

Social Problems SYG 2010

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[also available by scheduled appointment]

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course examines "social problems" in a critical and global perspective. The social problems examined concern issues such as poverty, wealth, race-ethnicity, sexuality, gender, age, disability and ableism, schooling, work, health, environment, space/place, politics, crime, justice, violence, genocide, and war.

Course Learning Foundations. Together we'll use sociological principles to explore issues of **social inequality**—from global to local and personal. Working together, we'll try to make sense of our lives in a complicated world: to gain insights into how our social worlds are created and how we can endeavor to make the world a large a better place. SYG 2010 is a **Global Learning** course that counts toward your FIU Global Learning graduation requirement.

Its specific Global Learning Course Outcomes are as follows.

- **Global Awareness:** Students will demonstrate understanding of how interplays of local, national, transnational, global, and intercultural forces construct "social problems." That is, students will demonstrate recognition of how interplays of such forces define some aspects of life but not others as social problems.
- **Global perspective:** Students will analyze multiple perspectives on social problems, ranging from varieties of "individual-blame" explanations to varieties of "system-blame" explanations, from the standpoint of interplays of local, national, transnational, global, and intercultural forces.
- **Global Engagement:** Students will conceptualize possible ways to ameliorate or solve social problems from the standpoint of interplays of local, national, transnational, global, and intercultural forces.

Final grades will be based on attendance/punctuality, multiple-choice exams, in-class quizzes, discussion forum posts, research papers, cooperative learning, community-based learning, and a team project (PowerPoint project and its oral presentation to the class).

Students who attend all classes, read the text and articles diligently, and complete assignments thoughtfully will do well in this course. Student responsibilities include participating in class and employing an open-minded approach to new ideas about race, class, gender, sexuality, and other elements of social problems. Class is not intended to create clones of the instructor; instead, the goal is to inspire students to think critically and actively about social problems and get students to think outside of the box — the "box" being whatever you imagine you are *supposed* to believe.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVE-LEARNING COMPONENT

Team Project- Students will form teams, each of which will select a specific social problem; conceptualize the problem in terms of interplays of local, national, transnational, global, and intercultural forces; and propose one or more ways of ameliorating or solving the problem. Each team will (a) create a PowerPoint project and (b) orally present it to the class for discussion.

Research Project- In this class, you will learn how to carry out an authentic, high quality research project that meets a community need. Projects will involve partnerships with service agencies in the Miami-Dade County area. Be prepared to devote time outside of the class to researching a partner organization. Projects will be created based on community needs, student capacity, and the extent to which they contribute to increasing equity or social justice. You do not need to have prior experience doing applied research—but you do need to be interested in learning about it! By the end of the course you will learn skills that will serve you well in undergraduate school and professional contexts, such as:

- How to carry out community-based research (e.g., interviews, focus groups, field notes etc.)
- How to develop collaborative relationships with organizations
- Effective approaches to promoting youth and community development
- How to write a research paper for public consumption based on original data

REQUIRED READINGS

Textbook

James Henslin. *Essentials of Sociology* (11th edition)

Weekly Interdisciplinary Readings

These focus on scholarly topics from around the world.

Global Learning Common Reading

Various printed and visual media

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2002. *Mazel and Lamed: on (not) getting by in America* New York, N.Y: Henry Holt.

Gladwell, Malcolm. 2002. "The Power of Context (Part One)." Pp.133-68 in *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. New York: Back Bay Books.

Moore, Wes. 2017. *The Other Wes Moore : one name, two fates*. New York: Spiegel & Grau Trade Paperbacks.

Learning Objectives:

The student will be able to...

- Identify, define, and evaluate major social problems in the United States
- Suggest possible solutions for social problems and defend these suggestions
- Critically examine social problems through the use of sociological theories, methods, and empirical techniques
- Communicate an understanding about the social problems discussed in the course through the use of academic research and the sociological imagination

SUMMARY OF MEASURES AND GRADING

Course grades will be based on the following weighting of course requirements:

<u>MEASURE</u>	<u>POINTS EACH</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>	<u>(% of Pts)*</u>
Quizzes	10	50 pts	(14% at 3% each)
Final	40	40 pts	(11%)
In-class written Assignments	15	15 pts	(5%)
Historical Analysis Paper	50	50 pts	(14%)
Cooperative Learning	15	45 pts	(13%)
Team Project	50	50 pts	(14%)
Community-Based Learning	100	100 pts	(30%)
Grand Total		350 points	100%
	Added Attendance Points	up to 10 points	

COURSE CONTENT AND OUTLINE

*Chapters do not appear throughout the course in the order in which they appear in the text.

1/20-1/24: Wrap up overview of Introduction to Sociology & In-class written assignment & Quiz 1

I. Problems of Social Inequality

1/27-2/3: Economy and Politics

Readings: Henslin, Chapters 14 and 15

2/10-2/21: Poverty and Class Inequality

In-Class written assignment

Readings: Henslin, Chapters 9 and 10

2/24-3/6: Race/ethnic inequality & Quiz 2 on economy and class inequality

Readings: Henslin, Chapter 12

3/9-3/20: Gender inequality & Age & Quiz 3 on race/ethnic inequality

Readings: Henslin, Chapters 13 and 11

SPRING BREAK

**3/30-4/10: Marriage and Family & Quiz 4
on gender/age inequality
Readings: Henslin, Chapter 16**

**4/13-4/19: Wrap up overview of social problems & Quiz 5
& In-class Team Project Assignment**

II. Social Change

4/3: Final Project Proposal Due (field research on your own)

5/23-5/27: Presentations/Research Project Due

Agreement Statement

I, _____ recognize that scientific research is a labor-intensive enterprise that demands a high level of personal commitment, time, and effort. This is particularly true when the research project is being undertaken for academic credit (e.g., independent research, senior seminar) and the project must be completed within the temporal limitations of a semester-long course. By signing this document, I promise to dedicate the necessary time and effort to complete this project in accordance to the schedule above. I will also uphold the principles of scientific integrity and inquiry particularly in regard to human subjects. I am fully aware of the seriousness of these issues.

I recognize that any form of data falsification, data fabrication, or plagiarism in the conduct of research is not only an academically dishonest act, but also a most severe form of scientific misconduct. If this research project involves human subjects, I agree to take a tutorial on the protection of human subjects before commencing work on the project. Similarly, if the project involves using animals as subjects, I agree to take a tutorial on the use of animals as research subjects.

I shall also abide by the stipulation that all research data (e.g., questionnaires, data files, records, observations) from this project will be retained by the faculty member who will determine who and under what circumstances others may have access to such data. I also understand that any resulting presentation or journal article based on this research is the property of Florida International University.

Student's signature

_____ date _____

Parent or guardian's signature

_____ date _____

Chairperson's signature

_____ date _____