

Course Description:

This seminar will explore issues in social constructionist social problems theory. Rather than focusing on the *conditions* we ordinarily think of as social problems, we will examine how various actors come to *define* conditions as problematic, the claims-making and other strategies that take place in these definitional processes, and some outcomes of these processes for specific cases. How is it that a social phenomenon comes to be seen as a social issue? How do people decide what is or is not a social problem, and how do they organize to get others to agree? What is at stake in these processes? We will begin with an introduction to constructionist theory and some debates regarding its utility. We will then examine stages and components of social problems construction. The goals of this course are to enable students to critically assess relevant theory, methods, and analyses in general terms, evaluate how well empirical exemplars make use of the approach, and draw upon it for their own research agendas.

Texts:

Altheide, David. 2006. Terrorism and the Politics of Fear. AltaMira Press.

Armstrong, Elizabeth M. 2008. Conceiving Risk, Bearing Responsibility: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and the Diagnosis of Moral Disorder. John Hopkins Press.

Heiner, Robert. 2005. Social Problems: An Introduction to Critical Constructionism. 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press.

Jenkins, Phillip. Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America. Oxford University Press.

Schneider, Anne and Helen Ingram. 2005. Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy. New York: SUNY Press.

- Readings available through JSTOR and other full-text sources and on ER (electronic course reserve) in Morris Library. If not otherwise noted, look in JSTOR.

Seminar Requirements And Grading For Sociology 550

1. Regular attendance and active participation in discussion.
2. Completion of all readings on schedule.
3. Serving as discussion leader(s) as assigned. NOTE: students will turn in a **brief** précis (1-2 paragraphs MAXIMUM) for each of the readings or book chapters they will be presenting (and should prepare enough copies for everyone. I will provide guidelines).
4. Oral presentation of seminar paper. These will be organized as sessions, exactly like those one finds at our annual professional meetings (each presenter will have 15-20 minutes; I will provide guidelines).
5. Seminar paper (due by 3:00 April 29. I will provide guidelines).

SEMINAR PAPER

The paper (of **potential** journal quality and length--25-30 pages) may be one of two types: {1} an analysis of empirical material (if you are currently engaged in research which is yielding data suitable for constructionist analysis (in this case, claims about a social problem) or {2} an historical analysis of the emergence of a social problem, based on a literature review BEYOND what we read in the seminar.

NOTE: you must meet with me prior to the third class meeting (January 28) to discuss your proposed topic. At this time, you will be required to provide me with a one-page (maximum) prospectus outlining your topic.

Grading will be based on presenting, leading, and contribution to discussion (20%), presentation of the seminar paper (5%) and the papers (75%). There will be no incompletes except for extraordinary reasons.

Week 1 (January 14): INTRODUCTION AND TECHNICAL MATTERS

Week 2 (January 21): THE CONSTRUCTIONIST STANCE

Fuller, R. and R. Myers. (1941). "Some Aspects of a Theory of Social Problems." American Sociological Review 6:24-32.

Blumer, H. (1971). "Social Problems as Collective Behavior." Social Problems 18:298-306.

Kitsuse, J. and M. Spector. (1973). "Toward a Sociology of Social Problems." Social Problems 20:407-49.

Pfohl, S. (1977). "The 'Discovery' of Child Abuse." Social Problems 24:310-23.

Best, J. (1995). "Historical Development and Defining Issues of Constructionist Inquiry." Pp. 41-63 in J. Holstein and J. Gubrium (eds.), Handbook of Constructionist Research. New York: The Guilford Press. (ER)

Loseke, D. (2003). Appendix: Social Constructionist Theories and Issues. Pp. 183-202 in D. Loseke, Thinking About Social Problems: An Introduction to Constructionist Perspectives. (2nd edition). New York: Aldine. (ER)

Recommended:

Berger, P. and T. Luckmann. 1966. The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. New York: Anchor Books.

Loseke, Donileen R. 2003. Thinking about Social Problems: An Introduction to Constructionist Perspectives (Second Edition). New York: Adeline De Gruyter.

Spector, Malcolm and John I. Kitsuse. 2001 (1977). Constructing Social Problems. New Brunswick: Transaction.

Best, J. 1989, 1995. Images of Issues, 1st and 2nd editions. (see below)

Week 3 (January 28): CONSTRUCTIONISM'S CRITICS AND CRITICAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Woolgar, S. and D. Pawluch. (1985). "Ontological Gerrymandering." Social Problems 32:214-27.

Ibarra, P. and J. Kitsuse. (2003). "Claims-making Discourse and Vernacular Resources." Pp. 17-50 in J. Holstein and G. Miller (eds), Challenges and Choices: Constructionist Perspectives on Social Problems. New York: Aldine. (ER)

Best, J. (2003). "But Seriously Folks: The Limitations of the Strict Constructionist Interpretation of Social Problems." Pp. 109-127 in G. Miller and J. Holstein (eds.), Constructionist Controversies: Issues in Social Problems Theory. New York: Aldine.(ER)

Week 3 (January 28): CONSTRUCTIONISM'S CRITICS AND CRITICAL CONSTRUCTIONISM (CONT.)

Heiner, Robert. 2005. Social Problems: An Introduction to Critical Constructionism. 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press.

Recommended:

Challenges and Choices: Constructionist Perspectives on Social Problems (see above).

Constructionist Controversies: Issues in Social Problems Theory (see above).

Week 4 (February 4): CLAIMS AS RHETORIC

Best, J. (1987). "Rhetoric in Claims-Making: Constructing the Missing Children Problem." Social Problems 34:101-121.

Benford R. "You Could Be the Hundredth Monkey": Collective Action Frames and Vocabularies of Motive within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement." The Sociological Quarterly, Vol. 34, No. 2 (May, 1993), pp. 195-216

Williams, R. (1995). "Constructing the Public Good: Social Movements and Cultural Resources." Social Problems 42:124-44.

Best, J. (1999). "Random Violence". Pp. 1-27 in J. Best, Random Violence: How We Talk About New Crimes and New Victims. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (ER)

Fields, J. 2005. "Children Having Children": Race, Innocence, and Sexuality Education." Social Problems 52, No. 4 (Nov., 2005), pp. 549-571

Week 5: (February 11): MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC RHETORIC

Schneider, J. 1978. "Deviant Drinking as Disease: Alcoholism as a Social Accomplishment." Social Problems 25 (4): 361-372.

Gusfield, J. (1981). "The Literary Art of Science: Comedy and Pathos in Drinking-Driver Research." Pp. 83-108 in J. Gusfield, The Culture of Public Problems. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (ER)

Conrad, P. (1992). "Medicalization and Social Control." Annual Review of Sociology 18:209-32.

Armstrong, Elizabeth M. 2008. Conceiving Risk, Bearing Responsibility: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and the Diagnosis of Moral Disorder. John Hopkins Press.

Week 6: (February 18): EMOTIONS AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS CONSTRUCTION

Johnson, J. (1989). "Horror Stories and the Construction of Child Abuse." Pp. 5-20 in J. Best (ed.), Images of Issues: Typifying Contemporary Social Problems. New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (ER)

Jasper, J. and J. Poulsen. (1995). "Recruiting Strangers and Friends: Moral Shocks and Social Networks in Animal Rights and Anti-Nuclear Protests." Social Problems 42:493-512.

Goodwin, Jeff, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta. 2001. "Why Emotions Matter." Pp. 1-24 in Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements, edited by Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (ER)

Loseke, D. (2000). "Ethos, Pathos, and Social Change: Reflections on Formula Narratives." Pp. 41-54 in J. Holstein and G. Miller (eds.), Perspectives on Social Problems (Vol. 12). Stamford, CT: JAI Press. (ER)

Dunn, J. (2004). "The Politics of Empathy: Social Movements and Victim Repertoires." Sociological Focus 37(3):235-250.

Reed, J. P. (2004). "Emotions in Context: Revolutionary Accelerators, Hope, Moral Outrage, and Other Emotions in the Making of Nicaragua's Revolution." Theory and Society, Vol. 33, No. 6, pp. 653-703

Week 7: (February 25): CLAIMSMAKERS/CLAIMS AND MASS MEDIA I

- Best, J. (1990). Threatened Children: Rhetoric and Concern About Child-Victims (Chapters 5-6). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (ER)
- Gamson, W., D. Croteau, W. Hoynes, and T. Sasson. (1992). "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality." Annual Review of Sociology 373:93.
- Beckett, K. (1996). "Culture and the Politics of Signification: The Case of Child Sexual Abuse." Social Problems 43:57-76.
- Nancy Berns. 1999. "My Problem and How I Solved It": Domestic Violence in Women's Magazines." The Sociological Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 85-108.
- Christopher J. Kollmeyer. 2004. "Corporate Interests: How the News Media Portray the Economy." Social Problems, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 432-452

Week 8: (March 4): CLAIMS AND MASS MEDIA II

- Altheide, David. 2006. Terrorism and the Politics of Fear. AltaMira Press.

Week 9: (March 18): CLAIMS IN THE PUBLIC POLICY ARENA

- Schneider, Anne and Helen Ingram. 2005. Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy. New York: SUNY Press.

Week 10: (March 25): SOCIAL PROBLEMS WORK

- Sudnow, D. 1965. "Normal Crimes: Sociological Features of the Penal Code in a Public Defender Office." Social Problems 12(3):
- Holstein, J. and G. Miller. 1990. "Rethinking Victimization: An Interactional Approach to Victimology." Symbolic Interaction 13(1):103-22.
- Holstein, J. and G. Miller. (1997). "Introduction: Social Problems as Work." Pp. ix-xxi in G. Miller and J. Holstein (eds), Social Problems in Everyday Life: Studies of Social Problems Work. Greenwich CT: JAI Press. (ER)
- Emerson, R. (1997). "Constructing Serious Violence and its Victims: Processing a Domestic Violence Restraining Order." Pp. 191-215 in G. Miller and J. Holstein (eds), Social Problems in Everyday Life: Studies of Social Problems Work. Greenwich CT: JAI Press. (ER)
- Dunn, J. (2000). "Innocence Lost: Accomplishing Victimization in Intimate Stalking Cases." Symbolic Interaction 24:285-313. (Caliber)
- Loseke, D. (2001). Lived Realities and Formula Stories of 'Battered Women.' Pp. 107-126 in J. Gubrium and J. Holstein (eds), Institutional Selves: Troubled Identities in a Postmodern World. New York: Oxford University Press. (ER)

Week 11: (April 1): SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT I

- Downs, A. (1972). "Up and Down with Ecology: The 'Issue Attention Cycle'." Public Interest 28:38-50. (CR).
- Hilgartner, S. and C. Bosk. (1988). "The Rise and Fall of Social Problems: A Public Arenas Model." American Journal of Sociology 94:53-78.
- Jeness, V. (1995). "Social Movement Growth, Domain Expansion, and Framing Processes: The Gay/Lesbian Movement and Violence Against Gays and Lesbians as a Social Problem." Social Problems 42:145-170.
- Loseke, D. (1997). "The Whole Spirit of Modern Philanthropy: The Idea of Charity, 1912-1992." Social Problems 44:425-44.
- Einwhoner, R. (2006). "Identity Work and Collective Action in a Repressive Context: Jewish Resistance on the 'Aryan Side' of the Warsaw Ghetto." Social Problems 53(1):38-56.

Week 11: (April 1): SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT I (CONT.)

Rohlinger, D. (2006). "Friends and Foes: Media, Politics, and Tactics in the Abortion War." Social Problems 53 (4): 537-561

Week 12: (April 8): SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT II

Jenkins, Phillip. Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America. Oxford University Press.

Week 13: (April 15) SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Davis, P. (1994). "The Changing Meanings of Spanking." Pp. 133-154 in J. Best (ed), Troubling Children: Studies of Children and Social Problems. New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (ER)

Lowney, Kathleen S. and Joel Best. 1995. "Stalking Strangers and Lovers: Changing Media Typifications of a New Crime Problem." Pp. 33-57 in Images of Issues: Typifying Contemporary Social Problems, edited by Joel Best. New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (ER)

Malone, R. E. Boyd, and L. Bero. (2000). "Journalists' Constructions of Passive Smoking as a Social Problem." Social Studies of Science 30:713-35.

Ferraro, K. (2005). "The Culture of Social Problems: Observations of the Third Reich, the Cold War, and Vietnam." Social Problems 52(1):1-14.

Fine, G. (2006). "The Chaining of Social Problems: Solutions and Unintended Consequences in the Age of Betrayal." Social Problems 53(1):3-17.

Akerstrom, M. (2006). "Doing Ambivalence: Embracing Policy Innovation—At Arm's Length." Social Problems 53(1):57-74.

Week 14: (April 22) ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Week 15: (April 29) ORAL PRESENTATIONS and DUE DATE for SEMINAR PAPER

Emergency Procedures. Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and health 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 BERT's website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Safety's website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down), and in Emergency Response Guideline 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.