

Bellevue College

SOC& 201, Social Problems, 5 Credits

Winter 2009: Jan 4 – March 19 Online only

Final Exam: March 22nd

Sara Sutler-Cohen, Ph.D. sara.sutlercohen@bellevuecollege.edu

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 10:30 – 11:30, D110-J

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?

“Western civilization, unfortunately, does not link knowledge and morality but rather, it connects knowledge and power and makes them equivalent.”

-- Vine Deloria, Jr. (Yankton Sioux)

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:

- Course reader. Articles available on Blackboard Vista site in the Course Content Area. There are no books to purchase for this class.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED:

- Any current 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/>

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 at <http://bellevuecollege.edu/drc/>

EXPLORE THE LMCI 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: reference@bellevuecollege.edu.

- Main Library Media Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/>
- For the LMC online catalog: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/catalogs.html>
- For article databases: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/periodicals.html>



LEARNING AND COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon your dedicated participation and subsequent completion of this course, you will demonstrate:

- 1) An understanding of the “sociological perspective.”
- 2) An understanding of what a “social problem” is.
- 3) An understanding of 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).
- 4) An understanding of how social problems affect all of us, regardless of our social position.
- 5) An understanding of several social solutions to contemporary social problems.
- 6) Your ability to critically reflect on popular culture’s representation of contemporary social problems.
- 7) Knowledge of how power is distributed among groups and individuals in our society.
- 8) A critical awareness of social problems in your own life.
- 9) A better understanding of perspectives different from your own.

GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

- “Attend” class at least four times per week (*yes* – I do keep track!).
- Complete readings and homework assignments *on time*.
- Emailed assignments *are not accepted*; you must post them appropriately. If you’re having technical difficulties, contact the BC Help Desk at (425)564-**HELP** (4357).
- Deadlines are non-negotiable. Late homework assignments *are accepted*, but make-up exams *are not*.
 - 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. So think before you post! Continued disrespectful behavior in my class may result in your being asked to exit the discussion board and will result in your grade lowering.
- **There are no extra credit assignments for this class.**
- Please consider this course a learning community, and one that everyone takes responsibility for and brings to it a certain modicum of respect.

A note on my expectations about your responsibility for your own learning: There is quite a bit of useful information in this syllabus. You should read it thoroughly, and check in with it no less than twice a week for the entire term (this is different than logging into our cyber-classroom. Print out a copy of the syllabus and refer to it often). Please consider consulting your syllabus prior to asking me when something is due, what the expectations are for an assignment or how much an assignment is worth. More often than not, the answer lies within. I have no problem fielding questions and helping you out as best I can to ensure your success in the course, but know that this course can be made even more demanding if you’re used to being reminded when things are due or what chapters we’re reading in a given week.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: In this course you will be completing assigned readings (some weeks are heavier than others, so keep a lookout), performing web-based exercises, engaging in discussion boards, a midterm & final exam. The work you do for this class will keep you critically engaged with social problems from a sociological perspective. There is a final research project & paper for this class; and you should expect to write every week and engage in sociological research throughout the course of the term. The key to this course is your thoughtful reflection on course material –be prepared to share those reflections with your colleagues in class.

ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION, AND ASSIGNMENT DETAILS:

<u>Participation:</u>	200
<u>Web Exercises:</u>	150
<u>Discussion Boards:</u>	150
<u>Research Project:</u>	350 (see below)
Topic:	50
Outline/Bib 1:	50
Draft/Bib 2:	50
Final:	200
<u>Midterm Exam:</u>	50
<u>Final Exam:</u>	100
<u>Total:</u>	1000

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

Participation: Occasionally you will be asked to post something for participation points; this is indicated throughout the syllabus (see Week One). Other than that: log in often, provoke energetic discussion, “speak” out, “listen” actively, work diligently and respectfully in our classroom, take copious notes of your readings, look up words you don’t understand or know, ask lots of questions, etc. Oh yes, and lest I forget: Think critically about the world around you. Every day.

Web Exercises & Discussion Boards: (50 Points Each. Lengths vary – see Calendar below for details.) Each week we will be exploring the many facets of Sociology and Social Problems. The Web Exercises and Discussion Board assignments give you an opportunity to explore the field in general, and the theoretical areas will that drive our discussion around the readings. Entries will reflect particular topics and themes we go over. You are asked to respond to, and discuss, the Questions and Topics pointedly and show how you’re engaging both the reading material as well as the general themes in question. Explore and question what is presented in class, and think about how they relate to our readings and the lecture material. For the Discussion Boards, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, since they are based on your own personal perspective. However, you are expected to think *sociologically* – and to avoid “Soap Boxing” or of being overtly opinionated. Please do not assert your opinion in such a way as to cut off discussion – remember that you are here to learn. Your Discussion Board submissions require that you include an original posting on Wednesdays and a second posting, your response, on Saturdays. Be thoughtful in your discussions! NOTE: Do not submit your Web Exercises in the comment boxes. Follow the prompts in the Assignments Area to upload your Word Documents.

Midterm & Final Exam: Exams cover everything up through the week you are tested and will usually include multiple choice and short-answer questions. Your responses should be clear and concise. Your short-answer responses must range from no less than one full (four-sentence) paragraph, to three full paragraphs. If you’re up on your reading, you should have no problem with these. You will *never* be asked a question out of “left field”. Questions will be based on readings, class discussion, and “lecture” material. Information about point distribution for each question will be on each exam. The exams will be timed.

Final Research Project (8 – 10 pages): You will be conducting research on a social problem that you choose from a list provided by me. This is peer-reviewed, so be prepared to share your work with one another and give positive, constructive feedback. These research projects will begin the second week of class; you are expected to work on them throughout the course of the term. Some topic examples are listed in the handout in our virtual classroom. The project is broken up into four increments:

1. **Topic – Due end of Week Two (50 points)**
 - a. 1 – 2 paragraphs on your chosen topic, including an explanation as to why you chose what you did. What is interesting about it?
2. **Outline & Bibliography 1 – Due end of Week Four (50 points)**
 - a. Your outline needs an introductory paragraph (which can later be altered), three main “points” explained in brief detail that will take up the body of the draft and final papers, and a working conclusion.
 - b. Bibliography 1 should be your research thus far. You are expected to have five sources, two of which must be scholarly.

3. Draft & Bibliography 2 – Due end of Week Seven (5 – 7 pages, 50 points)

- a. Your first draft should closely resemble your final paper, free from grammatical and spelling errors, cited properly, and well thought-out. You must use either APA or MLA format (see HANDOUTS area in our virtual classroom for this information) and you must give credit where credit is due. If you're unsure about proper citation or what plagiarism is, email me right away.
- b. Bibliography 2 will contain the sources from Bibliography 1 that you are still using, plus two additional references, one of which needs to be academic.
- c. After consultation with me, you are permitted to submit this as your final paper (which would then need to be 8 – 10 pages), and I will read it as such. Point distribution is adjusted accordingly. Your Final Bibliography will also need to be submitted. See below for details.

4. Final Paper & Final Bibliography with Annotations – Due end of Week 11 (8 – 10 pages, 200 points)

- a. In addition to submitting your final paper, you will turn in all of your graded material above, including my comments & your peer review sheet(s) with comments. Comments will be made digitally (details on Blackboard).
- b. Your Final Bibliography will include your information from Bibs 1 & 2, with any adjustments you've made. You will also add three new references, one of which needs to be from an academic journal. This will total ten (10) references, four (4) of which will be academic. In addition, you will submit *two annotations* for two of your academic references. More information on annotations is on Blackboard.

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: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/academicsuccess/>
- Academic Tutoring Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/tutoring/>
- TRiO Student Support Services: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/TRiO/>
- Writing Lab @ BCC: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/>

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 or APA Citations where appropriate – credit is given 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:

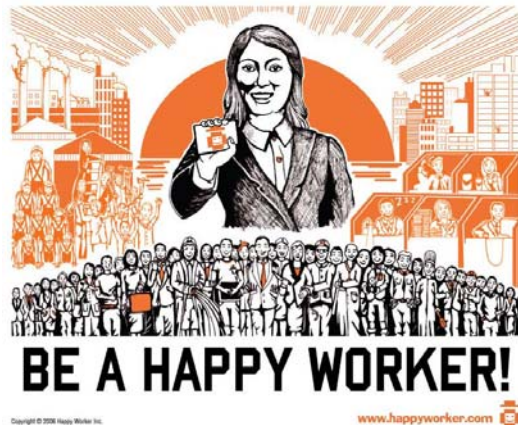
1) Content

- a. Fulfilling the entire assignment. Doing the minimum amount of work expected will likely get you a passing grade, but not an outstanding one. You're expected to go the extra mile.

- b. Fully developing your argument(s) and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument(s).
 - 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. Read it out loud to yourself, too! It really helps.
 - g. Dude, like totally don't write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different way of presenting your research and ideas. ☺

Preventing Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty occurring when students use information or material from outside sources and do not properly cite those sources. This 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. 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. Occasionally, 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. "A" work shows me you're engaged with all course material by utilizing quotes and ideas. It is writing **completely free** from grammar and spelling errors, demonstrating 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 work 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. “C” work 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. You write the bare minimum of the length requirement. 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.” I will work closely with each of you as much as time allows, getting you up to speed in class. Your struggles should not be with writing so much at this point but if they are please see me immediately. “D” work 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 little-to-no integration of material and you’re not responding to the questions raised in the assignment. 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.)

“When you don't see your own images through the media or in books, you start thinking you're weird, and your self-esteem gets bruised.” ~ Francisco Alarcón, poet and director of Spanish for Native Speakers, UC Davis

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (READING ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE BEGINNING OF EACH WEEK, BUT FOR YOUR FIRST WEEK YOU SHOULD HAVE THINGS READ BY FRIDAY):

<p><u>DATES AND READINGS:</u> READINGS AVAILABLE IN THE "HANDOUTS" SECTION OF THE COURSE CONTENTS AREA</p>	<p><u>ASSIGNMENTS (ALL DUE PST):</u> WEBEx's DUE SAT. @ 5PM DB's DUE WED. BY 5PM DB RESPONSES DUE SAT. BY 5PM RESEARCH PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS DUE FRI. BY 5PM</p>
<p>Week One: January 4th – 8th</p> <p>NOTE: I am out of town the first day of classes. Normal office hours will resume Jan. 11th</p> <p>*Please consider joining a sociology listserv! http://www.sociolog.com/links/listservs.html*</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Handouts • The Sociological Imagination by C. Wright Mills • What is a Social Problem? Summarized by Russ Long 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Exercise #1 Due • Participation #1: Personal Introduction <p><u>Quote of the Week:</u> "Without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible." - Frank Zappa</p>
<p>Week Two: January 11th – 15th</p>	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Project Topic Due • Discussion Board #1 Due • Participation Assignment #2: What should we study? Due MONDAY! <p><u>Quote of the Week:</u> "Two hundred years of tradition does not make using Indians as mascots right." - Tim Giago (Lakota)</p>
<p>Week Three: January 19th – 22nd January 18th – MLK Day (no classes)</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WebEx #2 Due <p><u>Quote of the Week:</u> "All you touch and all you see is all your life will ever be." -- Roger Waters</p>
<p>Week Four: January 25th – 29th</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Project Outline + Bibliography 1 Due • Discussion #2 Due <p><u>Quote of the Week:</u> "In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future." -- Alex Haley</p>

<p>DATES AND READINGS: READINGS AVAILABLE IN THE “HANDOUTS” SECTION OF THE COURSE CONTENTS AREA</p>	<p>ASSIGNMENTS (ALL DUE PST): WEBEx’s DUE SAT. @ 5PM DB’s DUE WED. BY 5PM DB RESPONSES DUE SAT. BY 5PM RESEARCH PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS DUE FRI. BY 5PM</p>
<p>Week Five: February 1st – 5th February 2nd – Faculty Professional Development Day (no classes)</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Exercise #3 Due <p><u>Quote of the Week:</u> “We must trust our own thinking. Trust where we’re going. And get the job done.” - Wilma Mankiller (former Chief of the Cherokee Nation)</p>
<p>Week Six: February 8th – 12th</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Participation Points, post two possible Midterm Questions by Monday, 5pm PST. Include answers. Short answer & multiple choice only. • Midterm – open Friday thru Saturday for 24 hours. <p><u>Quote of the Week:</u> “Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous.” –Confucius</p>
<p>Week Seven: February 16th – 19th February 15th – President’s Day (no classes)</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your favorite article in the discussions area. You <i>must</i> read one article and post to the Participation Discussions Area 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Project Draft + Bibliography 2 Due • Participation #4: Post your thoughts on one of the articles posted by your colleagues <p><u>Quote of the Week:</u> “You think you’re so clever and classless and free.” -- John Lennon</p>
<p>Week Eight: February 22nd – 26th</p> <p><u>No readings! Work on your research.</u> Open forum with Dr. Sara all week – see corresponding discussion board.</p>	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No assignments due – work on your research projects!
<p>Week Nine: March 1st – 5th March 4th – College Issues Day (no classes)</p> <p><u>No readings! Work on your research.</u></p>	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Review of Drafts (Participation Credit) Due Friday, March 5th by 5pm. Swap material on Monday, March 1st
<p>Week Ten: March 8th – 12th</p>	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Board #3 Due

DATES AND READINGS: READINGS AVAILABLE IN THE “HANDOUTS” SECTION OF THE COURSE CONTENTS AREA	ASSIGNMENTS (ALL DUE PST): WEBEX’S DUE SAT. @ 5PM DB’S DUE WED. BY 5PM DB RESPONSES DUE SAT. BY 5PM RESEARCH PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS DUE FRI. BY 5PM
<u>Readings:</u> •	
Week Eleven: March 15 th – 19 th No readings – finish up your papers.	<u>Assignments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Research Project + Final Bibliography & Annotations • NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS THIS WEEK • Turn in all graded Research Paper assignments, including Peer Review handout, with comments to me via Blackboard email. Send them as attachments.
Week Twelve: Finals Week	SOC& 201, Social Problems Final Exam: Monday, March 22 nd . Final Exam open from 8:00 am – 8:00 pm

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

When I’m not teaching, I’m usually whipping up some sort of baked goodness in my kitchen, doing collage art, taking photos of the world around me, hanging out with my kid, watching horror movies, or going out to listen to live music. Mostly, I go to hear metal, bluegrass, punk, or local hip-hop shows. I received my Ph.D. in Sociology (with an emphasis in American Studies) from UC Santa Cruz. I received my first MA in Sociology from Humboldt State University and my second MA in Sociology from UCSC, my BA in Sociology and Journalism from Mills College, and my AA in English and Creative Writing from Vista Community College. This is my fourth year as Instructor of Sociology at BCC, and my first year as Chair of the Social Science Division. I am the Programmer for BC’s Annual American Indian Film Festival. I love to write and am currently working on a memoir and a collection of poetry. More at: <http://sara.sutlercohen.com>, or you can add me as a friend on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/docsara>.

Thank you for a wonderful term!