

The University of Texas at Dallas  
School of Economic, Political & Policy Sciences  
Department of Sociology

Contemporary Social Issues  
SOCI 3322.0i1  
Spring 2013

**Instructor:**

Dr. Bev Carlsen-Landy

Email: [blc120130@utdallas.edu](mailto:blc120130@utdallas.edu)

Online office hours by appointment

**Course Description**

SOCI 3322.0i1. **Contemporary Social Issues** (3 semester hours) An overview of how sociological concepts and approaches can be applied to the study of the causes and consequences of various social issues in contemporary society. Topics may include poverty, crime, violence, social isolation, urban decay, changes in the family, consumerism, and health disparities.

This course is taught 100% online – each student is expected to have access to a computer and reliable internet service. There are no prerequisites for this course.

**Required materials**

- Kornblum, William and Joseph Julian. 2012. *Social Problems* 14<sup>th</sup> ed. Pearson. **Please note that you must purchase a MySocLab Access Code along with the required text. The bookstore has the correct bundle and it comes with an eText that you can download and listen to on the go!**
- eContent located on: <http://www.mysoclab.com/> - **Access Code required! If you purchase the Access Code as a standalone product, then you will not have access to the eText.**
- Best, Joel. 2013. *Social Problems*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. W. W. Norton & Company.

Throughout the semester I may assign additional readings that I will post on eLearning and/or articles that may be read via the Internet.

**Contact Information**

Please take advantage of my office hours which are offered online by appointment. I welcome your questions and concerns, and I will try my best to assist you. If you need to contact me privately, please do so via email. I will respond to emails generally within 24 hours. If you have questions related to the readings, assignments, quizzes, or anything else to do with the class please feel free to ask the question on the discussion board - often others will have the same questions. Please allow several days for grades to be posted.

For many of you, this is your first online class, and you are not completely comfortable with the format. If, after taking the eLearning tutorial, you have questions, concerns, or simply can't find

what you need on eLearning let me know - I'm here to help you.  
Skype: by appointment

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course, each student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of:

- Various sociological theories regarding contemporary social issues and apply them in the process of analyzing social problems.
- How sociologists define and analyze contemporary social issues through sociological research.
- The causes and consequences of current social issues facing the United States
- The global effects of social problems in the US and how global trends impact social issues in the US
- How to apply critical thinking to the sociological analysis of social issues
- The interventions and policies which address current social issues

These course objectives will be assessed through: required readings, weekly discussions, exams and other instructional materials.

### **Course Information and Policies**

My teaching goals are:

- To facilitate learning (yours and mine)
- The continuing development of students' critical thinking skills
- For students to understand coursework and be able to apply this learning to real-life situations outside of the classroom
- To encourage independent thinking
- To encourage questions
- To encourage open exchange of ideas
- To facilitate discussion

#### **Technological Considerations:**

Each student must have regular, reliable access to a computer and to the Internet to be successful in this course. The student should have basic computer skills, and should be able to access and browse the Internet. For more information please refer to "Getting Started with eLearning" and "Course Access and Navigation":

<http://www.utdallas.edu/elearning/webct/index.html>

**It is your responsibility to get your work in on time. There is no make-up work or late work available in this class. Exams are timed and must be completed in one sitting. If you lose your connection during an exam you will not be able to start the exam over.**

#### **Technical Support**

If you experience any problems with your UT Dallas account you may email [assist@utdallas.edu](mailto:assist@utdallas.edu) or call the UT Dallas Computer Help Desk at 972-883-2911. Please copy me on any emails that have to do with class and technical issues.

### **Electronic Communication:**

Email is an important form of communication for online classes. Please make sure to check your UTD email account regularly, or have it forwarded to an account that you check several times a week. Students are expected to check into class regularly for communication and announcements from the instructor.

### **Academic Integrity**

As a student at UTD you are expected to complete all assignments honestly. Neither the university nor I will tolerate cheating, plagiarism, and/or any other form of academic dishonesty. Please refer to "Academic Integrity": <http://coursebook.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies/>

### **UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures**

The following permanent address will bring you to the university policies and procedures online: <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

**All students are required to be familiar with these policies and procedures.**

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Interaction Expectations:**

Traditional classes, unlike online classes, meet at a specific time and place on a regular schedule. The online course offers the participants the opportunity to interact asynchronously; this means that the participants most likely will not be "in" the online classroom at the same time. Our interactions will take place on the discussion board forum. One of the great benefits of online interaction is that what we "say" in our discussions remains on the board. We have the opportunity to think about what someone has posted, and we can fully develop our thoughts before we respond to a classmate. Communication online is through words - we do not hear inflections, sarcasm, or humor, and we do not have physical cues and gestures to clarify meaning. Therefore, we must make every effort to phrase our responses and posts so they will not offend nor alienate our classmates. I expect each of you to completely think out all your posts, read and reread them thoroughly prior to posting, and to carefully consider what you are saying and how you are saying it. At all times show respect and courtesy for your fellow classmates.

#### **Participation (attendance):**

Weekly substantive posts are required for all students.

##### **Please note:**

- **In order to be eligible to earn an A in this class you must post at least 2 substantive posts per week**
- **In order to be eligible to earn a *maximum* of a B in this class you must post at least 2 substantive posts per week**
- **In order to be eligible to earn a *maximum* of a C in this class you must post at least 1 substantive posts per week**

Each student is required to post a *minimum* of 1 time a week with at least one post before Wednesday at 11:59PM. All posts must be substantive, and they must demonstrate your understanding of the reading materials.

The first post must be your reflection of the readings for the week and the second post must be in response to a classmate's substantive post. A reflection is **not** a summary. **The first post is due Wednesday before midnight.**

All subsequent posts are due by 6:00 PM each Saturday. Your posts must refer to different readings or topics; in other words, you must reflect on at least 2 different topics for the readings per week if you choose to post two times.

I will comment on many discussion posts. All students are expected to read and respond to my posted questions. All students are responsible for the information discussed on the discussion board.

Each student can earn up to 15 points per post for a maximum of 30 points for the week for participation in the discussion. Additional posts are encouraged and, at my discretion, up to 10 bonus points per week may be earned for exceptional work. Posts submitted after 6:00 PM on Saturday will not be eligible to earn points.

Grades are based on a 15 point rubric – follow the requirements and you earn up to 15 points.

Rubric:

- 15 points for being fully engaged in the discussion
- 10 points for being moderately engaged
- 5 points for being minimally engaged
- 0 points for late work or no participation

The expectations are:

- Properly formatted in-text citations
- Properly formatted references at the end of the post
- Proper use of quotation marks
- Posts are substantive
- Post reflect understanding of the reading

An automatic 0 will be earned for:

- Failure to include properly formatted in-text citations
- Failure to include properly formatted references at the end of post
- Failure to include substantive information
- Failure to properly use quotation marks
- Failure to reflect on reading
- Opinion only.
- Use of outside information not pre-approved
- Plagiarism, intentional or unintentional - possible additional academic sanction(s).

### **Substantive Posts:**

What is a substantive post? It is a post that demonstrates that you have read and understand the readings for the week. You may submit posts on 2 different readings or your 2 posts may reflect 2 or more readings. The point is that I need to know by your discussions that you have read and understand the course materials. Your posts must be at least 250 words and they must be written at a level appropriate for college students. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar count! Accurate use of quotation marks is mandatory. Quoted material does not count towards the word count. Improperly formatted quotes, references, and citations will result in a 0 for the post. You **may not** introduce outside information into this class. The reason for this is that I need to make sure the information in this class is accurate and course specific. I also require a

lot of reading for my classes and I do not believe it is fair to ask your classmates to read additional materials.

### **Time management:**

Time management is imperative in an online class. Many students find that online classes require more time commitment than traditional face to face classes. The student is responsible for the timely completion of all readings, assignments, and interactions. Late work will not be accepted.

### **Quizzes:**

There are 15 weekly assessments based on the Kornblum and Julian readings and 10 quizzes based on the Best readings. The quizzes are multiple choice, true/false, and/or matching. Once the quiz is started it must be finished. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes. You have 10 minutes to take the quiz. The quiz must be completed in the week of the unit. The quizzes should be used as study guides for the midterm and final – both of which are cumulative. These quizzes are intended to test your knowledge without the use of your books; in other words, they should be taken closed book. You will not have time to look up answers for these quizzes. Each quiz is worth 10 points. **If you go over 10 minutes, then you will not have access to the quiz and the correct answers.**

### **eContent:**

There are weekly activities located at MySocLab under the appropriate chapter and then “Experience the Media Assignments.” These activities are optional, but they are worth points. The activities are worth 5 points each. One or two activities are assigned per week. There are 5 questions to answer for each activity. You have 3 minutes to answer the quiz. You must answer the questions in order – you cannot skip a question or return to a previous question. Once started you must complete the activity in one sitting. Activities are due by 6pm on Saturday on the assigned week. Correct responses will be available after the due date. **Late work is not accepted.**

### **Wiki & Term Paper/Project:**

By the beginning of Week 3 each of you must have a topic for your semester project selected and approved. We will have a discussion board to talk about potential topics and general questions about the project. The entire project is worth 175 points: 100 points for the wiki and 75 points for the term paper/project. **You must complete the entire project to earn any points.** All content is subject to submission to TurnItIn for plagiarism check.

**Each of you must start a Wiki about your topic by Monday, January 27th (Week 3), at 12:01AM.** During this week I will review your topic, offer feedback, and (hopefully) approve your topic. Once approved, you will begin to create your wiki about the social problem which concerns you most (or is one in which you are very interested in learning about).

**The Wiki is worth 100 points and will be graded as follows (Complete details will be available in class):**

- **Due January 27<sup>th</sup> by 6PM:** Start your wiki with a paragraph about your topic. You should include: why this is a social problem and why you are interested in this problem = 10 points. **If the wiki is not started by the 27<sup>th</sup>, then you earn 0/175 points on the semester project.**
- **Due March 2<sup>nd</sup> by 6PM:** By March 2<sup>nd</sup>, you should have an outline of your wiki with background information (the development of the social problem) completed, and your

wiki should be well under construction. For this project, you may cite images by URL only. All of the text/information included in your wiki must be correctly cited. You must use the ASA (if you are a Sociology major this is a must to know), MLA, or APA style guide. Your references and in-text citations must be correct formatted. You should avoid using quoted material – use your words and then cite the source for the information. The use of peer-reviewed journal articles is required (if you do not know what they are, then ask) = 45 points. A significant portion of your grade is based on your writing, thus you may wish to take advantage of the UTD Writing Center. For more information about the Center go to: <http://www.utdallas.edu/GEMS/writing/index.html>

- **Due April 6<sup>th</sup>:** Your wiki should be completed = 45 points

**The Term Paper/Project is worth 75 points. You have a choice: term paper or video project. Due April 27<sup>th</sup> by 6PM.**

- Term Paper: If you choose this option, then you will write a 5-7 page research paper based on your wiki.
- Video Project: If you choose this option, then you will create a 7-10 minute video about your social problem. This is an opportunity to illustrate your topic for other. Videos can be posted to YouTube for review.

#### **Midterm and Final Exam:**

The midterm exam will be made available to the students on Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup> and it must be completed before Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:00PM. The midterm will consist of 100 multiple choice and true false questions. It includes material from the Kornblum and Julian readings (Chapters 1-7) and the Best readings (Chapter 1-6). You have 90 minutes to complete the midterm. You may use your book, but you may not collaborate. The exam must be completed in one sitting. Late exams will not be accepted. **If you exceed 90 minutes, then you will earn a 0 on the exam.**

The final exam will be made available to the students on Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> and must be completed before Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00PM. The final exam will consist of 100 multiple choice and true false questions. It covers the readings from the Kornblum and Julian (Chapters 8-15) and the Best (Chapter 7-11). You have 90 minutes to complete the final. You may use your book, but you may not collaborate. The exam must be completed in one sitting. Late exams will not be accepted. **If you exceed 90 minutes, then you will earn a 0 on the exam.**

#### **Extra credit:**

There is no extra credit for this course. However, at my discretion, up to 10 bonus points per week may be earned for exceptional work in your weekly postings.

Grading Rubric:

Assignment		Points Possible	% of Grade
C Level: Weekly Posts (minimum 1 per week)	15 points X 15 weeks	225	22.5%
A or B Level Weekly Posts (minimum 2 per week)	15 points X 15 weeks	225	22.5%
Wiki & Project	100 + 75	175	17.5%
Chapter Quizzes	10 points x 10 (Some questions will appear on midterm and final)	100	10%
Chapter Self Assessments (Kornblum & Julian)	5 points X 15 (some questions will appear on midterm and final)	75	7.5%
Weekly Assignments	5 points each (optional)		
Midterm		100	10%
Final		100	10%
Total		1000	100%

Grade	Points Range
A	950-1000
A-	900-949
B	850-899
B-	800-849
C	750-799
C-	700-749
D	650-699
D-	600-649
F	Less than 600

***The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.***

## Readings

Dates

Topics

**Topic 1:**  
**January 14 –19**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 1                      Sociological Perspective on Social Problems

2 Assignments at MySocLab

---

**Topic 2:**  
**January 20 – 26**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 2                      Problems of Health and Healthcare

Best:  
Chapter 1                      The Social Problems Process

1 Assignment at MySocLab  
**Wiki must be started by January 27th**

---

**Topic 3:**  
**January 27 – February 2**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 3                      Problems of Mental Illness and Treatment

Best:  
Chapter 2                      Claims

2 Assignments at MySocLab  
**Selection of Wiki Topic is due**

---

**Topic 4:**  
**February 3 – 9**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 4                      Alcohol and Other Drugs

Best:  
Chapter 3                      Activists as Claimsmakers

1 Assignment at MySocLab

---

**Topic 5:  
February 10 - 16**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 5                      Crime and Violence

Best:  
Chapter 4                      Experts as Claimsmakers

1 Assignment at MySocLab

---

**Topic 6:  
February 17 – 23**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 6                      Poverty and Affluence

Best:  
Chapter 5                      The Media & Claims

1 Assignment at MySocLab

---

**Topic 7:  
February 24 – March 2**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 7                      Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Best:  
Chapter 6                      Public Reaction

2 Assignments at MySocLab

**Wiki progress grade**

---

**Topic 8:  
March 3 - 9**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 8                      Gender & Sexuality

No assignment

**Midterm: Includes Kornblum and Julian (Chapters 1-7) and Best (Chapters 1-6): available Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup> and due Saturday March 9<sup>th</sup> at 6PM.**

---

**Spring Break  
March 10 -16**

---

**Topic 9:  
March 17 - 23**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 9                    An Aging Society

Best:  
Chapter 7                    Policymaking

1 Assignment at MySocLab

---

**Topic 10:  
March 24 – 30**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 10                    The Changing Family

Best:  
Chapter 8                    Social Problems Work

No assignment

---

**Topic 11:  
March 31 – April 6**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 11                    Problems of Education

Best:  
Chapter 9                    Policy Outcomes

2 Assignments at MySocLab

**Wiki Completed**

---

**Topic 12:  
April 7 – 13**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 12                    Problems of Work & the Economy

Best:  
Chapter 10                    Claims Across Space and Time

1 Assignment at MySocLab

---

**Topic 13:  
April 14 - 20**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 13                      Population & Immigration

Best:  
Chapter 11                      The Uses of the Constructionist Stance

No assignment

---

**Topic 14:  
April 21 - 27**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 14                      Technology & the Environment

1 Assignment at MySocLab

**Term Paper/Video Due**

---

**Topic 15:  
April 28 - May 4**

Kornblum & Julian:  
Chapter 15                      War & Global Insecurity

---

**Final Exam: Is multiple choice and based on your assignments and readings. It is available Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> – Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup> under the folder labeled Final Exam (in the Modules). You must take the exam all at once. Once you begin you must finish. The exam consists of 100 multiple choice and true/false questions and is worth 100 points. You have 90 minutes to complete the exam. The Exam must be completed before Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00PM. It covers Kornblum and Julian (Chapters 8 – 16) and Best (Chapters 7-11). If you exceed 90 minutes, then you will earn a 0 on the exam.**