

# Social Problems

## COURSE MATERIALS

Lauer, Robert H. and Jeanette C. 2008. [Social Problems: and the Quality of Life](#). 12th ed. Boston, Ma: McGraw Hill.

## WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

### APPLYING A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Sociologists focus on social rather than personal problems. A social problem is a problem whose causes and solutions lie outside of the individual and the immediate environment of the individual. The distinction between individual and social problems is sometimes blurred, since the causes and solutions may lie both inside and outside the individual. We, however, will only focus on the external factors involved.

At first glance, identifying and analyzing social problems seems a simple task. In truth, simply defining social problems is problematic. The conditions that constitute a social problem can seem ambiguous and imprecise.

This course is meant to help you **view** social problems via your **sociological imagination**. To do this, we must consider how the social problems arose, what factors in the culture increase and decrease the problems, and how solutions might affect other aspects of society. We must be mindful of the root causes of the problems. Also, we must consider the consequences whether direct, indirect, intended or unintended. We must look at the problems holistically considering the historical and global context in which the problem occurs. Finally, we must be aware of the shared ideas and values that shape our discussion of and conclusions about the problems.

## COURSE COMPONENTS

**All assignments, not completed in the classroom, will be submitted through blackboard under the assignments tab.**

**Chapter Tests:** cover the chapters from the book *Social Problems: and the Quality of Life*. Each test is made up of ten questions. The questions are either multiple choice or true/false. You will be required to read the chapters and complete the corresponding tests each week prior to the in class (or online) discussion of that chapter. The course schedule (below) provides information on when each chapter will be covered.

**Debates:** Students should prepare for debates by looking up evidence through scholarly sources. The library's opposing viewpoints resource center is linked to some of the debates in the course schedule (below).

**Extra Credit:** You may attend four campus events related to the course for extra credit. After attending an event, submit a short essay discussing how the experience illustrated or complimented the course material. Extra credit will also be given to students who find a glitch in any of the course materials. This includes typos, links that do not work, etc. Another option is to go on a [river testing or tree planting](#) expedition with Mike Phillips.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Week Due	Task	Points
One	<a href="#">Introduction</a>	20
	<a href="#">Syllabus – Test</a>	5
	Chapter One - Understanding Social Problems – Test	20
	Speed Dating & Group Formation	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>
Two	Chapter Two - Alcohol and Other Drugs - Test	20
	<a href="#">Elizabeth Pisani: Sex, Drugs and HIV -- Let's Get Rational</a> Discussion Question: <i>Identify the reasons policies fail to reflect what scientific evidence shows is rational in solving social problems. How can these reasons be eliminated?</i>	10
	<a href="#">End Persecution in America: Legalize Drugs &amp; Prohibition Quote</a>	5
	<a href="#">Has America Lost the War on Drugs?</a> Discussion Question: <i>Without modifying the current criminal law, brainstorm ways to make the "war on drugs" more effective.</i>	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>
Three	Chapter Three - Crime and Delinquency - Test	20
	<a href="#">Gun Control Made For Higher Crime Rates &amp; Gun Control Debate</a> (Rape-aXe)	10
	<a href="#">Misha Glenny Investigates Global Crime Networks</a>	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

<b>Four</b>	Chapter Four - Violence - Test	20
	<a href="#">Steven Pinker on the Myth of Violence</a> Discussion Question: <i>Is Violence Inevitable?</i>	10
	<a href="#">The Morality of Murder</a> Activity: <i>Moral Dilemmas</i>	10
	<a href="#">Power Point Presentations</a>	70
	<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Five</b>	Chapter Five – Sexual Deviance - Test	20
	<a href="#">Pornography Debate</a>	10
	<a href="#">Prostitution Debate</a>	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Six</b>	Chapter Six – Poverty - Test	20
	<a href="#">Jacqueline Novogratz: A Third Way to Think about Aid</a>	10
	<a href="#">Jared Diamond &amp; Paul Collier on the "Bottom Billion"</a>	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Seven</b>	Chapter Seven - Gender and Sexual Orientation - Test	20
	<a href="#">The Gender Agenda: Putting Parity into Practice</a>	8
	<a href="#">If Men Could Menstruate</a>	2
	<a href="#">Sex and Gender Orientation</a>	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Eight</b>	Chapter Eight - Race, Ethnic Groups, and Racism - Test	20
<b>Nine</b>	Chapter Nine - Government and Politics - Test	20
<b>Ten</b>	Chapter Ten - Work and the Economy - Test	20
	<a href="#">News Analysis</a>	<b>100</b>
<b>Eleven</b>	Chapter Eleven - Education - Test	20
<b>Twelve</b>	Chapter Twelve – Family Problems - Test	20
<b>Thirteen</b>	Chapter Thirteen – Health Care and Illness - Test	20
<b>Fourteen</b>	Chapter Fourteen – War and Terrorism	20
<b>Fifteen</b>	Chapter Fifteen – The Environment - Test	20
<b>Sixteen</b>	<a href="#">Conclusion/Evaluation</a>	15
	<a href="#">Term Papers</a>	200
	<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>

### GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Assignment	Points Allotted
Introduction	20
Syllabus Test	5
Chapter Tests	300
Class Discussions & Activities	130
News Analysis	75
Power Point Project	70
Conclusion/Evaluation	20
Attendance (second eight weeks)	40
Term Paper	140
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>

*Know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues, and in terms of the problems of history-making. Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles, and to the problems of the individual life. Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of societies occur; and within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time. C Wright Mills*

*A social problem is defined as public awareness of a gap between society's expectations and social realities. Neil Jacoby*

*Science cannot resolve moral conflicts, but it can help to more accurately frame the debates about those conflicts. Heinz Pagels*

# ReaCH FaR

**Responsibility, Caring, Honesty, Fairness, Respect**