

Bellevue College
SOC& 201, Social Problems, 5 Credits
Summer Quarter, 2012
Dr. Sara Sutler-Cohen
sara.sutlercohen@bellevuecollege.edu
(425) 564-5722

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course acquaints you with basic sociological concepts and perspectives as you become aware of and explore the importance of social problems in the United States. We will look at social problems with a social justice framework are controversial and timely to U.S. culture today and discuss these issues from a thoughtful, sociological perspective. You will also learn about the field of Sociology and become familiar with various “subfields” of the area. Through discussion, film and other media, as well as assigned readings, this course will take you on an exploration of the many dimensions of contemporary social problems in the U.S. We will make broad use of popular culture to understand the many complexities of our world. By the end of this course, I hope to have all of you thinking critically about the way things work, why things work the way they do, and who we are within the social fabric of the global entity in which we live. You will be asked, over the course of the term, to confront the things you take for granted. Everyday occurrences will be challenged and critically re-imagined. Think of Neo from “The Matrix” when he decides to take the Red Pill or Alice when she decides to explore the rabbit hole as she ventures forth into Wonderland. Both must deal with what’s at the end of their adventures. What will *you* find at the end of *this* adventure?



A NOTE ABOUT COURSE CONTENT: Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we talk about provocative material. Please be advised that when we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. Keeping in mind that when we find ourselves in a space outside of our comfort zone, it's an opportunity for learning, and you may be confronted with subject matter that is difficult to watch, see, discuss, or listen to. Please note, however, that you will be responsible for any course material you miss if you choose not to participate. If you have any questions or concerns about content or climate, feel free to speak with me about it right away.

READING REQUIREMENTS:

- Carl, John D. *Think: Social Problems*. Pearson Higher Education, 2013.
- There are films to watch during the quarter. All are available through the Library Media Center, Netflix streaming, YouTube, or at your local video store. Please prepare yourself for film screenings on your own time by checking out what films you're watching and when.
- Handouts and articles
 - *ALL* handouts are available on the course website.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Oxford Dictionary of the English Language
- Any current Sociology Dictionary
- *A Writer's Reference, 6th Ed.* By Diana Hacker. See the companion website here:
<http://www.dianahacker.com/>

LEARNING AND COURSE OUTCOMES:

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- be able to describe the “sociological perspective”;
- be able to explain what a “social problem” is;
- understand the ways in which social problems are created and perpetuated by culture and social institutions (such as the economy, government, the media, and the family);
- understand how social problems affect all of us, regardless of our social position;
- be able to offer several social solutions to contemporary social problems;
- be able to critically reflect on popular culture’s representation of contemporary social problems;
- know how power is distributed among groups and individuals in our society;
- develop a critical awareness of social problems in your own life; and
- have a better understanding of perspectives different from your own.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have medical information to share with me in the event of an emergency, please contact me via email or come to see me during office hours. Emergency preparedness is important! If you need course modifications, adaptations, or accommodations because of a disability, I can refer you to our Disability Resource Center (DRC). If you prefer, you may contact them directly by going to B132 or by calling 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110. Information is also available on their [website](#).

EXPLORE THE LMC! The Library Media Center is at your fingertips! I *strongly* encourage you to visit the LMC at least once a week, but you can also access it via the web. Talk to a Reference Librarian at the Library (D-126), by calling (425) 564-6161, or by [email](#).

- [Main Library Media Center](#)
- [For the LMC online catalog](#)
- [For article databases](#)

GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

- Check in to our online classroom no less than *four times per week* (yes – I do keep track!).
- Complete readings and homework assignments *on time*.
- Late homework assignments *are accepted*, but make-up exams *are not permitted*.
 1. Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays.

- I expect that your behavior in our virtual classroom be respectful. Continued disrespectful behavior in my class will result in your grade lowering. Please keep your postings to discussion boards (DBs) thoughtful and polite. One-on-one conversations should be taken off-board and onto email so our DBs don't get clogged. If you find at any point that you are uncomfortable with anything posted to a DB, please email me right away.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation*:	200 points
Key Terms Assignments (3):	75 points
Your Turn Assignments (2):	100 points
Discussion Boards (3):	75 points
Course Exams, Overall:	250 points
TOTAL:	700 points

Participation points accrue with various short assignments on the DB, such as your Introductory DB. These are labeled *PARTICIPATION DBs*. These may get added as the course goes along. The Graded DB assignments are labeled *GRADED DBs*. Please be aware of this difference.

The Fine Print (or, what I really mean by that table above):

Attendance & Participation: Check in no less than four times per week, be engaged with all of your discussion board assignments, provoke energetic and polite discussion, listen actively, work respectfully with your colleagues in class, take loads of notes from your readings, look up words you don't understand, ask questions, think critically about the world around you, etc. Additionally, several of your discussion boards also double as participation points.

Key Terms Assignments: You will be expected to understand certain terms used in the Sociology of Popular Culture. For these assignments, you will need to demonstrate your understanding by explaining by a real-world example.

Your Turn Assignments: These short assignments are an opportunity to put your learning to use as you explore the world of popular culture around you using the Sociological Imagination.

Discussion Board Assignments: The work done in the Discussion Board area will have you engage course material and work closely together. You are expected to participate in these assignments in order to generate critical discussion amongst one another. This method of learning gets you going socially! These assignments are always due on Wednesdays and Saturdays (your initial post goes up Wednesday and your responses to one another are due Saturdays). Your DBs are graded on two things: your original post and your responses (usually two of them) to colleagues of yours in the class. You must do both to earn full credit. A submission with no responses posted earns ½ credit at most, and responses without an original submission receive zero credit.

Participation Discussion Board Assignments: These are meant to support you throughout the course and will include things like Introductions, Quiz Study Sessions & General Q&A. They are required and the grades get folded into your overall Participation Grade.

Exams: There are two exams; a midterm and a final. Each exam asks you to study a feature film or documentary that engages several theories and themes we examine during our quarter together. You will be asked a series of short answer questions that demonstrate your knowledge of the material as you apply it to the film. Your midterm is a shorter version of your final. You will be provided with a list of films around Week 5. Most are available via Netflix streaming, video

stores, or on YouTube. You must have access to the film, so be sure you look ahead and choose wisely! The midterm film will be available to everyone by YouTube or Hulu.

For all of your written work: Submit proofread work **only**. Work not proofread will be returned **once** for a rewrite, expected to be handed in within 48 hours. If you need help with your writing, please make use of the following student support services:

- [Academic Success Center](#)
- [Academic Tutoring Center](#)
- [TRiO Student Support Services](#)
- [Writing Lab @ BC](#)

Below is a checklist for you to go over before you hand in each written assignment.

- Twelve-point sized Times font, double-spaced
- 1" margins all around
- MLA Citations where appropriate – you need to give credit to the author/s even where any *ideas* presented in the paper are not your own
- Title pages and bibliographies are not counted in final page count
- Student information is at the top left of the page, single spaced
- There are no extra spaces between paragraphs.
- Paragraphs contain no less than four sentences.
- Magazines, newspapers, journals, and books are *italicized*. Movie titles, article titles, song titles, etc. are “in quotation marks.” Quotes inside of a quotation use ‘single quotation marks.’

Your written work is evaluated on:

- 1) Content
 - a. Fulfilling the assignment.
 - b. Developing your argument and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument.
 - c. Flow of thought throughout the paper, with strong analyses and conclusions.

- 2) Writing Style
 - a. Excellent command of the written English language. In other words, most excellent grammar.
NOTE: If you struggle with grammar and spelling or are an ESL student, please let me know! I'm happy to work with you and point you in the right direction.
 - b. Clarity of thought.
 - c. Good organization and attention to detail.
 - d. Persuasiveness of your argument/s.
 - e. Creativity. Make it an interesting read!
 - f. PROOFREAD your work. Please do a spell/grammar check before you hand it in.
 - g. Dude, like totally don't write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different set of discussions. 😊

- 3) Preventing Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty that occurs when a student uses information or material from outside sources without proper citation and is grounds for disciplinary action. It is your responsibility to understand plagiarism and its consequences. Plagiarism occurs if:
 - a. You do not cite quotations and/or attribute borrowed ideas.
 - b. You fail to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks.

- c. You do not write summaries and paraphrases in his/her own words and/or doesn't document his/her source.
- d. You turn in work created by another person (e.g., another student, downloaded from the internet, etc.).
- e. You submit or use your own prior work for a current or past course, or work from one current course in another course *without express permission* from your professors. This may also be considered academic dishonesty.
- f. Consequences: If it is determined that you have plagiarized or engaged in other forms of academic dishonesty, you will likely fail the assignment and possibly the course, despite points earned through other work. Acts of academic dishonesty are reviewed for disciplinary action.



Grading: Please use the following rubric to help explain the grade you're given for a given assignment. You will receive a Numerical Grade from me, with little-to-no commentary. This is only because I've found that most students do not read written comments from their professors. Please do not hesitate to come to me with any questions you ever have on a grade you receive. There is no limit to how many times you email me! My email door is *always* open and I'm always happy to go over grades with you.

90-100 = A. The A paper shows me you're engaged with the readings, the media, and the lectures in class by utilizing quotes and ideas. It's a paper *completely free* from grammar and spelling errors, and demonstrates your command not only of the English language, but of the form and flow of a solid piece of written work. I also like to see/read/hear your "writing voice." That is, I want your style to come through! Your arguments should be solid and backed up with intellectual ammunition. You should demonstrate a strong understanding of our readings and the in-class media and how they intersect with one another. Your ideas should be "fleshed out" and not just a series of statements, in other words.

80-89 = B. The B tells me you're doing very good work. You may have a couple of grammar issues, but your paper is still tidy and the writing is still strong. You have a firm grasp on the themes in the course but you may not be as well-versed in the readings and/or media and/or lecture material as you could be. I should see that you're being challenged and that you're struggling with the course issues and themes, and what they represent to you in an interconnected way. Your understandings of some of the course materials are stronger than others.

70-79 = C. The C paper means that you're not as invested in the material as I would like to see. Your writing is relatively weaker than it could be and you're not thinking as critically as I would like you to. Some of what you point out I may not follow logically, and your use of the course materials may not be as solid as it could be. You omit some of the important points raised in class.

60-69 = D. Ah, the D. D is for “Don’t be Discouraged.” A D paper is not proofread, nor does it deal critically with the themes in the course. It responds, perhaps, to one part of one of the readings but there is no integration of material and you’re not responding to the questions raised in class. Demonstrated understanding of the course materials is not presented clearly, or at all. (NOTE: A D and below may be rewritten **once** if you choose to do so. It must be turned in within 72 hours, and I enter the better grade.)

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

READINGS DUE MONDAYS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

PLEASE NOTE THAT SOME CHAPTER SKIP AROUND AND WE DON’T ALWAYS READ IN ORDER

DEADLINE IS ALWAYS MIDNIGHT FOR ASSIGNMENTS

YOU’LL NOTICE THAT CHAPTER 20 IS NOT IN OUR SCHEDULE. IF YOU NEED EXTRA CREDIT AT THE END OF THE QUARTER (THAT IS, YOUR GRADE IS C OR LOWER), YOU MAY EMAIL ME FOR AN EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY.

Week One – June 25th – 29th

Readings (please have your readings done by Friday this week only):

- *Think: Social Problems*
 - Chapter 1: The Study of Social Problems
 - Chapter 2: Inequality: Poverty & Wealth

Assignments:

- Participation I: Personal Introduction – Due Friday, June 29th
- Your Turn 1 – Due Friday, June 29th

Week Two – July 2nd – 6th

Readings:

- *Think: Social Problems*
 - Chapter 3: Race & Immigration
 - Chapter 17: Globalization & Inequality
- Film: [Reel Bad Arabs](#)

Assignments:

- Key Terms Assignment I

Week Three – July 9th – 13th

Readings:

- *Think: Social Problems*
 - Chapter 4: Gender
 - Chapter 12: Sex & Social Problems Related to Sexuality
- Power Point Presentation: *What Makes A Man, A Man?*
- Film: [Hip Hop: Beyond Beats & Rhymes](#) The link directs you to the Google Video version of this film. It is also available in our library (Call Number: ML3531.H57).

Assignments:

- Discussion Board 1

Week Four – July 16th – 20th

Readings:

- *Think: Social Problems*
 - Chapter 5: Aging: Social Problems of Growing Old
 - Chapter 6: Media & Technology
 - Chapter 7: Economy & Work

Film:

- [The Lightbulb Conspiracy](#). Watch fully online.

Assignments:

- Key Terms II
- Discussion Board II
- Mid-Quarter Check-in (Participation Discussion Board)

Week Five – July 23rd – 27th

Readings:

- *Think: Social Problems*
 - Chapter 8: Politics
 - Chapter 9: Problems in Education
 - Chapter 10: Physical & Mental Health
 - Chapter 19: Environment
- Film: [Food, Inc.](#) (note, this is *only* the website for the film) – the film is available in our library (HD9005.F66), on Netflix streaming, in bits and pieces on YouTube (I do *not* recommend this, as the parts are garbled and confusing in terms of how they're presented in pieces), and in video rental stores.

Assignments:

- Midterm Examination Friday. Covers Weeks 1-5.
- Your Turn Assignment II

Week Six – July 30th – August 3rd

Readings:

- *Think: Social Problems*
 - Chapter 11: Drug & Alcohol Abuse
 - Chapter 13: Crime
 - Chapter 14: Criminal Justice
- Film: [The Union: The Business of Getting High](#)

Assignments:

- Key Terms Assignment III
- Participation II: Mid-Term Check-In

Week Seven – August 6th – 9th

Readings:

- *Think: Social Problems*
 - Chapter 15: Social Problems of Marriage & Family
 - Chapter 16: Urbanization: Social Problems From The Growth of Cities

- Chapter 18: Population Problems

Assignments:

- Discussion Board III

FINAL EXAM

Your final exam is cumulative. You will have a list of films to choose from that relate somehow to Social Problems and explore the Key Terms and Themes we've covered over the course of this quarter. You will be given the list during Week 5 and when you make your choice, I will email you the Final Exam. You will upload it on the last day of class.

Thank you for a wonderful term!