

**SOC 218: Introduction to Social Problems**, Section 1, CRN 87740, 3 Units, Spring 2015-2016  
Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30-11:45am, George 213  
Professor: Sun-Ki Chai, 956-7234, sunki{atmark}hawaii.edu  
Office Hours: TTh 9:30-10:30am, Saunders Hall 237

Social Problems is the branch of Sociology that seeks to connect broad sociological theories with the concrete issues that affect our everyday lives. Human beings naturally tend to think of life in terms of our own personal experiences, as well as those of our family and friends, since these are the events that are of the greatest direct importance to us. However, as sociologists, we must try to look at life from a much broader theoretical viewpoint, providing answers to questions that relate to a full range of human issues, encompassing people and societies around the world and throughout history. However, if we keep sociological ideas and personal experiences separated, then it will be hard to make sociology relevant to the concerns of ordinary people. Thus, we need to find ways to use sociological concepts and theories to analyze the everyday problems of "real life", but in a way that has meaning for a wider humanity. This course seeks help start this process. We will do by covering a number of different types of social issues such as poverty, racial conflict, crime, and war, using major theoretical approaches from sociology to explain the ways in which they impact our lives.

The course text is John D. Carl, *THINK: Social Problems 2nd Edition*, (Pearson, 2013). It is available at the University bookstore in a hard copy version. It can also be purchased or rented in an e-book format from online sites such as [Vitalsource](#) or [Amazon](#). Although it is also possible to order a hard copy online, please do not do so unless you can ensure that the book within the first week or two of class, as we will start using it right away.

Other than this syllabus, all of the course materials will be placed only on the [Laulima](#) course site. The course should appear automatically on your homepage at Laulima once you are registered for the course. All assignments should be turned in on Laulima, and grades/comments will be displayed there as well.

Grades in the course are based on point totals, with the total for assignments adding up to 100 points.

There will be three short writing assignments interspersed through the semester that will ask you to use theoretical ideas to understand a current event or trend related to one of the types of social issues covered in class. You will draw upon the theoretical approaches taught within the course, as well as information drawn from online and/or library materials. Together, these assignments will count for 45 points (15 points apiece).

You will be given a take-home final examination that will require you to show your deeper understanding of multiple theoretical approaches by comparing them as they apply across multiple issues from the course, highlighting the main similarities and differences. You may draw upon your earlier writing assignments, but the assignment will require you to do additional research, as well as to consolidate the analysis you have already done. This will count for 25 points. The final will be due at the end of the exam time assigned for the course on the University [final exam schedule](#).

Attendance will be taken in the course, and will count for a total of 25 points. One point will be subtracted your attendance grade for each class missed. Students should arrive when class begins and stay until class ends to receive full credit for attendance. Excused absences will be given only for mandatory University activities or medical/family emergencies that render you unable to attend. If either case, you must provide reasonable written documentation of the circumstances.

Open discussion will be encouraged throughout the course, and is crucial to the process of learning how to think about issues relating to everyday life in a new, more theoretically-informed, manner. Therefore, up to 5 points will be given for class participation. A point will be given for each class session in which a student contributes one or more questions and/or comments that engage with the substantive or theoretical course

topics being covered, as long this is done in a serious and courteous manner. These can include discussion of relevant news and current events, as well as experiences that may illustrate large social issues.

The course grade will be based on a modified D=60 | C=70 | B=80 | A=90 point scale (C- and D- are not awarded in this course). Depending on the distribution of class point total at the end of the semester, there is a possibility, but no guarantee, that the cutoff points may be lowered to a small extent. Therefore, although the exact cutoff lines will not be known until after the final paper, you can be confident of a grade if your total point total exceeds the corresponding level listed above. Please consult the [UHM catalog](#) for general information on credits and grades.

The sociology department has put forward three specific Student Learning Outcomes, which the this course will address as follows:

1. *Students will be able to evaluate sociological theories and use them to analyze and understand aspects of the social world.* Each unit in the course schedule will examine a type of social issue using each of four primary theoretical approaches central to the course.
2. *Students will be able to collect, analyze, and interpret data, and draw valid conclusions from their analyses.* All assignments in this course will involve doing research on a contemporary social issue, then using the empirical information from that research, along with one or more theoretical approach from the course, to address some facet of this issue.
3. *Students will have clear and effective verbal and written communication skills.* All assignments in this course will be in written essay format, each requiring a clear presentation of research issue, theory, empirical evidence, and application of theory to evidence, with appropriate citations.

Plagiarism is a violation of [campus policies](#) and is strictly prohibited. Students who plagiarize or otherwise violate student integrity policies on an assignment for any reason will be subject to an automatic failing grade, and further discipline may be administered for major violations. It is students' responsibility to be familiar with rules on plagiarism and other aspects of the [Student Conduct Code](#); ignorance of the rules is not a valid excuse. It is becoming increasingly easy to detect plagiarism electronically, and plagiarizing cheats the other students in the class who are following the rules.

Efforts will be made to provide reasonable accommodation for students who are registered with the [KOKUA Program](#), the UH Manoa office for students with disabilities. For more information on KOKUA, please contact them at Queen Lili'uokalani Center for Student Services 013, phone 956-7511, or email [kokua@hawaii.edu](mailto:kokua@hawaii.edu).