

**Social Problems (SOC 120)**  
**Spring 2017**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 12:40PM - 2:05PM**  
**Room: Centennial 3213**  
**Professor: Dr. Peter Marina**

**Office:** 437K Wimberly

**Office hours:** 3:45-4:45pm Tuesday and Thursday; or by appointment

**E-mail:** [pmarina@uwlax.edu](mailto:pmarina@uwlax.edu); **Website:** [petermarina.com](http://petermarina.com) and [downandoutneworleans.com](http://downandoutneworleans.com)

**Teaching Assistant:** Claire Howard

### **Course Description**

Social analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving are introduced as basic social science skills. These skills are applied to major contemporary social problems related to deviant behavior, social inequality, social change, and problems associated with major societal institutions. A variety of individual and collective responses and social policy strategies at local, national, and international levels are examined. This course invites students to the field of sociology through the examination of social problems in the contemporary world. Students will become introduced to the sociological imagination as a unique way to understand the world from the global problems of today to the personal orbits of our own lives. We will cover a wide variety of topics that include an analysis of capitalism and democracy, wealth and power, population growth and inequality, demography and immigration, urban and rural issues, race and gender inequality, poverty and the welfare state, “crime” and drugs, and other issues facing the world. We look at social problems particularly from the unique perspective of sociology and learn how to diagnose the causes of social problems. We will discuss some of the most pressing problems of the world and, after theorizing about their causes, make attempts to think about how to solve them. At the end of this course, students will be able to think like a sociologist about social problems using the sociological imagination.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

The mission of the General Education Program at UW-L is to develop life-long learners who will be engaged as knowledgeable and responsible citizens in a diverse and ever-changing world. It is the university's vision that the core curriculum encourages students to (1) detect underlying patterns of phenomena and draw reasonable inferences from information and (2) demonstrate an understanding of the forms and mechanisms of oppression, discrimination, or privilege.

### **Course Objectives**

- Understand the importance of utilizing your critical thinking skills and sociological imagination in the classroom and in everyday life;
- Appreciate the importance of sociology for studying macro and micro level phenomenon related to race, class, gender and sexuality in the United States and abroad;
- Understand the core theoretical perspectives and methodologies that shape and guide sociological analysis of social problems;
- Appreciate the diversity found within your own society and around the world;
- Familiarize with past issues that have shaped social problems in the United States as well as current issues that continue to do so;
- Understand the basic methods of the social sciences;
- Understand the dialectical relationship between individuals and society, and the impact of social location on social perception;
- Distinguish between social facts and myths using empirical evidence grounded in method.

**Required Books**

Eitzen, Stanley, Maxine Zinn, and Kelly Smith. *Social Problems* (13/E) Pearson Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780205172436

Peter Marina and Bill Zollweg. *Understanding Social Problems: A Guide to Field Research*. Kendall Hunt Press, 2017. ISBN: 9781465295859 (<https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/understanding-social-problems-guide-field-research>)

**Recommended Books**

C. Wright Mills. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press, USA

**Outside Readings**

Outside readings from scholarly books and articles may be included to compliment and elaborate on critical concepts offered in the main textbook and class discussions.

**Weekly Agenda**

All students must participate in weekly class discussions on class readings and assignments. It is important to read all class readings and assignments prior to class lectures and discussions. We will also have debates in class on controversial topics related to social problems in society.

**Course Requirements, Evaluation, and Grading**

Grade	Total Points
A	372-400
AB	356-371
B	332-355
BC	316-331
C	280-315
D	240-279
F	239 or less

400 total possible points in this course:

Requirements	Points
Exam # 1: February 23	100 points
Exam # 2: April 6	100 points
Exam # 3: May 11	100 points
Understanding Social Problems Assignments	50 points
Participation	50 points
<b>TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS</b>	<b>400 POINTS</b>

### Exam One (100 points)

This exam includes multiple-choice, short answer, and/or essay questions. The exam covers material related to class lectures and assigned readings.

### Exam Two (100 points)

This exam includes multiple-choice, short answer, and/or essay questions. The exam covers material related to class lectures and assigned readings.

### Exam Three (100 Points)

This is an out of class short-essay exam that covers class lectures and literature assigned in class. This exam is scheduled during your regularly scheduled exam date and time.

### Workbook Assignments (50 Points)

Complete Marina and Zollweg. *Understanding Social Problems: A Guide to Field Research* for up to 100 total points.

### Participation (50 Points)

This includes your attendance, participation in class, and critical response assignments

**Make-up Policy:** Students with an approved written excused absence may be allowed to take make-up exams but cannot make up in-class writing assignments.

## **Other Course Requirements**

Attendance: It is important to attend class. Excess lateness and absence may result in grade reduction.

Reading Assignments: Read all required class literature prior on the date assigned. Class lectures and discussions are primarily designed around the scholarly literature assigned for the class.

Writing Assignments: All class writing assignments must have a 12-size regular font and double spaced paragraphs with your name, title, date, and page numbers.

Participation: Participate in class discussion and lectures through active listening, questions, comments, and so on.

Open Discussion Sessions: How often do you get to ask all the questions you ever wanted to ask without feeling uncomfortable? We will occasionally devote some class time discussing anonymous sociological questions students will place in a hat for response and discussion. For example, students can ask questions they may usually not feel comfortable asking in a public setting. Students can ask questions about race and sex (*e.g.*, Is there a biological difference between black and white people or men and women), poverty (*e.g.*, Are poor people really lazy?), crime (*e.g.*, Are people that commit crime evil?), religion (*e.g.*, What do most sociologists think about god?), education (*e.g.*, What is the real purpose for education in society?), Karl Marx (*e.g.*, Wasn't he some Pinko communist?), environmentalism (*e.g.*, Are we really destroying the earth? What about fracking?), capitalism (*e.g.*, Is capitalism the best we've got or an evil?), and anything else you always wanted to ask but never did.

## **Class Structure**

The course structure involves lectures and discussions primarily related to the scholarly literature, current debates, controversial issues, and current events relevant to the study of social problems.

Students may be selected on certain weeks to present course material or debate in class. At times during lectures, a modified version of the Socratic method is used to stimulate critical thinking.

### ***Students with Disabilities***

Any student with a documented disability (e.g. ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Acquired Brain Injury, PTSD, Physical, Sensory, Psychological, or Learning Disability) who needs to arrange academic accommodations must contact The ACCESS Center (165 Murphy Library, [608-785-6900](tel:6087856900), [ACCESSCenter@uwlax.edu](mailto:ACCESSCenter@uwlax.edu)) and meet with an advisor to register and develop an accommodation plan. In addition to registering with The ACCESS Center, it is the student's responsibility to discuss their academic needs with their instructors. You can find out more about services available to students with disabilities at [The ACCESS Center website](http://www.uwlax.edu/access-center/) <http://www.uwlax.edu/access-center/>.

### ***Title IX: Gender Equity and Sexual Assault***

Title IX mandates that colleges receiving federal funding provide gender equity, not just in sports, but in all areas of campus life, meaning that all students should be able to study in an atmosphere free of harassment, sexual violence, and gender discrimination. Therefore, violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault, stalking, or violence or abuse in a relationship, the Student Life Violence Prevention Specialist is available to assist you with advocacy, information, and support, so that you can make informed choices about the options available to you in these situations. Services are free, confidential, and available to all UWL students, faculty, and staff members. Violence Prevention Specialist: [Ingrid Peterson](mailto:Ingrid.Peterson@uwlax.edu), 149 Graff Main Hall, [\(608\)785-8062](tel:6087858062). Please see the following site for more information: <http://www.uwlax.edu/Violence-Prevention/Resources/>

### ***I Am a Mandated Reporter***

As a faculty member of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, I am a mandated reporter of sexual harassment (including sexual violence). This means that I am obligated to disclose any detailed or specific information I receive about such incidents involving a member of this campus while that person is a member of this campus, regardless of whether the incident takes place on campus or off. I care about your well-being, and our course assignments sometimes lend themselves to disclosure, but you should not share any details of an incident with me until you have discussed your options under the new Title IX guidelines. There are confidential reporters available to students at UWL where you can have this discussion. The contact in Student Life is Ingrid Peterson, Violence Prevention Specialist, at [\(608\) 785-8062](tel:6087858062) or [ipeterson@uwlax.edu](mailto:ipeterson@uwlax.edu). I am also happy to help direct you to counseling and support services. Simply ask me to assist you in locating a confidential reporter and I will help you to do so.

### ***Veterans and active military personnel***

Veterans and active military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to me. For additional information and assistance, contact the [Veterans Services Office](http://www.uwlax.edu/veteran-services/) <http://www.uwlax.edu/veteran-services/>. Students who need to withdraw from class or from the university due to military orders should be aware of the [military duty withdrawal policy](http://catalog.uwlax.edu/undergraduate/academicpolicies/withdrawal/#military-duty-withdrawal-university) <http://catalog.uwlax.edu/undergraduate/academicpolicies/withdrawal/#military-duty-withdrawal-university>.

### ***Academic Misconduct (Cheating and Plagiarism)***

Academic misconduct is a violation of the ASA code of ethics and the student honor code (<http://catalog.uwlax.edu/undergraduate/academicpolicies/studentconduct/>). Plagiarism, including inadequate referencing or citation of other research is unacceptable. All work handed in for this class must be the students' own individual work. Plagiarism or cheating in any form may result in failure of the assignment or exam, failure of the course, and may include harsher sanctions. Academic misconduct is unacceptable. All work handed in for this class must be the students' own individual work. Plagiarism or cheating in any form may result in failure of the assignment or exam, failure of the course, and may include harsher sanctions. Refer to the Eagle Eye at <http://www.uwlax.edu/Student-Life/Student-handbook/#14.01> for a detailed definition of academic misconduct. For helpful information on how to avoid plagiarism, go to <http://www.uwlax.edu/catl/readiness/ethics.html>. You may also visit the Student Life Office if you have questions about plagiarism or cheating incidents. I encourage you to discuss any concerns regarding plagiarism or cheating with me directly and well before any assignments are handed in. Failure to understand what constitutes plagiarism or cheating is not a valid excuse for engaging in academic misconduct.

### ***Communication about Class Interruptions***

In the event of a campus incident that impacts the availability of teaching spaces, any changes or cancellations will be communicated to you via your university email. Depending on the incident, some or all of the information might be posted on the UWL home page.

### ***Eagle Alert System***

This class will be participating in the "Eagle Alert" system through WINGS. The Early Alert system is designed to promote student success. If I notice that you are experiencing difficulties early in the semester (e.g., low assignment scores or poor attendance), I may enter feedback into the program and you will receive an email indicating that feedback has been left. I may also enter positive feedback encouraging you to think about additional opportunities. You will be able to access the feedback through your student center in WINGS. I encourage you to meet with me and use one or more of several helpful campus resources listed here <http://www.uwlax.edu/studentssuccess/>.

### ***Writing Center***

The Writing Center, which is located in the Murphy Learning Center, provides trained peer tutors who can help you with any writing task (e.g., papers, proposals, research projects, summaries, reports, letters, application essays) at any stage of the process — understanding assignments, planning papers, organizing ideas, making revisions, improving sentences, using sources, etc. For current hours or to schedule an appointment, visit <http://www.uwlax.edu/writingcenter/>

### ***Sociology as a Writing-in-the-Major Program***

The Sociology major is a "writing-in-the-major" program (WIMP). The purpose behind the program is to insure that any undergraduate who completes a major in sociology has experienced sufficient informal and formal writing experiences so that graduates are proficient at communicating through a variety of formats. In all your sociology courses, you will be writing, and in each class, you may be asked to do a wide variety of types of writing. The department sees writing as an extremely important skill and as a mechanism to enhance student learning. In addition, you will learn the referencing and citation style used by archaeologists or sociologists. By completing the Sociology major, you will be completing the "writing emphasis" component of your general education requirements. The objectives of the writing-in-the-major program are available at <http://www.uwlax.edu/wimp/>. The student learning outcomes for Sociology major at UWL is available on the department webpage at

<http://www.uwlax.edu/sociology/> .

### ***Classroom Protocol***

Coming to class late or leaving class early is disruptive and disrespectful. I expect students to be on time and ready for class. I expect that students will take care of personal needs such as getting a drink of water, going to the bathroom, etc. before or after class and not come and go while class is in session. On occasion, students must leave during a class, if you have to leave a class early, please let me know at the beginning of class and make a quiet exit. It is not necessary to inform me that you will not be attending a class unless arrangements need to be made to make up an assignment for that day.

All electronic devices should be silenced during class and put away. Phone calls, texting, email, internet use, MP3 players/iPod use, etc. are not acceptable within a classroom setting. Students who intentionally use prohibited electronics during class will be required to leave the classroom. Students who disrupt the classroom or other students' learning experience by talking or carrying on side conversations within the classroom will also be required to leave the classroom.

Assignments, papers, and exams must be completed and handed in on the appointed dates. I will not accept late assignments unless I determine the circumstances to be beyond the student's control. The instructor determines the acceptability of student absences. Students with authorized absences will be allowed to make up exams or papers within a reasonable time-period. Students who are going to be absent for more than 3 days should contact the Student Life Office at 149 Graff Main Hall, 785-8062 and notify them of your absence so that the university and all instructors are informed of your absence (they do not authorize absences).

**Class Schedule:** (The course outline contained in this syllabus may change at the instructor's discretion in order to meet the needs of specific situations that may arise in the course of this semester and well as that needs of the students. Any changes to the syllabus including the course outline will be posted on D2L, emailed, or explained in class)

### **Class Schedule (Subject to modification):**

#### **Week One: Introduction to Social Problems**

1/24: Introduction to Social Problems

1/26: Sociologists as Medical Doctors of Society

#### **Week Two: A Sociological Approach to Study Social Problems**

1/31: The Sociological Imagination

2/2: The Sociological Imagination

\* Read Chapter 1 – Definitions/Types of Social Problems; Norm Violations and Social Conditions/Person-Blame Approach versus System-Blame Approach

#### **Week Three: Three Major Sociological Perspectives to Understand Social Problems**

2/7: Classical Theorists: Marx, Weber, Durkheim

2/9: Structural Functionalism, Conflict Theory, and Symbolic Interactionism

#### **Week Four: Wealth and Power**

2/14: Documentary: Chomsky: Requiem for the American Dream

2/16: Class Discussion on Wealth and Power

- \* Read Chapter 2 – Capitalism and Democracy as Wealth
- \* Read Chapter 3 – World Population and Global Inequality
- \* Critical Response Assignment I Due 2/16: Requiem for the American Dream

**Week Five: First Exam and Open Discussion**

2/21: Question Session

\*2/23: **First Exam**

**Week Six: The Rise of Transnational Corporations**

2/28: Century of the Self

3/2: Discussion on Century of the Self

- \* Critical Response Assignment II Due 3/2: The Century of the Self

**Week Seven: Changes in the United States: Hispanic Immigration**

3/7: Film: Harvest of Empire

3/9: Discussion on Immigration and American politics

- \* Read Chapter 5: Browning of America
- \* Critical Response Assignment III Due 3/9: Harvest of Empire

**Week Eight: Mid-semester Break (3/14 – 3/16)**

**Week Nine: Urban, Suburban, and Rural**

3/21: Urban, Suburban, and Rural Problems

3/23: Continuation of Above

- \* Read Chapter 6 – Urban, Rural, and Suburban Problems
- \* Read Marina: “Buskers of New Orleans” in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*.

**Week Ten: Education (Tentative on Speaker Availability)**

3/28: Guest Speaker from the La Crosse Public School System

3/30: Discussion on Education and Social Problems

- \* Read Chapters 16 – Education
- \* Critical Response Assignment IV Due 3/30

**Week Eleven: Exam II and Open Discussion**

4/4: Question/Review Day

\*4/6: Exam II

**Week: Twelve: Drugs/Criminal justice/Juvenile justice**

4/11: Guest Speaker from the La Crosse Sherriff’s Department (or special topics on police in society)

4/13: Discussion on Crime and Policing

- \* Read Chapter 12 – The Politics of Drugs / War on Drugs/ Chapter 13 – Crime and Justice in the U.S.

\* Critical Response Assignment V Due 4/13

**Week Thirteen: Understanding Social Problems**

4/18: Understanding Social Problems

4/20: Understanding Social Problems cont.

**Week Fourteen: Understanding Social Problems**

4/25: Understanding Social Problems

4/27: Understanding Social Problems cont.

**Week Fifteen: Diagnosing and Treating Social Problems**

5/2: Diagnosing and Treating Social Problems Using the Sociological Imagination

5/4: Solutions of Social Problems

\* Understanding Social Problems Workbook Due 5/2

Exam III: Thursday, May 11 10am-12pm

**Enjoy Summer Break!**