COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR BASIC INFORMATION

Course: Sociology 80-1 – Social Problems
Core GE-Area D1
Instructor: Stephen J. Morewitz, Ph.D.
Class Location, Day/Time: Boccardo Business Ctr. 103 MW, 9:00 AM – 10:15 AM
Office: BT 465
E-mail: stephen.morewitz@sjsu.edu
Tel: (408) 924-5329 (email communication is preferred)
Office Hours: Mon., 7:45 AM-8:45 AM

Required Texts:


Students will receive Powerpoint outlines and course material electronically and will view videos.

This course meets the requirement for the Core GE area D1 for the Social Sciences. As a core GE course, a minimum of 1500 words of writing is required!

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the study of social problems, e.g., social conditions that a segment of society views as harmful to members of society and in need of remedy. We will explore many of the major issues and concerns related to the study of social problems from a global perspective. We will analyze social problems in terms of their social definitions, causes, and solutions. Social problems, including illness and health care system problems, substance abuse, family problems, poverty and inequality, immigration problems, population growth and aging, war, and environmental dangers, will be analyzed in terms of their objective and subjective elements. Emphasis will be placed on understanding social problems from major sociological perspectives, including structural-functional, conflict, and symbolic interactionist viewpoints.

The greensheet (syllabus) is subject to change with notification.
GE Learning Objectives

1. 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.
   *Activities designed to help you meet this objective:
   - Lectures, readings, class discussions, online discussions, and exams
   - Social Problems Field Interview Project
   - Social Problems Debate Project
   - Social Problems Key Terms: Definitions and Examples

2. Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts.
   *Activities designed to help you meet this objective:
   - Lectures, readings, class discussions, online discussions, and exams
   - Social Problems Field Interview Project
   - Social Problems Debate Project
   - Social Problems Key Terms: Definitions and Examples

3. 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.
   *Activities designed to help you meet this objective:
   - Lectures, readings, class discussions, online discussions, and exams
   - Social Problems Field Interview Project
   - Social Problems Debate Project
   - Social Problems Key Terms: Definitions and Examples

4. To evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues.
   *Activities designed to help you meet this objective:
   - Lectures, readings, class discussions, online discussions, and exams
   - Social Problems Field Interview Project
   - Social Problems Debate Project
   - Social Problems Key Terms: Definitions and Examples

5. Students will be able to recognize the interaction of social institutions, culture, and environment with the behavior of individuals.
   *Activities designed to help you meet this objective:
   - Lectures, readings, class discussions, online discussions, and exams
   - Social Problems Field Interview Project
   - Social Problems Debate Project
   - Social Problem Key Terms: Definitions and Examples
Course Learning Objectives:

- To comprehend and utilize the basic language, theories, and methods involved in the study of social problems
- Grasp and provide examples of how social problems affect the roles of social institutions and status characteristics in the lives and life chances of diverse categories of people – in both micro and macro settings – from competing sociological perspectives
- Understand and evaluate the cross cutting and multiple social and cultural contemporary social forces and historical contexts that shape social problems in terms of their social definition, causes, and solutions
- Identify and analyze current social problems and assess their effect on ones’ self and various human groups
- Realize that human agency (action) is a significant social force, and be able to supply illustrations of such activities and outcomes can influence social problems in terms their social definition, causes, and solutions

Grades:

The grades for this course will be based on the following: 1) Midterm 2) Final Exam, 3) Social Problems Debate Project, 4) Social Problems Field Interview Project, 5) Social Problems Key Terms: Definitions and Examples, and 6) Class participation. A brief description of these activities and grading scale is listed below.

1) The Midterm (March 12, 2014) will consist of multiple choice questions and true/false items. They will be based on the readings, class lectures, and class/online discussions.

2) Final Exam (May 16, 7:15-9:30 AM) will consist of multiple choice questions and true/false items. They will be based on the readings, class lectures, and class/online discussions.

3) The Social Problems Field Interview Project paper will be a maximum 5-page paper (+ title page and list of references) due beginning April 2, 2014. Students will work in small groups to conduct a social problem-oriented field interview with an approved organization. These field interviews will test a social problem-based hypothesis using one independent variable and one dependent variable based on a review of peer-reviewed social problems literature. Students must follow the Liza format exactly with regard to the font style, font size, margins, headings, in-text reference format, and list of references format (see Liza format file on Canvas). Findings will be presented in class.

4) The Social Problems Debate Project paper will be a maximum 5-page paper (+ title page and list of references) due beginning May 5, 2014. Students will work in small groups to plan and carry out an in-class debate based on a review of the peer-reviewed social problems literature. Students must follow the Liza format exactly with regard to the font style, font size, margins, headings, in-text reference format, and list of references format (see Liza format file on Canvas). Results will be presented in class.
5) Social Problems Key Terms: Definitions and Examples. Students will select two key terms per chapter in Mooney or Morewitz. For each key term, the students will define it and give an example of this key term. Findings will be submitted weekly to the Canvas and also presented in class each week.

Each of these assignments is designed to help students meet all of the five Course Learning Objectives listed above. In order to help students to improve their research and writing skills, we will have in-class peer planning and editing sessions for these written assignments. The feedback you will receive on these papers is intended to help you to improve your performance on the next writing assignment. Participation in the peer planning and editing exercises counts as part of your class participation grade.

**Grading Scale:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Midterm:  25%</th>
<th>92.1% - 98% = A</th>
<th>78% - 79.9% = C+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam: 30%</td>
<td>90% - 92% =A-</td>
<td>72.1% - 77.9% = C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Interview: 20%</td>
<td>88% - 89.9% = B+</td>
<td>70% - 72% = C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debate Project: 20%</td>
<td>82.1% – 87.9% = B</td>
<td>68% - 69.9% = D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments 5%</td>
<td>80% - 82% = B-</td>
<td>62.1% - 67.9% = D</td>
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**Policies:**

1. The **Field Interview and Debate projects must be submitted to the Canvas and also turned in by hand during class.** Hard copies must also be stapled! No late papers will be accepted without a documented medical/legal emergency. If you foresee a problem with meeting a deadline, you need to speak with me about it as soon as possible. Waiting until the last minute is not a good idea. Late exams need to be taken as soon as possible.

2. Academic Honesty: Cheating on exams or written assignments is not allowed and will not be tolerated. Most importantly, this includes plagiarism on the formal written assignments. Basically, plagiarism includes using words and ideas of others without giving proper credit, as well as the outright copying of others’ work. In cases of substantiated violations of the academic integrity policy (i.e., there is sufficient evidence that you have cheated on any assignment), you will automatically fail the course.

**Disability Accommodations:**

Any student with a pre-existing disability requiring accommodation (as documented by the Disability Resource Center) should make this need known to the instructor during the first two weeks of the course. Every effort will be made to accommodate your need.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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| Week 1 | Jan. 27, 29 | • Introductions  
• Overview of course and syllabus  
• Clarification of course requirements  
• Thinking about social problems | • Purchase textbooks.  
• Plan projects & select team members  
• Chapter 1 in Mooney, et al.  
• Chapter 1 in Morewitz |
|---|---|---|---|
| Week 2 | Feb. 3, 5 | • Physical and mental health and health care | • Chapter 2 in Mooney, et al.  
• Chapter 2 in Morewitz |
| Week 3 | Feb. 10, 12 | • Alcohol and other drugs | • Chapter 3 in Mooney, et al.  
• Chapter 3 in Morewitz |
| Week 4 | Feb. 17, 19 | • Crime and social control | • Chapter 4 in Mooney, et al.  
• Chapter 4 in Morewitz |
| Week 5 | Feb. 24, 26 | • Family problems | • Chapter 5 in Mooney, et al.  
• Chapter 5 in Morewitz |

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| Week 6 | Mar. 3, 5 | • Poverty and economic inequality | • Chapter 6 in Mooney, et al.  
• Chapter 6 in Morewitz |
| Week 7 | Mar. 10, 12 | • Work and unemployment | • Chapter 7 in Mooney, et al.  
• Chapter 7 in Morewitz  
• Midterm on March 12, 2014 |
| Week 8 | Mar. 17, 19 | • Problems in education | • Chapter 8 in Mooney, et al.  
• Chapter 8 in Morewitz |
| Week 9 | Mar. 24, 26 | | |
| SPRING RECESS-NO CLASSES | | |
| Week 10 | Mar. 31 | (NO CLASS,) | • Race, ethnicity, & immigration  
• Gender inequality  
• Chapters 9 & 10 in Mooney, et al.  
• Chapters 9 & 10 in Morewitz  
• Field Interviews due on April |
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<tr>
<td>Week 16</td>
<td>Debate projects</td>
<td>Debate Projects</td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>Review of course</td>
<td>(continuation if necessary)</td>
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<td>Review of course</td>
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