

SOC 2890
Social Problems - Honors
Dr. Lisa New Freeland
Spring 2008

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Office Hours: MWF 12pm- 1pm
TR 12pm-12:30pm
& by appt.

Course Description

This course will introduce you to current social problems and is designed so that each student may have a clear understanding of the social problems of the world, differing perspectives of the issues, the context of each, and possible individual and collective responses. Classroom time will be divided among a variety of activities, readings, writing, films, and simulation games. For a full experience in this class each student should complete assigned readings, attend regularly, and participate fully. As we come to this class from differing backgrounds and perspectives, respectful listening and speaking practices MUST be maintained. It is my hope that this class will provide an understanding of social problems, the individual and collective impact of the problems, and the reward of societal involvement in both effort and outcome. If you live in our society, you are involved. You must, however, make a choice as to whether you will be part of the problem or part of the solution.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to provide each student with the tools necessary to:

1. Define current and future social problems,
2. Identify elements within each problem,
3. Understand each problem using a sociological perspective,
4. Determine ways to investigate and analyze social problems, and
5. Produce possible responses, both individual and collective, to address the problems.

Texts:

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America. New York: Henry and Holt.
Macionis, John J. 2005. Social Problems, second edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Evaluation

Unit 1 Assignment: Theoretical application of institution of work	25pts
Unit 2 Assignment: Impacts of urban life on labor	25pts
Unit 3 Assignment: Influence of agency on labor	25pts
Final Paper: Synthesis of final labor paper related to book	50pts
Final: Oral Exam (Socratic Dialogue)	25pts

A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=<60%

Class Policies

Attendance is expected at each class meeting. Material provided will extend beyond the information in the text. You are responsible for all material, announcements, and decisions made in class regardless of your attendance. Find a buddy, make a friend, form a group.

Your participation is expected at each class meeting. I will be prepared for an hour of education and thought provoking discussion. Each student should be prepared both with readings and frame of mind. The emphasis in this course is on education rather than evaluation.

Academic dishonesty in any form (including cheating and plagiarism) will not be tolerated.

Please review department and university guidelines on this subject. Consequences of academic dishonesty range from a zero on the assignment to university expulsion.

Consequences will be decided according to the severity of the offense. Every incident is reported to the Department of Judicial Affairs regardless of severity.

Papers and homework assignments are due at the beginning of the designated class period. No assignments will be accepted late for any reason. I will take assignments early.

Excused absences due to school sponsored activities are handled according to university policy.

You should notify me in advance.

Accommodations are made for students with special needs per the guidelines of the Office of Disability Services. Please provide your documentation and see me to make arrangements.

To ensure that the classroom environment is conducive to learning, the following *behaviors are prohibited* in sociology and anthropology classes: Eating, sleeping, reading unrelated materials, exiting and reentering during class, tardiness, discussions not assigned by the professor, and littering.

If you have *questions*, need further explanations, or require additional help with the material, please see me as soon as possible. As with most college courses, this material builds upon itself. Waiting for help puts you at an immediate disadvantage for future content.

Class Format

Experiential learning will be the cornerstone of this course. A weekly format will be followed for each topic. This format serves as your class schedule. I am not disseminating topics and readings now, as I want the class to use simulations prior to reading for optimal experiential effect.

The **semester outline** is:

- Unit 1: Jan 9-Feb. 8;
Social Structure as seen in problems of macrosocial institutions
- Unit 2: Feb. 13 – Mar. 22;
Human Agency as seen in status categories
- Unit 3: Mar. 27- April 26;
Causes, consequences, and responses as seen in contemporary conflict

The **weekly format** is:

- Monday: Simulation game, debriefing to introduce the topic and related social context, assign reading
- Wed/Friday: Reading/Discussion links, films, specific case/issue study, discussion

Assignments

Unit 1 Assignment: Structural application of institution of work 25pts

Using the structural functional perspective, explain the reality of the labor presented in your supplemental book. Paper should be typed, double spaced, stapled, and no longer than two pages. Due February 1.

Unit 2 Assignment: Influence of agency on labor 25pts

Using the symbolic interactionist perspective, explain the reality of the labor presented in your supplemental book. Papers should be typed, double spaced, stapled and no longer than two pages. Due March 7

Unit 3 Assignment: Impacts of urban life on labor 25pts

Using a conflict perspective, explain the reality of the labor presented in your supplemental book. Paper should be typed, double spaced, stapled and no longer than two pages. Due March 28

Grading:

A+ (25points)

Characteristics of an A response AND particularly insightful

A (23-24 points)

Both particularly well developed and comprehensive AND above average writing

B (20-22 points)

Either particularly well developed and comprehensive or writing is above average

C (18-19 points)

Answers the question asked with a complete, appropriate and understandable response; writing is average quality

D (15-17 points)

Response is lacking either the writing quality or content characteristics for a C response

F (13 points)

Response is lacking both the writing quality or content characteristics for a C response

No Credit (0 points)

Paper does not follow the assignment.

Final Paper: Synthesis of final labor paper related to book 50pts

Combine the three previous assignments into a single paper that compares and contrasts the three ways of understanding labor as presented by Ehrenreich. Is it the social structure, the power groups, or our own interpretations of society that produce our everyday reality? Attach the grading rubric; if you wish to use it in your writing portfolio, attach the EWP submission form as well. Due at the final, but I will accept it earlier.

Grading: See attached grading rubric

Your **final exam** will be a comprehensive oral exam during the regularly scheduled exam time covering. I will pose specific questions to the class and grade your responses. The time will be organized as a Socratic dialogue.

FORMAT:

I will have a series of questions prepared that will walk us through the content of the semester in a chronological fashion. The questions are designed to require critical thought and synthesis of the semester content. These are not multiple choice, not true/false, and cannot be answered with a memorized definition or anecdote from class. As each question is posed, I will draw a name from our “purple pumpkin” and ask that student to respond. Each student is allowed one *question pass*. If the student passes on that question, I will draw another name until someone wants to answer the question posed. *Passes* are marked on the name papers and put back into the pumpkin to be drawn again. Once an initial answer is presented to the question, we will take two follow-up responses on a volunteer basis. Finally, the original respondent will be allowed a brief rebuttal to the follow-up responses and any refocus/clarification questions I might have.

At the close of the rebuttal, the process begins anew for the next question in the series.

GRADING

Each student is responsible for a primary question response and two follow-up responses throughout the dialogue and will be graded on their participation as a whole. I will assign grades on a 1-15 point scale for each student. Students will have a preprinted class list and will assign grades on 5-10 point scale for each student in the class including themselves. I will average student assigned points for a maximum of ten points and add that to my point assignment giving each student a maximum of 25 points for the final exam. I have included the student assigned point scale below and will reproduce it on your preprinted class list to aiding in point assignment at the final. My scale is comparable but weighted 5 points heavier.

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|---------------|---|
| A+ (10points) | Characteristics of an A response AND particularly insightful |
| A (9 points) | Both particularly well developed and articulate response AND truly comprehensive |
| B (8 points) | Either particularly well developed and articulate response or truly comprehensive |
| C (7 points) | Answers the question asked with a complete, appropriate and understandable response |
| D (6 points) | Response is lacking a characteristic for a C response |
| F (5 points) | Response is lacking two or more characteristics for a C response |

PREPARATION

The best way to prepare for this exam is to review the chapter summaries and your class notes as a means to think about and process the “big picture.” The reading/discussion links we have in class will serve as a model for these questions.

DISABILITIES STATEMENT

Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) if they wish to discuss any necessary academic accommodations.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY STATEMENT

For medical emergencies, go to the nearest phone and call 911. All faculty offices have telephones and during normal business hours (8-12 and 1-4:30), the Sociology Office (Blair 3170) is open. Be sure to state the floor and room number of the emergency to the 911 operator. If possible, someone should go to the central entrance of Blair Hall to direct EMS personnel to the medical emergency scene. If the medical emergency is on the second or third floor, someone else should hold the elevator on the first floor for EMS use.

TORNADO STATEMENT

In case of a tornado warning, proceed to the center of the hallway on the first floor, near the posted severe weather signs. Under no circumstances should you attempt to leave the building.

BUILDING FIRE STATEMENT

In case of fire, activate the fire alarm and exit the building. When a fire alarm sounds, everyone must exit the building and cannot re-enter the building until allowed by the building coordinator or fire department official. Fire alarms are located at the north and south ends of the corridors just inside the fire doors. The closes exits for all classrooms in Blair are on the north and south ends of the building. Under no circumstance should the elevator be used. Group assembly areas for all classes in Blair are either on the patio area between Blair and Old Main or on the southeast corner of the North Quad. As you exit the building, continue moving well away from the exits so that you do not impede the egress of other students or the work of fire officials. Move a safe distance away from the building.