

Anso 1020
Summer 2008
Syllabus

Carol Warner
(618) 632-9652
Socprof364@aol.com

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Course Description: ANSO 1020 is an introduction to the major problems facing American society and the ways in which sociologists look at those problems. The focus is on how social problems are the outcome of social arrangements.

Objectives: This course is designed to teach the sociological approach to social problems – the basic concepts, theoretical orientations and research methods. The primary objective is learning how the “sociological imagination” applies to social problems – that is, how to place social problems within their social and developmental context, examine the social forces that create social problems, and theoretically interpret social problems. Through this course, you should gain an understanding of how social problems are the consequences of contemporary arrangements: culture, social change and patterns of group life – especially power relationships.

The assigned readings, term paper, in-class discussions, visual aides, lectures, simulations and presentations are designed to increase your understanding of the social factors that influence social problems. They are designed to make the cross currents of society more visible – especially the social forces that underlie discrimination and the relationship of social problems to the bolstering of the powerful in their positions of privilege.

A desired outcome is for you to attain an appreciative understanding of group-based threats to your own well-being in society, and of your own role in social problems: first, in withstanding them; and second, in striving toward workable solutions.

To gain this sociological understanding of social problems, we shall examine such topics as:

social change	pornography	war
technology	abortion	terrorism
changes in sex roles	rape	racism
murder	medical care	overpopulation
social statuses	drug abuse	sexism
homosexuality	family abuse	social power
social inequality	urban decay	crime
environmental poisoning	criminal justice system	

Procedures: Because no single procedure is best suited to meet our primary objectives of understanding the social factors that underlie social problems and perceiving our own place in those problems, we shall utilize a variety of procedures. These may include readings, papers, simulations, lectures, video tapes, small group discussions and in class presentations of various sorts. The ordering of topics and specific assignments will follow in the attached course outline, from which I may occasionally add, delete or substitute topics and readings.

Because the topics we shall cover in this course are so closely related to the situations we face in life – indeed, our own related well being and future welfare are intimately interconnected with them – part of our class time will be focused on group discussions. In small groups we shall examine specific social problems, or even small-scale aspects of selected social problems, focusing the light of sociological theory on them in order to attain analytical consciousness. Accordingly, regular outside of class preparation is essential if we are to have stimulating and focused in-class discussion.

Grading: The term paper, examinations and short papers will be worth the following maximum points:

Short papers – 2 - (50 points each)	100
Midterm	100
Typewritten interview	75
Term Paper	100
Final exam	100
Discretionary grade	25

I shall reserve 25 points to be awarded at my discretion for any of a combination of items which may include: participation, extra credit performance, or the like.

With respect to the grading system: students who have achieved 93% of the maximum point count offered will have earned an A; and an A- for 90-92. 87% to 89% will earn a B+, 83-86 = B, 80-82 a B-, etc.

- A = outstanding understanding of the material; excellent ability to analyze course subject matter; ability to structure thought and present it in a logical flow in a grammatically appropriate manner.
- B = good understanding of the material; good ability to analyze course subject matter; ability to present work in a logical flow with few grammatical errors.
- C = knowledge of the material; fair ability to analyze subject matter; written presentation that is not difficult to read by traditional standards (ie: reasonable grammar and flow).
- D = inadequate knowledge of the material; inadequate ability to analyze course material.
- F = No demonstration of knowledge of material or analytical ability.

Textbook: The textbook for the course is *Social Problems* by James Henslin.

Midterm Exam: The midterm will cover any and all materials covered in the first half of the course.

Final Exam: The final exam will focus on material covered in the latter half of the class, but application of principles and theories learned earlier will be helpful to your responses.

Make Ups: You are responsible for being present at both scheduled examinations. In exceptional cases, a make-up exam will be given at a mutually convenient time.

Understand that this only applies in circumstances, which your instructor considers to be exceptional.

Short papers: These papers, from 1-3 pages in length, should be personal papers written about social problems that affect you in a very personal way. The purpose of these papers is to emphasize the fact that each of us faces a variety of social problems as we go about our daily lives. The problems encountered by one are probably not the problems encountered by others – you are to choose topics from our readings that apply very personally to you. Therefore, if you are a white male – writing about sexism or racism would not be appropriate. However, both might be apt subjects for a black female to address. If you have had an abortion, were told that your mother considered aborting her pregnancy when she was pregnant with you, had a girlfriend who aborted your child, then you might be well equipped to write on that subject. For others, there is not the same personal attachment. Therefore, it would be difficult to write about the feelings associated with the issue in the same in-depth manner.

In these short papers, I want you to tell me about your experience with the social problem; offer a scenario, if that is appropriate; and then let me know your feelings about the issue as it pertains to you. In other words, these are to be very personal papers – no research is required or desired by your instructor.

The paper is due during the same class period that the reading material for your chosen subject is due. For example, if among the readings for the second week of class there was an article on the issue of old age, among others, AND you are old, have a close relationship with someone who is elderly, discriminate against this particular group of people on a regular basis, work with this population, etc., and wish to address the social problems associated with being old from a first person perspective, I would expect the paper turned in while we are addressing that topic in class.

There is no need for a title page on these short papers. If you can effectively describe and analyze your relationship to the topic you have chosen in one single page, you will earn the full point maximum. Points are awarded for substance, not length.

Term Paper: Separate instructions are attached.

Instructor's Availability Outside of Class: I will be happy to meet with you at any time that is mutually convenient to discuss matters pertinent to this course. This semester my regular office hours will be immediately before and after class. If you need to speak with me at other times, please feel free to contact me at home by phone or email anytime between the hours of 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. The easiest time to find me at home is between 4:00 and 6:45 p.m.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week One	Orientation
Week Two	Chapters 1-3
Week Three	Chapters 4-5
Week Four	Chapters 6-7
Week Five	Midterm exam will be given at 7:00 p.m. Chapters 8-10
Week Six	Chapters 11-12
Week Seven	Remainder of text
Week Eight	Final Exam

TERM PAPER GUIDELINES

The purpose of doing a term paper for this course is to give you the opportunity to more fully explore a social problem that interests you. During the eight week term, we will be analyzing a variety of social problems. For your term project, you may choose to further investigate one that we cover in class or select another. The main criterion for topic approval is that the social problem is a current one.

The paper itself is due on the seventh meeting of this class. I will accept a paper early, if you wish to get it out of the way; however, late papers will be assessed a severe penalty.

Papers are to be 6-8 pages long – typewritten, double spaced with standard margins. I will expect you to have used a minimum of three academic sources, and each paper is to include material gleaned from at least one interview. In other words, if you should choose the social issue, euthanasia, for your topic – I would expect you to begin your research effort by reading about the issue in academically acceptable books or journals. When you have a pretty good handle on the subject – some history on the subject, how long it has been a social problem and for whom, the various sides of the issue on which people line up – you should talk with people who are involved in the issue. Some examples might be: a physician or nurse who commonly deals with this ethical problem in the work environment, someone who has made a living will, someone who is concerned about carrying out the wishes of an ailing person who has requested to “die with dignity”, Jack Kevorkian, Terry Schiavo’s husband, those who petitioned the courts for guardianship of Terry Schiavo to prevent her nourishment from being discontinued, a counselor or other knowledgeable person with strong feelings and background on either side of the issue.

When you finally sit down to write the paper, I want you to work the interview (a quote here and there) into the paper – either backing up or refuting what the literature says. An example might be:

Many pro-euthanasia arguments deal with the quality of life. According to Dr. A.B.Cee, “...where there is absolutely no hope of ever recovering from the vegetative state, the humane choice for the family is to remove all tubes...”

I expect the paper to analyze the issue – that is, to present the various sides in a balanced manner as you explain the problem. You may (but are not required to) explain where you stand with regard to the issue, but the paper must still be balanced.

You must integrate sociological theory into the paper.

ADDITIONAL TERM PAPER SPECIFICS

To maximize your grade, follow the instructions on these pages. If you do not understand something – ask! Opportunity will be provided to discuss the term paper in the classroom, and because the term paper can be one of the most significant parts of your learning experience – also in private consultations.

Topic: The topic is to be worked out with your instructor

Purpose: The term paper is designed to provide the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the subject matter, your ability to express yourself and indicate a grasp of sociological theory.

Sociological Theory: An emphasis in this class is on three sociological theories that sociologists use to interpret social problems: symbolic interactionism, functionalism and conflict analysis. You **MUST** apply one of these in your paper.

References: You must cite a minimum of three sources (academic articles or books written no more than two decades ago. All references are to be listed in the bibliography in proper format. Any approved academic format will be fine.

Interviews: You must interview some person involved in the social problem on which you are writing. You are encouraged to supplement the interview with observations. These interviews are to be typed in Q & A format and handed in for grading purposes. I will accept the interview whenever you wish to hand it in, just as long as it **PRECEDES** your handing in of the term paper by at least one week.

Group papers: If you wish to work with others, that can be arranged. Since it is a group effort and the grade will apply to more than one person, I will expect more interviews and a longer paper written at a higher level. Work this out with me.

Early papers and Advance critique: If you turn your paper in to me a minimum of two weeks before it is due, I will return it to you within a week along with suggestions on how you can improve your paper.

Oral presentations: It is conceivable (but by no means a certainty) that some paper topics will be selected for oral presentation. That is, if I know that you are working on a particular topic, I may ask you to share the knowledge you have gleaned to date. You likely will not know in advance if your topic has been so selected; however, if you are up to the task, a good presentation can result in a full score in the discretionary portion of your grade. The presentation will, naturally, be informal.

Grading: The maximum number of points is listed on the syllabus. As I grade term papers, I will look for the following:

Number of sources

Quality of sources

Appropriateness of citations

Use of interview material

Integration of sociological theory

Quality of your analysis