

# **SOCIAL PROBLEMS**

**SOC 403**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**SPRING 2007**

## **Course Information:**

**Meeting Place:** Broom 171

**Meeting Times:** Mondays, 6:00–9:00 pm

## **Instructor Information:**

**Instructor:** Dr. Alan Barton

**Office:** 37 Ward Hall

**Telephone:** (662) 846-4097

**E-mail:** abarton@deltastate.edu

**Webpage:** [http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp\\_academic/abarton/](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/)

## **Office Hours:**

The instructor holds regular office hours at the following times:

Monday 2:00 – 6:00 pm

Tuesday 2:00 – 6:00 pm

Wednesday 10:00 – 11:00 am; 1:00 – 2:00 pm

If you cannot make one of these times, contact the professor to set up an appointment.

## **Course Webpage:**

Additional materials and updated course information can be found on the course webpage:

[http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp\\_academic/abarton/SOC403SP07/SOC403Syllabus.htm](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/SOC403SP07/SOC403Syllabus.htm)

## **Course Overview:**

This course provides an overview of how sociologists conceptualize and analyze a variety of social problems.

**Prerequisites:** SOC 101 or permission of instructor

## Readings:

The Course Outline below lists the reading assignments for each class meeting; you should do the assigned reading BEFORE the class meeting for which it is assigned.

**Required Textbook:** The required textbook is available at the DSU Bookstore. You should purchase this book or otherwise arrange to complete the reading assignments.

James M. Henslin. 2006. *Social Problems*, 7th Edition. Allyn & Bacon, Boston, MA. ISBN 10: 0131930826; ISBN 13: 9780131930827.

## Course Objectives:

Once you successfully complete this course, you will be able to:

- (1) Define a social problem and provide examples of social problems.
- (2) Describe 5 sociological concepts and how they apply to social problems.
- (3) Analyze social problems from 3 distinct sociological perspectives.
- (4) Apply a sociological perspective to understanding current social problems.

These objectives contribute to overall course goals:

(1) Developing **critical thinking skills**. The class discussions, readings, writing assignments and exams are designed to encourage you to develop and use higher-order thinking skills, including analytical, synthetic and applied thinking.

(2) Understanding the **social structures and processes** that condition our lives. A basic goal of all sociology courses is to help you understand the nature and workings of these social structures, and how they open opportunities and impose constraints on individuals operating within these structures. C. Wright Mills called this using your "sociological imagination;" activities in this course are designed to encourage you to use *your* sociological imagination.

## Course Organization and Approach:

This course uses a participatory, learner-centered, adult education approach. An adult education approach recognizes that you are responsible for your own learning. The professor can only provide opportunities to learn, but cannot force you to learn. You are expected to work hard in this course, meaning that for every hour of class time, you should spend two to three hours outside of class preparing by doing readings, assignments, studying for quizzes and exams, and thinking about the course material. You are expected to take responsibility for the success of the course, that is, you should take an active interest not just in the course material, but in the course itself, making it a success for all participants. Factors such as interest, motivation, creativity, and initiative are important elements in evaluating your performance and assigning a grade.

## **Learning Opportunities:**

All students must complete the following assignments:

### **(1) Attendance (15 points)**

- You are expected to attend all class sessions
- Because this course meets only once per week, each absence is equivalent to three absences in a MWF course
- See the course policy on absences (no. 3 below)

### **(2) Participation in Class Discussions (15 points)**

- You are expected to do all of the assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss them
- You are expected to engage in classroom discussions, reflecting on the topic and readings
- The quality of contributions to class discussions is more important than the quantity of contributions; however, you should make an effort to participate in all discussions
- Participation in class discussions is not graded based on whether it is "right" or "wrong;" rather, you are expected to engage the material critically, and demonstrate an understanding and ability to apply the course material in productive ways

### **(3) Social Problems in the News (30 points)**

- Twice during the semester, you will lead a class discussion on the weekly topic
- You will identify a newspaper article related to the topic, photocopy the article and bring enough copies for the other students in the course
- You will lead a discussion lasting 1/2 hour on the topic, relating the course material to the information in the article
- Your discussion should focus on sociological concepts, and should advance the students' understanding of these concepts
- You should have a set of discussion questions that lead to a critical discussion

### **(4) Midterm Exam (20 points)**

- The midterm exam will be given on Monday, March 15 at 6:00 pm
- The midterm consists of twenty multiple choice questions, worth 1/2 point each, five short answer questions worth 1 point each, and one essay worth 5 points
- The midterm exam covers all of the material from the first half of the course, including information from the text, lecture, class discussions and other readings
- The midterm will take approximately one hour to complete

### **(5) Final Exam (20 points)**

- The final exam will be given on Monday, May 7 at 6 pm
- The final exam follows the same format as the midterm, but covers material during the second half of the course (after the midterm exam)
- The final exam will take approximately one hour to complete

(6) **Critical Engagement** ( $\pm 10$  points)

- The instructor will evaluate your performance based on factors such as the motivation, interest, and improvement you demonstrate in the course

## **Grading:**

There are a total of 100 points available for the semester. Your final score is simply the sum of all points earned over the semester. If you accumulate 90 or more points over the course of the semester, you will get an "A" in the course. If you accumulate 80 to 89 points, you will get a "B," for 70 to 79 points you will get a "C," and for 60 to 69 points will get a "D." If you get less than 60 points, your final grade will be an "F." Note that you start with zero and earn points; you do not start with 100 and lose points.

If you comply with all course requirements and submit all of the assignments satisfactorily and on time, you can expect a "C" in this course. To receive a higher grade, you must demonstrate a superior grasp of course material and an ability to apply the material in productive ways. It is also helpful to show an interest in the course material and in learning, and an achievement-based orientation.

## **Policies and Expectations:**

(1) **YOU** are responsible for learning the course material and for your progress in the course

- You are expected to **attend class regularly**. An attendance sheet will be passed around at every class session. **Make sure you sign the attendance sheet at each class meeting** – this will serve as the official record of attendance, and if your name is not on the sheet, you will not receive credit for attending on that date.
- You are expected to **complete all of the assignments** and know all material presented during class sessions, whether you attended the class or not. If you miss a class session, you should check with another student to see what you missed.
- "I didn't know" is **NEVER** a valid excuse. If you don't know something, it is your job to find out.

(2) Missed assignments **CANNOT** be made up

- It is assumed that if you miss class or an assignment, you are making a choice that prioritizes other activities above the class. For this reason, **none of the assignments or coursework can be made up**.
- Assignments are due at the time specified; **no late assignments will be accepted**.
- If you miss an exam or writing assignment, you will receive a grade of zero for that assignment. You are not required to turn a writing assignment in every week, but cannot make up assignments if you do not turn in the required number by the end of the semester.
- If you must miss a presentation or other in-class activity, it is up to you to arrange to trade with another student before the event. Please notify the instructor of such changes. Points will be **deducted** from your grade if you simply do not show up for a presentation.

(3) Illnesses and emergencies **MUST** be documented

- If you must miss a class due to illness or another personal emergency, notify the instructor **BEFORE** the missed class period either by e-mail or telephone.
- If you cannot notify the instructor in advance, bring a note from a doctor or other professional to the next class meeting.
- Illnesses and emergencies pertain **only** to the student, not to the student's family, friends or others.
- If you must miss class for an official university activity, you should make arrangements with the instructor **BEFORE** the missed class. Appropriate documentation is required.
- Notified absences (i.e. you notify the instructor before the event) count as one-half absence. Excused absences (i.e. you bring a note from a doctor or other professional) will not count against you for the first two; after that, each excused absence counts as one-half absence.
- Unexcused absences will be scored on a sliding scale, as shown **here**.
- You are responsible for all material presented in the class, even during an excused absence. You should get class notes from another student for all class sessions you miss.
- It is in your interest to provide the instructor with **written** notification (e.g. note or e-mail) or documentation for any missed class. It is risky to simply tell the instructor and expect him to remember.

(4) Class **discussion** is an important element in this course

- The purpose of the discussion is to provide you with an opportunity to practice thinking skills in a safe environment.
- In discussions, you are encouraged to explore ideas presented in the readings and lectures, to think about and apply concepts, and to develop arguments and evaluate evidence.
- You must demonstrate **appropriate respect** the opinions and ideas of other students. If you repeatedly show disrespect for other students, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
- Class discussions are **NOT** a time to chat with other students about topics not related to the course. Talking privately with other students while the rest of the class is trying to carry on a discussion is disruptive, bothersome, and disrespectful to other students and to the professor. If you repeatedly talk out of turn, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
- It is acceptable (and encouraged) to disagree with the perspectives of other students, but you should phrase this to show disagreement with the idea or opinion, not with the person presenting the idea or opinion.
- Please make sure that all pagers, cell phones, etc. are **turned off** during class time. If your phone or pager repeatedly interrupts class, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
- Any work missed by a student that was asked to leave the classroom **cannot** be made up under any circumstances.

- (5) You are expected to **comply with all academic standards and ethics** as defined in the DSU Bulletin and Handbook
- You are expected to do their own work in this course. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will **NOT** be tolerated.
  - **Click here if you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism.** The DSU Library's "Plagiarism Prevention: A Guide for Students" is also a good resource. If it is still unclear, see the instructor. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO UNDERSTAND THESE GUIDELINES.** If at some point in the semester you are suspected of committing plagiarism, pleas of "I didn't know what plagiarism was" will not be accepted.
  - The sanctions for plagiarism are outlined on the web page linked above. Make sure you are aware of these **BEFORE** you submit any work in this class.
- (6) **DO NOT** bring cell phones or other portable communication devices to class during quizzes, exams, or in-class assignments. If the instructor sees a cell phone or other device during a quiz, exam or in-class assignment, your work will be collected immediately and you will be asked to leave the classroom.
- (7) Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with medical problems or diagnosed disabilities. Have Dr. Richard Houston at the Reily Health Center (846-4690) contact the course instructor to make arrangements.

**Course Outline:**

Day/Date	Topic	Readings
<b>Week 1: Course Introduction</b>		
Monday Jan. 8	Review Syllabus; Course Policies	
	The Sociological Perspective	
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 2: Holiday</b>		
Monday Jan. 15	<b>MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY</b> Class will not meet	
<b>Week 3: The Social Construction of Reality</b>		
Monday Jan. 22	Abortion as a Social Problem	Text, Chapter 1
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 4: Interpreting Social Problems</b>		
Monday Jan. 29	Aging as a Social Problem	Text, Chapter 2
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 5: Objectivity and Subjectivity</b>		
Monday Feb. 5	Homosexuality, Prostitution and Pornography	Text, Chapter 3
	Social Problems in the News	

Day/Date	Topic	Readings
<b>Week 6: Theory and Social Problems</b>		
Monday Feb. 12	Alcohol and Drugs	Text, Chapter 4
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 7: Research in Social Problems</b>		
Monday Feb. 19	Deviance, Crime and Criminal Justice	Text, Chapter 6
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 8: Social Inequality</b>		
Monday Feb. 26	Wealth and Poverty as Social Problems	Text, Chapter 7
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 9: Midterm Exam</b>		
Monday Mar. 5	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b> 6:00 pm Broom 171	
<b>Spring Break</b>		
Monday Mar. 12	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
<b>Week 10: Dominant and Minority Groups</b>		
Monday Mar. 19	Stratification by Race and Ethnicity	Text, Chapter 8
	Social Problems in the News	



<b>Day/Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>Week 11: Prejudice and Discrimination</b>		
Monday Mar. 26	Stratification by Gender	Text, Chapter 9
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 12: Rights and Priveleges</b>		
Monday Apr. 2	Health Care as a Social Problem	Text, Chapter 10
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 13: Demography</b>		
Monday Apr. 9	Population Growth and Food Security	Text, Chapter 13
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 14: The Costs of Global Social Change I</b>		
Monday Apr. 16	Environment and Natural Resources	Text, Chapter 14
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 15: The Costs of Global Social Change II</b>		
Monday Apr. 23	Globalization, War and Terrorism	Text, Chapter 15
	Social Problems in the News	
<b>Week 16: Dead Week</b>		
Monday Apr. 30	Review for Final Exam	
	Course Evaluation	

<b>Final Exam Week</b>	
<b>Monday May 7</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM 6:00 pm Broom 171</b>

## **Student Engagement and Success:**

The faculty and administration at Delta State University are committed to assisting all students achieve success while at DSU and in their future careers. In addition to faculty office hours and periodic workshops and seminars, the following resources are always available to students to help them prepare for college-level work, and to improve their study habits and skills. We encourage you to take full advantage of these resources.

**Roberts-LaForge Library:** <http://www.deltastate.edu/897.asp>

**Writing Center:** 311 Bailey Hall

**Academic Support Lab:** <http://www.deltastate.edu/342.asp>

**Study Skills Workshops:** <http://www.deltastate.edu/479.asp>

**Technology Learning Center:** <http://www.deltastate.edu/1082.asp>

***PREPARATION and PERSEVERANCE are the KEYS to SUCCESS***  
Be prepared; don't give up