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Sociology 218: Introduction to Social Problems Summer Session I 2010 (May 24, 2010-July 2, 2010)

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will expose students to various social problems and encourage student's to examine these issues from a sociological perspective. The first portion of this course will focus on the theoretical perspectives (conflict, structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and social constructionism) and the research methods that sociologists use to examine societal problems. The second portion of the course will examine social problems (Poverty, Racism, Sexism, Heterosexism) that lead to create and maintain societal inequality. The third, and final, portion of this course will focus on issues problems that exist within social institutions (Issues in the family, work, criminal justice system, health and illness, politics, and the media). The social problems examined in the second and third portion of the course will be examined through the theoretical perspectives presented in the first portion of the course. Furthermore, students will use the research methods discussed to examine and connect the social problems discussed in the course to their local context.

In this course students are asked to have an open mind and explore the many possibilities that sociology offers in the examination of the world around us. Many of the perspectives covered in this course may not agree with the student's worldview. However, the student is asked to consider each perspective as a way of looking at the world, rather than an absolute truth on the subject. Therefore, students should leave this course being able to see various problems from a plethora of angles and choose the perspective that best fits their position on issues.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

- (1) Demonstrate a basic understanding of the theoretical perspectives and research methods often used by sociologists to examine social problems.
- (2) Identify various social problems and discuss the possible root causes of the issues.
- (3) Understand how social problems contribute to the creation and maintenance of social inequalities.
- (4) Understand how the social problems presented in the text relate to and connect to the local context in Hawaii.
- (5) Consider various social issues from multiple perspectives, while being sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective.
- (6) Begin to feel comfortable using the American Sociological Association (ASA) citation style.

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COURSE TEXT

The required text, listed below, for this course are available at the UH bookstore and online through sites like www.amazon.com. Purchasing the following books as NEW books on Amazon, which cost the student approximately \$100.00. All book can also be purchased as USED books either at the UH Bookstore or an online bookseller.

Finsterbusch, Kurt. 2009. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Social Issues*. 15th ed. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. (ISBN: 978-0-07-812750-2)

Konradi, Amanda and Martha Schmidt. 2004. *Reading Between the Lines: Toward an Understanding of Current Social Problems*. 3rd ed. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. (ISBN: 0-07282152-3)

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

FIELDWORK ASSIGNMENTS: Two fieldwork assignments will be assigned during the course of the semester. The purpose of the fieldwork assignments is to get the students to apply the concepts and theories discussed in class to their everyday worlds. One fieldwork assignment will require students to do engage in participant observation or interviews and write a 3 page essay on the topic of **racism in Hawaii**. The second fieldwork assignment requires the student to complete a “photo essay” that illuminates a social problem discussed during the course. Each fieldwork assignment will be worth 10% of the student’s final grade. Combined the fieldwork assignments will account for 20% of the student’s final grade.

In-Class Assignments: Throughout the course, various in-class assignments will be assigned. These assignments are designed to help facilitate discussion and critical thinking throughout the semester. The in-class assignments, combined, account for 10% of the student’s final grade.

FINAL PAPER: The final paper, a creative short story informed by the course content, will provide the student with a creative outlet to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the theories, concepts, and substantive areas discussed throughout the course. The final paper must be a minimum of 12 pages long. More information on the final paper will be provided during the first weeks of the class.

REFLECTION PAPER: Students will complete a short reflection paper at the end of the semester. The paper will require students to reflect on the final film shown in the class (Freedom Writers) in the context of the course material. Students will also be asked to reflect on the course as a whole. More information on the final reflection paper will be provided at a later date.

MIDTERM: The midterm exam will assess the student’s knowledge of all the material covered prior to the day of the exam. The format of the midterm has not been decided and will be negotiated with the students enrolled in the class. The structure of the midterm will

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also depend on the class size. The midterm exam will be worth 20% of the student's final grade.

CLASS PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE: The student is expected to attend classes regularly, come prepared for class by completing the assigned readings, and actively participate in class/online discussions or activities. Students are expected to have no more than 3 unexcused absences throughout the course. Each absence after the 3rd unexcused absence will result in a 2% deduction off the student's final grade. If a student is unable to attend class he/she is expected to let instructor know via email before the start of class on that day. The student's attendance and participation in classroom activities is worth 20% of the student's total grade.

Therefore the final grade comprises of the following:

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Fieldwork Assignments | 20% |
| In-Class Assignments | 10% |
| Reflection Paper | 10% |
| Final Paper | 20% |
| Midterm | 20% |
| Attendance/Participation | 20% |
| <hr/> | |
| Final Grade | 100% |

| DATE | FOCUS/TOPIC | READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS |
|---------------|--|--|
| Week 1 | | |
| Day 1: May 24 | Syllabus/Course Expectations | None |
| Day 2: May 25 | What is a social problem?/The Sociological Imagination and Critical Thinking | C. Wright Mills' "The Sociological Imagination" |
| Day 3: May 26 | Conflict Theory and Structural Functionalism/Intersectionality | Patricia Hill Collins "Towards a New Vision" |
| Day 4: May 27 | Symbolic Interactionism/Reproducing Social Inequality | Schwalbe et al. "Reproducing Inequality" |
| Day 5: May 28 | Capitalism: The Communist Manifesto | Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto "Preface" and "Chapter 1" |
| Week 2 | | |
| Day 6: May 31 | HOLIDAY: MEMORIAL DAY | NO CLASS |

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| DATE | FOCUS/TOPIC | READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Day 7: June 1 | Capitalism: Davis and Moore's Theory of Stratification | Davis and Moore "Some Principles of Social Stratification" Tumin's Critique of Davis and Moore |
| Day 8: June 2 | Power and Poverty | "The Capitalist Manifesto" and "Corporate Welfare" |
| Day 9: June 3 | Power and Poverty | "Without a Safety Net" and "The Social Psychology of Modern Slavery" |
| Day 10: June 4 | Capitalism, Poverty, and Globalization: Life and Debt | None Racism in Hawaii Field Assignment Due |
| Week 3 | | |
| Day 11: June 7 | Race, Ethnicity, and Racism | "Hawaii's Tradition of Local Ethnic Humor" and "Closing the Black-White Test Gap" |
| Day 12: June 8 | Race, Ethnicity, and Racism | "Testing the Model Minority Myth" and "Racial Microaggressions and the Asian American Experience" |
| Day 13: June 9 | Race, Ethnicity, and Racism: The Massey Affair | None |
| Day 14: June 10 | MIDTERM EXAM | MIDTERM EXAM |
| Day 15: June 11 | HOLIDAY: KAMEHAMEHA DAY | NO CLASS |
| Week 4 | | |
| Day 16: June 14 | Gender, Sexuality, Sexism, and Heterosexism | "Doing Gender" and "Embattled Terrain" |
| Day 17: June 15 | Gender, Sexuality, Sexism, and Heterosexism | "The Time Bind" and "Re-examining Battering..." |
| Day 18: June 16 | Social Problems in Education | "Missing in Interaction" and "A War Against Boys?" |

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| DATE | FOCUS/TOPIC | READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Day 19: June 17 | Social Problems in Education | “Contextualizing Asian American Education...” and “Students for Sale...” |
| Day 20: June 18 | Writer’s Workshop | Writer’s Workshop |
| Week 5 | | |
| Day 21: June 21 | Social Problems: Illness and Health Care | TBD |
| Day 22: June 22 | Social Problems: Illness and Health Care | TBD |
| Day 23: June 23 | Social Problems and the Criminal Justice System | TBD |
| Day 24: June 24 | Field Assignment Presentations | Photo Essay Field Assignment Due |
| Day 25: June 25 | Writer’s Workshop | Writer’s Workshop |
| Week 6 | | |
| Day 26: June 28 | Perpetuating/Masking Social Problems: The Media | “Business as Media” Except |
| Day 27: June 29 | Social Movements and Social Change | None |
| Day 28: June 30 | Course Recap: Freedom Writers | None |
| Day 29: July 1 | Course Recap: Freedom Writers | None |
| Day 30: July 2 | Presentation of Final Paper | Final Paper Due Reflection Paper Due |

GENERAL ISSUES:

CELL PHONES AND COMPUTERS: Students are expected to silence/turn off their cell phones during the class period. It is also expected that students will not use their cell phones in the classroom during instruction. While the use of computers is not prohibited during instruction, it is expected that students be using the computer for content related to the lecture. If it is clear that students are using computers for other purposes (eg. Facebook, myspace, etc.) students will be asked to discontinue using the computer. If this

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becomes a consistent problem, the use of computers will be prohibited during class time unless instructor grants the student approval to use the computer.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Students should strive to turn in their assignments on time, as late assignments will suffer a substantial reduction in points. If a student can not turn an assignment on time, he or she must contact the instructor PRIOR to the deadline to negotiate an extension to avoid any penalty for a late assignment. For everyday that an assignment is late (this includes weekends, as papers can be turned in via email) the assignment will automatically lose 5%. Therefore, if an assignment is worth 10% of a student's final grade and the student turns the assignment in one day late, the student will forfeit 5% of the final grade and the assignment will only contribute to 5% of the student's final grade.

EXTRA CREDIT: There may be a possibility that extra credit will be offered during this course. However, in order for any extra credit to be applied to the final grade all course work must be completed. If a student fails to complete an assignment or an exam the extra credit will not be counted towards the student's final grade.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: The University of Hawaii at Manoa explicitly prohibits cheating or plagiarism in the academic environment. Section IH of the student code of conduct defines these as:

"Cheating includes but is not limited to giving or receiving unauthorized assistance during an examination; obtaining unauthorized information about an examination before it is given; submitting another's work as one's own; using prohibited sources of information during an examination; fabricating or falsifying data in experiments and other research; altering the record of any grade; altering answers after an examination has been submitted; falsifying any official University record; or misrepresenting of facts in order to obtain exemptions from course requirements."

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to submitting, in fulfillment of an academic requirement, any work that has been copied in whole or in part from another individual's work without attributing that borrowed portion to the individual; neglecting to identify as a quotation another's idea and particular phrasing that was not assimilated into the student's language and style or paraphrasing a passage so that the reader is misled as to the source; submitting the same written or oral or artistic material in more than one course without obtaining authorization from the instructors involved; or "drylabbing," which includes obtaining and using experimental data and laboratory write-ups from other sections of a course or from previous terms."

ACCOMODATIONS AND KOKUA: Students who need accommodations in this class due to the impact of a disability are encouraged to contact both the instructor and KOKUA to ensure the appropriate accommodations are made. KOKUA can be reached at (808) 956-7511 or (808) 956-7612. KOKUA is located in room 013 of the Queen Lili'uokalani Center for Student Services.

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**The instructor reserves the right to change the order/content of the syllabus to accommodate scheduling conflicts and any other unforeseen circumstances.