San José State University  
Sociology Department  
SOCI 80 Social Problems, Section 1

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Office Hours: Friday 8 to 9 AM & By Appointment  
Class Days/Time: M, W 3 to 4:15 PM  
Classroom: Boccardo Business Center 102  
GE/SJSU Studies Category: Core GE Area D3

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging:

Copies of the course materials such as the syllabus, major assignment handouts, etc. may be found on my faculty web page accessible through the Quick Links>Faculty Web Page links on the SJSU home page. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor).

Course Description:

This course will explore the major social problems facing American society today. Students will define and analyze the causes and consequences of social problems and examine possible solutions. Students will develop critical thinking skills, apply basic concept of sociology and theory to specific social problems. This course will increase the student’s understanding of human behavior, social interaction and social location of social problems within society. This will be approached in the context of using value systems, economic structures, political institutions, social groups and natural environments as a paradigm for understanding social problems.

What is a social problem? Is defining a social problem a reflection of one’s own value system? Who determines what constitutes a social problem? How are we as individuals affected by problems such as crime, drug abuse, poverty, sexism, and racism? Do some people stand to gain from others’ misfortunes? In what ways can we best solve social problems and initiate social change?

Course Goals & Student Learning Objectives:

Linkage between Specific Learning Objectives and Student Activities/Experience:
Learning Objective 1: Students shall be able to identify and analyze the social dimension of society as a context for human life, the processes of social change and social continuity, the role of human agency in those social processes, and the forces that engender social cohesion and fragmentation.

Small group discussions and written assignments will be used to help identify and analyze the social dimension of society, social change, and social forces behind social cohesion and fragmentation.

Learning Objective 2: Students will be able to place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. Group discussions, written assignments, film clips and artifacts (articles, pop culture items, movies, etc.) that depict a current social problem will be used to discuss social problems in cultural, historical, environmental and spatial contexts. Each artifact will be accompanied by a 2 page written paper (a minimum of 500 words) summarizing the issue and social solutions.

Learning Objective 3: Students will be able to identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them.

Small group discussions and written assignments on artifacts will be used to help students identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional and national identities and recognize the similarities and differences between them.

Learning Objective 4: Students will be able to evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. Written assignments on artifacts will be used to help students identify contemporary artifacts as social problems and analyze such social problems from sociological perspectives.

Learning Objective 5: Students will be able to apply multidisciplinary material to a topic relevant to policy and social action at the local, national, and/or international levels. The use of small group discussions will assist students in evaluating social issues and analyzing possible social action resolutions.

Required Texts/Readings:


http://www.sagepub.com/books/Book237173?siteId=sage-us&prodTypes=any&q=social+problems&fs=1

Academic Integrity:
Students should know that the University’s Academic Integrity Policy is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources:

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

Learning Assistance Resource Center:

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center. It is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. The center provides support services, such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. The LARC website is located at http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/.

SJSU Writing Center:
The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The Writing Center website is located at http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/.

Peer Mentor Center:

The Peer Mentor Center is located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. The Peer Mentor Center is staffed with Peer Mentors who excel in helping students manage university life, tackling problems that range from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. On the road to graduation, Peer Mentors are navigators, offering “roadside assistance” to peers who feel a bit lost or simply need help mapping out the locations of campus resources. Peer Mentor services are free and available on a drop –in basis, no reservation required. Website of Peer Mentor Center is located at http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/.

Classroom Protocol:

In keeping with the Student Code of Conduct concerning the maintenance of a learning environment, it is expected that students will not receive or place calls during class time. Should a student anticipate an emergency call during class time, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor in advance of the class and to make arrangements accordingly.

Laptops & Tablets are wonderful tools, but there is both a time and place for them in the classroom. The machine should be used for in class activities. Hiding behind a laptop, answering e-mail, playing games, surfing the web etc. will not be tolerated. Instructors may ask students to close laptops/tablets at specific times during class.

Academic Honesty:

According to the University's Academic Integrity Policy, "... cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means" (see Section 1.1.1 through 1.1.7). Plagiarism is "... the act of representing the work of another as one's own without appropriate credit, regardless of how that work was obtained, and/or submitting it to fulfill academic requirements" (see section 1.2.1 and 1.2.2). Violation of the university policy can result in sever consequences, up to and including dismissal from the University.

Academic dishonesty could involve:

- Having a tutor or friend complete a portion of your assignments
- Having a reviewer make extensive revisions to an assignment
- Copying work submitted by another student to a public class meeting
- Using information from online information services without proper citation
Dropping and Adding:

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. Information on add/drops are available at http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-298.html. Information about late drop is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

Assignment Late Policy:

Assignments submitted after the day of the classroom session in which they are due may be assessed a point penalty. Assignments that are submitted after the due date will have a 30% reduction in score if received within 2 weeks of due date, and a “0” for anything received after that. HOWEVER, nothing will be accepted after the last day of instruction.

Class Participation:

You will be expected to actively participate in class discussions and activities. We learn from each other as well as from the instructor. Students who miss class cannot receive participation points for that day. Students who arrive late or leave early should also anticipate a reduced participation grade. The quality of contributions will be based on:

1. Knowledge of assigned readings
2. Application of critical thinking skills
3. Application of theory to real life situations
4. Completed Online Discussion Questions

Attendance:

- You are responsible for all the material presented in class whether or not you are present. Exams often include questions on material presented only in class, so performance on these indirectly reflects attendance. School is like your job. It will only pay if you attend.
- If you decide not to remain in the class, for whatever reason, you are responsible for dropping. Do not rely on the Instructor to take on this responsibility.
- In the event you miss class, talk to a friend and do your best to catch up on missed class notes, work, and films. All absences are treated the same no matter what the excuse.

Popular American Culture Paper
In preparation for this paper, compile an inventory of every artifact of popular culture that you come into contact with (e.g., music videos, fast food establishments, comic book) over the course of **three days**.

- After compiling this inventory, prepare a 700 to 1,050-word paper in which you describe the impact that popular American culture has on your personal decision making. In your paper, be sure to address the following items:
  - Briefly describe popular American culture.
  - Identify patterns in the list of pop culture artifacts in your inventory.
  - Describe which sorts of items are more common than others, and identify which themes are prevalent.
  - Describe the values that are being communicated by the items listed in your compiled inventory (e.g., convenience, pleasure, health, pursuit of wealth, social responsibility).
  - Determine the extent to which you feel the values of popular American culture have directly impacted your personal decision making. Do you consider yourself very aware of the influence of popular culture on your decision making? Or has the influence been more subconscious? Justify your answer.
  - Attach your inventory to your paper.
  - The paper must follow APA format.
  - A minimum of 2-5 credible & scholarly (peer reviewed) sources.

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**Social Problems Paper**

Select a U.S. social phenomenon, problem, or issue that you think warrants sociological research. (i.e. Internet Dating, Homelessness, Gangs, Welfare, Divorce Rates, Human Rights, etc.)

- Write a 700 to 1,050-word paper in of the social problem and an explanation of the social problem based on a sociological perspective (social conflict, structural-functional, or symbolic interactionism).
- You may choose to focus on a specific time period or location regarding your selected social problem. Be sure to state from which perspective you are explaining the social problem, and give specific examples from the data indicating the problem exist in American society.
- The paper must follow APA format.
- A minimum of 2-5 credible & scholarly (peer reviewed) sources.

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**Team Project & Presentation - Examine American Society through a Sociological Perspective**

- Utilize your team’s assigned sociological perspective & social problem.
- Based on your team’s Review of Literature:
- Identify the societal impact of your team’s social problem in American Society.
• Identify the role mass media such as music, radio, television, and the motion pictures, etc. plays in the production & dissemination of your team’s social problem.

• Team 1: Functionalist perspective
• Team 2: Conflict perspective
• Team 3: Feminist perspective
• Team 4: Symbolic Interactionist perspective
• Team 5: Functionalist perspective
• Team 6: Conflict perspective
• Team 7: Feminist perspective
• Team 8: Symbolic Interactionist perspective
• Team 9: Conflict perspective
• Team 10: Symbolic Interactionist perspective

**Exams:**

There will be three exams that will be based on concepts and ideas from the discussions, readings, and presentations. These exams will assess your understanding of lecture materials, text book readings and films associated with this course. All exams will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. **More Details Will Be Forthcoming.**

**Point Values for Course Assignments:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular American Culture Paper</td>
<td>9/11/13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam # 1 {Ch 1-5}</td>
<td>9/25/13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam # 2 {Ch 6-10}</td>
<td>10/30/13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Project &amp; Presentation</td>
<td>11/11/13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Problems Paper</td>
<td>11/27/13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation (including online discussion questions)</td>
<td>All Semester</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam {Ch 11-15}</td>
<td>12/13/13</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12:15PM to 2:30PM</td>
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**Total Points** 100
Grades

A = Excellent performance. Work is exemplary and worthy of emulation by others. Student constructively contributes to the learning environment.

B = Above average performance. All assignments are complete and on time and exhibit a complete understanding and an ability to apply concepts.

C = Average performance. Student accomplishes only the minimum requirements or does not complete all assignments. Oral and written communication is at an acceptable level for a college student.

D = Work is below acceptable level for a college student. Student shows only a very basic understanding of the material or does not meet all assignment requirements as described in this syllabus.

F = Work is not passing. Student’s work is incomplete, chronically late, or does not apply information and concepts in a satisfactory manner.

Grading Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/21</td>
<td></td>
<td>Introductions, Course Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/26 &amp; 8/27</td>
<td>Review Chapter 1 PPT</td>
<td>In Class Activities, Team Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/2 &amp; 9/4</td>
<td>Review Chapter 2 PPT</td>
<td>In Class Activities, Team Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/9 &amp; 9/11</td>
<td>Review Chapter 3 PPT</td>
<td><strong>Sociological Perspective Paper</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9/16 &amp; 9/18</td>
<td>Review Chapter 4 PPT</td>
<td>In Class Activities, Team Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/23 &amp; 9/25</td>
<td>Review Chapter 5 PPT</td>
<td><strong>Exam # 1 {Ch 1-5}</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/30 &amp; 10/2</td>
<td>Review Chapter 6 PPT</td>
<td>In Class Activities, Team Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/7 &amp; 10/9</td>
<td>Review Chapter 7 PPT</td>
<td>In Class Activities, Team Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/14 &amp; 10/16</td>
<td>Review Chapter 8 PPT</td>
<td>In Class Activities, Team Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity 1</td>
<td>Activity 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/21 &amp; 10/23</td>
<td>Review Chapter 9 PPT</td>
<td>In Class Activities, Team Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/28 &amp; 10/30</td>
<td>Review Chapter 10 PPT</td>
<td><strong>Exam # 2 {Ch 6-10}</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11/4 &amp; 11/6</td>
<td>Review Chapter 11 PPT</td>
<td>Review Chapter 12 PPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/11 &amp; 11/13</td>
<td><strong>Team Project Presentations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Team Project Presentations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18 &amp; 11/20</td>
<td>Review Chapter 13 PPT</td>
<td>In Class Activities, Team Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/25 &amp; 11/27</td>
<td>Review Chapter 14 PPT</td>
<td><strong>Social Problems Paper Due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12/4 &amp; 12/6</td>
<td>Review Chapter 15 PPT</td>
<td>In Class Activities, Team Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13</td>
<td><strong>Final Exam from 12:15 to 2:30 PM</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapters 11 to 15</strong></td>
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</table>