

Sociology 110 – Fall 2006
Social Problems
T, W, Th 10:00-10:50 AM
Maxey 202

Instructor: Helen Kim

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Office Location and Hours: Maxey 229; Tuesdays and Thursdays 11-12 and by appointment

Course Description:

Welcome! This broad survey course investigates a variety of social problems through a sociological lens. Rather than focusing solely on personal or individual factors, a sociological perspective emphasizes aspects of our social environments that play into the existence and perpetuation of social problems.

Throughout the term, we will primarily focus on various commonly identified social problems in the United States. We will also pay attention to what is happening abroad, in terms of conditions and problems outside the US as they reveal a larger global context that shapes how we might make sense of what is going on in our own backyard.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, I hope that you will be able to do the following:

- 1) Utilize sociological tools and frameworks to examine what constitutes a social problem, who is affected by these problems, what solutions have been proposed to address these problems, and what future work needs to be done to alleviate these problems.
- 2) Understand yourself better by using your “sociological imagination” to see how your experiences fit into a larger social context that includes other individuals and groups, social institutions, systems, and history.

Everything and everyone in this world is connected somehow!

Readings:

- **Nickel and Dimed*; Barbara Ehrenreich.
- **The World is Flat*; Thomas Friedman.
- **Savage Inequalities*; Jonathan Kozol
- **Fast Food Nation*; Eric Schlosser.

***In addition to these books, readings will be placed on reserve at Penrose Library. It is your responsibility to obtain these readings. I may also pass out readings during class or refer you to readings on-line. If you have problems throughout the course of the term acquiring any readings, please let me know ASAP.

Course Requirements:

1) **In-Class Participation (20%):** Class participation requires more than attending every class. Because much of class time will revolve around discussion, please come to class ready to actively listen and engage with the materials, your fellow students, and your instructor. To do so requires critically thinking about the readings or any other materials and information presented during the course, respecting each other's opinions, keeping extraneous noise to a minimum, and refraining from dominating discussion or group work during class. I acknowledge that not everyone is comfortable being vocal in class. For those who are hesitant to talk during class, please come see me outside of the classroom so that I know you are actively engaging with the substantive elements of the course. If you come to class all the time but do not make any comments during class or outside the classroom, know that you will not receive full credit for participation.

2) **Sociological Imagination Assignments (20%):** These assignments will present an opportunity to exercise your sociological imagination within the context of various social problems we address throughout the course. You will complete a two 3 page papers that demonstrate how your "biography fits in with history" (Mills). A handout describing this assignment will be passed out during the second week of class. **The due date for the first paper is Sept. 26; the due date for the second paper is October 24. Re-writes will not be allowed.**

3) **Group Project and Paper (30%):** On September 26, 2006, everyone will be randomly assigned to a group of four to five individuals. Your group will prepare a research report on a "social problem" culminating in a 20-25 minute oral presentation to the entire class during weeks eleven and twelve. This report should include the following: 1) a definition of the social problem (this includes a discussion of why your social problem is a legitimate one); 2) a discussion of the historical and social context surrounding the social problem; 3) information/data regarding the social problem (e.g. numbers or words); 4) a discussion of what has been done to address and alleviate the social problem (including analysis of why these solutions have or have not worked); 5) a discussion of possible solutions that have not been offered or implemented (including why you think these might work over any other solutions). As a group, you will need to decide what is most important and interesting to focus on, taking care to organize a lively and informative presentation that presents the various sections of your report. Visual aids such as slides, overheads, photos, or Powerpoint can be very helpful here – feel free to exercise creativity!

In addition, your group will write a 20 page paper based on your project. This paper is due **Wednesday, November 8, 2006**. Group members will decide who will write which sections of the final paper. Any sources should be cited appropriately in the text and should also be included in a bibliography at the end of the paper. If you are interested in conducting one-on-one interviews, note the date and place where the interview was conducted in the body of the paper and in the bibliography.

Please come to office hours or schedule a time to meet with me as a group to discuss your projects. I would like to hear what your thoughts are about the project and address any substantive or logistical questions or concerns you have about the presentation and/or paper. It would be to your advantage to schedule this meeting very soon after group members and paper topics are chosen.

4) **Midterm Exam (15%):** A midterm exam is scheduled for **Thursday, October 5, 2006 from 10-10:50 AM.** The exam will comprise a selection of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions and will cover materials included in any class discussions we may have, films shown during class as well as readings and handouts.

5) **Final Exam (15%):** A take-home final exam is due in my mailbox or in person no later than **Thursday, December 7, 2006 at 11 AM.** The exam will include material covered after the midterm and will consist of a choice of essay questions. The exam questions will be handed out on **Thursday, November 30, 2006,** giving you a full week to ponder and compose your responses. You should feel free to consult any materials and your peers as you construct your answers. However, all writing must be your own. There will be no final exam review.

Grades will be determined as follows:

93-100 = A or A+	90-92.9 = A-
88-89.9 = B+	83-87.9 = B
80-82.9 = B-	78-79.9 = C+
73-77.9 = C	70-72.9 = C-
60-69.9 = D	59.9 and below = F

****Please feel free to call or e-mail me about any concerns or questions regarding the course. You can also come by during office hours or set up an appointment to talk to me. I love getting to know students and welcome your thoughts and input wholeheartedly!**

Class Schedule:

Week One: Getting Started

August 29:	Introductions, picture time
August 30:	No reading; in-class exercise
August 31:	Read C. Wright Mills "The Sociological Imagination": <i>www.lclark.edu/~goldman/socimagination.html</i>

Social Inequalities: Class, Race, Gender and Sexuality

Week Two:

September 5: *Read Patricia Hill Collins "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection." (handout)

September 6: *Read New York Times articles on class

- 1) <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=839712251&Fmt=3&clientId=48453&RQT=309&VName>
=PQD
- 2) <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=843776571&Fmt=3&clientId=48453&RQT=309&VName>
=PQD
- 3) <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=846408111&Fmt=3&clientId=48453&RQT=309&VName>
=PQD
- 4) <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=847432761&Fmt=3&clientId=48453&RQT=309&VName>
=PQD

5) <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=841477091&Fmt=3&clientId=48453&RQT=309&VName>
=PQD

6) <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=841477101&Fmt=3&clientId=48453&RQT=309&VName>
=PQD

Film: People Like Us

September 7: *Discuss NYT Readings and Film

Week Three:

September 12: *Read Jones' Levels of Racism (handout):
*Read Peggy McIntosh (handout)
*Read Jensen's "White Privilege Shapes the U.S." (handout)

September 13: *Read Eitzen and Baca Zinn on Gender Inequality (handout)

September 14: *Read Eitzen and Baca Zinn on Sexual Orientation (handout)

Week Four:

September 19: *Film: *Crash*

September 20: *Film: *Crash*

September 21: *Discuss *Crash*

**Pick Group Project Members

Institutional Inequalities

Week Five: Problems of Education

September 26: *Read Savage Inequalities, pp. 1-39

SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION EXERCISE #1 DUE

September 27: *Read Savage Inequalities, pp. 40-82

September 28: *Read Savage Inequalities, pp. 83-132

Week Six: Problems of Education continued

October 3: *Read Savage Inequalities, pp. 133-end

October 4: *Review for Midterm Exam

October 5: ***Midterm Exam**

Week Seven:

- October 10:** *No class – fall break
- October 11:** *Library Presentation – meet in Maxey computer lab
- October 12:** *No class – however, use this time to get together in your groups and continue work on your projects;

Week Eight: Problems of Work & Health Care

- October 17:** *Read Nickel and Dimed – begin class discussion
WRITE-UP OF OCTOBER 12 GROUP PROJECT MEETING DUE
- October 18:** *Continue discussion of Nickel and Dimed
- October 19:** *Continue discussion of Nickel and Dimed

Week Nine: Problems of the Environment, Agriculture, Food

- October 24:** *Read Fast Food Nation pp. 1-57
SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION EXERCISE #2 DUE
- October 25:** *Read Fast Food Nation, pp. 59-107
- October 26:** *Read Fast Food Nation, pp. 111-190

Week Ten: Problems of the Environment, Agriculture, Food continued

- October 31:** *Read Fast Food Nation, pp. 193-270
- November 1:** *Film: *Super size me*
- November 2:** *Film: *Super size me*

Week Eleven:

- November 7:** *Finish up with *Super Size Me* and *Fast Food Nation*
- November 8:** *Read The World is Flat – Chapter One
- November 9:** *Read The World is Flat – pp. 48-81

Week Twelve:

- November 14:** *Read The World is Flat – pp. 81-127
- November 15:** *Read The World is Flat - pp. 128-172
- November 16:** *Read The World is Flat – Chapters 7 & 8

Week Thirteen:

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week Fourteen:

- November 28:** ***GROUP PAPERS DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS**
*Group Presentations
- November 29:** *Group Presentations
- November 30:** *Group Presentations

Week Fifteen:

December 5:	*Group Presentations
December 6:	*Group Presentations
December 7:	*FINAL EXAM DUE NO LATER THAN 11 AM

******Nothing is set in stone regarding this syllabus, especially as nothing in this world is permanent and determined. We may have very interesting discussions that may unexpectedly bleed into other class periods, or we may be hit with some unexpected disaster, natural or otherwise. Given these unpredictabilities, I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus. I will try my best to keep these to a minimum and give you fair advance warning.**