SOC 3960-001
Social Problems in Utah
FALL 2010
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Course Overview
This course is designed to be a secondary introduction to the field of sociology (the first is SOC 1010). You will explore social problems in the context of your own communities: in and around Salt Lake City, Utah. In addition to understanding how different sociological perspectives can shed light on the causes and consequences of social problems, you will learn about how larger social issues manifest themselves in your own neck of the woods. During this course you will have the chance to experience real life problems and solutions in the context of community organizations and local events. You will be exposed to a variety of often-controversial social problems, including issues concerning race/class/gender/sexuality, health, environmental problems, overpopulation, and war, with particular attention paid to the importance of awareness, understanding, and activism in the face of social injustice.

Course Objectives
At the end of this course, you will have a better sense of what constitutes a social problem. More importantly, you will be able to identify the causes of a diverse array of societal problems, why they are identified as such, and how they are dealt with in Utah. My ultimate aim is to encourage you to think critically and creatively about why these problems persist in our community and what can be done to manage and solve them. I hope that you will be able to personally gain from a better understanding of these problems by examining them critically, discovering where you stand and what you can do to actively contribute to social solutions!

Required Materials:
(Use of an earlier edition of this text is fine.)
* Access to a computer to download and print additional articles for the course via e-reserve.

Course Requirements and Grading:
Your grade will be based on five engagement assignments, class participation, article discussion leading, and one final project in the following proportions:

Class participation ..................................................10%
Assignments ......................................................45%
Discussion leading ................................................20%
Final Project .......................................................25%

100%
Assessment of Learning and Assignment Grades:

**Class Participation** includes actively listening to and engaging in discussions as well as completing assigned readings. Each week you will be assigned an article to read that relates to the textbook material. **You will come with an index card with your name on the back with ONE discussion question from the material,** and I will assess participation in part based on that. This should be **easy points** for everyone doing the reading, and will help facilitate discussions by guiding me on what to bring up in class. Class activities will also be included in assessment of participation. If you are shy, please don’t fret! I can tell if you are actively listening and thinking about it, so just speak up when you’re ready! 😊

**Exams** will **not** be given in this class. Busy work will not be assigned and rote memorization is not what I am grading you on. Regurgitating lectures I give will not help you to **find your own voice.** You will complete reflection papers to show me you are learning and thinking about the material. I reserve the right to give pop quizzes on readings if I feel the class is not keeping up with the reading.

The **assignments** (1-3 pages double spaced 12pt. font with 1-in. margins, etc.) are designed to give you credit for your grasp of the topics we discuss in class and your ability to apply them to your local community. Typically they will entail an activity you will do outside of class on your own or with a partner, and a reflection based on a few guiding questions. You will complete five assignments throughout the semester, choosing from a total of ten topics. It is my hope that this will allow you to choose the issues that most interest you to engage with and reflect on.

You will be graded more on content than grammar, but your paper should be coherent and free of excessive errors. You should address ALL of the guiding questions, although you are free to pose and answer questions of your own as well. I will give a check-minus, check, check-plus grade assessment (explained in further detail below). These are relatively informal and are designed to give you the chance to show you are both understanding and **engaging** with the material, and are **in place of exams.**

**Discussion leading** will be done by you, the students, with myself as the facilitator. This is how we will incorporate our readings in the classroom. Articles will be assigned weekly and are to be read by everyone. Everyone should come to class with a note card (see “class participation” above). Each week, two students will be assigned “discussion leader” status. It is their job to briefly present to the class what the article was about, how it relates to Utah, and pose 5-8 discussion questions about it to the class. As discussion leaders, you are encouraged to bring up recent local news related to the issue, although everyone is welcome to come prepared with such tidbits that may help bring the issue more to life.
Your final project will be a 5-10 page reflection on the social problem of your choice and a solution for it, either one implemented in Salt Lake City or a comparison of two cities/communities’ approach. Your project should be based on issues specific to Salt Lake/Utah, and you will be interviewing someone in the community that works directly with the problem to guide your conception of the issue. You will address the following in your paper:

1) What is the social problem? What makes it a social problem? What is the “status” of the problem here in Utah (what makes it unique in your own community)?
2) What are the central challenges/struggles that people face who work in the field everyday?
3) What theoretical perspective best explains the origin and persistence of this problem in Utah, and why?
4) Describe a solution that is implemented here in Utah. What are its strengths and weaknesses?
5) Did your view of the social problem change after researching/writing on this topic?
6) What would you change about this solution? Can you think of a better one?

I will grade your final papers based on if you addressed the aforementioned topics in your paper, as well as clarity of your writing and ideas. In addition you will create a project that

Attendance:
Class attendance is highly recommended—you will get something out of class when you come. Throughout the semester we will also be watching films and doing in class activities that you will receive participation credit for.

Cheating:
This may come as a surprise to some of you, but cheating is easy to spot. You will get caught if you cheat, and it will be a hassle for both of us, so please don’t. If you do the reading and come to class you should not have to resort to this to do well.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement:
The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangement san accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Extra credit:
You can receive extra credit by 1) volunteering additional hours 2) bringing a song about a social problem related to that week’s topic that we can discuss.
Readings (on e-reserve):


**Course Schedule—subject to change:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>23-Aug</td>
<td>Syllabus, What is a social problem?</td>
<td>Ch. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30-Aug</td>
<td>Illness and Health Care</td>
<td>Ch. 2</td>
<td>Coulter, Utah Dept. of Health Status Update</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13-Sept</td>
<td>Drugs and Alcohol</td>
<td>Ch. 3</td>
<td>Brownstein, Substance Abuse Health Report 2009</td>
<td>Assignment #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20-Sept</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Ch. 14</td>
<td>Dasgupta</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>27-Sept</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Ch. 5</td>
<td>Skolnick Page</td>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4-Oct</td>
<td>Work and Unemployment</td>
<td>Ch. 6</td>
<td>Gans, Chambliss</td>
<td>Paper Topic Due</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>11-Oct</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Ch. 6</td>
<td>McKibben</td>
<td>Assignment #3</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>25-Oct</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Ch. 8</td>
<td>Kozol</td>
<td>Assignment #4</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>8-Nov</td>
<td>Race, Ethnicity, Immigration</td>
<td>Ch. 9</td>
<td>McIntosh</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>15-Nov</td>
<td>Juvenile Delinquency</td>
<td>Ch. 12</td>
<td>Jackson, Walljasper, Ison, Johnson</td>
<td>Assignment #5</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>22-Nov</td>
<td>Gender, Sexuality, LGBT Issues</td>
<td>Ch. 10/11</td>
<td>Hochschild, Hilton</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>29-Nov</td>
<td>Review, wrap up discussion</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>6-Dec</td>
<td>Final Presentations</td>
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<td>Final Projects!</td>
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