

SOCIAL PROBLEMS (SOC 203, A1)

Department of Sociology, University of Alberta
Spring 2022

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Office Hours: By appointment

MW 09:00 - 11:50 (ED 254)

The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community. Learn more about territorial acknowledgments: [Going Beyond the Script](#)

Important Dates Spring 2022:

Course Start Date: Monday, May 9, 2022

Add/Delete Deadline: Tuesday, May 12, 2022

50% Withdrawal Deadline: Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Withdrawal Deadline: Wednesday, June 8, 2022.

Term End Date: Wednesday, June 15, 2022

Final Examination: June 16, 2022

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore a wide range of social problems from a historic and contemporary perspective. Students can expect to learn the theoretical tools needed to understand social problems as “socially constructed” in their make-up. While Canada will serve as the main empirical site of analysis, some topics will elicit an exploration of social problems in other parts of the world. Hence, students will be provided both a global and local understanding of social problems, seeing them as relevant “elsewhere” as they are “over here.”

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Develop and critically apply sociological thinking to understand the nature of social problems: definition, causes, consequences, and the reasons behind their persistence.
2. Analyze theoretical perspectives and their usefulness in helping us understand social problems.

3. Understand the interrelationship of social problems from both a micro and macro perspective.
4. Identify and analyze social problems in Canadian society, and their connection to issues in other parts of the world.

COURSE FORMAT

Synchronous: This class will take place in-person, unless otherwise stated by university directive.

TEXTBOOK

The assigned text for this class is *Social Problems in a Diverse Society*, Fourth Canadian Edition, 4/E. In addition, for certain weeks I have supplemented the designated chapter with a mix of book chapters or articles from newspapers, journals or magazines. All readings other than the assigned text will be available on e-class.

AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

“Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or Instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).”

ASSESSMENT

Grading	%	Deadline
Participation Grade – Short Class Entries	20%	After Every Class
Mid-term Examination	40%	May 30
Final Examination	40%	June 16

Participation Grade - Short Class Entries – 20%

The purpose of this assessment is to encourage vibrant, continuous engagement with the course content throughout the term. For the last 30 minutes of each class, I will post a question which

you are required to answer. This question will be based on the lecture content and/or readings. Your answers should reflect engagement with both materials. You will submit your answers to me before you leave. I will mark them and post your grades on eClass. If you miss a class you will not receive a participation grade for that class. Your submissions will be graded using the scale below:

- 3 - Excellent
- 2 - Good
- 1 - Unsatisfactory
- 0 - No submission

Mid-Term Examination (40%) and Final Examination (40%)

Both the Mid-Term and Final Examination will be in multiple choice format. The Mid-Term will cover weeks 1-3. The Final Exam will be cumulative. While weeks 4 – 6 will be the main areas of focus, some questions from topics covered in weeks 1-3 will be included.

ABSENCE FROM MIDTERM EXAM

Students who must miss an examination must email within 2 days with a valid excuse and documentation. Without a valid excuse and documentation, a grade of zero will be assigned for a missed exam. Any make-up exams (if granted) will be scheduled at my convenience and are not subject to negotiation. Below is a list of acceptable documentation to support an absence:

1. For incapacitating medical illness, students can present one of the following:
 - “University of Alberta Medical Statement” signed by a doctor (this cannot be required, but must be accepted if provided in lieu of other documents).
 - [Request for Excused Absence or Deferral of Term Work](#)” Faculty of Arts form
2. For all other cases, such as domestic afflictions or religious convictions, the student should submit documentation appropriate to the situation. This could include the following:
 - For a death in the family – a copy of the death certificate
 - For a religious conflict – a letter from the church or pastor
 - For a car accident – a copy of the accident report
 - For other serious afflictions – consult the Instructor or Department about appropriate documents

ABSENCE FROM FINAL EXAM

If you miss the final exam, you must formally apply to your Faculty Student Services office to be considered for a deferred final exam within two working days from the date of the missed exam (or as soon as possible, considering the circumstances). I cannot approve or deny requests for deferred final exams. Refer to the Absence from Final Exams information provided in the [Attendance](#) section of the University Calendar for full details.

GRADING

Marks for graded course requirements are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below. The percentage mark resulting from all graded components produces the final letter grade for the course. Marks for grades are not curved or scaled.

Descriptor	letter	Percentage	Grade Points	Additional Descriptive Information
Excellent	A+	95-100	4.0	Exceptional performance with respect to course learning objectives; exhibits original, creative thinking and demonstrates a capacity to analyze critically and synthesize information.
	A	88-94	4.0	Excellent performance combined with strong evidence of critical thinking.
	A-	82-87	3.7	Excellent performance with respect to course learning objectives.
Good	B+	78-81	3.3	Very good achievement of course learning objectives.
	B	74-77	3.0	Good to very good achievement of course learning objectives.
	B-	70-73	2.7	Good achievement of course learning objectives.
Satisfactory	C+	66-69	2.3	Satisfactory to good achievement of course learning objectives.
	C	62-65	2.0	Satisfactory achievement.

	C-	58-61	1.7	Acceptable achievement but somewhat less than the normal expectation of course learning objectives.
Poor	D+	54-57	1.3	Poor achievement with respect to course learning objectives.
Minimal Pass	D	50-53	1.0	Minimal pass.
Failure	F	0-49	0.0	Unsatisfactory performance and considered a failing grade.

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, AND MISSED GRADE COMPONENTS

Regular attendance is mandatory and essential for optimal performance. You are expected and advised to attend each lecture to give yourself the best possible chance of doing well in this course. Content covered in class will be included in exam questions. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult the [Attendance](#) section of the University Calendar.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

The best all-purpose website for student services on campus, including academic, financial, health, safety, career development services and more is <https://www.ualberta.ca/current-students>.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of Alberta is committed to creating work and learning communities that inspire and enable all people to reach their full potential. Accessibility Resources promotes an accessible, inclusive, and universally designed environment. For general information or to register for services visit the [Accessibility Resources](#) webpage.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behavior (online at <https://www.ualberta.ca/governance/>) and avoid any behavior which could potentially result in

suspicious of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Students are expected to engage in the highest level of honesty in their work. It is possible, however, to violate academic integrity even if you believed you were being honest. The onus is on students to understand the University of Alberta's expectations regarding academic integrity. Not knowing is not an excuse. Resources and more information on the standards of Academic Integrity and the Code of Student Behavior can be found at

<https://www.ualberta.ca/currentstudents/academic-resources/academic-integrity>.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the Academic Discipline Process.

LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behavior that undermines that environment.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY

It is the policy of the University of Alberta that sexual violence committed by any member of the University community is prohibited and constitutes misconduct. Resources and more information can be found at <https://www.ualberta.ca/campus-life/sexual-violence>.

COURSE OUTLINE POLICY

"Policy about course outlines can be found in Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading of the University Calendar."

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Week	Monday	Wednesday
Week 1	May 9	May 11
	Introduction to the course	Understanding Social Problems: Theoretical Approaches

Week 2	May 16	May 18
	Race and Racism	Gender Inequality
Week 3	May 23	May 25
	No Class – Victoria Day	Problems in Education
Week 4	May 30	June 1
	Mid-Term Examination Poverty and social welfare (pt.1)	Poverty and social welfare (pt. 2)
Week 5	June 6	June 8
	Crime and Deviance	Immigration
Week 6	June 13	June 15
	Environmental issues	Recap of the course

READING LIST:

WEEK 1

Monday, May 9: Introduction to the course

- [Oksman, O. \(2016, November\). How lobbyists made breakfast the most important meal of the day. *The Guardian*.](#)

Wednesday, May 11: Understanding Social Problems: Theoretical Approaches

- Chapter 1: Studying Social Problems in the 21st Century
- [Mills, C. W. *The Promise of the Sociological Imagination*](#)

WEEK 2

Monday, May 16 - Race and Racism

- Chapter 3: Racism and Ethnic Inequality
- [Gilmore, S. \(2015, January\) Canada's race problem? Its even worse than America's. *Maclean's*.](#)

Wednesday, May 18 - Gender Inequality

- Chapter 4: Gender Inequality

- [Messner, M. \(2011\) Gender Ideologies, Youth Sports, and the Production of Soft Essentialism, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 28\(2\): 151-170. DOI: 10.1123/ssj.28.2.151](#)

WEEK 3

Monday, May 23 – No Class (Victoria Day)

Wednesday, May 25 - Problems in Education

- Chapter 12: Problems in Education
- [Podcast: Canada's International Cash Cows](#)

WEEK 4

Monday, May 30 - Poverty & Social Welfare (Pt. 1)

MID-TERM EXAMINATION (Weeks 1-3)

- Video: Prisons as Temporary Refuge?

Wednesday, June 1- Poverty and Social Welfare (Pt. 2)

- [Bucerius, S., Haggerty, K. D and Dunford, D. T \(2021\) Prison as temporary refuge: amplifying the voices of women detained in prison, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 61\(2\), 519–537, DOI: <https://doi-org.eres.qnl.qa/10.1093/bjc/azaa073>](#)

WEEK 5

Monday, June 6 - Crime and Deviance

- Chapter 9: Crime and Criminal Justice
- [Jackson, N. \(2015\). Aboriginal Youth Overrepresentation in Canadian Correctional Services: Judicial and Non-Judicial Actors and Influence. *Alberta Law Review*, 52\(4\), 927–947.](#)

Wednesday, June 8 - Immigration

- [Domise, A. \(2019, April\) The rise of an uncaring Canada. *Maclean's*.](#)

WEEK 6

Monday, June 13 - Environmental issues

- Chapter 15: Population, urbanization, and the environmental crisis

Wednesday, June 15 – Recap of the course

Thursday, June 16- FINAL EXAMINATION