

## Course Syllabus: Social Problems\*

Mark Swiencicki, Ph.D.      Office: Room 557, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, BCC); Ph: 510-981-2916;  
Sociology 2                      Office Hours in Rm. 557: Mon. 4:20-5:20 pm; Wed. 12:20-1:20 pm; Tues. 4:50-  
20361                                5:50 pm; Digital/Online Office Hour: Thurs. 11-12 pm; & 1 hr by appointment.  
Spring 2019    3 Credits      Email address: mswiencicki@peralta.edu

\*Meets major requirements for BCC Sociology AA-T to CSU; Satisfies IGETC & CSU-GE breadth requirements for transfer to UCs/CSUs; Satisfies requirements for SOCIOL 3 at UC-Davis & SOCY 10 at UCSC.

**MEETING TIME/PLACE:** Mon & Weds: 1:30- 2:45 pm; Room 015.

### Why take “Social Problems”?

Ever wonder why the U.S. has the highest murder and imprisonment rate of all major industrialized nations? Or why so many Americans become addicted to drugs and alcohol, or join street gangs? Or what causes racism, sexism, and poverty, and how these problems harm the nation? Or why the environment is degrading and what can society do to reverse global warming? If you'd like to learn more about these problems and how to solve them, consider taking “Social Problems”.

### Course Description:

This course analyzes various social problems from a sociological perspective (i.e., using social theory and social science research). We examine the social, economic, and ideological causes and solutions of racism, sexism, homophobia, poverty, crime and violence, drug abuse, and human population and environmental change. Emphasis is on U.S. society, but international comparisons are made when those countries offer solutions to the problem at hand. Finally, at the end of each topic, students apply the theories and concepts they've learned to a video documentary on each social problem. Lectures are delivered in PowerPoint, the class slides can be downloaded online, and course concepts are frequently illustrated with video clips.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** At the conclusion of the course students will be able to:

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|---|
| 1. Correctly apply the sociological concepts & theories learned in the course to written text and/or video clips. |
| 2. Explain how a selected social problem is caused by cultural, structural, and economic factors.                 |

**Course Objectives:** Upon complete of the course, students will be expected to be able to:

1. Distinguish between "personal" and "social" problems.
2. Identify and analyze social problems, both macro and micro.
3. Analyze social problems using several theoretical frameworks.
4. Effectively investigate and understand several particular social problems.
5. Demonstrate an awareness of the complexities of social problems and the difficulties in resolving them.

**Course Requirements:** The ability to use a computer-based word processor or type writer.

### 1) Required Texts/Class Reading Materials:

a) Required Text: *Social Problems, 6e*, 2015, John Macionis, Pearson, paper (hereby abbreviated as SP; 6e sold or rented in the bookstore, or 5e used at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for \$23 and up. A 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the textbook is on reserve at the library.

b) Library Reserve Readings: will be available for photocopying at the BCC library reserve desk (and on Canvas if indicated). To check these out for 3 hours you must bring your BCC ID, and give them both my last name and the exact title of the reading as it appears below:

- Anderson, Elijah. 1994. “The Code of the Street.” The Atlantic May 1994 Issue (or on Canvas).
- Brown, P, Jr. (2001). “Biology and the social construction of the "race" concept”. In Ferrate & Brown Jr. (eds.), *The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity in the United States* (pp. 144-150). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Frye, Marilyn, 1998. “Oppression”, pp. 48-52 in Anderson, Margaret, and P. H. Collins (eds.), *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing (or on Canvas).
- Henslin, James. 2005. "On Becoming Male: Reflections of a Sociologist on Childhood and Early Socialization." Pp. 143-54 in James M. Henslin (ed.), *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*. NY: Free Press (13th ed.).
- Kimmel, Michael. 2001. “Manhood and Violence: The Deadliest Equation.” Newsday. (or on Canvas)

c) **Class Slides:** the PowerPoint slides shown in class can be downloaded from the course Canvas site at <http://portal.peralta.edu> for free (about a 74 pg. pdf document). About 5 cents a copy (B&W) at Krishna Copy Center, 2001 University Ave @ Milvia. Print on only 1 side so you can add extra notes on the back of each page. Note, these slides are **just as important** as the text book, so if you don't print these up and take notes on them in class it will hurt you at exam time.

## 2) Course Assignments & Grading Policy:

**a) Exams (100 pts):** 3 multiple-choice exams will be given (and I'll drop the lowest exam **if** you take and complete all 3 exams, and **if** you miss no more than 20% of classes). Questions come from the lectures, readings, class slides, discussions, and the videos, and review sheets are only provided in class or office hours (I don't email them). Nothing can be brought to the exam besides a #2 pencil and a green, 100-item (50 per side) scantron sheet (buy at bookstore). No retakes allowed.

**Exam Makeup Policy:** You may make up either of the first 2 exams without a documented hardship (i.e., hospital report, doctor's note, court docket, etc.) during my office hours provided it occurs within 1 week of the exam. However, you'll lose 1.5 letter grades without an officially documented excuse. People with official excuses that can't do the regular makeup will take a different version during finals week.

### Extra Credit Assignments:

**b) Ethnographic Study Analysis (9 pts):** students can select an ethnography that studies 1 of the social problems studied in class, and write a 5-7 page typed essay that: 1) identifies what the author says has caused the social problem, and 2) shows us the original evidence that the author uses to support their findings (assignment will be handed out in class). Hard copy of paper due 4/29 in class. No late papers without an officially documented excuse (i.e., doctor, court, etc.), and no emailed papers unless you are legally visually impaired.

**c) Online Reading Quizzes" (5 pts):** In the 2.5 days before the date at which each chapter is first listed for discussion in class, log into the course Canvas shell at <http://portal.peralta.edu> (see page for login instructions) and take your chapter reading quiz. See Canvas for the official quiz due dates, and quiz dates may be extended if the class gets behind schedule.

You have 7 minutes to answer 10 questions, and there are no retakes or make ups for missed quizzes so be sure to use a reliable web connection, and don't take the quiz at the very last minute because sometimes the Moodle server goes down. Also, individual quizzes that score less than 40% will not count.

Students with documented disabilities requiring extra time on the quizzes can get this if you show me your DSPS documentation; however, anyone exceeding their allotted extra time will get a 0 on the quiz.

If you don't have an internet connection you can take the exams at the BCC computer lab or your local library. Students having trouble using Canvas can get help at the computer lab, or during my office hours. Note: the quizzes work best in IE, Mozilla/Firefox, or Safari, and are not meant to be taken on smart phones.

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is mandatory so students get dropped for missing the first week of class (if they don't contact me with an acceptable documented excuse), or for missing **over 4 weeks** of class by Attendance Verification in late April - unless acceptable officially documented excuses are provided for at least half of those absences (i.e., medical notes, hospital forms, court documents, car towing bill, etc.). Please see page 25 of the BCC 2017-19 Catalogue for my authority to do this. However, students who miss over 4 weeks and present valid official documents will be dropped if they continue missing class. Also, students signing up after classes start are marked "absent" for previously missed classes, and students who leave during class without permission get marked absent. Being "present" = clearly letting me know you're present during roll call. However, students can be late 3x without being marked absent if they let me know right after class, but after that students who arrive late will be recorded as absent. Finally, students must get copies of any missed lecture notes from another student.

**Note:** Any changes to the syllabus or class deemed necessary will be announced in class. See me after class or in my office hours if you are having trouble understanding the syllabus.

**Grading Scale:** A: 90-100 points; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 0-59.

## Classroom Rules:

- 1) If you have a documented disability please register with PSSD office in room 261 (510-981-2812) ASAP to arrange for any special accommodations, and see me after class if you need materials in a different format.
- 2) Students who disrupt the class (i.e., chatting with friends, monopolizing discussions, disrespecting others, using cell phones or digital devices, etc.,) will get a warning upon each disturbance. Upon the 3<sup>rd</sup> warning I will ask the Dean to drop you from the course (per pp. 352-53 of the BCC 2017-19 Catalog).
- 3) No cell phones, laptops or digital devices may be used in class, nor may students place book bags or purses on their desks in front of them. Students caught using cell phones or digital devices will face the penalties in #2 above. If you are expecting an emergency cell phone call place your phone on vibrate and take it outside.
- 4) If you take issue with any classroom rules/policies/assignments you must discuss it with me in private after class or at my office hours. Class rules/policies/assignments will not be debated in the classroom.
- 5) Students caught cheating on an exam will receive a 0 on that exam.

Note: By returning to class you are acknowledging that you consent to the policies in this syllabus.

## 3) Class Readings, Assignments & Exam Dates:

**1/23 (Topic 0): Introduction** to Instructor, course goals, syllabus. A survey of the field: What is sociology? how is it done? and what can the “sociological imagination” teach us?

**1/28, 1/30, 2/4 (Topic 1): Sociology & the Study of Social Problems: Theories, Methods, Approaches.**  
SP Ch. 1: Studying Social Problems. Video: “Geraldo on Hoodies”.

**2/6, 2/11, 2/13, 2/20 (Topic 2): Gender, Theories of Gender Inequality; Sexism, Glass Ceiling, Pay Gap, Rape Culture, Structural Oppression; Feminism/Women’s Liberation; Possible Solutions.**

2/6-11: SP Ch. 4: Gender Inequality;

2/13: (Q) Henslin "On Becoming Male: Reflections of a Sociologist" pp. 143-154;

(Q) Frye “Oppression”, pp. 48-52, RCG, or on Canvas).

Videos: “Blood Coming out of her...”, “Mean Girls, Sluts & Whores”; “Still Killing Me Softly 3”, “Dreamworlds 3”, “Feminism’s 1<sup>st</sup> 2 Waves”; “Girls to the Front!”.

**2/25, 2/27, 3/4, 3/6, 3/11 (Topic 3): Socio-Economic Stratification, Inequality, Poverty, Welfare, Homelessness, Unemployment & Crime. Possible Solutions.**

**2/25: Exam 1** [on Topics 0-2 material]; Bring green, 1/3-page, 100 items total, BCC Scantron Sheet.

2/27-3/6: SP Ch. 2: Poverty and Wealth;

Videos: “Your Baby can Read”; “Mad Real World”; “Portrait of the Lower Class”; discussion.

**3/11, 3/13, 3/18, 3/20, 3/25 (Topic 4): Race vs. Ethnicity, Patterns of Ethnic Oppression, Prejudice; Institutional Discrimination; the Racial Glass Ceiling. Possible Solutions.**

3/11-20: SP Ch. 3: Racial and Ethnic Inequality;

3/13: Brown "Biology & the Social Construction of the 'Race' Concept", pp. 144-150.

Videos: “Gov. Lepage on Crime”; “George Lopez Joke”; “Internal Colonialism in Oakland”; “Marion Barry”.

**3/27, 4/8, 4/10, 4/15, 4/17 (Topic 5): Crime & Violence: Patterns of Violent Crime; Theories & Causes of Crime; the Prison/Justice System; Race & Justice; Possible Solutions.**

**3/27: Exam 2** [on Topics 3-4 material]; Bring green, 1/3-page, 100 items total, BCC Scantron Sheet.

4/8 - 15: SP Ch. 6: Crime, Violence & Criminal Justice.

4/10: Andersen’s “Code of the Street” (on Canvas); Video: “Code of the Street”;

4/15: Kimmel’s, “Manhood & Violence” (on Canvas);

**4/17, 4/22, 4/24, 4/29, 5/1 (Topic 6): Substance Abuse, Downsides of Various Drugs; Theories of Substance Abuse; History of the “War Against Drugs”; Race & Drug Laws; Possible Solutions.**

4/17-4/29: SP Ch. 8: Alcohol & Other Drugs. Videos: “Unseen face of Meth Use”, “The House I Live In”.

**4/29: Extra credit paper** due in class (no late papers without official medical excuse).

**5/6, 5/8, 5/13, 5/15 (Topic 7): Human Population & Environmental Change: Theories & Models of Human Population; the values & socio-economic arrangements causing climate change. Solutions.**

SP Ch. 15: Population and Global Inequality (pp. 337-446 only; or 5<sup>th</sup> Edition: pp: 394-403);

SP Ch. 16: Technology & the Environment. Video: "Carbon Tax vs. Cap & Trade".

**Final Exam** (on Topics 5-7): **Mon. 5/20, 1:30-2:30 pm.**, bring green scantron sheet.

**Where to Find each Type of Reading:** Each type of reading uses a different type of symbol, which indicates where it is found. Below is a legend for each of these symbols:

- a) SP means that this reading comes from the course textbook, *Social Problems*;
- b) “ ”: titles in quotation marks are xeroxed articles on Library Reserve;
- c) Video: means this is a video documentary that will be shown in class.

**See the Sociology Program Web Page** at [www.berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/socsci/course-descriptions/sociology/](http://www.berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/socsci/course-descriptions/sociology/) if interested in other sociology courses, or becoming a sociology major.

**4) Important dates:**

2/3: Last day to drop classes without a “W”;

2/8: Last Day to File for PASS/NO PASS;

3/15: Last Day to File Petitions for AA/AS Degree;

4/26: Last day to withdraw with a “W”.

**5) Content Warning:** Because this class examines intensely personal things in a critical fashion (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and religion, etc.), and because it examines them from the perspective of different social groups and ideologies, you should only take this class if you are emotionally prepared to deal with potentially difficult social topics.