

**WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY**  
**Sociology Department**  
**Social Problems, SOC 1020-80**  
**Winter 2014, Dr. Gennifer Furst**

Course Description

This course provides an overview of contemporary American social problems from a sociological perspective. In doing so, it utilizes Functionalist, Conflict and Interactionist sociological theories. Students will use these three main sociological approaches to comprehend and analyze social problems in American society from the individual to the structural level.

Course Objectives

- a. To increase students' sociological imagination in grasping the relationship between individual problems and social forces that shape them;
- b. To teach student how shifting societal values shape the definition of when/how social conditions become social problems;
- c. To orient students to the most prevalent social ills and how they are conceptualized within sociological theoretical frameworks;
- d. To teach students what research methods to employ to study a social problem;
- e. To acquaint students with various forms of stratification and inequality in the U.S.;
- f. To teach students about social institutions and their role in shaping society.

Student Learning Outcomes

After completion of this course, students will be able to:

- a. Utilize C. Wright Mill's concept of the "sociological imagination" to connect personal troubles to public issues, in discussions, papers, and tests.
- b. Demonstrate they understand that social problems are socially constructed and, therefore, vary over time and between societies via class discussion and written assignments;
- c. Analyze, social problems from all the major theoretical perspectives (micro and macro);
- d. Utilize basic sociological methods (e.g. carry out at least one mini-research project);
- e. Show through tests and papers that they understand basic issues of inequality in U.S. society (e.g. race, gender, class, sexual orientation);
- f. Show evidence that they recognize and understand the influence of the basic institutions in U.S. society (family, education, political, government, media, religion).

Course Text

Parrillo, V. (2005). Contemporary Social Problems (6<sup>th</sup> ed). NY, NY: Pearson. ISBN: 0-205-42076-1

## Course Requirements

Your grade for the course will be determined by the following assignments:

1. Exams. There are three non-cumulative exams that you can **take when you choose**. The exams total 50% of your final grade. You will have 1.5 hour to complete each exam. They are posted in “Course Assignments.” Exams are 50 multiple-choice and true/false questions on the chapters indicated. They are closed-book, meaning you should not use your book when taking the exam. You cannot take an exam more than once. The exams will be timed; there will be a 90-minute time limit in which to take the exam. If you have not completed the readings you will not be able to look up the answers to the questions within that 90-minute allotment.

2. Discussion Board (DB). The DB total 50% of your final grade. There will be 3 DB questions posted under Discussion Board. Write your response (minimum 500 words) in Word and then paste into the discussion board. **The DB assignment must be submitted by 12 midnight on the due date.**

**You MUST use proper grammar and spelling in order to receive a decent grade! Be sure to follow the directions for each Discussion Board (DB)! You MUST cite your book and use proper spelling and grammar.**

For DB Assignments: Be sure to use proper grammar. You WILL earn a lower grade for run-on/incomplete sentences, misspellings, lack of proper citations, incorrect grammar, etc. Use ASA style citations (e.g. Parrillo 2005:53) or APA style (e.g. Parrillo, 2005, p. 53).

The assignment requires you to write a response of NO LESS THAN TWO (2) PAGES. You should include terminology from the reading and connect your analysis to the key points of the chapter. Write your response in Word and then past into the discussion board.

**BE SURE TO CAREFULLY PROOFREAD YOUR PAPERS AND POSTINGS BEFORE YOU SUBMIT THEM. GRAMMATICAL AND SPELLING ERRORS WILL RESULT IN SUBSTANTIALLY LOWER GRADES!**

**NO LATE PAPERS OR POSTINGS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!**

The discussion boards and papers have clear and non-negotiable deadlines. Early postings and papers are welcome but late ones will not be accepted.

**You MUST use proper grammar and spelling in order to receive a decent grade! Be sure to follow the directions for each Discussion Board (DB)! You MUST cite your book and use proper spelling and grammar.**

### Professor

All communication with me should be through email. Email me at [furstg@wpunj.edu](mailto:furstg@wpunj.edu) (see below).

### Disability

If you have a differing ability that may prevent you from completing the exam or other assignments on this schedule (and are registered as such with WPU), please let me know as early in the semester as possible.

### Policies

#### *Class Participation:*

Our class "meets" by logging onto Blackboard, a shell-program that serves as my vehicle for delivering the course to you. In a sense, Blackboard is our "classroom" for the semester. Everything (accessing information, receiving and sending assignments, and conducting discussions) is done through Blackboard.

Evaluation of your participation will be based on the completion of assignments.

#### *Plagiarism:*

You should review the Academic Integrity Policy in the WPU *Student Handbook*. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and lying.

You should also review the *Sociology Department Handbook* for the Department's policy on cheating and plagiarism. The first offense will result in failing the course; the second offense will result in failing the course and expulsion from the sociology major (or a prohibition of becoming a major).

#### *Virtual Classroom Conduct:*

Your classroom behavior and demeanor "count" in this course. The virtual classroom must be a place of mutual respect and tolerance, but we all must cooperate to create this type of atmosphere. Treat others with the respect you would like in return. This includes avoiding nasty email comments.

#### *Absences:*

Active learning is required in this class. Your participation is necessary for this. **YOU MUST READ THE ASSIGNED CHAPTERS IN THE TEXT.** Attendance in the traditional sense will not be recorded. Your learning is based on attendance and the timely submission of the quizzes and other assignments.

**LATE WORK IS NOT ACCEPTED.** If you have a vacation planned for any time during the three weeks, you should bring a laptop computer and work from your destination.

*Email:*

Begin your email with an appropriate salutation (e.g., ‘To Professor Furst’, or simply ‘Professor Furst:’. Never start emails to *any* of your professors with ‘hey’. Sign all emails with your name – I may not know who you are from your email address.

*Blackboard:*

Documents related to this course (syllabus, descriptions of assignments, etc.) and student grades are posted on Blackboard. Blackboard will also be used to correspond with the class via email; it is your responsibility as a student in this online course to check your WPU email account each weekday.

*Exams:*

Exams are **self-paced**, meaning take them when you feel prepared. They are on-line and closed-text, i.e., you may NOT use your textbook during the exam. You will have a specified limited amount of time to take and submit the exam. You can only take each exam once.

Course Material

A brief outline of notes and PowerPoint slides from each chapter is posted under “Course Material” in Blackboard. You may use them as a guide for your reading and/or print them out and fill them in with additional information.

READING THE NOTES OR POWERPOINT SLIDES ALONE IS NOT SUFFICIENT FOR TAKING THE TESTS. YOU MUST READ THE CHAPTERS.

## Schedule of Activities

*Schedule of activities is subject to change.*

Monday, December 22

Read and print out the syllabus. Email the professor with any questions.

Post any questions to the “General Questions” thread in the Discussion Board.

**Submit:** Introduce yourself on the Discussion Board in Blackboard. Click on the Discussion Board on the left side of the screen. Tell us your name, your major and if you have taken an on line course before. Read your classmates’ introductions as well.

Tuesday, December 23

Read Chapter 1: The Sociology of Social Problems

Wednesday, December 24

Read Chapter 2: The Individual in Modern Society

Thursday, December 25

Read Chapter 3: Population and the Environment

Friday, December 26

Read Chapter 4: Housing and Urbanization

Sunday, December 28

**DB #1: Due Sunday, December 28 by midnight.**

Write your response (minimum of 500 words) in Word and then paste into the discussion board.

Monday, December 29

Read Chapter 5: Power

Tuesday, December 30

Read Chapter 6: Poverty and Social Class

Wednesday December 31

Read Chapter 7: Gender Inequality & Herterosexualism

Thursday January 1

Read Chapter 8: Race and Ethnic Relations

Friday, January 2

Read Chapter 9: Crime and Violence

Sunday, January 4

**DB#2: Due Sunday January 4 by midnight.**

Write your response (minimum of 500 words) in Word and then paste into the discussion board.

Monday, January 5

Read Chapter 10: Family

Tuesday, January 6

Read Chapter 11: Healthcare

Wednesday, January 7

Read Chapter 12: Education for the Masses

Thursday January 8

Reach Chapter 13: Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Use Friday, January 9 and Saturday, January 10 to catch up on your reading and make sure the three exams are completed.

Sunday, January 11

**DB#3: Due Sunday, January 11 by midnight.**

Write your response (minimum of 500 words) in Word and then paste into the discussion board.