

Social Problems (English Lecture)

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

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

Course Objectives

The course is not designed to test or evaluate your English level, but it is designed to help you learn and think in English. I also hope that you may experience a bit of American college life (what American undergraduates learn and do in a classroom).

Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to enroll in the class even if your English is not fluent; 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 for help, or find related information from NTPU's online blackboard (i.e., 數位學苑 2.0)
 - Trevino, A. *Investigating Social Problems*. SAGE.
 - Wilkinson, R. & K. Pickett. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. Bloomsbury Press.
 - **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

✧ Weekly after-class memos (or reflections) (40%)

- ◆ Each week after the Friday course, you will be required to write a memo based on what you have learned from lectures, in-class exercises, group discussions, and documentaries. You must finish them **before the end of Sunday (11:59pm) after the class on Friday**. In other words, you will have about two days to write the memo after the class each week. Do it as early as you can; you may not be able to post a late entry.
- ◆ The memo can be **either in English or Chinese**. And it does not have to be long (as long as there are more than 50 words in total).
- ◆ If you write an extended memo (a long one) or if your memo reflects on the required readings of the week (for instance, you write a summary regarding what you have read from the readings), you may receive additional points.
- ◆ The weekly memos are worth **400 points** (8 weekly entries, 50 points for each) toward your final course grade. If you make 9 entries, you can drop the worst grade at the end of semester. If you make 10 entries, you can drop your two worst grades, etc. These drops exist to cover sicknesses, religious holidays, and other emergencies.

✧ Two project presentations (40%)

- ◆ **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 book project (200 points):**
 - Each group is responsible for presenting summaries, stories, and findings from a book chapter of *The Spirit Level*. For instance, Groups #4 and #5 will present chapters 4 and 5, respectively.
 - Each group will take turn to give a 20-minute-oral presentation in class **between May 14 and June 4**. The main objective of the presentation is to help other students to learn something from the chapter that you are presenting.
 - While English is encouraged, the oral presentation can be **either in English or Chinese**. But I do expect that your PowerPoint slides are written in English.
 - Make sure you apply sociological insights/theories into your project. On a group basis, submit your presentation slides a day before your presentation.

- (2) **The comparative project (200 points):**
 - Each group will 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*. You may choose any topic or address any question, as long as the project is *comparative* in its nature. For instance, you may 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.
 - Each group will take turn to give a 20-minute-oral presentation in class **on June 18 or June 25**.
 - While English is encouraged, the oral presentation can be **either in English or Chinese**. But I do expect that your PowerPoint slides are written in English.
 - Make sure you apply sociological insights/theories into your project. On a group basis, submit your presentation slides a day before your presentation.
 - 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 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 legitimate reasons for you not attending class (sickness, death in the family...), so you will not be penalized for missing up to 1 class.
 - ◆ Your overall performance of class participation and group discussion is worth **200 points** toward your final course grade.

Grading Scale

✧ Relative values of various assignments are as follows:

● 8 after-class memos	400 points
2 group project presentations	400 points
<u>Overall class participation</u>	<u>200 points</u>
TOTAL	1000 points

✧ More importantly, 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.

A	930-1000	B-	800-829	D+	670-699
A-	900-929	C+	770-799	D	600-669
B+	860-899	C	730-769	F	0-599
B	830-859	C-	700-729		

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.

✧ 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
— 2/22~2/27	Course introduction
— 3/1~3/6	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: Warming up
≡ 3/8~3/13	What is (or "is not") a social problem? What constitutes a social problem? Read: Ch. 1 **In-class exercise: Invisible inequalities
㊄ 3/15~3/20	Race and Ethnicity: Is immigration a "threat" to our way of life? Read: Ch. 3 + Hochschild, "Love and Gold" **Watch: The Truth about Racism

<p>五 3/22~3/27</p>	<p>Gender & Sexuality: Are there women's jobs and men's jobs and why are they different? How are sexually-related problems socially defined? Read: Ch. 4 & Ch. 5 **In-class exercise: Working mom vs. stay-at-home mom</p>
<p>六 3/29~4/3</p>	<p>No class today ...4/2(五)補兒童節適逢星期日放假</p>
<p>七 4/5~4/10</p>	<p>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?</p>
<p>八 4/12~4/17</p>	<p>Media: How does social media present a social problem? Read: Ch. 8 + Mantsios, "Media Magic: Making Class Invisible" **Watch: Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck (Cartoon)</p>
<p>九 4/19~4/24</p>	<p>Health: Should the government help pay for medical care? Read: Ch. 13 and Steves, "Europe's Drug Antiwar" **Watch: Food Inc.</p>
<p>十 4/26~5/1</p>	<p>Poverty & Class Inequality: Should we spend more money on assistance to the poor? Read: Ch. 2 + Rosenberg, "Why Mexico's Small Corn Farmers Go Hungry" **In-class exercise: The story of three brothers</p>
<p>十一 5/3~5/8</p>	<p>Why inequality matters for everyone? Read: Wilkinson and Pickett "The Spirit Level" Ch. 1~3 **Watch: Black Gold</p>
<p>十二 5/10~5/15</p>	<p>Why inequality matters for everyone? Read: Wilkinson and Pickett "The Spirit Level" Ch. 4~6 Book project presentation Groups 4~6 (turn in your presentation slides a day in advance)</p>
<p>十三 5/17~5/22</p>	<p>Why inequality matters for everyone? Read: Wilkinson and Pickett "The Spirit Level" Ch. 7~9 Book project presentation Groups 7~9 (turn in your presentation slides a day in advance)</p>
<p>十四 5/24~5/29</p>	<p>Why inequality matters for everyone? Read: Wilkinson and Pickett "The Spirit Level" Ch. 10~12 Book project presentation Groups 10~12 (turn in your presentation slides a day in advance)</p>
<p>十五 5/31~6/5</p>	<p>Why inequality matters for everyone? Read: Wilkinson and Pickett "The Spirit Level" Ch. 13~15 Book project presentation Groups 13~15 (turn in your presentation slides a day in advance)</p>

<p>十六 6/7~6/12</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>十七 6/14~6/19</p>	<p>Comparative project presentation Groups 4~9 (turn in your presentation slides a day in advance)</p>
<p>十八 6/21~6/26</p>	<p>Comparative project presentation Groups 10~15 (turn in your presentation slides a day in advance)</p>