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## **Sociology 218: Introduction to Social Problems Spring 2010 (January 2010-May 2010) Tuesday & Thursday 9:00-10:15 AM**

### **INSTRUCTOR**

Daniel B. Eisen

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### **GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT**

Office:

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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.

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- (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.

### **COURSE TEXT**

The required text, listed below, for this course are available at the UH bookstore and online through sites like [www.amazon.com](http://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*. 15<sup>th</sup> 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*. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 can be completed by an individual (9-11 pages) or two individuals (13-16 pages). 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

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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 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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%
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Final Grade	100%

Date	Focus/Topic	Reading/Assignment
January 12	Syllabus and Course Expectations	None
January 14	What is a social problem?/The Sociological Imagination and Critical Thinking	C. Wright Mill's "The Sociological Imagination"
January 19	Conflict Theory and Structural Functionalism/Intersectionality	Patricia Hill Collins "Towards a New Vision"
January 21	Symbolic Interactionism/Reproducing Social Inequality	Schwalbe et al. "Reproducing Inequality"

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Date	Focus/Topic	Reading/Assignment
January 26	Capitalism: The Communist Manifesto	Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto “Preface” and “Chapter I”
January 28	Capitalism: Davis and Moore’s Theory of Stratification	Davis and Moore “Some Principles of Social Stratification”  Tumin’s Critique of Davis and Moore
February 2	Power and Poverty	“The Capitalist Manifesto” and “Corporate Welfare”
February 4	Power and Poverty	“Without a Safety Net” and “The Social Psychology of Modern Slavery”
February 9	Capitalism, Poverty, and Globalization: Life and Debt	None
February 11	Race, Ethnicity, and Racism	“Hawaii’s Tradition of Local Ethnic Humor” and “Closing the Black-White Test Gap”
February 16	Race, Ethnicity, and Racism	“Testing the Model Minority Myth” and “Racial Microaggressions and the Asian American Experience”
February 18	Race, Ethnicity, and Racism: The Massey Affair	None <b>Racism in Hawaii Field Assignment Due</b>
February 23	Gender, Sexuality, Sexism, and Heterosexism	“Doing Gender” and “Embattled Terrain”
February 25	Gender, Sexuality, Sexism, and Heterosexism	“The Time Bind” and “Re-examining Battering...”
March 2	REVIEW FOR MIDTERM	REVIEW FOR MIDTERM

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Date	Focus/Topic	Reading/Assignment
March 4	MIDTERM	MIDTERM
March 9	Social Problems in Education	"Missing in Interaction" and "A War Against Boys?"
March 11	Social Problems in Education	"Contextualizing Asian American Education..." and "Students for Sale..."
March 16	Social Problems: Illness and Health Care	TBD
March 18	Social Problems: Illness and Health Care	TBD
March 23	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
March 25	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
March 30	Social Problems and the Criminal Justice System/Deviance	TBD
April 1	Social Problems and the Criminal Justice System/Deviance	TBD
April 6	Field Assignment Presentations	None <b>Photo Essay Field Assignment Due</b>
April 8	Field Assignment Presentations	None
April 13	Perpetuating/Masking Social Problems: The Media	TBD
April 15	Perpetuating/Masking Social Problems: The Media	TBD
April 20	Social Movements and Social Change	TBD
April 22	Social Movements and Social Change	TBD
April 27	Course Recap: Freedom Writers	None
April 29	Course Recap: Freedom Writers	None

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Date	Focus/Topic	Reading/Assignment
May 4	REVIEW FOR FINAL	REVIEW FOR FINAL <b>Freedom Writer's Reflection/Final Course Reflection Due</b>
May XX	FINAL EXAM	FINAL EXAM

### 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.

**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*

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*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.**