

# **SOCIAL PROBLEMS**

## **soc&201 online**

### **(5credits)**

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**Is there still racism in the United States of America?**

**If so, what does it look like and how do we get rid of it?**

**Do our schools provide equal education for all?**

**If not, what should we do about this?**

## **Course Overview**

The scientific study of social problems focuses on analyzing the broader social and structural sources and contributors to issues that are problematic for and detrimental to the social health of a society. This leads to the creation of potential solutions for these issues. In this course, we will focus on the above questions. This will happen through an active learning experience in which students use personal involvement, readings, and discussion assignments to build and extend knowledge. An end of the quarter essay and a self -assessment give students a chance to look at possible social solutions and personal insights. These are all the formal assessments for the course. Late assignments are not accepted.

You need to be a committed student who takes responsibility for your own learning in a community of learners. We will cooperate, collaborate and provide feedback to improve each other's learning. The subject matter and the process are fascinating, and if you're willing to work, you may find yourself somewhat transformed by the experience.

## Course Outcomes

After completing the course, the successful student will be able to:

1. Identify and analyze major social forces and structures contributing to inequality.
2. Delineate and interrelate social pathways and barriers to education, especially for low income and minority populations.
3. Evaluate the adequacy and usefulness of source materials, especially Internet source materials.
4. Evaluate the success of social agencies and organizations in helping to solve social problems.

## Learning Atmosphere

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Thus, this is an *active, interactive* course where you will *learn by doing*. You are expected to observe the world, read, write, discuss, and participate. I think of our class as a “collaborative learning community” where we all teach and learn from each other. Every time you post a comment or ask a question, you are teaching something to the rest of us. In order to do well in this course, you will need to abandon the traditional "passive" student role and instead *take control of your learning and education*. I think you'll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

**A note about online learning:** Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending upon your perspective!), online classes are not for everyone. In general, they demand far more independent initiative and personal discipline than do classes that meet on campus. Additionally, online classes demand stronger reading and writing skills. If you are a student who likes having someone to keep you on your toes, such as reminding you regularly to keep up with your work, then online classes are probably not a good choice for you. That's okay (it's not a failure on your part!)...some students simply thrive more when working on a "strict" daily routine, the kind of routine that on-campus classes provide. Thus, the students who succeed most at online learning tend to be those students who:

- are disciplined enough to check the course website around five-to-seven days per week;
- have enough personal initiative that they will contact their instructor (that is, me!) if they don't understand something;
- have good to excellent written communication skills;
- are good readers (i.e. they can sit down and focus on a reading, highlighting key concepts/ideas, and then study it well);
- are independent; AND

- have a basic understanding of computer culture and technology (navigating a website, uploading/downloading, discussion etiquette)

**A note about course content:** Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we sometimes discuss provocative material. Please be advised that, when we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. Furthermore, I expect you to communicate with others in a professional, academic manner. If you have any questions or concerns about course content, please don't hesitate to let me know.

**A note about instructor availability:** I have noticed that, sometimes, students who enroll in online classes have unreasonable expectations about their Instructor's availability. Please be aware that I am not online 24-hours a day. In general, I am online for this class a couple of hours per day. You will rarely be able to reach me in the evenings or on the weekends. I am, obviously, an active member of this course, but I do my coursework during the week, during daytime business hours. *Thus, please do not send to me late-night or weekend emails expecting an immediate response.* On Mondays-Fridays, I aim to respond to emails within 24-hours. Please adjust your expectations accordingly. Thanks!

## **The following outlines what you may expect of me as your instructor:**

**A sincere desire to help you learn.** Since my ultimate goal is to help you learn, I have invested a significant amount of time into the design of this course site, with the hopes that the materials and assignments will enhance your learning. I think this course is understandable, interesting, and engaging. However, if at any time you are unclear or unsure about any aspects of the course - including reading material - feel free to contact me for assistance/clarification.

**Fairness.** Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned and how I assess your performance. It is your job to clearly communicate to me (in your writing) that you understand the material. I don't negotiate final grades.

**Respect and inclusion.** This class is a "Safe Space" for all students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer-identified, and transgendered students are welcome in this classroom and encouraged to speak out and be an integral part of this class. All are welcome!

## **The following outlines what I expect of you throughout the quarter:**

**A sincere effort to learn the course material:** When participating in discussions and when writing papers, your comments should indicate to me that you have read and understand the course material. Some students wrongly assume that they can simply "wing it" in this class and still receive a high grade.

**Preparation:** You should keep up with the readings each week, particularly before contributing to seminar and our course discussion board.

**Promptness:** You should comply with all due dates, as **I do not accept late work. All assignments are due by 11:59pm on the listed due date... NO EXCEPTIONS (that includes computer problems).** You will learn that I am quite a stickler on due dates, so please learn to comply with all deadlines. I highly recommend that you plan to turn in your work early (with plenty of time to spare before the deadline - you can even turn in your work days early!).

I accept assignments ONLY in the following formats: pdf and Word. Do NOT send to me attachments in other formats. Submitting your work to me in other formats will result in a **ZERO** grade.

You can submit your work to me in one of two ways:

- (1) by uploading your work to Canvas (on the Assignments pages), or
- (2) by emailing your work to me at my Bellevue College address.

If #1 doesn't work for you, then try #2. It is your job to get your work in on time.

Every student should have a "back up plan" for what you will do if you have computer problems. **Please note that you are responsible for getting your work in on time REGARDLESS of the state of your computer/browser or your Internet Service Provider (ISP).** All late work will receive a zero grade. Due dates are indicated on the "Calendar" link at the top of the course website, so it is extremely important for you to stay on top of the Calendar.

**Contribution.** Learning about each other's experiences and perspectives is an integral part of the learning process in this course. I believe that you will learn a lot about yourself and your fellow classmates. To work effectively in this course, therefore, you are expected to be an active participant in our learning environment. This is why you are required to contribute to class discussions and to read almost all of your classmates' posts. Please be advised that your grade will suffer if you do not participate and contribute to the intellectual life of our class.

**Respect, courtesy, and tolerance.** Since learning about diverse experiences is central to this course, it is of the utmost importance that you respect your classmates' experiences, differences, and opinions. Disrespectful attitudes will not be tolerated.

**Honesty.** This means no cheating and no plagiarism. If you cheat/plagiarize, you fail. No excuses will be taken into account. Your work must be your own, except when asked to work with other students. Furthermore, you are required to acknowledge in your papers if you have borrowed any ideas, terms, or phrases, even if you have borrowed from a classmate OR from the textbook. Please do not copy and paste material from wikipedia or any other website into

your assignments, as this is a severe form of cheating (that is very easy to catch, by the way). ***In this class, your assignments should be grounded in the textbook (rather than web resources, which are often wrong). This means that you should NOT do internet research in this class – all you need is in the course textbook and supplementary readings.*** In fact, if you do outside research in this class, you will lose points. I dock points for this because: (a) information on the Internet is often misleading and/or inaccurate and (b) I need to make sure that you understand OUR TEXTBOOK (which is, after all, sociological!). If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.

## Course Requirements:

- *Discussion Boards. 500 points*

Each week students are required to participate in online Discussion Boards related to class readings from the assigned textbook. ***Forum points vary.***

- *Field Work Project/Service Learning. 250pts*

Students are required to complete 10-15 hours of community service as it relates to racial and educational inequality in the US.

- *Final Exam Essay. 250 points*

The final exam is in essay format. Questions will be given during week 5 with the final draft due on the last day of the quarter. Students will work through several drafts of their essays and will complete a self-evaluation as part of this component.

## Grading:

There are 1,000 points available in this class. Here is the grading scale:

95-100% = A	73-77% = C+	<58%= Fail
90-94% = A-	69-72% = C	
85-89% = B+	65-68% = C-	
81-84% = B	61-64% = D+	
78-80% = B-	58-60% = D	

# Evaluation Criteria & Grading Standards

**(1) Discussion Boards:** Each week, you will participate in large class discussions on the “Discussions” link (on the left hand side of the course website). It is your responsibility, as a member of our class, to respond thoughtfully not only to my prompt(s), but also to your classmates’ comments. You are required to participate thoroughly in each week’s discussion(s), as your grade will be based on the quality of your contributions and your level of involvement. In order to receive high grades on your discussion, you will need to:

(a) make an initial post about the topic in the first couple of days of the week (because if you wait until the night before the discussion is "due," then your classmates will not benefit from your insights!), and

(b) respond to AT LEAST 2 of your classmates' posts throughout the week (i.e. contribute something intellectually meaningful).

In other words, you will need to make a TOTAL of 3-5 **high-quality** posts each week- one will be your initial post (to my discussion prompt) and then the rest will be your responses to what others have said. I have set up the weekly discussions so that you cannot see what others have posted until you've made your own initial post first.

I recommend that you ***check the discussion board almost daily, including the evening the discussion closes.*** By checking the discussion board frequently, you will be able to look for opportunities where you can add more to the conversation (thus improving your grade!). This will also improve your learning. The following are guidelines that you should follow in order to contribute to successful class discussions:

Your responses to my discussion questions should be in sentence/paragraph format, and you should avoid what I call "text message" grammar (that means no "u" instead of "you"). While format is always important (since it eases communication), the focus in this class is primarily on content. Therefore, your comments should be meaningful and expand your classmates' understanding of the topic. The goal for our discussions is to deepen our understanding of the course themes.

Your posts must reflect real thought and deepen the conversation. Therefore keep the following in mind:

- Say something that will *contribute to a meaningful* discussion--this requires *time and thought!* Thoroughly reflect on and think about the point you are making.
- Fully explain and elaborate your points, using examples, evidence and logic to explain. Rely on evidence whenever possible, as this course is a social science course, and you are learning the social science perspective. Speak with precision regarding your meaning, rather than being vague or general.

- Respond to the topic, not the author. This does not mean you should ignore the person who wrote the original post, but it means you need to focus on the ideas in the post and how to further the conversation on the topic, not tell the author what you think of his or her post.
- Place your reaction in the context of the discussion. Make sure that you clearly connect your response to the week's (or previous weeks') themes.
- Minimize prejudices, biases, unfounded beliefs, and too much reliance on emotional reactions, which can sidetrack good sound judgment and opinions rooted in your learning and in the sociological perspective. It is easy for bias, belief and emotion to dominate a discussion because we have existing emotions around the topic at hand, or because we fall prey to "reductionism" (seeing individuals as causes of their predicaments, which have social roots and solutions).
- Feel free to be personal and interpersonal on the threads, in addition to substantive discussion. This aspect of discussion helps the group bond as a community. Remember, too, that you will apply many of the topics to your own social worlds. Be careful, however, not to go WAY off on a personal tangent--stay focused on the topic. If you want to carry on a more personal discussion, use the "other" forum on the discussion site. The assignment forums are reserved for analyzing the assignment of the week.

Examples of good discussion posts include: clarifying or expanding the relevant concept if important points are missing, vague or incorrect; looking at the issue from another angle or perspective; adding pertinent information; asking a question that forces your classmates to think more in depth on the topic. Your first Discussion Board Assignment is called [Introductions](#).

I'm looking forward to an engaging and interesting discussion board!

**(2) Fieldwork Project:** Fieldwork projects require you to observe some aspect of the social world by engaging in community service and write a paper linking your observations to the course material. Please note that **I will not accept late work**, so plan ahead. Specific information about paper format, including citation style, can be found in the [Getting Started with Field Work Project](#) page.

**(3) Final Exam Essay:** This cumulative essay will allow you to combine all aspects of this class into one final paper integrating what you learned. A rough draft is due by the end of Week 5. A final draft is due by the end of the quarter. Specific information about paper format, including citation style, can be found in the [Final Exam Essay \(rough draft\)](#) and [Final Exam Essay \(final draft\)](#) pages and will include a [Self-Evaluation](#) component. Please review the Calendar link at the top of the site to see due dates. Plan ahead! **(NOTE: Checking the calendar link frequently is one of the keys to success in this class – EVERYTHING that is due is posted for you there!)**

## A Note About Fieldwork/Service Learning

This course utilizes a service learning approach. What this means in a practical sense is that you will spend 10-15 hours during the quarter doing service (volunteering) in the

community. What it means for your learning experience is increased understanding, retention and skill development. What it means for your personal development is largely up to you.

## Reading

You will also read two original sources:

Jones, L., Newman, L., & Isay, D. (1999). *Our America: Life and death on the south side of Chicago*. New York, NY: Washington Square Press. (isbn # 978-0684870441)

Kozol, J. (2006). *The shame of the nation*. New York, NY: Broadway Books. (isbn # 978-1400052455)

## Bellevue College's Rules and Regulations:

- **Incomplete:** If a student fails to complete all the required work for a course, an instructor may assign the grade of Incomplete ("I"). The student must complete the coursework by the end of the next quarter, or receive the assigned letter grade (usually an "F").
- **F Grade:** Students who fail a course will receive a letter grade of "F."
- **Final Examination Schedule:** The Social Science Division will adhere to the final examination schedule as stated in the BC Schedule. Final examinations will be held at the end of each quarter at fixed times. Instructors will not give examinations in advance of the regular schedule. A student who is absent from any examination held at any time during the quarter may forfeit the right to make up the examination. If, for illness or some other circumstance beyond the student's control, the student is unable to be present at any scheduled examination and has contacted the instructor on a timely basis, the student may be permitted to take such examination at a time designated by the instructor.
- **Withdrawal from Class:** College policy states that students must formally withdraw from a class by the end of the seventh week of the quarter (Registration Office, B125). If a student has not withdrawn by that date, an appropriate letter grade will be assigned for the course.
- **Hardship Withdrawal:** Instructors may assign the grade of "HW" (hardship withdrawal) at their discretion in the event that a student cannot complete the coursework due to extreme and exceptional circumstances. Students may also contact the Enrollment Services office BEFORE grades are assigned in cases of hardship.
- **Cheating, Stealing and Plagiarizing:** Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pagers to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Dean of Student Services for possible



probation or suspension from Bellevue College. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Dean of Student Services. If you are accused of cheating, stealing exams and/or plagiarism, there is a Bellevue College Student Discipline and Appeals Procedure (the right to due process) which you may pursue. Contact the office of Division Chair (D110), the Dean of Student Services (B231A) or the Associated Student Body (C212) for information regarding the appeals process.

- **Students Who Require Disability Accommodations:** Students with disabilities who have accommodation needs are encouraged to meet with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) office located in B132 (telephone 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110), to establish their eligibility for accommodation. The DRC office will provide each eligible student with an accommodation letter. Students who require accommodation in class should review the DRC accommodation letter with each instructor during the first week of the quarter. Students with mobility challenges who may need assistance in case of an emergency situation or evacuation should register with Disability Resource Center, and review those needs with the instructor as well.
- **Distribution of Grades:** Grades will not be posted in the Social Science Division or in faculty offices, and secretaries will not give out grades. Students should access their grades through the BC Web site.
- **Return of Papers and Tests:** Paper and/or Scantron score sheet returns will be arranged in the following ways ONLY: by mail, if student supplies the instructor with stamped, self-addressed envelope (with appropriate postage); or by the instructor designating a time and place whereby the student may retrieve his/her papers. Unclaimed papers and/or Scantron score sheets must be kept by the instructor for a minimum of sixty (60) instructional days following the end of the quarter.

## Students with Disabilities:

All students are responsible for all requirements of the class, but the way they meet these requirements may vary. If you need specific academic accommodations due to a disability, please speak with me and with the Disability Resource Center at (425)564-2498. You will need to obtain the appropriate documentation from the DRC in room B132. The disability accommodation documentation must be given to me before it is needed rather than afterward, so that we can make appropriate arrangements. You will need to make arrangements with the DRC in advance for test-taking or other accommodations.

## Last Note:

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check for announcements made while you were absent.

***I look forward to having a great quarter  
with you!***

Below is a list of assignments and due dates.