

SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

SOC 170 (A)

Fall 2007

Bellevue Community College

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Office Hours: By appointment
Office location: D200A
Class Meets: Daily 12:30-1:20 in C164

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*“There is nothing that humans socially construct
that they cannot socially change.”*

-Beth Rubin
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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the quarter, we are going to explore social problems using a sociological perspective. We will begin by learning what exactly makes a social problem “social.” You will learn how sociologists identify and study social problems, and you will discover how the sociological approach differs from everyday, “common sense” explanations. The remainder of the quarter will be devoted to studying several specific social problems facing us today. We will discuss the causes of social problems, and we will consider solutions. This course is designed for the beginning sociology student and thus serves as a broad introduction to the science of sociology.

Since sociology is a *science*, it relies on scientific research and evidence, not personal opinion. In many cases, the ideas sociology has to offer are difficult to grasp and accept because they challenge many of the taken-for-granted attitudes and opinions that we all tend to operate by in our everyday lives. (Science often contradicts opinion. As an example, just think about how science challenged the previously held belief that the earth was flat and at the center of the universe!) As we all come to the course with strong ideas and beliefs about the world in which we live, the subject matter is personally as well as intellectually challenging. Some of what you will learn in this course may initially seem like “common sense.” Sometimes what you will learn might be shocking, surprising, or even make you angry. Ideally, you will learn from each experience and take these lessons with you on your future endeavors.

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 are expected to read, write, discuss, participate, and solve problems. I think of our class as a “collaborative learning community” where we all teach and learn from each other. Every time you make a comment or ask a question, you teach something to the rest of us. I challenge you to abandon the traditional passive student role and to get involved with teaching and learning – I think you’ll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The following is a list of my objectives for your learning. At the end of this course, you should:

- be able to describe the “sociological imagination”;
- 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 social solutions to contemporary social problems;
- be able to critically reflect on popular culture's representation of contemporary social problems;
- have a better understanding of perspectives different from your own.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND BOOKS

Our America by Jones, Newman and Isay (isbn # 0671004646)

Shame of the Nation by Jonathon Kozol (isbn # 1400052440)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

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

- *A sincere effort to help you learn the course material.* Since my ultimate goal is to help you succeed, I intend to spend enough time and effort on class preparation to make the material as understandable and as interesting as I possibly can.
- *Accessibility.* I agree to be available to you outside of class should you desire help. I encourage you to come to my office hours whenever you have a question or concern. I am more than happy to help. Please try to make it your personal goal to visit my office hours at least once this quarter. I think you will find it helpful. If my office hours are not convenient for you, we can schedule an appointment that fits your schedule.
- *Attention and courtesy.* When you are speaking, you will have my undivided attention. And I will never ridicule you or express disagreement with you in an impolite fashion.
- *Fairness.* Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned and how I assess your performance. It will not be based upon any purely personal consideration. I will not negotiate final grades.

The following outlines what I expect from you as a student in this class:

- *A sincere effort to learn the course material.*
- *Preparation.* You should come to class having done the assigned readings and homework, and you should always bring the proper supplies with you. You should bring the readings (textbooks) and supplies for note taking. Note that the BCC guideline for homework is two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class.
- *Attendance:* Please attend all class sessions – your presence in class contributes significantly toward your final grade in the course. If you have to miss class for any reason you must find out what was done and get notes from a classmate. You can find any handouts on the MyBCC site.
- *Promptness:* You should be in class on time except when delayed by an emergency, and you should stay until class is over unless you become ill or have made arrangements with me to leave early. Furthermore, you should comply with all due dates. Late assignments (late means any time after class starting time on the due date) will be graded down 10% per day. You may email assignments to me, but keep in mind the time due is the same for emailed assignments. If there is a true emergency (computer problems do not qualify as emergencies) and you cannot get your assignment in, call or email to let me know the situation as soon as possible. Doing this, along with providing relevant documentation, will allow me to work out a reasonable accommodation with you.
- *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 a collaborative learning experience and therefore your presence is needed on a daily basis.

- ***Respect and courtesy:*** We will have many discussions in which you are expected to participate by asking questions, answering questions, and making relevant comments and observations. During a discussion (planned or spontaneous) it is important that we all respect each other's right to participate. That means no side talking, no interrupting, no monopolizing the conversation, and no offensive language. Disagreement is fine, healthy, and makes life more interesting, but be sure that when you disagree you are disagreeing with the ideas and not the other person. People who are disrespectful, either to fellow students or to the instructor, will be asked to leave the class. Serious violations will be reported to the Dean of Student Services.
- ***Honesty:*** If you cheat, 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. Be careful to cite your sources properly as plagiarism will result in a score of zero for the assignment, and possibly an F for the class depending on the severity of the offense. If you would like information on how to avoid plagiarism, the writing lab (<http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/> or D-204D) is an excellent resource online and in person.

GRADING

Performance on Reading Roles: These are central to this class and I need all your effort and openness and creativity on these assignments. If you are absent on the day of a reading role and have not turned it in early for half credit you will receive a zero grade. Please review the Course Calendar and make note of the due dates. Plan ahead! Also watch the board for any changes that I may have to make to better facilitate your learning—I will never make a date earlier-only later.

Participation: Participation is essential to the format of this class and will therefore contribute significantly toward your grade. In short, your success in this class depends on your *active* participation. "Participation" includes attendance, class discussions, group work, and independent assignments that are given out in class. Participation points are NOT automatic – you must earn them by participating and attending class. *Do not take this portion of your grade lightly!*

Movie Reflections: Throughout the quarter, you will have a variety of movies along with your text to supplement your learning. These are very important and will help you more fully integrate the material that we are learning. Please do not take these lightly. You will be responsible for a 2 page critical response paper for each movie we watch and you must tie it into the chapter we are reading and how you do or do not think it relates and why—this is not a summary of the movie—this is your critical thinking on the topics we are studying and how they play out in the real world

More on Papers Your essays should be critical and analytical (they are not opinion papers!). This means they should make a point, back up the point with evidence from the movie you are analyzing or from the course material, have some connection to the discussions we've had in class concerning social problems (e.g. What makes this problem a "social" one? How is the problem being defined by the source? Is the source using a sociological approach? Are there any proposed solutions and by whom? Will these solutions work, based upon what we've learned in class?), and be academically enlightening. In short, you should demonstrate that you understand and can apply sociological ideas and themes. **Make the connection between your media source or book and our class.** If you would like assistance with your written work, the writing lab (<http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/> or D-204D) is an excellent resource online and in person.

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS (subject to minor redistribution or change)
Poverty internet	50
Education internet	50
Race internet	50
Reading roles	8 @ 50 = 400
SL journals	
1	10 points
2	30 points
3	30 points
4	30 points
SL presentation	100
SL hours	100
Mid-term assessment	25
Final assessment	50
Movie/speaker reflections	4 @ 25 = 100
Rough draft	25
Course essay	200
Participation	100
TOTAL	1350

GRADING SCALE

A:	1269 – 1350
A-:	1215 – 1268
B+:	1174 – 1214
B:	1120 – 1173
B-:	1080 – 1119
C+:	1039 – 1079
C:	985 – 1038
C-:	945 – 984
D+:	864 – 944
D:	810 - 863
F:	<810

ACCOMMODATION:

"If you need course adaptations or special accommodations because of a disability, or if you have medical information that needs to be shared with me in the event that the building needs to be evacuated, please contact me during the first week of the quarter. If you require accommodations due to a diagnosed disability, please contact the Disability Resource Center in B132. Phone: 425-564-2498 (Voice) TTY: 425-564-4110." Please let me know if I may assist you in any way; I'll be glad to help you.

Finally, essential to a liberal arts education is an open-minded acceptance of ideas and modes of expression which might conflict with one's personal values. By being exposed to such ideas and expressions, you are not expected to endorse or adopt them but rather understand that they are part of the free flow of information upon which higher education depends

PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION
Revised Fall 2007

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 Community 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 Community 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.

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 BCC 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.

Students Who Require Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities who have accommodation needs are encouraged to meet with the Disability Support Services (DSS) office located in B132 (telephone 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110), to establish their eligibility for accommodation. The DSS office will provide each eligible student with an accommodation letter. Students who require accommodation in class should review the DSS 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 Support Services, 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 BCC 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.

**If you are accused of cheating, stealing exams and/or plagiarism, there is a Bellevue Community 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.*