



## SOC 1020

**Division:** Social and Behavioral Science

**Department:** Social Sciences

**Course:** SOC 1020

**Title:** Modern Social Problems

**Catalog Description:**

This course presents an introduction to current social problems, including population, crime, prejudice, family disintegration, dependency, and religious conflict. *Variable credit may be earned.*

**General Education Requirements:** Social and Behavioral Science

**Semesters Offered:** Fall, Spring

**Credit/Time Requirement:** Credit: 0; Lecture: 3; Lab: 0

**Clock/Hour Requirements:** 0

**Offered for Non-Credit:** No

**Credit/Clock Comments:** Three credit hours are required to complete the Social AND Behavioral Sciences GE Requirement.

**Prerequisites:** N/A

**Corequisites:** N/A

**Justification:**

This course is offered to help transfer students meet general education requirements in social science, and to provide a lower division course elective for upper division sociology course for sociology majors. The course also serves as an elective credit for social work and criminal justice majors. Nontransfer students will find it useful in understanding the major problems associated with life in modern societies.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- be introduced to the sociological study of current major U.S. social problems through the three major theoretical perspectives of sociology:
  - functionalism
  - conflict theory
  - symbolic interactionism
- be able to read and interpret the statistical tables and graphs found in the various chapters of the text
- be given an opportunity to improve their course grades by retesting and by extra credit assignments on social problems of interest to them.

**Content:**

The following topics will be covered through reading chapters of the text, and by the viewing relevant documentary videos on current social problems: **SOC 1020**

- How Sociologists View Social Problems: The Abortion Dilemma
  - elements of social problems
  - the natural history of social problems
  - the role of sociology in social problems
- Interpreting Social Problems: Aging
  - Video: "Who Takes Care of Mom and Dad"
  - sociological theories and social problems
  - symbolic interactionism
  - functionalism
  - conflict theory
- Prostitution, Homosexuality, and Pornography
  - Video: "Gays in the Nineties"
  - theoretical perspectives
  - prostitution as a social problem
  - homosexuality as a social problem
  - pornography as a social problem
- Alcohol and Other Drugs
  - Video: "The Hijacked Brain"
  - theoretical perspective on drugs
  - drug use and abuse
    - recreational mood elevators
    - hallucinogens
    - amphetamines and barbiturates
    - narcotics
- Violence in Society: Rape and Murder
  - Video: "International Sex Slavery"
  - theoretical perspectives on violence
  - rape
  - murder
  - dealing with offenders and victims
- Crime and Criminal Justice
  - Video: "When Cops Go Bad"
  - theoretical perspectives
  - crime as a social problem
    - juvenile delinquency
    - white collar crime
    - professional crime
    - organized crime
    - political crime
  - problems with U.S. criminal justice
- Economic Problems: Wealth and Poverty
  - Video: "Poverty"
  - theoretical perspectives
    - conflict: power elite theory
    - functional: interest coalition
  - theory

- measuring American inequality
  - the "Povertyline"
  - Who are the poor?
  - the feminization of poverty
  - global inequality
- government policies and poverty
- Race and Ethnic Relations
  - Video: "Throw-Away People"
  - theoretical perspectives
  - Native Americans
  - Latinos
  - African Americans
  - Asian Americans
  - civil rights movements
  - government policies
- Sex Discrimination
  - Video: "Sex, Power, and the Workplace"
  - theoretical perspectives
  - discrimination:
    - mass media
    - political
    - economic
  - government policies
- Problems of Physical and Mental Illness
  - Video: "Health Care Report"
  - theoretical perspectives
  - inequalities of care
  - changes in U.S. health care
  - health care dilemma
- The Changing Family
  - Video: "Families Matter, Or Do They?"
- Urban Problems
  - Video: "Los Angeles is Burning"
  - theoretical perspectives
  - decline of the Central City
  - urban violence
  - emerging megalopolis
  - government policies
- Population and Food
  - Video: "The Population Bomb"
  - theoretical perspectives
  - New Malthusian viewpoint
  - Anti Malthusian viewpoint
  - the food distribution problem
- The Environmental Crisis
  - Video: "Population Growth and Environment at the Crossroads"

- theoretical perspectives
- air pollution
- water pollution
- nuclear pollution
- food pollution
- chemical pollution
- energy resources
- War, Terrorism and the Balance of Power
  - Video: "Terrorism: The New World War"
  - the costs of war
  - types of terrorism
  - weapons of mass destruction

### **General Education Outcomes:**

#### 5) Apply a cultural and historical awareness to a variety of phenomena.

Sociology is the scientific study of society. Each social problem covered in this social problems course introduces the problem by briefly reviewing the history of how the behavior which is presently defined as a problem in present-day American society was viewed in the U.S. and other societies in the past, or is viewed by the contemporary societies. Each social problem is also analyzed in a subcultural context within American society, comparing the extent of particular problems in and their effect on the dominant white, African American, Latino American, Asian and Native American groups. The overall objective of the Social Problems course is to help students develop what sociologists call a sociological imagination, or sociological perspective on the social problems covered in the course. This is the ability to connect the macro events of the larger social world of political, economic institutions at the world, national and local level with the micro events which affect the students in their communities, neighborhoods, families and individual lives. Sociological reasoning concerning social problems uses three major perspectives on why certain human behaviors are regarded as social rather than personal problems. The first is the symbolic interactionist perspective which focuses on how people interacting symbolically with each other in social groups form definitions of what constitutes unacceptable behavior to them. The second is the conflict perspective which focuses on how various groups in society or the world get and utilize power to determine what types of behavior will be officially regarded as punishable social problems. The third is the functionalist perspective which focuses on how societies in a changing world attempt to adapt to intergroup and inter-societal conflicts in order to prevent their societies from overall failure or collapse.

#### 7) Apply scientific reasoning to a variety of contexts.

Sociology is a social science based on analysis of social statistics collected by various social entities, such as government agencies or agencies required to collect and report data to various government agencies in the course of performing public services. In addition, sociologists collect many types of social data through independent studies in pursuit of evidence which is used to test aspects of the three major sociological theories. Social problems constitutes a major introductory sub-field in the social science of sociology. It introduces students pursuing a degree in a sub-field, such as criminology, to that sub-field as well as its interrelationship to other social problems, such as urban problems and poverty. Students who are not pursuing a career in sociology are introduced to the scientific way of studying the various social problems which confront American society. Chapter one introduces the student to the way sociologists use scientific methods to study social problems. Chapter two follows up by discussing the three major theoretical perspectives which sociologists apply to

achieve a scientific explanation of a social problem. Subsequent chapters are a presentation of the scientific information about particular major social problems in American society at present. (See contents above.)

8) Apply ethical reasoning to a variety of contexts.

Students learn to develop a sociological imagination -- the ability to connect the macro events of the larger social world with the micro events in community, family, and individual life.

**Key Performance Indicators:**

- Fifty percent of grade based on daily quizzes on assigned reading material and graded notes on audiovisual material presented in class instruction.
  - The student is required to demonstrate on a quiz given at the end of each instruction period that they understand the main sociological concepts in the assigned reading material. The questions are composed of a randomly chosen selection of the concepts covered in the day's reading assignment from the text. Students are able to determine their comprehension by checking their answers with a key sheet posted just outside the classroom door, after they have turned in an answer sheet which will be corrected by the instructor.
  - Every other period, students are required as a part of the study of a particular social problem to watch an in-class documentary video related to the problem, and to take written notes on what they are watching. (See course outline for video titles.) These notes are handed in at the completion of the video and are graded by the instructor for the students' comprehension of the subject matter of the video. The graded notes are returned to the student at the beginning of the next class period. These notes are counted as a part of the student's quiz grade for each of the three units of instruction.
- Fifty percent of grade based on major unit tests covering the material in each unit. A retest is available to all students who wish to improve their unit test scores. The best of the two scores will count in computing the students' overall unit grades.
  - At the end of each of three major units of instruction, the student is required to take a comprehensive test of the main concepts in each of the chapters within that unit. The test questions, like the quiz questions, represent a random sample of the concepts in each of the chapters in the unit. The highest student quiz and test scores from both sections of the course are used to determine the difficulty of the material covered in the unit, and the students' relative percentile performance on the unit is graded A through F on a comparative basis to that score.
  - Students may elect to drop a less than satisfactory unit to raise the remaining units of credit for one less course credit. Students may elect to enter the course for variable credit of 1-3 units during the course in order to meet scholarship, grant and graduation requirements.
  - Students may earn up to one-half of one grade (+ or -) for each unit of credit by satisfactorily completing an extra-credit report from an approved documentary video by handing in at least four handwritten pages, and however many more pages it takes to complete the video. these extra-credit assignments are checked by the instructor for satisfactory fulfillment of the assignment and added to the student's unit scores.

Percentages are approximate.

**Representative Text and/or Supplies:**

- James M. Henslin, *Social Problems*, current edition, Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

**Optimum Class Size: 40**  
**Maximum Class Size: 40**

**Signatures:**

I hereby submit this course syllabus:

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I hereby find this course consistent with the goals and resources of the Social Sciences Department:

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Kerry Hansen, D.A., Professor, Chair

I hereby find this course consistent with the goals and resources of the Social and Behavioral Science Division:

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Sue Dalley, M.S., Associate Professor, Dean

I have discussed the need for library resources related to this class with the person submitting the syllabus:

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Lynn Anderson, MLIS, Technical Services Librarian (Main Campus)

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Michelle Olsen, MLS, Campus Librarian (Richfield Campus)