SOCY 2 Social Problems
Winter Quarter 2013

Class Meets in 312 Silsby Hall, 2A: TR 2:00–3:50pm (X-hour: W 4:15-5:05pm)

Professor Janice McCabe
Office: 105 Silsby Hall
Email: janice.m.mccabe@dartmouth.edu
Phone: 603-646-8160
Office hours: Monday 10:00-12:00 or by appointment

Course Description:
Daily news reports direct much of our attention to social problems such as crime, poverty, prejudice and political corruption. Yet rarely are such reports accompanied by a discussion of the systematic causes of these problems. More often we become witness to an endless stream of media coverage reporting seemingly isolated incidents. Seldom are we informed of the decision-making process by which some social problems become selected for coverage, while others are ignored. The purpose of this course is to subject the coverage of modern social problems to an in-depth, critical analysis. We will attempt to answer such questions as: "how does a social problem become defined as such?" and "what are the causes or sources of various social problems?"

Course Goals and Objectives:
By the end of this course, students will:
1. Identify, define, and illustrate basic concepts, theories, and research techniques related to the sociological study of social problems.
2. Apply these concepts, theories and techniques to different aspects of society.
3. Critically examine your social environment in terms of the connections between social problems and inequalities, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, and class.
4. Understand why some social issues become defined as social problems and others do not.
5. Analyze popular culture sources about social problems and present your findings with your group as a written and oral assignment.
6. Write and think critically via class discussions, research projects, written assignments, and exams about the concepts, theories and techniques in the field.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:
Students are encouraged to check the course Blackboard site weekly for messages from the professor. In addition, selected handouts and related materials will be available for downloading.

READINGS: The following required books are available at the Dartmouth Bookstore and Wheelock Books. They also are on 2-hour reserve at Baker Berry library, links to this information is on our course Blackboard site, under “Library Reserves.”:

Additional readings are available on our course Blackboard site, under “Additional Readings.”

PARTICIPATION: Your attendance and active participation are crucial to this seminar. Active class participation has many dimensions, including enthusiastic and intellectually-rigorous discussion (talking and listening), coming to class prepared by having completed the readings, work on in-class assignments, and regular class attendance.

EXAMS: Two exams are required. Lectures, films, video clips, discussions, in-class assignments, activities, presentations, and readings will be covered on the exams. The midterm exam will be an in-class exam and the final will be a take-home exam. Both exams will be open notes. You may study together; in fact, I encourage it. However, exams should be completed independently; you should not discuss the exam or your answers with classmates or anyone else while completing it.

PROJECTS AND PAPERS: Students will complete two projects and papers throughout the term. Papers should be 3-4 pages, typed, double spaced. In order to write the paper, you will need to engage in a small sociological project. More details about the projects and papers, including the grading rubric, are provided on a separate handout. All papers are due at the beginning of class on the selected date. You will sign up for due dates on Thursday, January 10.

GROUP PROJECT: In groups of 4-5, students will analyze a recent school shooting using the arguments in the Newman and Klein books and the Best article. Each group will choose a specific mass school shooting and locate and read popular culture sources (newspaper, magazine, web, etc.) about the event and the individuals involved. The project will culminate with a written and oral assignment discussing on the ways that the event fits with and contradicts the arguments of Newman and Klein on school shootings and Best on claims-making. The presentations will be scheduled for the last week of class. More details about the assignment will be distributed prior to the midterm exam.
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<tr>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
<th>Final Course Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>A = 93.0–100</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>C = 73.0–76.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>A– = 90.0–92.99</td>
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<td>20%</td>
<td>C– = 70.0–72.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>B+ = 87.0–89.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>D+ = 67.0–69.99</td>
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<td>Papers (15% each)</td>
<td>B = 83.0–86.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>D = 63.0–66.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Project</td>
<td>B– = 80.0–82.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>D– = 60.0–62.99</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C+ = 77.0–79.99</td>
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<td>E &lt; 60.0</td>
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**Course Guidelines and Policies:**

**Honor Principle:** Examinations and assignments will be conducted in accord with the principles of academic honor detailed in the Dartmouth Organization, Regulations and Courses. I also encourage students to read Dartmouth’s statement on Sources and Citations: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources/

**Religious Holidays:** Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible, and by the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested. Information about Student Accessibility Services is available at: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~accessibility/

**Missed Classes:** Students should notify the instructor of any anticipated absences. In the event that you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for getting class notes for that class from another student. As a general policy, I do not make my notes available. If you miss more than five days of class, you will lose an entire letter grade, regardless of your performance on other activities and assignments.

**Late Submissions and Make-Up Exams:** The submission of assignments, exams and papers is expected on the indicated “due date” during that day’s class meeting (unless otherwise stated). Requests for extensions beyond the submission date should be made prior to the due date. Please note that grades on non-approved late submissions will be penalized. Any work turned in more than 10 minutes after the start of class is considered late and the grade will be reduced by one step (for example, from a B to a B–). The grade will be reduced by an additional step for each day it is late. **Papers turned in after class begins are considered one day late. Papers turned in the day after class are considered two days late.**

**Classroom Etiquette:** Disruptions to class negative affect everyone’s ability to learn. Everyone should arrive to class on time and not leave early. If you must arrive late or leave early, please notify the instructor in advance and sit by the door to minimize disruptions. It is inappropriate to
use cell phones in class or use laptops for activities outside of taking notes (such as email or facebook). Doing so will negatively impact your participation grade.

**Guide to Reading Assigned Books:**
As you read, take notes. After you finish each chapter, write a short summary (1-5 sentences) of that chapter.

In addition, here are some overall questions to guide your reading of the assigned books:

1. **Summary.** Provide a brief summary of the social problem identified in the book.
2. **Thesis.** What is the author’s thesis? In other words, what exactly does the author argue is the problem, and what is the primary cause of the problem?
3. **Causes of the Problem.** Expand on the thesis. What factors (causes) does the author focus on as producing this problem? How does the author’s argument similar to and different from other theories on the problem (specifically, how does the author say her/his work differs)?
4. **Context of the Problem.** According to the author, why should we care about this problem? What is the history or background of this problem? What are the (positive and negative) effects or consequences of this problem?
5. **Evidence.** What kind of evidence does the author use to examine this problem? What does this type of evidence reveal about the problem? How is it helpful for enhancing our understanding of the problem? Is the evidence adequate to address the questions raised by the author? How might additional information or data affect the author’s thesis?
6. **Addressing the Problem.** How does the author’s work affect our understanding of this social problem (for example, will this book affect the way we think about the problem, how we define the problem, how we might address the problem)? What are the typical solutions proposed for this problem? What, if any, are the solutions offered by the author?
7. **Your Personal Position.** Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?

(Thank you, Professor Denise Anthony, for sharing some of these tips!)
### Class Schedule:

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC AND READINGS</th>
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| 1/8  | **Introduction to Course**  
|      | *No Readings* |
| 1/10 | **What is a Social Problem? How do Sociologists Study Social Problems?**  
| 1/15 | **Income Inequalities and Poverty**  
|      | *Collins and Mayer, p.1-54.* Chapters 1-2 |
| 1/17 | **Studying Social Problems Through the Study of School Shootings**  
|      | *Ruane, p.97-109.* Essay 9: The More We Pay, the More It’s Worth and Essay 10: Money is the Root of All Evil  
|      | *Collins and Mayer, p.55-113.* Chapters 3-4 |
| 1/22 | **Studying Social Problems Through the Study of School Shootings (cont.)**  
|      | *Ruane, p.205-216.* Essay 19: Welfare is Ruining this Country  
|      | *Collins and Mayer, p.114-164.* Chapters 5-7 |
| 1/24 | **Studying Social Problems Through the Study of School Shootings (cont.)**  
|      | *Newman, p.3-73.* Part 1 - Chapters 1-3 |
| 1/29 | **Studying Social Problems Through the Study of School Shootings (cont.)**  
|      | *Ruane, p.161-172.* Essay 15: There Ought to Be a Law  
|      | *Newman, p.77-176.* Part 2 - Chapters 4-7 |
| 1/31 | **Studying Social Problems Through the Study of School Shootings (cont.)**  
|      | *Ruane, p.173-180.* Essay 16: Honesty Is the Best Policy  
|      | *Newman, p.179-306.* Part 3 - Chapters 8-11 and Epilogue |
| 2/5  | **No Readings** |
| 2/7  | **MIDTERM EXAM** |
| 2/12 | **Studying Social Problems Through the Study of School Shootings (cont.)**  
|      | *Klein, p.1-80.* Introduction and Chapters 1-3 |
| 2/14 | **Studying Social Problems Through the Study of School Shootings (cont.)**  
|      | *Klein, p.81-126.* Chapters 4-6 |
| 2/19 | **Studying Social Problems Through the Study of School Shootings (cont.)**  
|      | *Ruane, p.29-41.* Essay 3: Children Are Our Most Precious Commodity  
<p>|      | <em>Klein, p.127-243.</em> Chapters 7-10 and Conclusion |</p>
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| 2/21 | Racial Inequalities and Racism  
Ruane, p.73-84. Essay 7: What’s in a Name?  
Bonilla-Silva, p.1-73. Chapters 1-3 |
| 2/26 | T  
Ruane, p.217-230. Essay 20: Immigrants are Ruining This Nation  
Bonilla-Silva, p.75-149. Chapters 4-6 |
| 2/28 | R  
Ruane, p.245-257. Essay 22: Education Is the Great Equalizer  
Bonilla-Silva, p.151-275. Chapters 7-10 |
| 3/5  | Group Presentations and Conclusions  
No Readings  
GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND GROUP PROJECTS DUE |
| 3/7  | R  
Ruane, p.271-274. Conclusions: Why Does Conventional Wisdom Persist?  
RECEIVE TAKE-HOME EXAM |