

DRAFT: SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Sociology 218: Introduction to Social Problems
Fall 2009 (August 2009-December 2009)
Tuesday & Thursday 12:00-1:15 PM

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.

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- (6) Begin to feel comfortable using the American Sociological Association (ASA) citation style.

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 3-4 page essay on their findings and their experience with the research method. The second fieldwork assignment requires the student to complete a “photo essay” that illuminates a concept or theory 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.

PROPOSAL: Each group will submit a proposal for their final project. The proposal should provide an overview of some of the literature on the group’s selected social problem, the theory(ies) that will guide the group’s analysis, and the methodology that the group proposes to employ for the project. The proposal will account for 10% of the student’s final grade. More information on the proposal will be provided in a separate handout.

FINAL PAPER: The final paper, approximately 15 pages in length, will be a group effort. The paper will be based on the research that students propose to conduct at the beginning of the semester with their proposal. The final paper should examine the social problem chosen to be studied, connect the social problem to Hawaii, and propose solutions to the problem in Hawaii. The final paper will account for 20% of the student’s final grade. More information on the final paper will be provided in a separate handout.

FINAL PRESENTATION: For the final presentation groups will create a presentation about their final paper that will be shared with the class. Presentation length will be determined by the number of groups that will need to give a presentation during the final exam period. The final presentation will account for 10% of the student’s final grade. More information on the final presentation will be provided in a separate handout.

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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 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%
Proposal	10%
Final Paper	20%
Final Presentation	10%
Midterm	20%
Attendance/Participation	20%
Final Grade	
	100%

Date	Focus/Topic	Readings/Assignments
Day 1: August 24	Syllabus and Course Expectations	None
Day 2: August 26	Examining Common Sense Knowledge about Social Problems/Creating Common Sense Knowledge: The Media	Chapter 1 KF: Issue 2
Day 3: Sept. 1	The Sociological Perspective and Critical Thinking	KS: Reading 1
Day 4: Sept. 3	Functionalism and Conflict Theory	KS: Reading 2 and 32
Day 5: Sept. 8	Symbolic Interactionism/Feminist Theory	KF: Issue 8 KS: Reading 3
Day 6: Sept. 11	Social Constructionism/Postmodern Theory	
Day 7: Sept. 15	Sociological Research Methods	Handouts
Day 8: Sept. 17	Sociological Research Methods	Handouts
Day 9: Sept. 22	Power, Capitalism, and Poverty	Chapter 3 and Chapter 4
Day 10: Sept. 24		KF: Issue 7, 11, and 12 PROPOSAL DUE

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Day 11: Sept. 29	Race and Ethnicity (Racism)	Chapter 5
Day 12: Oct. 1		KF: Issue 9
Day 13: Oct. 6	Gender and Sexuality (Sexism and Heterosexism)	Chapter 6
Day 14: Oct. 8		KF: Issue 10 and 6
Day 15: Oct. 13	Social Problems and the Family	Chapter 8
Day 16: Oct. 15		KF: Issue 4 and 5
Day 17: Oct. 20	REVIEW FOR MIDTERM	REVIEW FOR MIDTERM
Day 18: Oct. 22	MIDTERM	MIDTERM
Day 19: Oct. 27	Social Problems and Education	Chapter 9
Day 20: Oct. 29		KF: Issue 13
Day 21: Nov. 3	Social Problems and the Criminal Justice System	Chapter 10
Day 22: Nov. 5		KF: Issue 15 and 16
Day 23: Nov. 10	Social Problems and the Environment	Chapter 12, KF: Issue 18
Day 24: Nov. 12	WRITER'S WORKSHOP: Bring Draft of Final Paper to Class	
Day 25: Nov. 17	Social Problems and Global Politics, Terrorism, and War	Chapter 13
Day 26: Nov. 19		KF: Issue 22 and 19
Day 27: Nov. 24	NO CLASS: Fieldwork Day	WORK ON FINAL PAPER
Day 28: Nov. 26	NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING
Day 29: Dec. 1	SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CHANGE	Handouts
Day 30: Dec. 3	SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CHANGE	Handouts
Day 31: Dec. 8	WRITER'S WORKSHOP: Bring 2 nd Draft of Final Paper to Class	
Day 32: Dec. 10	COURSE EVALUATIONS AND COURSE REFLECTION	FINAL PAPER DUE
DEC. XXX, 2009	FINAL PRESENTATIONS	FINAL PRESENTATIONS

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

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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.

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