NOTE to prospective students: This syllabus is intended to provide students who are considering taking this course an idea of what they will be learning. A more detailed syllabus will be available on the course site for enrolled students and may be more current than this sample syllabus.

Oregon State University

SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND ISSUES
SOC 206
Ecampus Course
Bacc Core Course
DPD (Difference, Power, and Discrimination) Course
3 credit hours

Instructor: Dr. Olga Custer

A discussion thread named “Q&A Discussion” is located inside the Canvas course site at the top of the discussion board and is created for common questions about course design, deadlines, homework, and other general questions about the course requirements. If you have a question of such kind, post it into the Q&A Discussion thread. If you see a question posted and know the answer please feel free to respond. If you posted a question and got no answers in 24 hours please email me.

Email: custero@oregonstate.edu

I check my email daily and usually respond within 24-48 hours on a weekday. Do not hesitate to send me an email if you want to contact me with personal questions that you do not want to bring into the Q&A Discussion thread.

Catalogue description:
Examination of social problems with particular focus upon U.S. society. Sociological perspectives on definition, description, and analysis of contemporary and recurrent problems in industrialized societies. Investigation of causes and consequences of social problems considered in societal context.

In line with the DPD requirements, this course is directed toward engaging students in fruitful discussions and self-reflecting strategies that will allow them to practice “the intellectual examination of the complexity of the structures, systems,
and ideologies that sustain discrimination and the unequal distribution of power and resources in society. Such examination will enhance meaningful democratic participation in our diverse university community and our increasingly multicultural U.S. society.” (quoted from Difference, Power and Discrimination Program rationale)

This course combines approximately 90 hours of instruction, online activities, and assignments for 3 credits.

**Broadly Stated Course Objective:**
To hone skills at employing a sociological perspective and acquire a look at sometimes pressing, sometimes controversial issues of the US and the world that will allow them to see social problems as complicated, structurally conditioned, socially constructed, and influencing everybody’s everyday lives.

**Measurable Objectives:**
Students who completed the course successfully will be able to:
- give a list of current social problems in the US,
- discuss whether a particular condition in society is a social problem or not, and why,
- discuss how social problems are structurally conditioned and socially constructed,
- discuss in what way being a minority makes a difference in one’s experiencing of social problems,
- explain how different points of view on social problems are connected with different political engagements and/or different sociological theoretical frameworks,
- explain how social problems influence their everyday lives,
- give an idea of how they would be able to alleviate the social problems with their actions in their everyday lives.

**Bacc Core Difference, Power, and Discrimination (DPD) Learning Outcomes**

1. Explain how difference is socially constructed
2. Using historical and contemporary examples, describe how perceived differences, combined with unequal distribution of power across economic, social, and political institutions, result in discrimination
3. Analyze ways in which the interactions of social categories, such as race, ethnicity, social class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and age, are related to difference, power, and discrimination in the United States.
Required Materials:
- For a course taught exclusively online, a computer with Internet connection and email access is required.
- *Social Problems* by Thomas J. Sullivan, 10th edition is required. I have not seen the earlier editions of this text and therefore cannot answer any questions about them.
- *Inequality In the United States: A Reader* by John Brueggeman is required.
- Microsoft Word is required for successful completion of writing assignments such as reading reviews. Please note that it can be downloaded for free at Oregon State University Office 365.
- A free, online digital poster program such as Smore or Tackk is required for a group project.
- **NOTE:** For textbook accuracy, please always check the textbook list at the OSU Bookstore website. Sample syllabi may not have the most up-to-date information.

Five things you want to know about late assignments:
It is always better to submit everything on time. If you fall behind, email me and let me know about your situation and planned arrangements.
1. Your open-book quizzes have to be taken during the week. They will not be accepted late. Once I enter a zero for a quiz in the gradebook, it’s done. No exceptions.
2. Late discussion boards original posts will be penalized. No discussion posts can be submitted after the end of the week. No exceptions.
3. I accept late reading reviews assignments one full day after the deadline without loss of points (because things happen to us all the time). Once the reading reviews are graded, no late work submitted. No exceptions.
4. All late work from the first five weeks must be turned in by the Midterm due date and cannot be returned any later.
5. I will not accept any late assignments at all after week 9 so plan accordingly.

Coursework
Each week, we will focus on one social problem (or two) and will study it from different angles.

The weekly assignments are available under the modules in Canvas. Each week has a reading assignment, a quiz, a discussion assignment, a reading review option, and the assignments.

Open Book Quizzes – 20 points each quiz (200 points total)
Every week you take a quiz consisting of mostly multiple-choice and true/false questions.
Quizzes are due at the end of the week, on Sunday, at 11:59pm PT.
You will be able to see the correct answers after the deadline.

Discussion board assignments – 20 points each (220 points total)
Each week you need to participate in a discussion boards plus have one introductory discussion at the beginning of the course.
The prompts for discussion will be different each week and are available in Canvas.
A minimum of 3 substantive posts per week is required (posts saying “I agree”, “I thought the same” do not count as substantive). Think of it as going to class and discussing the class material in an organized manner. A minimal amount of posts will land you a minimal grade, so if you are happy with a passing level grade (D+ - C+ range) three posts will be sufficient. If you strive to do well (B) or excellent (A), start from posting more than three posts a week.
Discussion boards are not for sharing opinions, they are for describing personal experience with no judgment attached and connecting this personal experience to class material. More detailed guidelines on discussion posting are available on Canvas.
Full credit is only available to the students who:
1. comply with the posting deadlines,
2. answer all discussion prompt questions,
3. post at least 5 posts a week,
4. respond to people who posted in their own threads (i.e. maintain the dialogue in their thread), and
5. respond to at least two other posts in the threads started by their classmates.
First (the original) post is due by 11:59pm PT on Wednesday of the current week, the last post is due at the end of the week, on Sunday by 11:59pm PT.

Group Discussion Facilitation – 100 points (50 points group grade + 50 points individual grade)
By the end of Week 2 I will create a set of groups, 3-5 students in each. Each group focuses on a social problem the group members have firsthand experience with (e.g. poverty, family problems, environmental problems). One week out of a quarter each group starts and facilitates a discussion on the social problem of their focus.
Starting from Week 4 a group will start a discussion by creating a digital poster using programs such as Smore at https://www.smore.com/or Tackk at https://tackk.com/education. A digital poster describes the group members’ experiences with a social problem, shows pictures, provides personal stories.
Classmates are to connect these experiences to the class material and the group members are to facilitate the discussion and promote reflection. The grade will be based on the quality of the original digital poster and the quality of facilitation. A group poster grade is a group grade, facilitation grade is an individual grade.

Readings Reviews – 50 points each (200 points total)
- You will need to write a total of four reviews during the quarter, there is one available per week during weeks 2-10. Two of these reviews need to be submitted before the midterm due date, two of them need to be submitted after the midterm due date. No exceptions. (You can choose the weeks in which you submit them as long as you meet the above guidelines.)
- The majority of readings for the reading reviews come from Inequality in the United States: A Reader. The Week 7 readings are posted as a PDF file.
- Reviews will be graded bi-weekly, ungraded reviews will receive a zero but only the four highest grades will be kept.
- You may submit more than four reviews, in which case you can raise the grade because the lowest score(s) will be dropped.
- Reading reviews are due in the end of the week, on Sunday by 11:59pm PT.
- The guidelines for reviews are posted on Canvas.

Exams (Midterm and Final)
- The exams are NOT proctored.
- The Midterm and Final Exams are timed, closed-book tests. Each test is a random block of multiple choice and true/false questions. The questions from the quizzes may or may not appear on the exam.
  - Midterm Exam – 100 points
  - Final Exam – 100 points

Group Final Project – 100 points (Group grade)
A digital poster using the programs Smore or Tackk that describes the group’s firsthand experience with the social problem, connects it to the class material, and reflects on it from the point of view of social construction of power and difference. This assignment builds up on the group’s work of facilitating the discussion and uses the reflective observation provided by the classmates in their comments.
Grading:
You have to complete all assignments to receive a final grade. You will receive the scores for quizzes and tests and letter grades for discussion boards and essays. Keep in mind the way I assign grades for these assignments: I will be grading your weekly work as follows:

A  Excellent work, an example for all to follow. It shows that the student fluently uses information from the reading assignments, cites them, and includes personal perspective. The work exhibits openness and unusually sharp insight into many sides of an issue. Shows considerable critical thought and ability to make an argument. Performs far above minimum requirements. Exceptionally articulate.

B  Above average. Demonstrates very good understanding of ideas and good knowledge of class readings. Performs above the minimum requirements.

C  Acceptable, satisfactory, average work. Shows understanding of the class readings and effort in answering questions. Meets minimum requirements.

D  Below average work. Minimally acceptable, but unacceptable if this course is required.

F  Unacceptable work. Does not meet minimum requirements.

Your final grade will be calculated in the following way:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-91%</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89%</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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Policy on student conduct:
Students are expected to conduct themselves in the classroom (e.g., on discussion boards) in compliance with the university's regulations regarding civility. Students are expected to comply with all regulations pertaining to academic honesty as well. For further information, visit the university’s comprehensive website on Student Conduct & Community Standards or contact the office of Student Conduct and Mediation at 541-737-3656.

Statement regarding disabilities:
Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information that I should know, or who need special arrangements, should contact me as early as possible, no later than the second Week of the term. Students seeking accommodations should be registered with the Disability Access Services. You can access Disability and Access Services (DAS).

Statement on disrespectful behavior:
My main goal is to create a fruitful learning environment for all of my students. Remember, Canvas is a public forum. And in a public forum you cannot assume that everyone is going to be like you. On the contrary, you need to assume that when you are talking to your classmates, you are potentially talking to people of diverse backgrounds. Respecting them all is a part of passing this class. Disrespectful behavior will result in not being able to pass the course.

I am looking forward to our joint work in this course! Olga

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:
If you experience computer difficulties, need help downloading a browser or plug-in, assistance logging into the course, or if you experience any errors or problems while in your online course, contact the OSU Help Desk for assistance. You can call (541) 737-3474, email osuhelpdesk@oregonstate.edu or visit the OSU Computer Helpdesk online.

- COURSE DEMO
- GETTING STARTED

COURSE SITE LOGIN INFORMATION
Information on how to login to your course site can be found HERE.

REFUND POLICY INFORMATION
Please see the Ecampus website for policy information on refunds and late fees.

This course is offered through Oregon State University Extended Campus. For more information, contact:
Web: ecampus.oregonstate.edu Email: ecampus@oregonstate.edu Telephone: 800-667-1465