

SOCY 2031

Social Problems (Continuing Education Online Class)

Instructor: Bertha Alicia Bermúdez Tapia

Instructor

Contact Information

Bertha Alicia Bermúdez Tapia

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Office Location: Virtual Office, Meetings available through Zoom by appointment

Office Hours: By appointment

Communication Policy

Due to the online nature of the course, email will be the best form of communication. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24-36 hours during the week, and by Monday for emails received over the weekend. Please do not hesitate to email with any questions.

Instructor Bio

I am a Doctoral Candidate in Sociology at the University of Colorado Boulder, and a fellow at the Institute of Behavioral Science for the Population Program. I have served as an Instructor for SOCY 1021, 3201, 2031, and 4131 on campus. I encourage engagement and participation in the online classroom through respectful debates and discussion, while maintaining an inclusive learning environment open to all perspectives. My research interests are on the qualitative aspects of the relationship between migration, deportation, and border lives, particularly exploring community responses to immigration policies and violence on the US Mexico Border. I received a BA in Political Science from Monterrey Tech (Mexico) and a Master's degree in Gender Studies and Culture from the University of Chile.

About the Course

Course description

This course will consider social problems from a sociological perspective. We will apply critical thinking skills to analyze a number of social problems that affect populations both in the U.S. and around the globe. Using a variety of theoretical paradigms and sociological concepts, we will explore what the structural causes and consequences of social problems are for society and discuss and analyze existing and proposed solutions. This course will connect social theory and broader issues to real-world problems using examples and case studies in the U.S. and other parts of the world. The course is structured so the first half focuses on broader social issues central to the U.S. context—such as race, gender, class, sexuality, culture—and the second half of the course looks at international social problems that are global in nature covering topics such as the environment, globalization, war and conflict, human rights, and social change.

Course Objectives

With the completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain the concept of social problems through a sociological perspective and the social problems process;
2. Understand the four main sociological theories;
3. Apply various theoretical perspectives to contemporary social issues and problems;
4. Evaluate how social forces, institutions, and power dynamics are at play in constructing our social reality and what is deemed as a “social problem”;
5. Critically analyze and challenge social norms, stereotypes, and social constructions of reality that frame social problems in our society.
6. Shift the level of analysis to make transnational connections between what is happening in one part of the world and how it is affected by global relations and power dynamics.

Course Overview

Course content will be presented in six formats:

1. Short videos by the instructor introducing material or addressing specific topics.
2. Presentation files from the instructor on a per-topic basis.
4. Textbooks readings and additional research article that will be presented through Canvas and the corresponding discussion will center around them.
5. Education films will be introduced via canvas.
6. Weekly Online Discussion Posts and Responses.

As this is an online course, traditional lectures will be presented as PDF files, and traditional class discussion will be facilitated through the discussion tool in Canvas. Additional readings will be provided through online PDFs. Occasional films will be presented by the instructor on specific topics. Instructor can be contacted via email or through canvas, and through discussions. Zoom meetings are available in lieu of office hours.

Course Outline

This is a tentative calendar. Any significant changes will be announced on Canvas. Students are responsible for keeping up with these announcements.

R= Reading, F= Film, L=Lecture, A= Assignment Due, P=Canvas Post Due

*Two films are only available on Netflix, so please plan accordingly

| Week | Topic | To do or to Read |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| Week 1. September 30 – October 4 | Introduction to the course | L: Introduction to the Course L: Social Problems Overview R: Chapter 1 (1-7) R: <i>Telling the Truth about Damned Lies...</i> (Best) |
| Week 2. October 7 – October 11 | Social Theory | L: Using Theory to Analyze Social Problems R: Chapter 1 (7-20) |

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| | | <p>R: C. Wright Mills (1959) <i>The Sociological Imagination</i>, pp. 1-25.</p> <p>P: Discussion Post/Response #1</p> |
| <p>Week 3. October 14 – October 18</p> | <p>Social Inequalities and Power</p> | <p>L: Social Class, Inequality, and Power R: Chapter 2 (23-48) R: <i>Of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%</i> (Stiglitz) F: Wealth Inequality in America A: Syllabus Quiz Due P: Discussion Post/Response #2</p> |
| <p>Week 4 October 21 – October 18</p> | <p>Race and Ethnicity</p> | <p>L: Race and Ethnicity as a Social Problem R: Chapter 3 (51-75) R: Victoria M. Massie “Race isn’t biologically real. That doesn’t mean racism doesn’t exist” Vox, June 11 2016. F*: 13TH (on Netflix) P: Discussion Post/Response #3</p> |
| <p>Week 5 October 28 – November 1</p> | <p>Gender and Sexuality</p> | <p>Gender: L: Gender as a Social Problem R: Chapter 4 (77-94) F: What People Miss about the Gender Wage Gap</p> <p>Sexuality: L: Sex and Sexual Orientation R: Chapter 5 (97-112) R: <i>One Town’s War on Gay Teens</i> (Erdely)</p> <p>P: Discussion Post/Response #4 A: Paper #1 Due Friday November 1st midnight</p> |
| <p>Week 6 November 4- November 8</p> | <p>Culture and Ethnocentrism / The Media</p> | <p>Culture and Ethnocentrism: L: Culture and Ethnocentrism R: <i>Orientalism Excerpt</i> (Said) F: Why Arabs and Muslims Aren’t Exotic</p> <p>The Media: L: The Media and Constructing Social Pro R: Chapter 11 (237-254) R: Immigration an Economic Drain? (Contexts)</p> <p>P: Discussion Post/Response #5</p> |

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| <p>Week 7 November 11 – November 15</p> | <p>Midterm Globalization and consumerism</p> | <p>Globalization and consumerism: L: Globalization and Consumerism R: <i>E-Waste in Developing Countries</i> (U.S. News) F: <i>China Blue</i></p> <p>The Environment: L: The Environment R: Chapter 15 (331-354) F*: <i>A Plastic Ocean</i> (on Netflix)</p> <p>War and Terrorism: L: War and Conflict as a Social Problem R: Chapter 16 (357-379) R: Charles Tilly (2004) “Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists” <i>Sociological Theory</i> 22(1): 5-13. R: Charles Kurzman (2011) <i>The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists</i>, pp. 3-24, 169-204.</p> <p>P: Discussion Post/Response #6</p> |
| <p>Week 8 November 18 – November 22</p> | <p>The Environment / War and Terrorism</p> | <p>The Environment: L: The Environment R: Chapter 15 (331-354) F*: <i>A Plastic Ocean</i> (on Netflix)</p> <p>War and Terrorism: L: War and Conflict as a Social Problem R: Chapter 16 (357-379) R: Charles Tilly (2004) “Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists” <i>Sociological Theory</i> 22(1): 5-13. R: Charles Kurzman (2011) <i>The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists</i>, pp. 3-24, 169-204.</p> <p>P: Discussion Post/Response #7</p> |
| <p>Fall Break November 25 – November 29</p> | | <p>Enjoy your break!</p> |
| <p>Week 9 December 2 – December 6</p> | <p>The Immigration debate</p> | <p>L: The immigration debate R: Racism, nativism, and Immigration policy. Tanya Golash-Boza (Chapter 13)*</p> |

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| | | <p>R: Chavez, L., 2013. The Latino threat: Constructing immigrants, citizens, and the nation. (Chapter 8)</p> <p>R: Sergio Rodriguez's dream deferred: Illegality, deportation, and the long-term impacts of lives in limbo (239-246)</p> <p>R: De Genova, N.P., 2002. Migrant "illegality" and deportability in everyday life. Annual review of anthropology, 31(1), pp.419-447.</p> <p>P: Discussion Post/Response #8</p> <p>A: Paper #2 Due on Friday December 6th midnight</p> |
| <p>Week 10 & finals December 9 – December 13</p> | <p>Course closure Final examination</p> | <p>Final Examination TBD</p> |

Required Texts

Social Problems: Community, Policy, and Social Action (6th Edition) by Anna Leon-Guerrero. This book is available at the CU Bookstore or can be found through a variety of online sources. If you purchase the text, make sure that you get the correct edition. All other required readings can be downloaded from the Canvas website.

Student Responsibilities

Students will be responsible for all readings and videos contained within modules, two exams, two papers, and all discussions. Please allow the approximate the time commitment required for successful completion of the course.

Class Expectations

My overriding goal for this course is to have you engage with the class material and to think critically about sociological social problems. The instructor expects all students to participate in discussions with thoughtful and insightful content and questions, and to incorporate readings, current events, and prior class knowledge into increasingly complex analysis of ideas and topics. To that end, here are my expectations for the course:

1. I expect you to be prepared to discuss the material and to engage with me and your fellow classmates in a critical way. I want to challenge your thinking and broaden your intellectual horizons regarding the sociological study of social problems.
2. Some of the topics covered in this course may elicit strong and diverse opinions, such as racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, sexuality, etc. I expect that these topics will be discussed openly,

professionally, and without aggression or malice. It is perfectly fine to have differing opinions on such weighty topics, but we must respect everyone's views in the classroom.

Assignments

Readings/Films/Lectures: Completion of the reading is absolutely critical to your success in the class and your final grade will depend greatly upon you having read, written about, discussed, and taken tests on the readings. All readings, films, and lectures need to be completed during the week they are listed on the syllabus.

Online Discussion Posts and Responses: This is an essential part of the online class experience. These discussion posts and responses are your opportunity to reflect on the course readings and material, think critically, and respond to other students' posts. The objective is twofold: 1.) to respond to one of the weekly prompts by discussing main points from the various readings, films, and lecture material for that week; 2.) to spark debate and discussion amongst students regarding particular topics, current events, etc.

- **Discussion Posts:** Each week, there will be two different discussion prompts. Students must pick one of the prompts to discuss. Each student must write a total of 8 weekly discussion posts, one for each week of the fall session (there will not be discussion posts final examination and fall break). Each post should be roughly 400-500 words. Each of the eight posts is worth 11.25 points, so the posts are worth 90 points total. The discussion board for posts will be open Tuesday-Wednesday on the assigned week, so pay attention each week to post on time. Late posts will not be accepted.

The discussion posts will be evaluated on the following:

1. How well does the discussion post answer the discussion prompt for that week?
2. Does it include main points from the readings/films/lecture materials?
3. Is it well argued? If there are statistics or facts cited, does it include sources?
4. Is it written in an objective and respectful way? (It is fine to take one side or another on a particular issue, but make sure you are not presenting your opinion as fact. What does the other side have to say? Are you challenging your own thinking and preconceived biases?)
5. Does it demonstrate critical sociological thinking? This may not come naturally at first, but as we get further into the readings and the course, you will learn how to think critically and how to apply your sociological imagination and social theories when discussing current events and social issues.

- **Responses:** Each student will ALSO have to respond to at least one other student's discussion post each week. Responses should be roughly 100 words each. The weekly responses are worth 1.25 points per week, for a total of 10 points total throughout the semester. Posting responses to the posts will be open until Friday on the assigned week.

These responses will be evaluated on the following:

1. How well do you demonstrate your understanding of the readings/films/lecture material?
 2. Are you making a thoughtful comment or question?
 3. Is your response well argued? Does it provide sources for statistics or facts? Does it pose thoughtful and engaging questions or explain why you agree or disagree with a particular point?
 4. Is it respectful? Again, the purpose is to spark respectful and critical discussion.
- **Additional Discussion:** Additional discussion about the prompt or posts each week is highly encouraged. Please feel free to respond to posts beyond the required responses. Just remember that these discussions must remain respectful and inclusive of all voices.

Syllabus Quiz: There will be a brief 10-point quiz open during the first week of class that covers information about the course listed on the syllabus. The purpose of this quiz is to ensure that students read the syllabus and are aware of the expectations for the course.

Exams: There will be a mid-term and final exam with multiple choice and short answer questions. The dates they are available are listed in the course schedule. The midterm and final will both be open for 24 hours, so please put these dates in your calendar because there will not be make-up exams except for emergency situations, which require written documentation.

Papers: There will be two required papers for the course. The due dates are listed in the course schedule. The paper prompts will be available at least one week prior to each paper's due date. The prompts will include expectations for the paper including format and a grading rubric. Each paper is worth 75 points, 150 points total.

Grading Criteria

Final Grade: Your final grade is based on course requirements above, with point distributions:

| | Number of points (out of 460 total) | Percent of Final Grade |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Syllabus Quiz | 10 | 2.3% |
| Discussion Posts Responses | 90 (11.25 pts each) 10 (1.25 pts each) (100 total) | 21.7% |
| Paper 1 Paper 2 | 75 75 (150 total) | 32.6% |
| Exam 1 | 100 | 21.7% |
| Exam 2 | 100 | 21.7% |
| | 460 | 100.00% |

Grading Scale

Grades will be assigned as follows:

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|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D+ | D | D- | F |
| 94-100 | 90-93 | 87-89 | 83-86 | 80-82 | 77-79 | 73-76 | 70-72 | 67-69 | 63-66 | 60-62 | <60 |

Comments on Grading: There will be no extra-credit at the end of the semester. If you find that you are not doing well in the course, please email me as soon as possible. Staying up-to-date with the coursework and readings is the best way to succeed in this course.

Work that is missed cannot be made up. The only times I will accept late papers, posts, or give make-up exams is when you provide written documentation of a death in your family or a medical emergency. All documentation must be provided within one week of the situation.

Submission Policies

Instructions on how to submit assignments is included in the assignment description, and assignments are submitted through Canvas. Feedback can be expected on exams and projects within two weeks of the due date. Feedback on discussions will be ongoing. Please see discussion grading information for more detail.

Course Policies

Course Plagiarism Policy and policy issues

Online Discussion Posts and Responses: These provide a wonderful way for all members of a class to participate in discussion and debate. While I encourage participants to feel free to engage in debates and to intellectually challenge other people's ideas when they feel it is appropriate this MUST be done with civility and respect, just as we would expect in a traditional classroom. This is an inclusive online classroom environment and disrespect for others' opinions will not be tolerated. Please think first before submitting your discussion posts and responses to ensure that you are expressing yourself in a clear and respectful manner.

Academic Dishonesty: All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threats, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Plagiarism and Turnitin: All assignments submitted online go through Turnitin software that detects cases of plagiarism. Please ensure that your submissions only include your own original work and there will be no issue. If you have any questions about paraphrasing, using sources, or plagiarism please refer to the following resources: [Understanding and Preventing Plagiarism](#) or [Plagiarism and Citation Guide](#).

Special Needs: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further

assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

Religious Conflict: If such occurs with any part of this course, bring it to the professor's attention by the end of the second week of classes. See http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Netiquette

All students should be aware that their behavior impacts other people, even online. I hope that we will all strive to develop a positive and supportive environment and will be courteous to fellow students and your instructor. Due to the nature of the online environment, there are some things to remember.

1. Always think before you write. In other words, without the use of nonverbals with your message, your message can be misinterpreted. So please think twice before you hit submit.
2. Keep it relevant. There are places to chat and post for fun everyday stuff. Do not stray from the discussion in the assigned questions.
3. Never use all caps. This is the equivalent of yelling in the online world. It is not fun to read. Only use capital letters when appropriate.
4. Make sure that you are using appropriate grammar and structure. In other words, I don't want to see anyone writing "R U" instead of "are you". There are people in the class that may not understand this type of abbreviation, not to mention it does nothing to help expand your writing and vocabulary skills. Emoticons are fine as long as they are appropriate. A smile ☺ is welcome, anything offensive is not.
5. Treat people the same as you would face-to-face. In other words, it is easy to hide behind the computer. In some cases, it empowers people to treat others in ways they would not in person. Remember there is a person behind the name on your screen. Treat all with dignity and respect and you can expect that in return.
6. Respect the time of others. This class is going to require you to work together for discussions and responses. Learn to respect the time of others in your group and your experience will be much better. Always remember that you are not the only person with a busy schedule, be flexible. Do not procrastinate! You may be one that works best with the pressures of the deadline looming on you, but others may not be that way. The same is true for the reverse.

Website: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

*Compiled by Melissa Landin, Instructor, Dept. of Communication, Inver Hills Community College,
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Technology Requirements and Support

A separate page with the current technology requirements and support language will be provided by your instructional designer.

University Policies

A separate page with the current university policies will be provided by your instructional designer.

