Social Problems (Soci 180), Spring 2021

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:00-11:00, and by appointment

Meeting Time: asynchronous
Meeting Place: online

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will cover a variety of current social problems in the United States and around the world, focusing on how a problem is defined, who defines it, and what implications this has for the treatment of the social problem in question. Social problems are real problems, often with life and death consequences for real people. Nevertheless, all problems exist within the contexts of their particular societies and cultures. What is a social problem and how we seek to solve social problems are influenced by governments, media, corporations, social movements, and individual actors, consciously or unconsciously. We will adopt a sociological perspective on various social problems in this course; meaning we will look at the problems from different vantage points, which may or may not challenge your existing values and beliefs. By the end of the course you should develop an understanding of some of the major social problems facing society, why we consider these social problems, and how the contestation over the definition of a social problem influences the flow of societal resources to help solve or ease these problems.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
This course seeks to establish what a social problem is, how they are defined by society, and some of the solutions sought to these problems. We will attempt to understand how the proponents and opponents of these social problems define the situation and seek resolutions. We will delve further into the nature of social problems, below the external structures and arguments presented by the interested parties, through insights from sociological theories. Basic goals:

- Understand how a social problem is constructed
- Understand the basic facts behind the major social problems facing the U.S. and the world
- Understand different sociological perspectives used to explain particular problems
- Develop the ability to evaluate arguments concerning the impact of social problems and solutions to social problems

REQUIRED TEXTS
• Additional readings posted on Canvas

GRADING (all grades posted on Canvas)

Exam #1
Exam #2
Exam #3
Quizzes (10 points each, two lowest quiz grades dropped)
Discussion posts (5 points each, two lowest dropped)
Written Assignment #1: Visual Exploration of Inequality
Written Assignment #2: Hate Groups in the U.S.

A+ 490-500 points
A 460-489 points
A- 450-459 points
B+ 440-449 points
B 410-439 points
B- 400-409 points
C+ 390-399 points
C 360-389 points
C- 350-359 points
D+ 340-349 points
D 310-339 points
D- 300-309 points
F 299 points and below

ACHIEVEMENT-CENTERED EDUCATION (ACE)
The University of Nebraska—Lincoln seeks to provide quality education to all of its students. To that end, it has designated certain classes as ACE certified. These classes provide and assess specific learning outcomes. As an ACE class, Social Problems will facilitate Learning Outcomes #6 (using knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior) and #9 (exhibit global awareness or knowledge of human diversity through analysis of an issue). This class will:

• Provide opportunities to increase your knowledge of contemporary social problems, sociological perspectives on social problems, and prevalent patterns of inequality that affect and are affected by social problems.
• Examine social problems in Nebraska, the United States, and around the world.
• Focus on the relationship between social problems and gender, race, social class, religion, and family status.
• Facilitate these goals through lecture, readings, class discussion, in-class activities, and research on crime or drugs in the United States.

ACE learning outcomes in this class will be assessed by:

• Quizzes, three exams, and a research paper on crime or drugs in the United States.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS
There are assignments due each week, usually by Saturday night at 11:59 pm. All assignments must be completed in Canvas. Late assignments will receive reduced grades (5% off for each day late). Assignments will NOT be accepted more than one week after the due date. The final exam must be completed on time.

**EXAMS AND QUIZZES**
Exams will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and some short essays. There are three exams. There is a quiz each week of the course except the weeks when there is an exam. Quizzes will mostly consist of true/false and multiple-choice questions. Your two lowest quiz scores will be dropped (i.e. not count towards your grade in the class). The exams and quizzes cover material from class lectures/PowerPoint slides and from the assigned readings. All exams and quizzes should be taken in Canvas.

The exams are not cumulative. Each exam will cover a third of the semester’s material. The quizzes primarily focus on the course material from that week, though there may be questions from material from the previous week or two if it is relevant.

You should complete the readings, lectures, videos, and any other learning materials for that week and previous weeks before taking an exam or quiz. Once you start an exam or quiz, you will have limited amount of time to complete it. Be sure you are ready, and in a place with a stable internet connection, before beginning an exam or quiz. You are welcome to use any class materials to help with exams and quizzes. However, because the exams and quizzes are timed, you will not have time to complete them if you are unfamiliar with the material and forced to look up the answer to each question.

**DISCUSSION POSTS**
Each week students are required to participate in weekly discussions. A question/prompt will be posted in the Canvas module for each week. Note that questions/prompts may not be posted far in advance. This allows the instructor to adjust the course based on previous discussions, responses to readings, and current events.

Discussion posts must be a minimum of 150 words. Add the word count to the bottom of each post. Posts should be clearly written using correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Posts should utilize course materials (unless otherwise specified in the question/prompt). Unless asked for your view on something, it is not about your opinion, it is about the course material. These criteria will factor into discussion post grades. Your two lowest discussion post scores will be dropped (i.e. not count towards your grade in the class).

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**
There are two short written assignments (consult course schedule for due dates). The instructions for each assignment as well as pre-formatted sheets in which to complete the assignments can be found on Canvas. Be sure to look ahead at these assignments. They may take some time to complete as they require accessing additional online content beyond the normal course materials.
While this is not an English class, your written assignments must be intelligible. Make sure to proofread your responses to the questions in the assignment. Excessive misspellings, typos, or unclear sentences will result in a lower grade.

Plagiarism. Using someone else’s words without citing them and/or using quotations marks is the most basic form of plagiarism (excessive paraphrasing can also be considered plagiarism). Using plagiarism detection software, we will compare your assignments to published work, websites, online papers, other UNL students’ papers, and other relevant documents. Excessive quoting will result in a lower grade. Plagiarism will result in failing the assignment and notification to the University of a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

ACADEMIC HONESTY
There will be no leniency for any form of academic dishonesty. Cheating on exams or quizzes and plagiarizing written assignments will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty will result in failing the assignment and notification to the University of a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. If you are unfamiliar with the student code of conduct, please visit http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/three.shtml.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 117 Louise Pound Hall.; 402-472-3787.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL & SERVICES
UNL offers a variety of options to students to aid them in dealing with stress and adversity. Counseling and Psychological & Services (CAPS) is a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and counselors that works collaboratively with Nebraska students to help them explore their feelings and thoughts and learn helpful ways to improve their mental, psychological and emotional well-being when issues arise. CAPS can be reached by calling 402-472-7450. Big Red Resilience & Well-BeingLinks to an external site. (BRRWB) provides one-on-one well-being coaching to any student who wants to enhance their well-being. Trained well-being coaches help students create and be grateful for positive experiences, practice resilience and self-compassion, and find support as they need it. BRRWB can be reached by calling 402-472-8770.