

**SOC 218**  
**INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS (3 units)**  
**Fall 2014**  
**Tu/Th 12:00-1:15pm**

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Instructor: Sanna King

Office: Saunders Hall 211

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30pm  
or by appointment

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, we will explore the process of how social problems are constructed. We will examine the different processes that go into how a problem becomes a *social* problem. The class is divided into three sections. In the first section, "The Social Problems Process," we will look at the different theoretical perceptions utilized in constructing social problems, and examine the beginning stages of the process of constructing a social problem. In the second section, "Claiming and Framing Social Problems," we will examine how problems are framed and public responses to these problems. In the third section, "Policy Making and Outcomes," we will focus on how social problems lead to social policies, and the outcomes of these policies.

**STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of the course students should be able to:

- Describe and evaluate different perspectives and ideologies of the social problem process.
- Understand theoretical approaches to social problems.
- Recognize strengths and weaknesses in methods of constructing social problems.
- Illustrate and discuss through written examinations and assignments concepts of social problems and different factors that impact the construction of social problems and their policy outcomes.
- Describe how the construction and framing of social problems can affect our societal framework.

**REQUIRED READING**

- Best, Joel (2013). *Social Problems (Second Edition)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Silver, Ira (2008). *Social Problems Readings*. New York: NYU Press W.W. Norton & Company.
- Additional readings will be posted on Lulima

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Participation (10%)  
Participation will be graded on pop quizzes and in-class assignments.
2. Assignments (2 at 10% each)  
There will be 2 assignments during the course. Due dates are listed in the course schedule. Assignment instructions will be posted on Laulima in the assignments folder. No late submissions are accepted without documented major extenuating circumstances.
3. Debate (20%)  
The class will be broken up into two groups (Pros v. Cons) and will participate in an in-class debate on a current social problem that will be selected by the instructor. Each group will have 2 weeks to prepare their arguments. Further instructions will be provided 2 weeks prior to the in-class debate.
4. Research Essay (10-12 pages) (50%)
  - a. Research proposal including bibliography - Due September 18<sup>th</sup> (5% or 15 points)
  - b. 1<sup>st</sup> draft of paper - Due October 16<sup>th</sup> (10% or 30 points)
  - c. 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of paper – Due November 13<sup>th</sup> (10% or 30 points)
  - d. Final Paper – Due December 18<sup>th</sup> (25% or 75 points)

Notification of an extenuating conflict or absence with documentation from a relevant professional is required and a reasonable accommodation can be made for any missed papers, class presentations, and/or late assignments.

If you are unable to or late in submitting an assignment, or paper, you must:

- 1) Talk with me at least 24 hours before the assignment/paper due date (email is acceptable).  
AND
- 2) Have a viable reason (i.e. and emergency) for missing an assignment/paper deadline or turning assignment/paper in late.  
AND
- 3) Have a note from a doctor or relevant professional explaining the nature of your emergency.

Late papers, class presentations, and/or late assignments will be accepted for students who meet the above three criteria. Those who do not meet the above three criteria will receive a score of 0 for the paper or assignment. Those who turn papers or assignments in late and do not meet the above three criteria will be marked down 10%.

<b>GRADING</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total Points</b>
Participation	10%	30 points
Assignments (2 at 10% each)	20%	60 points
In-Class Debate	20%	60 points
Research Essay	50%	150 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>300 points</b>

**Grading Percentiles:**

95 – 100%	A	80 – 82%	B-	67 – 69%	D+
90 – 94%	A-	76 – 79%	C+	64 – 66%	D
86 – 89%	B+	73 – 75%	C	60 – 63%	D-
83 – 85%	B	70 – 72%	C-	59% and lower	F

**CLASS ETIQUETTE**

Class discussions may touch on a number of sensitive topics. While students are encouraged to share their views, please do so with respect for others in the class, and respond in a respectful manner. Interruptions of or insults directed at other students will not be tolerated.

**KOKUA**

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability is invited to contact me privately. I would be happy to work with you, and the KOKUA Program (Office for Students with Disabilities) to ensure reasonable accommodations in my course. KOKUA can be reached at (808) 956-7511 or (808) 956-7612 (voice/text) in room 103 of the Queen Lili'uokalani Center for Student Services.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Any form of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is a serious violation of the UH-Manoa Student Conduct Code. In it, plagiarism is defined as follows:

"The term 'plagiarism' includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials."

University of Hawai'i at Manoa Student Conduct Code (2009), E7.208, Pages 4 and 5

## COURSE SCHEDULE

\* Please note, class schedule may be subject to change depending on progress of the course.

### **Section I. The Social Problems Process**

#### **Week 1: August 26<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> – Course Introduction & Overview**

Tuesday 8/26: Course Introduction

Thursday 8/28: Chapter 1 – Thinking About Social Problems [**Laulima**]

#### **Week 2: September 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> – The Social Problems Process**

Tuesday 9/2: *Best* – Chapter 1

Thursday 9/4: *Silver* – Reading 5: *Making Road Dangers Invisible*, Malcolm Gladwell

*Silver* – Reading 26: *Black Men as Criminals and as Victims*, Barry Glassner

#### **Week 3: September 9<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> - Theoretical Perspectives**

Tuesday 9/9: Readings TBA – [**Laulima**]

Thursday 9/11: Readings TBA – [**Laulima**]

#### **Week 4: September 16<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> – Claims – RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE**

Tuesday 9/16: *Best* – Chapter 2

*Silver* – Reading 3: *Viewing Bodily Imperfection as a Health Problem*, Ken Silverstein

Thursday 9/18: *Silver* – Reading 10: *The Horrors of Child Abuse*, John M. Johnson

*Silver* – Reading 20: *Compensating for Deficit versus Enhancing Performance*, Kate Zernike

*Silver* – Reading 22: *Babies Having Babies*, Kristin Luker

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE: SEPTEMBER 18TH**

### **Section II. Claiming and Framing Social Problems**

#### **Week 5: September 23<sup>rd</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> – Activists as Claimsmakers**

Tuesday 9/23: *Best* - Chapter 3

*Silver* – Reading 9: *Random Violence*, Joel Best

Thursday 9/25: *Silver* – Reading 12: *Injustice Based on Sexual Orientation*, Mitch Berbrier and Elaine Pruett

*Silver* – Reading 19: *Selling Environmental Problems*, Sheldon Ungar

#### **Week 6: September 30<sup>th</sup> & October 2<sup>nd</sup> - Experts as Claimsmakers - Assignment #1 DUE**

Tuesday 9/30: *Best* – Chapter 4

Thursday 10/2: *Silver* – Reading 6: *Getting Fat on Misinformation*, The Center for Consumer Freedom

*Silver* – Reading 13: *PMS and the Biological Flaws of Womanhood*, Carol Tavris

**Assignment #1 DUE: October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Week 7: October 7<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> – The Media and Claims**

Tuesday 10/7: *Best* – Chapter 5

*Silver* – Reading 1: Spotighting Disaster, Eric Klinenberg

Thursday 10/9: *Silver* – Reading 7: Making School Shootings More Thinkable, Lionel Shriver

**Week 8: October 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> – The Media and Claims (continued...) – Paper Draft #1 DUE**

Tuesday 10/14: *Silver* – Reading 11: *Dangerous Music in Black and White*, Amy Binder

Thursday 10/16: *Silver* – Reading 18: *A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words*, Ira Silver

*Silver* – Reading 31: *Labor Strife Produces Disgruntled Consumers*, Christopher R. Martin

**Paper Draft #1 DUE: October 16th**

**Week 9: October 21<sup>st</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> - Public Reaction**

Tuesday 10/21: *Best* – Chapter 6

*Silver* – Reading 4: *Seeing Police Mistreatment of Blacks as a Necessary Evil*, Frank Bruni

*Silver* – Reading 23: *When Kids Become Victims of Violence*, Joel Best

Thursday 10/23: *Silver* – Reading 21: The Crimes That Come to Mind, Jeffrey Reiman

*Silver* – Reading 32: *The Colored Stigma of Imprisonment*, Devah Pager

**Week 10: October 28<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> - Public Reaction (Continued...)**

Tuesday 10/28: *Silver* – Reading 16: *Killer Tales About Serial Killings*, Philip Jenkins

*Silver* – Reading 14: *Black and Undeserving: Exposing Myths about America's Poor*, Martin Glins

Thursday 10/30: Debate Prep

**Week 11: November 4<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> – IN-CLASS DEBATE**

Tuesday 11/4: HOLIDAY

Thursday 11/6: IN-CLASS DEBATE

**Section III. Policy Making and Outcomes**
**Week 12: November 11<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> – Policymaking – Paper Draft #2 DUE**

Tuesday 11/11: HOLIDAY

Thursday 11/13: *Best* – Chapter 7

**PAPER DRAFT #2 DUE: November 13<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 13: November 18<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> - Policymaking (continued...) - Assignment #2 DUE**

Tuesday 11/18: *Silver* – Reading 2: *Waging War on Drugs*, Craig Reinerman and Harry G. Levine

*Logan* (1999) – Crack Babies [**Laulima**]

Thursday 11/20: *Silver* – Reading 27: *The War on Terror and a Terrified Public*, Dawn Rothe and Stephen L. Muzzatti

*Silver* – Reading 24: *Homeless, Not Poor*, Gary Blasi

**Assignment #2 DUE: November 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 14: November 25<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> - Social Problems Work & Thanksgiving Holiday**

Tuesday 11/25: Best – Chapter 8

*Silver* – Reading 15: *Treating Social Problems as Emergencies*, Michael Lipsky

*Silver* – Reading 25: *Catastrophes That Count*, Hendrik Hertzberg

*Silver* – Reading 28: *Fostering Personal Responsibility Among Women on Welfare*, Sharon Hays

Thursday 11/26: **NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING**

**Week 15: December 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> - Policy Outcomes**

Tuesday 12/3: Best – Chapter 9

*Silver* – Reading 29: *Providing Free Housing to the Homeless*, Malcolm Gladwell

Thursday 12/5: *Silver* – Reading 30: *The Politics of Disaster*, David E. Rosenbaum

*Silver* – Reading 33: *Gaming on Native American Reservations*, Donald L. Bartlett and James B. Steele

**Week 16: December 9<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> – Claims Across Space and Time**

Tuesday 12/9: Best – Chapter 10

*Silver* – Reading 17: *Stalking as a Danger Potentially Menacing All Women*, Kathleen S. Lowney and Joel Best

Thursday 12/11: Course Review

**FINAL PAPER DUE: Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm**