

SOC 203: CURRENT SOCIAL PROBLEMS

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesdays, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm (no appointment needed)
By appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

This course provides an introduction to sociological thought by examining contemporary social problems, including economic, racial, and gender inequality. Sociologists study how social organizations, institutions, and culture shape patterns of human behavior. In this course, we will learn to think critically about how social problems develop, persist, and change.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Differentiate between sociological and non-sociological explanations of social behavior
2. Understand how sociologists define and study social problems
3. Apply sociological theories and concepts to social problems
4. Analyze power relations and their relationship to patterns of social inequality

This course fulfills 3 credits hours in the Social Sciences General Education Program (GEP). Each course in the Social Sciences category will provide instruction and guidance that help students to:

1. Examine at least one of the following: human behavior, culture, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes
2. Demonstrate how social scientific methods may be applied to the study of human behavior, culture, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes
3. Use theories or concepts of the social sciences to analyze and explain theoretical and/or real-world problems, including the underlying origins of such problems

REQUIRED READINGS

1. Defronzo, James and Jungyun Gill. 2019. *Social Problems and Social Movements*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
2. Edin & Shaefer. 2015. *\$2 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*.
3. PDFs posted on Moodle

You are responsible for completing all readings before the class for which they are assigned. Keeping up with the readings is a serious course requirement because of the discussion-based nature of this class.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

1. **Attendance & Participation:** Students ability to succeed in this course depends on attendance, preparedness, and participation. I will take attendance each class period using a sign-in sheet, which you are responsible for signing. Moodle will be used to keep track of your attendance including excused and unexcused absences; you are responsible for notifying

me if there are any mistakes reflected in your attendance on Moodle. Attendance is not graded, but excessive absences will negatively affect your participation grade and ability to succeed in the course. Please make an effort to be in class on time. Notify me in advance if you anticipate arriving more than 5 minutes late. Students exhibiting a pattern of tardiness will be asked to leave on days they arrive late.

2. **Discussions & Classroom Respect:** Sociology addresses many controversial and emotionally charged issues. I do not expect everyone to agree with all of the course material or each other – however, students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of each topic and to engage respectfully with their classmates and instructor. While opposing viewpoints are inevitable and crucial for productive discussion, disagreements should be conducted in a professional manner.
3. **Email & Electronic Communication:** If you email me, please allow at least 24 hours for a response. Be sure to check your email and Moodle regularly for class updates, announcements, assignments, etc. I will typically use the “Announcement” function on Moodle for email purposes.

TESTS & ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Participation (20%):** Course participation will be assessed using in class activities and assignments, including small group activities, informal writing and presentations, and reading quizzes. Most of this will be completed in class, but homework may also be periodically assigned. Participation activities missed due to absences cannot be made up.
2. **Sociology in Everyday Life Projects (40%):** Students will complete three projects to practice “doing sociology” in everyday life, which will be due at the end of each unit. You will have at least 2 project options to choose from for each unit. *Most of these will require advanced planning to execute, so be sure to begin early to allow sufficient time.* Students should come to class prepared to discuss their findings. See project instructions on Moodle for more information, including project requirements and a grading rubric.
3. **Exams (40%):** There will be three in class exams, consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions. Exams are cumulative, but will focus on material covered during the preceding unit. Exams will cover material from both the readings and lectures.

In the case of excused absences, you may take an exam early. Make-up exams will not be offered after the exam date. In the case of unanticipated excused absences, grades from the remaining exams will be averaged.

COURSE EVALUATION & GRADING POLICIES

Assignment	Percent
Participation	20%
Sociology in Everyday Life Projects (3)	40%
Exams (3)	40%
	100%

Grading Scale									
98-100%	A+	87-89.99%	B+	77-79.99%	C+	67-69.99%	D+	0-59.99%	F
93-97.99%	A	83-86.99%	B	73-76.99%	C	63-66.99%	D		
90-92.99%	A-	80-82.99%	B-	70-72.99%	C-	60-62.99%	D-		

- 1. Late Assignments & Extra Credit Policy:** Late work will not be accepted, except in the case of excused absences or documented emergencies. I must be notified no later than 48 hours after the assignment or exam is missed. No extra credit will be offered in this course.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- 1. Academic Integrity:** By submitting assignments, you are agreeing to abide by the University's Academic Integrity policy. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, fabrication or falsification of information, and assisting others to commit academic misconduct. The minimum penalty for a student found guilty of academic misconduct will be a zero on the assignment and the incident may be reported to Student Conduct for academic dishonesty. For more information, please see the [Code of Student Conduct policy \(NCSU POL11.35.1\)](#).
- 2. Disability Accommodations:** Please notify me immediately if you have a disability so that we can plan accordingly. Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with the Disability Services Office at Suite 2221, Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 919-515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the [Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation \(REG02.20.01\)](#).
- 3. Harassment:** Maintaining a safe environment for learning is of the highest priority in this class. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. If any student feels that they have been treated disrespectfully, they should contact me. If I, or any of your peers, say or do anything that you consider sexual, racial, or any other form of harassment, notify me or the department head immediately. You may also contact the undergraduate administrator, the NCSU Affirmative Action Office, or the Women's Center. Visit the [Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity](#) for more information.
- 4. Equal Treatment & Inclusivity:** North Carolina State University is committed to equality of educational opportunity and does not discriminate against applicants, students, or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. In an effort to affirm and respect the identities of transgender and non-binary students in the classroom and beyond, please contact me if you wish to be referred to using a name and/or pronouns other than what is listed in the student directory.
- 5. Basic Needs:** The [Pack Essentials program](#) provides support and resources for students facing food or housing insecurity. Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing is urged to look at the Pack Essentials website or contact the Division of Academic and Student Affairs for support. If comfortable, please notify me so that I can connect you

with resources, including personal support. To discuss your situation in a confidential meeting with the university, you can schedule a meeting by calling 919-513-3401.

- 6. Religious Holidays:** Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me to discuss appropriate accommodations.

WEEK 12		Schools & Education
Day 1	<i>Education & Class</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [T] Ch. 8: “Education and Media”
Day 2	<i>School Segregation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kozol. 2005. “Still Separate, Still Unequal” Kohli and Quartz. 2014. “Modern-Day Segregation in Public Schools”
WEEK 13		Deviance & Social Control
Day 1	<i>The Sociology of Deviance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [T] Ch. 10. “Crime & Criminal Justice” Becker. 1991 [1963]. “Outsiders”
Day 2	<i>The War on Drugs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class video: <i>The House I Live In</i> (2013) 1h 48m
WEEK 14		Environmental Problems
Day 1	<i>The Social Construction of Nature</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capek. 2015. “The Social Construction of Nature”
THANKSGIVING BREAK		
WEEK 15		Food & Environment
Day 1	<i>Environmental Problems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [T] Ch. 13. “Environmental Problems”
Day 2	<i>Problems in the Food System</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driscoll & Edwards. 2015. “From Farms to Factories” Kelloway & Miller. 2019. “Food and Power”
WEEK 16		Unit 3 Wrap Up & Exam Review
Day 1	Assignment: Sociology in Everyday Life Project 3 due Monday, December 3 at 11 am	
Day 2	<i>Final Exam Review</i>	
WEEK 17		Finals Week
	FINAL EXAM	