

Social Problems (English Lecture)

Spring 2019

Last updated: 2019/02/17

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Class meets: Th 9:10 am - 12:00 pm

Office hours: Th 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Course Objectives

The course is not designed to test or evaluate your English level, but to help experience American college life (what American undergraduates learn and do in a classroom). You are strongly encouraged to enroll in the class even if your English is poor; whether your English is good or poor does NOT matter to your final grade. What matters is your hard work.

The primary objectives of this course are to help students:

- ✧ #1 Acquire awareness of the era and society: this course focuses on the troublesome situations endemic to social structures and institutions, like poverty and unemployment, gender inequalities, racial discrimination, drug addiction, environmental disasters, international migration, and so on. In addition to examining the American society, this course also emphasizes the importance of studying various social problems and inequities from a global perspective.
- ✧ #2 Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience: students are encouraged to be aware of differences among societies and to apply sociological perspectives to explaining this variability. Students should also learn to become more tolerant through mutual understanding and appreciate that different people think and live differently.

Both #1 and #2 contribute to the accomplishment of #3:

- ✧ #3 Acquire critical judgment: through numerous group discussions and exercises, this course helps students to apply multiple perspectives in analyzing the information related to their everyday lives. Moreover, students will be challenged and encouraged to think about what they would do in similar situations.

Required Reading

- ✧ You may get required text by yourself, ask the instructor for help, or find more information from NTPU's online blackboard (i.e., 數位學苑 2.0)
 - Trevino, A. Javier. *Investigating Social Problems*. SAGE; 1st edition
 - **Articles** posted on NTPU's online blackboard

If you have any questions or believe assignments are ambiguous, please ask immediately. Post hoc interpretations of the syllabus or university policy will not be accepted as rationale for unfair or unacceptable grading.

Course Requirements

✧ Exams (50%)

- ◆ You will be required to take **one mid-term exam** and **one final exam**. The exams are worth **50 points** for your final course grade (25 points for each).
- ◆ Exams are based on book chapters, articles, documentaries, and class notes in designated weeks.
- ◆ To help students succeed, a short exam review session may be held before the exam.

✧ Two project presentations (30%)

- ◆ **Overview:** Each of you will join a team comprised of 2 or 3 people throughout the semester. There are a number of reasons to do a group project: to develop intergroup skills that will be very useful to you in your work, community, and family lives after college. You will also be able to do a more extensive project than one person working alone could do, and you will learn from each other in the process.
- ◆ **Things to do:**
 - (1) **The media project (15 points):** Examine how the media presents underprivileged people (e.g., the working class, the homeless, people of color, foreign bride, foreign workers etc.) by analyzing a video clip (e.g., news, a movie, a television show, a song, etc.). Give a 15~20 minute presentation in class on **May 9**. The video clips that you want to play during the presentation should be no more than 10 minutes. For another 5-10 minutes, tell us what you think about this video (i.e., why you analyzed this video clip and what have you observed). Make sure you apply sociological insights/theories into your project. On a group basis, submit your presentation slides within a week after your presentation (before **May 16** noon).
 - (2) **The comparative project (15 points):** Focus on a specific issue (e.g., educational inequality and social mobility, health inequality, social welfare, gender wage gap, racial inequality, etc.) related to *social problems*. Compare between two countries or two different locations in Taiwan in order to explain how the research agenda of your interest differs across social contexts. Give a 10-12 minute presentation in class either on **June 13**. Make sure you apply sociological insights/theories into your project. On a group basis, submit your presentation slides within a week after your presentation (before **June 20** noon).
 - There may be a penalty of points if you do not finish the assignments on time.

✧ Class participation, attendance, and contribution (20%)

- **Don't miss any class!**
 - ◆ The class will consist of lectures, discussions, exercises, and videos. **You should have read the required chapter and articles BEFORE coming to class.** Based on this, you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the primary issues, to engage in an exchange of ideas, and to show your contribution to this course.
 - ◆ There are several group exercises and discussions throughout the semester. In each exercise, you are expected to participate in a debate regarding a specific social agenda. You will work with several other students—as a team—to review a question or a

scenario, to use sociological concepts to build your arguments, and to offer your personal opinions in the class.

- ◆ It is understandable that there are some legitimate reasons for you not attending class (serious sickness, death in the family, etc.), so you will not be penalized for missing up to 1 class.
- ◆ Your overall performance of class participation and group discussion is worth **20 points** toward your final course grade.

Grading Scale

✧ Relative values of various assignments are as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| 2 exams (mid-term and final exams) | 50 points |
| 2 project presentations | 30 points |
| <u>Overall class participation</u> | <u>20 points</u> |
| TOTAL | 100 points |

✧ Most important, please be assured that I want each student to learn and to receive the best grades they deserve. So please make an appointment with me should you have undue difficulty with your work in the course.

Course Policy

✧ **Use of electronics in class:**

- ◆ iPods, pagers, and cell phones must be completely turned off (including the vibrating function) and put away during class. **Students should use their laptops ONLY for class purposes such as taking notes** (no email, no Facebook, no Warcraft, and etc). If you are caught using your laptop for anything other than taking notes in class, you will be denied the privilege of its use in class for the remainder of the semester.

✧ **Examinations:**

- ◆ You will be required to show your student ID to me when you turn in your exams. **No exams will be accepted without your ID.** To return to your dorm to retrieve your ID is not allowed. Therefore, make sure you bring it with you to all exams.
- ◆ No electronic devices will be allowed during exams: no iPods, cell phones, headphones, wireless headsets, pagers, laptops, or any other such devices.
- ◆ Hats will not be allowed to be worn during exams. If you enter the room wearing a hat during an exam you will be told to remove it. Also, candy will not be allowed on your desks during the exam.
- ◆ If you have a *documented learning or physical disability requiring accommodations*, please bring me your documentation from the Center for Students with Disabilities so that I can provide you with the appropriate testing conditions to which you are entitled to help you succeed.
- ◆ **Make-up exams are given ONLY in the event of an emergency and MUST BE SCHEDULED IN ADVANCE of the regular test date.** In case of serious illness an exam will be administered right after the regularly scheduled test provided you have a doctor's excuse.

✧ **Communication between the instructor and students:**

- ◆ **You are responsible for making up any work you miss and to get notes from the missed classes.** I strongly suggest getting these from at least two different people so you can compare the notes to get a better picture of what you missed. After reviewing the notes if you still have difficulty with the material, please see me for help. If you miss a video, you will have to get the notes from classmates. The videos are generally not in our library, and I cannot lend out private videos.
- ◆ For any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. Avoid using the e-mail option on Husky CT. I will be much more likely to send you a response if you send me a regular e-mail. **When sending emails, please make sure to include clear language, your name, and “Social problems” in the subject line.**

✧ **Changes to the syllabus:**

- ◆ I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus at any point during the semester. If the syllabus changes, I will send the revised syllabus by email.

Class Schedule

| Week | Content |
|----------------|---|
| — 2/18~2/22 | Course introduction |
| 二 2/25~3/1 | No class today ...2/28(四)和平紀念日放假 |
| 三 3/4~3/8 | Use your sociological imagination and think: How a social problem arises Read: 1) Mills, "The Promise." and 2) Heiner, "An Introduction to the Sociology of Social Problems." **In-class exercise: The coin game |
| 四 3/11~3/15 | What is (or "is not") a social problem? What constitutes a social problem? Read: Ch. 1 |
| 五 3/18~3/22 | Poverty & Class Inequality: Should we spend more money on assistance to the poor? Read: Ch. 2 **In-class exercise: The story of three brothers |
| 六 3/25~3/29 | Race and Ethnicity: Is immigration a "threat" to our way of life? Read: Ch. 3 + Hochschild, "Love and Gold" **In-class exercise: Invisible inequalities |

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|-----------------|---|
| 七 4/1~4/5 | No class today ...4/4(四)兒童節放假 |
| 八 4/8~4/12 | Gender: Are there women's jobs and men's jobs and why are they different? Read: Ch. 4 **In-class exercise: Working mom vs. stay-at-home mom |
| 九 4/15~4/19 | Sexuality: How are sexually-related problems socially defined? Read: Ch. 5 **Watch: Orgasm Inc. |
| 十 4/22~4/26 | Midterm exam (期中考試) |
| 十一 4/29~5/3 | Media: How does social media present a social problem? Read: Ch. 8 + Mantsios, "Media Magic: Making Class Invisible" |
| 十二 5/6~5/10 | TBA **Watch: College Inc. Media project presentation (turn in your presentation slides before May 16th) |
| 十三 5/13~5/17 | Family: How does the changing definition of "family" affect parents and their kids? Read: Ch. 9 **In-class exercise: Sperm and egg, do they matter? |
| 十四 5/20~5/24 | Health: Should the government help pay for medical care? Read: Ch. 13 and Steves, "Europe's Drug Antiwar" |
| 十五 5/27~5/31 | Work and the Economy: Is economic inequality a social problem for whom? Read: Ch. 10 + Rosenberg, "Why Mexico's Small Corn Farmers Go Hungry" **Watch: Black Gold |
| 十六 6/3~6/7 | The Environment: Who are more likely to suffer from the climate change? Read: Ch. 14 + Romero "The \$6.66-a-Gallon Solution" **Watch: Blue Gold |
| 十七 6/10~6/14 | TBD / Exam review Comparative project presentation (turn in your presentation slides before June 20th) |
| 十八 6/17~6/21 | Final exam (期末考試) |