

**Social Problems (SOC 120)**  
**Fall 2018**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 2:15 - 3:40PM**  
**Room: Centennial 1404**  
**Professor: Dr. Peter Marina**

**Office:** 437K Wimberly

**Office hours:** 12-1 pm Wednesday; or by appointment

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**Teaching Assistant:** Jake Fischer

### **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

Marina, Peter 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: October 11	100 points
Exam # 2: November 15	100 points
Exam # 3: December 17	100 points
Understanding Social Problems Workbook (Due 12/5)	60 points
Participation	40 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 exam covers class lectures and literature assigned in class. This exam is scheduled during your regularly scheduled exam date and time.

### Workbook Assignments (60 Points)

Complete Marina and Zollweg's workbook *Understanding Social Problems: A Guide to Field Research* for up to 60 total points.

### Participation (40 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.

### **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.

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

**Week One: Introduction to Social Problems**

9/4: Introduction to Social Problems

9/6: Sociologists as Medical Doctors of Society

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

9/11: The Sociological Imagination

9/13: Cont.

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

\* Read Excerpt from Mill's *The Sociological Imagination*

**Week Three: The Approach of Classical Theorists to Social Problems**

9/18: Classical Theorists: Marx, Weber, Durkheim

9/20: Cont.

**Week Four: Wealth and Power**

9/25: Documentary: Chomsky: *Requiem for the American Dream*

9/27: Discussion: Wealth and Power as a Threat to American Democracy

\* Read Chapter 2 – Capitalism and Democracy as Wealth

\* Read Chapter 3 – World Population and Global Inequality

\* Critical Response I Assignment Due 9/28: Requiem for the American Dream

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

10/2: Century of the Self

10/4: Discussion on Corporations and Democracy

\* Critical Response II Assignment Due 10/5: Century of the Self

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

10/9: Question/Review Day

\*10/11: **First Exam**

**Week Seven: Immigration as a Social Problem**

10/16: Film: Harvest of Empire

10/18: Discussion on Immigration and American Politics

\* Read Chapter 5: Browning of America

\* Critical Response III Assignment Due 10/19: Harvest of Empire

**Week Eight: Special Topic (Midsemester)**

10/23: Special Topic

10/25: Special Topic

**Week Nine: Crime as a Social Problem**

10/30: Understanding Crime Using the Sociological Imagination  
11/1: Solving Crime Using the Sociological Imagination

- \* Critical Response IV Assignment Due 11/2: Causes of Crime and its Solutions
- \* Read Chapter 12 –Politics of Drugs / War on Drugs/ Chapter 13 – Crime & Justice in the U.S.

**Week Ten: Urban, Suburban, and Rural Problems**

11/6: Urban, Suburban, and Rural Problems  
11/8: Special Topic on Urban/Rural Problems

- \* Read Chapter 6 – Urban, Rural, and Suburban Problems
- \* Read Marina: *Down and Out in New Orleans*

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

11/13: Question/Exam Review Day  
\*11/15: **Exam II**

**Week Twelve: Guest Speaker on Education/Policing** (subject to change)

11/20: Guest Speaker on Education or Policing  
11/22: Thanksgiving (no class)

**Week Thirteen: Understanding Social Problems Workbook**

11/27: Understanding Social Problems  
11/29: Understanding Social Problems cont.

**Week Fourteen: Proposing Solutions to Social Problems**

12/4: Thinking about Solutions of Social Problems  
12/6: Diagnosing and Treating Social Problems Using the Sociological Imagination

- \* Understanding Social Problems Workbook Due 12/6

**Week Fifteen: Solutions of Social Problems**

12/11: Solutions of Social Problems

**Exam III:** Monday December 17, 7:45-9:45 a.m.

**Enjoy Winter Break!**

## **Other UWL Syllabus Related Policies**

### ***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.

### ***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).

### **Eagle Alert System**

This class will be participating in the Eagle Alert System <https://www.uwlax.edu/academic-advising-center/eagle-alert/student-resources/> through WINGS. The 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 limited participation), I may note this information and you will receive an email indicating that I have entered feedback. I may also enter positive feedback encouraging you to consider additional learning opportunities. The link in the email will take you to WINGS where you can login to see the feedback. I encourage you to meet with me and/or refer to the helpful campus resources listed below under Academic Services and Resources and on UWL's Student Success page <https://www.uwlax.edu/info/student-success/>.

### **Inclusive Excellence**

UWL's core values include "Diversity, equity, and the inclusion and engagement of all people in a safe campus climate that embraces and respects the innumerable different perspectives found within an increasingly integrated and culturally diverse global community" (<https://www.uwlax.edu/chancellor/mission/>). If you are not experiencing my class in this manner, please come talk to me about your experiences so I can try to adjust the course if possible.

### **Name/Pronouns**

Please advise me of your preferred name or gender pronoun(s) early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Information on UWL's preferred name policy is available here <https://www.uwlax.edu/records/preferred-name/> and UWL's Pride Center is available for additional assistance.

### **Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI)**

UWL conducts student evaluations electronically. Approximately 2 weeks prior to the conclusion of a course, you will receive an email at your UWL email address directing you to complete an evaluation for each of your courses. In-class time will be provided for students to complete the evaluation in class. Electronic reminders will be sent if you do not complete the evaluation. The evaluation will include numerical ratings and, depending on the department, may provide options for comments. The university takes student feedback very seriously and the information gathered from student evaluations is more valuable when a larger percentage of students complete the evaluation. Please be especially mindful to complete the surveys.

## **Academic Services and Resources at UWL**

Below are several student services available to students taking online courses:

- Academic Advising Center: <http://www.uwlax.edu/advising/>
- ACCESS Center (formerly Disability Resources): <http://www.uwlax.edu/access-center/>
- Career Services: <http://www.uwlax.edu/careerservices/>
- Counseling and Testing Center: <http://www.uwlax.edu/counseling/>
- Financial Information: Financial Aid Office <https://www.uwlax.edu/finaid/> and It Makes Cents <https://www.uwlax.edu/it-makes-cents/>
- Murphy Learning Center (Walk-in tutoring): <http://www.uwlax.edu/murphy-learning-center/>
- Murphy Library: <http://www.uwlax.edu/murphylibrary/>
- Multicultural Student Services: <http://www.uwlax.edu/mss/>
- Public Speaking Center: <https://www.uwlax.edu/murphy-learning-center/subject/public-speaking-center/>
- Records and Registration: <http://www.uwlax.edu/records/>
- Student Handbook: <https://www.uwlax.edu/student-life/student-resources/student-handbook/>
- Student Support Services: <https://www.uwlax.edu/student-support-services/>
- Veteran Services: <http://www.uwlax.edu/veteran-services/>
- Writing Center: <http://www.uwlax.edu/writingcenter/>

## **Technical Support**

For tips and information about D2L visit the Information Technology Services (ITS) student support page, at <http://www.uwlax.edu/D2L/Help-for-students/>.

Need help making sure your computer is set up correctly for online coursework? D2L's System Check <https://community.desire2learn.com/d2l/systemCheck> ensures that your computer and web browser are configured to properly access their system.

You can also contact the ITS Support Center at (608) 785-8774 or email them at [helpdesk@uwlax.edu](mailto:helpdesk@uwlax.edu) for questions about D2L or any other technological difficulties. The hours for ITS are Monday through Thursday from 7:30 am to 6:30 pm, and Friday from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm, Central Time.

## **Our Legal Obligations to You**

See the following link of statements that reflect UWL's legal obligations to students:

<https://www.uwlax.edu/info/syllabus/>