

Sociology 105: Introduction to Contemporary Social Problems

Sociology 105, Section 0501
Time: 3:30-4:45 Tuesday/Thursday
Location: 1213 Art/Sociology
Office Hours: 12:00-1:00 Mon. and by Appts.

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Class email: socy0501@umd.edu

Purpose of the course

Sociology 105 ('Introduction to Social Problems') is an introductory course in sociology and a CORE Distributive Studies course (Area D: Social and Behavioral Sciences). Distributive Studies courses are designed to ensure that you will take a look at several different academic disciplines and the ways they create and analyze knowledge about the world.

The purpose of the Sociology 105 is to provide you with an introduction to social problems experienced by American society and social groups. Some of the most fundamental aspects of American society will be presented and discussed. These aspects include basic structures such as institutions and values that profoundly shape specific social problems as well as influence our social and political policies toward them. In this course, American social problems will be examined primarily from a socio-economic perspective.

Course Textbook

Social Problems, 2006. (10th edition). D. Stanley Eitzen and Maxine Baca Zinn. This book is available for purchase at the University of Maryland College Park Bookstore.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Learn how sociologists view the social world and "think sociologically"
2. Learn and apply sociological concepts (e.g., social structure, institutions, etc.) and theories (e.g., Functional Theory)
3. Learn how social structure and culture shape and influence our life

Grading & Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be determined by the following methods of evaluation, which are listed below in terms of points and approximate percentage of your total overall course grade:

<i>Class Participation (Attendance (2%) + Discussion (5%) + 2 Debates (10%))</i>	= 17%
<i>Critical Thinking Question (CTQ)</i>	= 5%
<i>Quizzes (6@3% points each)</i>	= 18%
<i>Group Project</i>	= 10%
<i>Mid-Term Exam</i>	= 25%
<i>Final Exam</i>	= 25%
Total:	100 %

Class participation includes asking questions, offering comments, remarks, class attendance, and participation in class debates. It also includes your performance on leading class discussion during your CTQ session (see the next paragraph for details). Given this, absence from class significantly reduces your ability to participate.

Critical Thinking Question: For each chapter, a small group -- called critical thinking (CT) team-- comprising with 2-3 students will be formed. Each member of the CT team is required to write two critical thinking questions for the assigned chapter. You are required to send your questions to me via email (rbishwa@socy.umd.edu) **no later than 8:30 pm the day before the class (earlier if possible!)**. The question should not be more than six lines (single space 12" font) long but you are expected to put some effort to pose a critical question on any issue that crosscuts the assigned reading chapter (an example of a

CT question is presented below). If the same chapter covers both Tuesday and Thursday of any week, you don't need to write CT questions twice. For example, in week 3, we cover Chapter 6 – Problem of Place for both Tuesday and Thursday. In this case, you will write critical thinking questions for only one time (Tuesday's class only), and send it to me before 8:30 pm on Monday.

Example of CT question for Chapter #1:

Person-blame is stated in the chapter as bad because of how our judicial system works on such a view. It is mentioned again before explaining why the book uses the system-blame view as, "Individuals, obviously, can be malicious and aggressive for purely psychological reasons". If person-blame is viewed as a singular deviation, what explains the individual who chooses to go along with the crowd consensus of racism, sexism, economy, and etc.?—(NAME)

I will compile all questions that I receive by 8:30 pm in a single MS Word document and send it to entire class using socy0501@umd.edu before 9:30 pm of the same night. All students are expected to go through the questions and be prepared to discuss on these questions (and/or any other relevant issue that they think important to discuss) in class next day. In class, the CT team members will open/lead the discussion session asking their questions to the entire class. (*CT team – note that the entire class will spend some time on your questions; hence, it is important that you write your questions thoughtfully*).

There will be two *debates* in this class throughout the semester. The first debate will take place on “Health and Health Care Delivery” topic on October 30th (Thursday) right after the quiz. Second debate will focus on “Chapter 18: National Security in the Twenty First Century: the War on Terror” on November 13th (Thursday). The detail about the structure of debate will be provided later.

Quizzes typically consist of several multiple choice and/or short answer questions. They may be given without notice, and may cover lecture and/or reading material.

Group Project will require the class to be divided into small groups. Each small group will select a contemporary social problem in the US and write a short research report. The report should not be more three pages excluding the cited references, double spaced (12” font). You will need to do some web research and text book analysis while preparing the report. It should include statement of problem, existing policies and recommendations.

Exams will pose a series of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer and/or essay questions. I will provide more specific details prior to the exam dates.

Class participation, quizzes, group project, and exams will be graded using the conventional grading scale as outlined below:

100-98	A+		79-78	C+	
97-93	A	‘Excellent’	77-73	C	‘Satisfactory’
92-90	A-		72-70	C-	
89-88	B+		69-68	D+	
87-83	B	‘Good’	67-63	D	‘Poor’
82-80	B-		62-60	D-	
			59-0	F	‘Unsatisfactory’/Fail

If you have a question regarding any of these aspects of your grade, or the evaluation of your work, please come and see me during office hours.

Class Attendance and Participation

This course requires that you attend and participate in class meetings. You cannot adequately process the content of the course without attending class. Additionally, your questions and comments improve the value of the course. Attendance also helps me to learn your name, reminds you of your academic responsibilities, and provides useful information for future letters of recommendation. Moreover, research studies indicate that class attendance is a better predictor of grades than the number of hours you study outside of class and even better than your high school grade point average and your SAT score!

If you do not know University policy regarding class attendance, please learn it before the beginning of our second class. The complete policy is printed in the Undergraduate Catalog and is available online at www.inform.umd.edu/ugradcat/. The key points of this policy are:

(1) The University expects each student to take full responsibility for his or her academic work and academic progress. Students are expected to attend classes regularly, for consistent attendance offers the most effective opportunity open to all students to gain command of the concepts and materials of their courses of study.

(2) Students claiming excused absence must apply in writing and furnish documentary support for their assertion that absence resulted from one of the following causes:

- illness or illness of a dependent;
- religious observance;
- participation in activities at the request of university authorities;
- compelling circumstances beyond the student's control.

(3) Occasional in-class assessments may occur, sometimes without advance notice. If you have a University-excused absence, please let me know as soon as possible.

Classroom Conduct

Diversity makes the world go around, and we will respect this in this class. It is likely that in this class another person has a position you may strongly disagree with which is expected and fine. Use this opportunity to bounce ideas and arguments back and forth and to make your arguments sharper in response to what others have to say. It may be that, at the end, these two positions can not be resolved which is again both fine and expected for it is not so much a resolution that matters, but rather the goal lies in the process of the evaluation of ours and others' argument.

You will hopefully hear a number of different opinions and positions offered both by the instructor and other students on the issues we discuss. Please keep in mind you are free to disagree with these opinions and positions and, indeed, I think this is healthy for the intellect. Nevertheless, at all times in the classroom we will conduct ourselves in a civil fashion. That is we will always respect another's right to disagree with us and will treat them with respect and courtesy.

To make each class a learning experience, I expect you to NOT use your cell phones during the class. I also expect that you use your personal laptop strictly for the class note-taking purpose. Online chatting, web-surfing, and/or movie/video-watching is not allowed in personal laptops during the class. Any behavior (example: side-talk, sleeping in the class) that distracts the learning environment of class is not allowed. I may introduce new classroom rules or change/modify syllabus as deemed necessary.

A Comment on Reading

This course will be reading-intensive. In other words, there will be a lot of reading. That said, I have done my best to make the reading for this course both engaging and insightful. I will do my best to keep you up-to-date and informed as to what the assigned readings are, but it is ultimately *your* responsibility to keep up with the reading. When a book chapter or article is listed on a given date I expect you to have read the given article *for that class*. I suggest that you glance at the reading assignments ahead of time, as several readings will tend to be longer or require more close attention in reading. *Plan ahead so that you have enough time to read the material.*

Students with Disabilities

If you have a University documented disability, please inform me of such *by the second class meeting* so we can discuss making the appropriate and necessary arrangements.

Religious Observance

If you will need to be absent from class to participate in a religious observance, please provide a written note of the dates before the end of the second week of classes. We will make certain that you are not disadvantaged because of your absence. University policy regarding religious observance is available online at www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/iii_510a.pdf

Inclement Weather Policy

Week-8: Drugs and Gender Inequality

Tues 10/21 Chapter 13: Drugs
Thurs 10/23 Chapter 9: Gender Inequality (*Guest Speaker*) + film (*killing us softly*)

Week-9: Health and Health Care Delivery

Tues 10/28 Chapter 17: Health
Thurs 10/30 ****Quiz-4****
Chapter 17: Health (*Debate*)

Week-10: Education and Families

Tues 11/04 Chapter 16: Education
Thurs 11/06 Chapter 15: Families

Week-11: Families & National Security in the Twenty First Century: The war on Terror

Tues 11/11 ** *Quiz #5* ** Single parenting and teen pregnancy
Thurs 11/13 Chapter 18: National Security in the Twenty First Century: the War on Terror (*Debate*)

Week 12: National Security in the Twenty First Century: The war on Terror & World Pop & Glob. Inequality

Tues 11/18 Chapter 3: World Population and Global Inequality
****Group Project due* ***
Thurs 11/20 ***Quiz#6*** + *Group Project Presentation*

Week 13: Group Presentations

Tues 11/25 *Group Project Presentation*
Thurs 11/27 Thanksgiving [No class]

Week 14: Environmental Problems and Demographic Changes

Tues 12/02 Chapter 4: Threats to the Environment
Thurs 12/04 Chapter 5: Demographic Changes in the United States: The Browning and Graying of Society

Week 15: Work and Globalization

Tues 12/09 Work
Thurs 13/09 Globalization (will provide reading materials by email)

Week 16: Conclusion

Tues 15/09 Conclusion (Review for Final Exam)

Week 17: Final Week

Sat 12/20 (10:30-12:30 pm) **Final Exam** (non-cumulative)