: Introduction	
Feb. 19	Racial Inequality Bertrand and Mullainathan. "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal?" Feagin. "The Continuing Significance of Race"	
Feb. 24	Racial Inequality Continued	In-Class Film excerpt: Race the Power of an Illusion Film companion site: http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm
Feb. 26	Racial Inequality Continued: Farley and Squires. "Fences and Neighbors: Segregation in 21 st Century America." Alexander. "The New Jim Crow."	
March 3	Gender Inequality: Correll. "Is There a Motherhood Penalty?"	
March 5	Gender Inequality: Cerulo and Ruane. "Conventional Wisdom Tells Us... You've Come a Long Way Baby." Williams. "The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for men in the 'Female Professions.'"	
March 10	Chapter 11 Disability and Ableism	In-Class Activity
March 12	In-Class Social Problems Paper Work Day Exam Review	<i>Semester midpoint. Last day to withdraw without penalty.</i> http://registrar.gsu.edu/registration/withdrawals/
March 17 – 23	SPRING BREAK – No Classes	
March 24	Exam 2	
March 31	Crime and Justice: Cole. "The Color of Punishment." Reiman. "Weeding Out the Wealthy."	
April 2	The Economy: Link: http://www.mcdonaldization.com/whatisit.shtml (Read the overview section and each of the four dimensions: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control.)	In-Class Assignment using NY Times Class Matters Data (http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/class/index.html)
April 7	Families: Lareau. "Unequal Childhoods."	
April 9	Families Continued: Hays. "Flat Broke with Children." Hull. "The Changing Landscape of Love and Marriage."	
April 14	Education: Kozol: <i>Savage Inequalities</i> (Chapters 1 – 3)	Come prepared to discuss reading in detail (as you always should do for class.)
April 16	Education: Kozol: <i>Savage Inequalities</i> (Chapters 4 – 6)	Come prepared to discuss reading in detail (as you always should do for class.)
April 21	"Baby, You're Home"	Film: <i>The Business of Being Born</i>
April 23	In-Class Social Problems Paper Peer Review	In-Class Social Problems Paper Review. <i>Bring 2 copies of a polished draft of your Social Problems Paper to class. One copy will be given to me. Another will be given to a peer for critique. Be prepared to give a serious critique of someone else's paper in class. Participation in peer review counts as a portion of</i>

		<i>your grade for the assignment.</i>
April 28	Last Class - Wrap-Up and Exam Review Day	Social Problems Paper Due. (Before turning in your paper, be sure to review the instructions for turning in this assignment that are attached. It is important that you follow these instructions carefully in order to do well on the assignment.)
April 30	Final Exam	Final Exam Time – 1:30pm to 4:00pm Exam Schedule: http://registrar.gsu.edu/registration/semester-calendars-exam-schedules/spring-2014-final-exam-schedule/
May 8th	No Class	Grades Due for Faculty and Staff
May 9th	No Class	Grade Available via PAWS to Students

* *The class schedule and course requirements are subject to change as the course progresses.*

Personal Information and Course Contract

Name:

Major:

Year:

Have you taken a Sociology course before? Yes No

Reason for taking the course:

One thing you are proud of:

One thing that worries you about this course or courses in general:

One question you want the professor to answer:

Your signature on this sheet signifies that you have read and understood all of the terms and conditions specified in the syllabus and understand that the instructor may adjust the schedule as necessary. Your signature also signifies that you agree to raise any questions you have regarding the syllabus, the assignments, or the class, in class or by e-mail, phone, or personal meeting with the professor.

Signature:

Date:

Print Name Here: