



northern *State* university

Course Number and Title: Social Problems
SOC-150-N01 MWF 10-10:50AM, JFAC 107
Term: Spring 2018

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Kristi Brownfield
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Office: TC 350
Office Hours: Mon 12PM-3PM; Tue/Thurs 8AM-9AM; Wed 8AM-9AM
Other times available by appointment

Course Information

Catalog Description:

A study of present day problems in contemporary societies, such as racism, sexism, ageism, alcoholism, drug addiction, physical and mental health, war and environmental issues - their significance and current policies and action.

Course Prerequisites: None

Required Textbooks and Materials:

Investigating Social Problems, A. Javier Trevino

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, Matthew Desmond

White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide, Carol Anderson

The Trevino text, *Investigating Social Problems*, will be your primary textbook throughout the class. You will NEED to get a copy of this book to pass the class. The other books you will need to complete writing assignments. However owning the books is not necessary so long as you are able to get copies to read (e.g., from the library, from a friend, etc.). There will be copies of all three books on reserve at the Williams Library. The two supplemental texts may be checked out for a 3-day period; the textbook may be borrowed for in-library use for a 2-hour time frame.

Response Time Expectations

E-mail Response Times: M-F: Within 12-16 hours
Weekends: Within 24 hours

Please email me at kristi.brownfield@northern.edu instead of using the D2L email interface. I find the D2L email interface clunky and not user friendly so I would appreciate if you simply emailed me directly instead.

Grading Response Times: 24-48 hours

Course Goals and Objectives

The objectives for this course are:

Students will be able to: (a) identify and describe how sociologists define and understand social problems, (b) identify and describe various theoretical perspectives on current social problems; (c) document, analyze, and debate ongoing social problem processes and issues using a sociological framework, and (d) investigate and analyze one current social problem in-depth or investigate and analyze one agency involved in the handling of a social problem.

The goals for this course are:

This course will explore a social constructionist perspective to social problems theory. Rather than looking at the conditions of what we consider “social problems,” we will primarily be examining what actors have the power to define those situations as “social problems,” why those conditions and not others are defined as “social problems,” and why some “social problems” aren’t actually as bad as we think they are.

Instructional Methods

This is a writing intensive class. Class time will be spent in lecture and discussion, during which we concern ourselves with understanding the readings and with learning how to “read” and analyze all sorts of other things. In order to be prepared for class, thus, you will need to come to class having done the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them.

Electronics are welcome and, on some days, will be encouraged in this class. However, your electronics use should be related to this class and should not be disruptive to other students. This means please turn off cell phone ringers. Do not play music or videos. No headphones. Be respectful of the classroom as a learning environment. Please note that if you’re being disruptive or I notice your inattention you will be required to write a thousand-word essay about a sociological concept of my choosing.

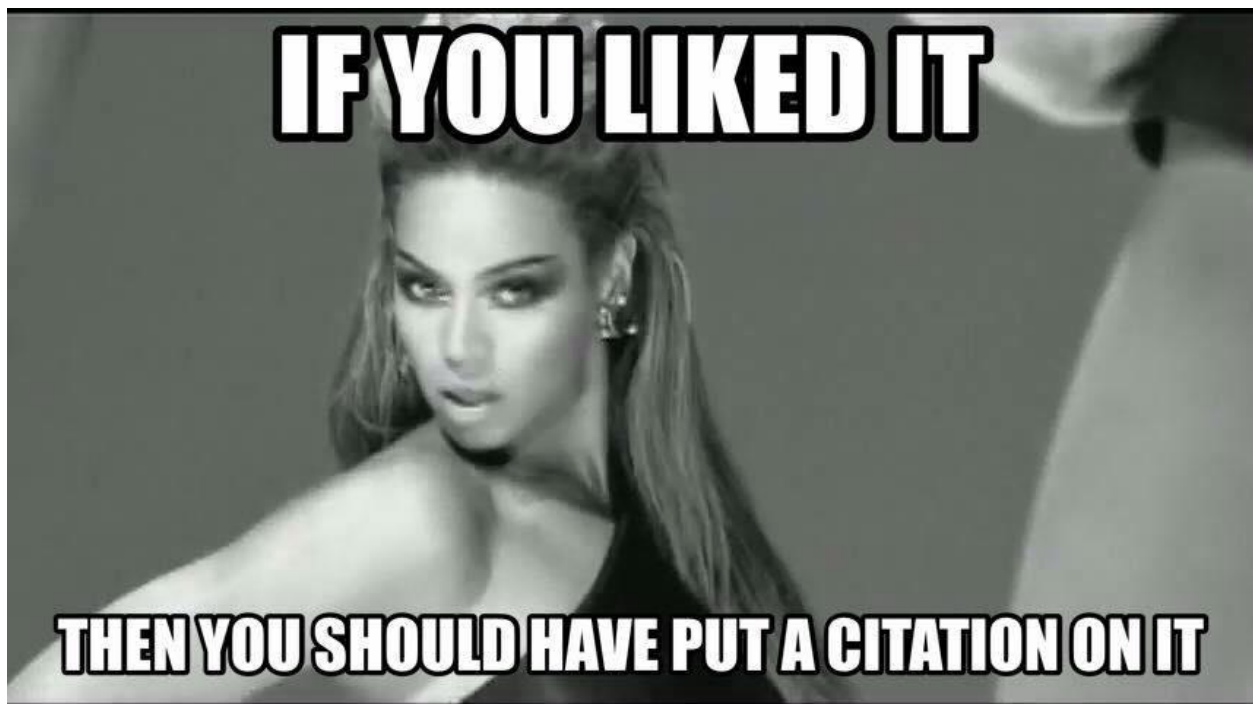
Adulting (or how to be successful in this class)

The trick to being successful in this class is to treat the course as a marathon and not a sprint. A sprinter wins by providing a burst of energy in a short period of time. Students who are “sprinters” tend to do all of the work in the course quickly (usually at the last minute). To be a successful marathon runner, you need to train consistently and keep working in a sustained manner; that means making sure you’re running every day. Apply that principle to this course – do a little bit of the work consistently until you’ve finished the assignments each week. The course structure is designed to help you do that by having new content open each week and the assignments for that week (typically reading responses/comments and chapter quizzes) due that week. I realize some students would like to work “ahead” and get done with the assignments

rather than having stricter deadlines. However, what I've learned through teaching face-to-face and teaching online is that students tend to become "sprinters" without staggered deadlines and the work "sprinters" turn in tends to be lacking quality.

A second guideline to keep in mind is that you *do not have to be afraid to ask for help!* That's what I (and your classmates) are there for. If there's something you don't understand, please feel free to ask and we will figure it out together. If you need accommodations, such as extra time on exams, **please** contact the Disability Office ASAP (further information about this is available later in the syllabus). Everyone here at NSU wants you to succeed in this course! Unfortunately, none of us are mind-readers so we will not know if anything is wrong unless you tell us. So please feel free to get in touch with me ASAP if a problem is occurring. I'm happy to work with you as needed. However, if something comes up in February and you find yourself struggling but you don't email or call me about it until the end of April – that's probably too late. Please be aware you can ask for help if you need it – but also be sure to ask *as soon as you need it*.

The third guideline I want everyone to remember can easily be summed up in gif format:



GIF taken from the Facebook Group SAS [<https://www.facebook.com/academicssay/posts/1890762834478838:0>]; original picture taken from:

Single Ladies, I Am...Sasha Fierce, Thaddus Harrell, Terius Knowles, Beyonce, Hash, Terrius, Columbia Records, 2008, Recording.

Plagiarism is unacceptable in this course. So how is plagiarism defined? The most basic definition of plagiarism that everyone is likely familiar with is simply taking another person's words and passing them off as your own. For example, if I hadn't given you the reference of where I found the Beyoncé gif? That would be plagiarism! But plagiarism is actually more complex than simply copying and pasting someone else's words. Plagiarism can also include:

- (a) Paraphrasing another's words without citation

- (b) Paraphrasing or copying work you have done yourself in other papers or classes without citation (Yes! You can plagiarize yourself!)

Any instances of plagiarism in this class will result in a zero on that particular assignment (for more information on specific consequences for this action, please see the “Academic Dishonesty” section”). If I see that you have made a good faith effort to cite or source the information you are using, even if you are using the incorrect citation format that is *not* plagiarism; that’s simply incorrect citation. You might lose a few points for getting the citation wrong – but you will not fail the assignment. For more information on how to properly cite things in this course, please feel free to check out the “Writing Tips” document that you can find under the “Writing for Sociology” module.

The final thing to keep in mind for this class is that I use a standard 5-point scale for grading (A,B,C,D,F). What do each of these demonstrate?

A: Exceptional work, developed critical thinking and analytical skills, willingness to incorporate material and content not already included as part of the assignment or course, ease of ability to apply the assigned concepts to practical examples not included as part of the course, going above and beyond what the assignment requires

B: Excellent work, shows a critical understanding of the assigned concepts, able to begin to apply the assigned concepts to other course material, going beyond what the assignment requires

C: Average work, shows an understanding of the assigned concepts and is able to apply those concepts to course material, does the minimum amount of work required by the assignment

D: Below average work, does not show an understanding of the assigned concepts OR does not show an ability to apply the assigned concepts, some portions of the assigned work likely not completed

F: Failing work, does not show an understanding of the assigned concepts AND does not show an ability to apply the assigned concepts, the majority of the requirements of the assigned work are not completed or fulfilled; alternately, the assignment includes some form of plagiarism

If you aren’t happy with a grade you receive on an assignment, look at the comments on that assignment and refer back to this scale. Did you miss a part of the assignment? Did you bring in practical examples that weren’t discussed in the course material? Did you get a concept wrong? Use this scale as a guideline to figure out how best to approach your assignments and remember that a “C” is not actually a bad grade – it shows you completed the assignment as asked. A “C” is the average grade. Papers will have a specific and more comprehensive grading rubric to follow; you can use this as a guideline for the broader class.

Attendance Policy

The attendance policy for this course is: I expect students to attend class every day and to come to class on Mondays having reviewed the assigned readings for that week, which we will discuss as the week progresses. I keep track of attendance, participation in classroom discussions, and visits to my office, all of which I take into consideration if your final grade is borderline (within 5 points of the next higher grade). The more often you are here, participate, and come see me if needed, the more likely I am to raise a borderline grade. The more frequently you are absent without telling me why, or you come in late, the less likely I am to raise a borderline grade.

Do not be late for class. Being late is disruptive and disrespectful. If you are not on time, you will not be recorded on the attendance sheet and will receive an absence. If you have a legitimate concern about being on time regularly, please come talk to me as soon as possible!

All students are required to complete the online “Attendance Confirmation” through WebAdvisor at the start of the fall and spring semester. No Financial Aid refunds will be processed until Attendance Confirmation is completed and registrations will be cancelled if not done by January 18, 2018.

Tuition and fees must be paid in full by January 18, 2018.

Please contact the Finance Office in the Krikac Administration Building, (605)626-2566 or email nsustudentaccounts@northern.edu if you have any questions.

Academic Success Support/Starfish

As your instructor, I am personally committed to supporting YOUR academic success in this course. For that reason, if you demonstrate any academic performance or behavioral problems which may impede your success, I will personally discuss and attempt to resolve the issue with you. I may also refer your case using Starfish, which is an online student success program. Starfish will allow me to send you various performance updates, concerns, and referrals. If you receive a “flag” in Starfish, please come see me or seek assistance and support from your advisor or other resource staff member on campus. Please make sure to update your Starfish profile at the beginning of each semester (including a photo and up-to-date contact information). The Starfish link is located in D2L at the very top left corner of the homepage. My goal is to make your learning experience in this course as meaningful and successful as possible.

If you have questions regarding Starfish, please contact the Student Success Center at 605.626.2633 or studentsuccess@northern.edu.

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct run contrary to the purposes of higher education and will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, copying answers or work done by another student (either on an exam or an assignment), allowing another student to copy from you, and using unauthorized materials during an exam. Northern State University's policy and procedures on cheating and academic dishonesty as outlined in the Northern State University Student Handbook apply to this course. The consequences for cheating and academic dishonesty in this class include receiving no or reduced credit for the assignment and failing the course. Students may also fail the course after receiving failing or reduced grades for affected assignments.

Above all, be sure that everything you write is in your own words. When you do use the words and ideas of others, cite them properly. Passing other's words and ideas off as your own is

dishonest and the essence of plagiarism. Stick to your primary sources, and your analysis of them, and you'll be fine. See Chapter 3 of Storey and the Northern State University Student Handbook regarding plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. The consequence for cheating and academic dishonesty in this class is: (a) for the first offense, receiving a zero on that assignment and (b) for a second offense, failing this course.

Evaluation and Assignments

Reading Responses: 10 points each x 15 times = 150 points (37% of grade)
 Analysis Papers: 50 points each x 2 times = 100 points (25% of grade)
 Social Problems Portfolio: 100 points (25% of grade)
 Social Problems in the News: 10 points each x 4 = 40 points (10% of grade)
 Syllabus Quiz: 10 points (3% of grade)
 Total possible points: 400

Grading Scale:

450 or above – A
 400 to 449 – B
 350 to 399 – C
 300 to 347 – D
 299 or below – F

Reading Responses:

Students are expected to finish all the readings and participate in the discussion of the reading materials in class. Everyone is expected to write a 200-word response analyzing aspects of the readings due by 9am on Fridays. Some suggested topics to write about:

Questions the readings raised for you

Videos, articles, or other interesting internet-based material that is related to the readings (along with a discussion of how they are related)

Applying sociological theories and ideas in the readings to your life (e.g., how you act, popular culture you consume, etc.)

Responses and thoughts – connected to the readings – to things other people have posted to the group

You are required to post **thirteen times** over the course of the semester. These assignments are read and will be given comments to help you improve your analytical abilities but will be solely graded on the following criteria:

- (a) Does the writing assignment meet the required length?
- (b) Does the writing assignment address the prompt?

If both (a) and (b) are complete, you will receive the full ten points. If, for example, (b) is complete but you only write 180 words, you will receive partial credit. If (a) is complete but your writing does not address the topic, you will receive partial credit. You will receive a zero for weeks in which the assignment is not completed. The other twenty points for reading responses will come from **two comment reply posts** you must also make. Each student must make a minimum of **two 200-word** replies to another student's reading response. These comments responses may not be to the same student or posted during the same module. For example, you

may not respond to Jane Doe twice OR respond to both Jane Doe and John Doe during the “Globalization” module.

Analysis Papers:

There will be two longer writing assignments throughout the semester. These will be structured writing assignments of a minimum 750 words (3 pages). For this class, you should treat these essays as an analytical, reflective, or persuasive piece of expository prose, depending on the writing prompt. An essay consists of an introduction, a body of evidence and arguments, and a conclusion. In the introduction, you set up a question or debate. In the body, you provide specific arguments and supporting evidence (and deal with any counter-arguments or counter-examples if possible). In the conclusion, you discuss implications, make recommendations, or explore ramifications. In this class, your essays will answer (or at least grapple with) central questions raised by social theory.

You will be given one opportunity to revise and resubmit each essay if you are unsatisfied with your grade. You should then use the comments you receive on your first essay to help you prepare for your second.

Your analyses will be due:

Paper 1: *White Rage*, Friday 02/02/2018

Paper 1 Revisions: Monday 02/12/2018

Paper 2: *Evicted*, Friday 03/30/2018

Paper 2 Revisions: Monday 04/09/2018

Social Problems Portfolio:

You will be expected to create a “before and after” social problems portfolio. The portfolio will include twenty (20) pictures of three (3) social problems that exist within the United States. **You must take these pictures yourself; any pictures taken from the internet will count as plagiarism for this assignment.** The pictures should reflect how you view those social problems and why you think they are social problems.

You will turn this portfolio in twice. The first, “before,” will be due during third week of class (01/26). Then at the end of the semester, you should recreate your portfolio with one of the three social problems you selected in your before portfolio, and use the images to display the ways your thinking about that problem has changed or been influenced by this class. Your “after” portfolio will also include a 500-word minimum essay exploring the ways your thinking have changed about that social problem and how your new pictures reflect that change due the last day of class (04/27/2018). You will be asked to briefly (3-4 minutes) present your “after” portfolio to the class during the scheduled final exam period for this class (05/01/2018; 12-2PM).

The 100 points for this assignment will be broken down in the following way:

Before Portfolio: 10 points, due Friday January 26, 9am

After Portfolio: 30 points, due Friday April 27, 9am

Portfolio Essay: 40 points, due Friday April 27, 9am

Portfolio Presentation: 20 points, due Tuesday May 1, 12-2PM

Social Problems in the News:

You are required to turn in four news articles across the semester that detail a social problem you are interested. Along with the news article, you should turn in a brief (250-500 word) examination of the claims made in the article about the social problem in question. Two of the news articles must be from local news sources (e.g., Aberdeen American News) and two must be from national (e.g., CNN) or international (e.g., BBC) news sources. The deadlines for these assignments are:

News Article 1: Friday February 16, 9am

News Article 2: Friday March 2, 9am

News Article 3: Friday March 23, 9am

News Article 4: Friday April 20, 9am

If you are hospitalized or have a family emergency, you must contact me prior to the date and time set for the assignment. In the case of illness or family emergency, documentation will be required. Late assignments will be accepted **up to 72-hours after the deadline** but the total points possible for an assignment will be **docked 20% for each 24-hour period late**. For example, if a paper is due on Friday at 9am and you turn it in Friday at 9pm, the highest grade you could potentially receive on that paper is an 80% due to the 20% point reduction.

Student Expectations

It is vitally important that you play an active role in the learning process. As a result, your participation in class discussions threads is required.

The 4 P's of student involvement in class are:

1. Preparation (read the assigned material)
2. Presence (routinely log in to D2L and attend class)
3. Promptness (post thoughts, ideas, comments, etc. regularly) and
4. Participation (get actively involved).

The student is expected to participate in the course via e-mail exchanges (or other communication) with the instructor, by reading the assigned readings, submitting comments to the discussion forums, submitting assignments, and completing assignments in a timely fashion. Students are expected to check their e-mails daily and the announcements at least every 48 hours.

ADA Statement

ADA Statement: Northern State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for students with physical, learning, mental health and/or other types of disabilities. Accommodations for students with disabilities are made only in consultation with the Director of Disability Services. If you believe you have a disability, either temporary or permanent, requiring accommodation, contact Doris Stusiak (contact information below). NSU can show you how to secure proper documentation and help you arrange appropriate accommodations as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Doris Stusiak, Director of Disability Services
Student Center Room 240 – 2nd Floor
Phone 605-626-2371
Fax 605-626-3399
Email Doris.Stusiak@northern.edu

Diversity Statement

Northern State University strives to build an academic community of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences who are committed to sharing diverse ideas in a mutually respectful environment. We value open discourse and consideration of multiple perspectives on issues of regional, national, and international importance, in which individuals are free to express their points of view. Our goal is a diverse learning community with equal opportunity for all. During the semester students will be able to share thoughts, opinions, and beliefs about their own experiences. We will also read articles and books that will offer academic perspectives. The differences in these perspectives will add depth and richness to this course. Please be respectful of those differences. Here are some ground rules for discussion I expect people to follow in class:

Freedom in Learning

Under Board of Regents and University policy student academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Students who believe that an academic evaluation reflects prejudiced or capricious consideration of student opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards should contact the academic dean administratively in charge of the class to initiate a review of the evaluation.

Tentative Course Schedule

The tentative schedule for this course is outlined below. Please note, the instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule at any time.

Module One: Course introduction, Social Problems

Module Two: Poverty

Module Three: Race and Ethnicity

Module Four: Gender

Module Five: Sexuality

Module Six: Aging

Module Seven: Education

Module Eight: Media

Module Nine: Family

Module Ten: Work & the Economy

Module Eleven: Crime

Module Twelve: Alcohol & Other Drugs

Module Thirteen: Health

Module Fourteen: The Environment
Module Fifteen: War & Terrorism