

Sociology 302 (001)—Contemporary Social Problems
Spring 2010
Instructor: Jessica Abbott

Time and Place: *Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:00-3:15, Faner 2525*

Instructor's Contact Information:

Phone: 453-7624

Email: ab1227@siu.edu

Office: Faner 3427

Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 11:50-1:50

Course Goals and Objectives:

This course is designed to introduce you to what *some* call social problems. Specifically, in this class we will cover how an *issue* comes to be defined as a *problem*: who says it is a problem, what rationale is given for it being a problem, and what solution is given to solve it. Throughout the semester, we will cover these questions as well as discuss specific instance of social problems (e.g., bullying, crime, smoking). As you will soon see, this course is heavily reliant on the social constructionist perspective (we will discuss what this is in detail very soon). By the end of the semester, you should not only have a firm grasp on the various concepts discussed, but also be able to answer important questions regarding current social "problems."

Required Texts:

Loseke, Donileen R. 2003. *Thinking About Social Problems*, 2nd ed. New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Loseke, Donileen R., and Joel Best. 2003. *Social Problems: Constructionist Readings*. New York: Walter de Gruyter.

TBA: Numerous reserve readings at lib.siu.edu

Course Requirements

EXAMS: In this class, you will have two exams worth 100 points each, a mid-term and a final (total 200 points). Both exams will be essay/short answer. The class session before the exam, I will hand out a comprehensive study guide.

POP QUIZZES: To ensure that you are keeping up with the reading material, there will be 10 pop quizzes worth 10 points each throughout the semester (100 points total). To maximize your scores on quizzes, make sure you have a read all the material to be covered in class on the day of the quiz.

SHORT PAPERS: Instead of having one extended length paper for the course, you will have 4 short papers (4-5 pages) due throughout the semester (50 points each, for a total of 200 points). With each paper, you will choose what to write from a list of topics/ideas I hand out. For each of these papers, you must not only use the readings from class, but

also do your own research and cite at least 3-4 outside references. Instructions for each paper will be given at least 2 class sessions before the paper is due.

ATTENDANCE PARTICIPATION: You are expected to not only come to class, but also to participate in class discussions/activities. At the beginning of class each day, I will take attendance. You get three free misses. Each absence after three results in two points being deducted from the 50 points slated for attendance. Participation also is worth 50 points. I will keep track of how often you participate in class, and base your participation grade on my calculations.

Grading:

Mid-Term Exam	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Pop Quizzes	100 points
Short Paper 1	50 points
Short Paper 2	50 points
Short Paper 3	50 points
Short Paper 4	50 points
Attendance	50 points
Participation	50 points

Total Possible Points 600

540-600	A
480-539	B
420-479	C
360-419	D
Under 360	F

Classroom Respect:

Please turn off cell phones upon entering the classroom. Also, to ensure a conducive learning environment, refrain from speaking to your neighbor, text messaging, etc.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is taking someone else's work and using it as if it were your own. This is unacceptable in this course. If you believe you have mistakenly plagiarized on an assignment or the final proposal, please see me.

Emergency Procedures: Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, on BERT's website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Safety's website www.dps.siu.edu, and in Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

The instructor will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The BERT Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

January 19-21

Introduction to the course

January 26-28

Loseke: Chapter 1: Examining Social Problems

Loseke and Best: (1) The Changing Meanings of Spanking; (2) Bullying as a Social Problem in Great Britain

February 2-4

Film Week: "Reefer Madness" and "Dazed and Confused"—may bleed over into next week

February 9-11

Short Paper 1 discussion

Loseke: Chapter 2: Claims-Makers and Audiences

Loseke and Best: (6) Promoters of Hate Crime Legislation; (7) Psychiatrists Construct Homosexuality; (8) Television Talk Shows Construct Morality

February 16-18

**February 16: Short Paper 1 due

Loseke: Chapter 3: Constructing Conditions

Loseke and Best: (9) Smoking Problems in Japan; (10) Crime Frames and Their Sponsors; (11) Framing in the Father's Rights Movement

February 23-25

Loseke: Chapter 4: Constructing People

Loseke and Best: (13) The Rhetorical Appeal of Random Violence; (15) Science Constructs PMS; (16) Multicultural Education as Moral Drama

March 2-4

Mid-Term Review

Short Paper 2 discussion

**March 4: Mid-Term Exam

March 9-11

Spring Break—No Class

March 16-18

**March 16: Short Paper 2 due

Loseke: Chapter 5: Constructing Solutions

Loseke and Best: (17) The Homeless Mentally Ill; (18) Constructing a War on Drugs; (19) Urine Testing and Social Control; (20) The Size Acceptance Movement

March 23-25

Loseke: Chapter 6: Social Problems and Everyday Life

Loseke and Best: (21) Constructing the Need for "Low Fat" Food; (22) Pregnant Women as a Social Problem; (24) The Beliefs of Recover Religion

March 30-April 1

Film Week: TBA

April 6-April 8

Short Paper 3 discussion

Readings TBA

April 13-15

Loseke: Chapter 7: Social Problems and Troubled People

Loseke and Best: (25) Medicalizing Childhood; (26) Teaching Gifted Children; (27) Constructing Insanity in Involuntary Commitment Hearings; (28) Formula Stories and Support Groups for Battered Women

April 20-22

**April 20: Short Paper 3 due

Readings TBA

April 27-29

Short Paper 4 discussion

Loseke: Chapter 8: Evaluating Constructionist Perspectives on Social Problems

Loseke and Best: (29) "Crack Babies" and the Politics of Mothering; (30) The Symbolic Meanings of "Pedophile Priests"; (31) Horror Stories and the Construction of Child Abuse; (32) Constructing the "Jewish Problem" in Nazi Germany

May 4-6

Semester Wrap-Up

May 6: Short Paper 4 due

May 10-14

Final Exam Week: Exam date/time TBA

**This schedule is tentative. I reserve the right to change dates and topics throughout the semester.