

Contemporary Social Problems

SOC 302, Spring 2011

Class Location: Faner 1326, Class Schedule: MWF 10:00am-10:50 am

Professor: Muhammed Asadi

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Office Hours: M- 11:30am-1:30pm, T 11:30am-1:30pm, W 11:30am-1:30pm, Th: by appointment only
F- by appointment only

The Field

Sociology is the scientific study of society. It examines the ways in which society is structured, and the factors that contribute to its stability, conflict and eventual change. It includes study of both micro processes through which we make sense of the world in which we live as individuals and members of intimate groups, and macro structures in which we participate as students, professors, employees, employers, and citizens or powerful decision makers. Sociology also studies how your identity develops, how you come to see yourself and the world. **Social Problems** study is a subfield within sociology. Any study of social problems that neglects the sociological context of how certain conditions come to be seen and felt as “problems” would be inadequate in either seeking explanations for those problems and/or prescriptions for their solutions. What are understood as “Social Problems” varies based on a society’s history and its particular structure (institutions and culture), as such all problems are relative to time and place in their popular perception by people. Part of this course will be to uncover why certain phenomenon come to be considered social problems and others do not, the role of elites in defining popular culture and hence popular social problems and institutional solutions to contemporary social problems.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to examine the basic components of society that together form the social structure, its relationship to culture and the mismatch between the two that results in the phenomenon of **social problems**. We will examine culture, socialization, social institutions and social organization and social problems related to social institutions in contemporary global society. The primary goal of this class is to help students learn about the society in which they live within a wider global context and its connections with the more micro ‘personal world’ of everyday lives. At the end of this class, I expect students to be comfortable with

1. The connection between social structure and culture
2. Basic theoretical paradigms in sociological analysis as explanations for various social problems
3. An ability to translate their privately felt ‘personal troubles’ into publicly observed ‘public issues’ that are in essence **social problems** related to a society’s institutional order.

Course Material:

Required Power point Notes: Can be downloaded from <http://socialproblems.asadi.org> (Most of what is in your exams will be from these notes, so it is important that you download them all at your earliest)

Required Text Book: **Social Problems: A Critical Approach** by Kenneth J. Neubeck, Mary Alice Neubeck and Davita Silfen Glasberg. New York: Mc Graw Hill

ISBN-13: 978-0072968040. (Inexpensive used copies (under \$10) are available online at www.amazon.com)

Supplementary Book: Mills, C. Wright. *The Sociological Imagination*. 1959. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 0195133730 (Note: Chapters 1 & the appendix (On Intellectual Craftsmanship) are required readings and you will be tested on the material therein). I highly recommend that you purchase this book for future reference regardless of what your major might be.

Course Policies:

- 1 Attendance is mandatory. The course is not taught or tested merely from the textbook. Therefore, attendance is crucial to your ability to achieve success in this course. It is vital that your attendance remains in good standing in order to pass the course. You are allowed a maximum of three unexcused absences.
 - 2 I expect you to read the text section assigned for the class before the class for relevant participation. The chapters listed are (reading) homework and should be completed as such before the class.
 - 3 Grade scale:
 - o 90% or more gets an A
 - o 80% to 89% gets a B
 - o 70% to 79% gets a C
 - o 61% to 69% gets a D
 - o Those getting below 61% get an F
- 1 Class Format: The class will be a mix of lecture material and group discussions. My hope is that you all are eager to participate in class discussions. Many of the issues we will be discussing will challenge common perspectives, and should be interesting. Issues will be discussed from a sociological perspective and not a Republican, Democrat, Conservative or Liberal perspective.
 - 2 Course Expectations: You are responsible for all course material. Anything being discussed in the course can be used for testing purposes. This includes lectures, class discussions, and student presentations.
 - 3 Exams: There will be three exams, the first two (multiple-choice) worth 25% of the grade each. The final exam (multiple-choice) will be worth 25% of the grade as well. Surprise quizzes, class participation/discussion/attendance etc, will be 5% of the grade. The rest, 20% will be based on your term paper. It is mandatory that you be present for the exams and you turn your paper in on time. I will not give a makeup exam without a valid explanation for not being able to take the test when scheduled (a doctor's written excuse is such an example), and no incompletes are given in this class. The alternative to a missed test without a valid excuse usually involves a 15-page double-spaced take-home essay paper in addition to the term paper, or a score of "0". If you have a time conflict with the tests, please let me know in advance so the matter can be dealt with without complications later.
 - 4 Term Paper (20% of your grade): A seven page (double spaced) typed report on any social problem that concerns you (make sure it is a "social problem" based on how we will define social problems in class) from the sociological perspective: 1)define the problem, 2)its history, when it came to be considered a 'problem', 3)why it is considered a problem from a sociological point of view, and 4)institutional solutions that you prescribe to 'fix' that problem, and 5)how you might go about implementing your solutions given the country's power structure. The report is to be turned in at least three weeks prior to the Final exam. The report must be **properly credited and cited** as well as (at least) **5 sociological concepts** learned in class must be **clearly highlighted** in the summary report. I suggest that you do not begin work on the paper before the third week of

class in order to familiarize yourself with basic concepts that will be necessary in writing the paper.

- 5 Cheating and Plagiarism: Regarding my policy for cheating and plagiarism; any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an “F” for the course.
- 6 Pagers and Phones: Please turn these items off to minimize disruptions.
- 7 Special Needs: If you require special learning needs because of any disability, please see me as soon as possible.
- 8 Assessment: You will have the opportunity to assess the quality of teaching as it relates to your overall learning in this course, in the class period after every exam (except the Final). This is in addition to the teacher evaluation at the end of the semester.

Please Note: This is a tentative schedule which can be subject to change. I will consult with you (the students) and inform you in a timely manner about any changes we make. The subject matter of this course makes it a unique learning experience and for some of you it might define your career choice and for all of you it will relate to some aspect of your daily lives. I hope you enjoy your introduction to the sociology of social problems and can use the concepts you learn in this class in your everyday lives for personal and social change.

Emergency Procedures:

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some 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, available on the BERT’S website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Public Safety’s website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guidelines pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors 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 Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

Tentative Course Schedule

Instructor reserves the right to alter this schedule in consultation with the students

Week, Date Assignments/Tests Chapter(s)

Week 1: The Sociological Imagination and approaches to the study of social problems

W 1/19, F 1/21

Neubeck, Chapter 1, Pages 2-22

Mills, Chapter 1. The Promise

Week 2: Chapter one and power point on Research methods

M 1/24, W 1/26, F 1/28

Week 3: Concentration of Economic and Political Power

M 1/31, W 2/2, F 2/4

Neubeck, Chapter 2, Pages 30-54

Web Article, Mills, *Power Elite* (http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Book_Excerpts/PowerElite.html)

Can be accessed through, <http://www.asadi.org>, see bar on left under *Power Elite*.

Week 4 & 5: Militarism, War and Terrorism

M 2/7, W 2/9, F 2/11

Neubeck, Chapter 3, Pages 60-88

Web Article, Herman, *Media Propaganda Model*.

Can be accessed through <http://www.asadi.org>, see bar on left under same title.

Exam 1 **M 2/14**: chapters 1,2,3 and Mills chapter 1 plus class notes (50 multiple choice questions plus 1 diagram)

Week 6: W 2/16, F 2/18

The Global Context: Population and Underdevelopment

Neubeck, Chapter 4, Pages 96-121

Week 7: Economic Inequality and Poverty

M 2/21, W 2/23, F 2/25

Neubeck, Chapter 6, Pages 162-192

Week 8: Racism

M 2/28, W 3/2, F 3/4

Neubeck, Chapter 7, Pages 196-232

Spring Break No Class 3/12 to 3/20

Week 9: Sexism

M 3/7, W 3/9, F 3/11

Neubeck, Chapter 8, Pages 238-262

Th 3/21-Exam 2 over Chapters 4,6,7,8 (50 multiple choice questions plus 1 diagram)

Week 10: M 3/23, W 3/25, F 3/28

**1. Institutional Problems:
The Changing Structure of Work**

Neubeck, Chapter 11, Pages 326-367

Week 11: Institutional Problems continued: (might omit- tentative)

M 3/30, W 4/01, F 4/04

Schooling and Unequal Educational Opportunity

Neubeck, Chapter 12, Pages 362-357.

Week 12: Institutional Problems Continued: (might omit- tentative)

M 4/06, W 4/8, F 4/11

Health Care

Neubeck, Chapter 13, Pages 396-425.

Week 13: Institutional Problems Continued (might omit- tentative):

M 4/13, W 4/15 , F4/18

Family related problems

Neubeck, Chapter 14, Pages 430-454.

Week 15: Crime and Criminal Behavior:

M 4/20, W 4/22, F 4/25

Neubeck, Chapter 15, Pages 462-502

Week 17: On Intellectual Craftsmanship

(Papers due by May 2 - 20% of your grade)

M 5/02 Mills, Appendix- On Intellectual Craftsmanship

PowerPoint- *The Political Economy of War*

Week 18-19: Catch up, Wrap up and Review

W 5/4 and F 5/6

The Final Exam is non-comprehensive except for what we covered in the first week of class (Neubeck chapter 1, Mills chapter 1 and class notes). For the Final you are responsible for Chapters 11,12,13,14,15 & Mills chapter 1 and appendix unless otherwise stated in class.

Final Exam

Fri., May 13th. 7:50 am to 9:50 am, same class room 55 multiple choice- 25% of your grade