



Shanghai Jiao Tong University

SO928 Introduction to Social Problems (Online)

Instructor Information	Qingli Meng Home Institution: University of Northern Iowa Email: ztmeng99@yahoo.com Office Hours: Determined by Instructor		
Term:	June 29, 2020 - July 24, 2020	Credits:	4 units
Class Hours:	Monday through Friday, 120 mins per teaching day		
Discussion Sessions:	2 hours each week, conducted by teaching assistant(s)		
Total Contact Hours:	66 contact hours (1 contact hour = 45 mins, 3000 mins in total)		
Required Texts (with ISBN):	Maxine P. Atkinson, Kathleen Odell Korgen, and Mary Nell Trautner. Social Problems: Sociology in Action. 1 st Edition. SAGE Publishing, 2021. ISBN: 9781544338668		
Prerequisite:	Competent in English (Oral and Written)		



Course Overview

Social analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving are introduced as basic social science skills. These skills are applied to major contemporary social problems related to deviant behavior, social inequality, social change, and problems associated with major societal institutions. A variety of individual and collective responses and social policy strategies at local, national, and international levels are examined. This course invites students to the field of sociology through the examination of social problems in the contemporary world. Students will become introduced to the sociological imagination as a unique way to understand the world from the global problems of today to the personal orbits of our own lives. We will cover a wide variety of topics that include an analysis of capitalism and democracy, wealth and power, population growth and inequality, demography and immigration, urban and rural issues, race and gender inequality, poverty and the welfare state, “crime” and drugs, and other issues facing the world. We look at social problems particularly from the unique perspective of sociology and learn how to diagnose the causes of social problems. We will discuss some of the most pressing problems of the world and, after theorizing about their causes, make attempts to think about how to solve them. At the end of this course, students will be able to think like a sociologist about social problems using the sociological imagination.

Learning Outcomes / Course Goals

Goals

After this course, student can detect underlying patterns of phenomena and draw reasonable inferences from information, and demonstrate an understanding of the forms and mechanisms of oppression, discrimination, or privilege.

Expected Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the importance of utilizing critical thinking skills and sociological imagination in the classroom and in everyday life;
2. Assess the importance of sociology for studying macro and micro level phenomenon related to race, class, gender and sexuality in the United States and abroad.
3. Assess the diversity found within your own society and around the world.
4. Identify past issues that have shaped social problems in the United States as well as current issues that continue to do so.
5. Explain the basic methods of the social sciences.
6. Explain the dialectical relationship between individuals and society, and the impact of social location on social perception.
7. Explain and apply the core theoretical perspectives and methodologies that shape and guide sociological analysis of social problems.
8. Evaluate social facts and myths using empirical evidence grounded in method

Course Grade

Your grade in this class will be based on Exam, Chapter Test, and Class Participation.

Exam (60%)

There are three exams and a final exam. The format of the multiple choice questions and essay question exams. The exams are not cumulative but will be based on the information presented immediately preceding each exam. The final exam is also not cumulative but will be based on the information presented immediately preceding the exam. All the exams are close-book in class exams. The essay part of final exam is an open-book take home exam.

No make-up exams will be given except for rare and exceptional circumstances.



Chapter Test (20%)

You will be required to complete 16 Chapter Tests during the whole semester. Chapter Tests will be distributed during each class session. All the chapter tests are take home open-book tests. You are expected to complete each test and submit it to the TA before each class session. No make-up after the due date. No exception. Test questions will cover material from the lectures, course text, readings, and Power Points that correspond with each test.

Class Participation (20%)

Class will alternate among lectures, seminar, and class discussion formats. Instructions for discussion will be given during class time. Daily attendance is mandated for this course, and excessive absences will be reflected in your participation grade. For safety reasons, the classroom will be locked 10 minutes after class starts. Please be well prepared to discuss the topics and related readings each day that class is held. Please be polite to your peers and respect their different opinions. Your grade on class participation is based on both daily attendance and class discussion. Final participation grade will be impacted if you are absent from class or/and consistently unprepared for discussion. Please turn off your cell phones before coming to class. **Do not send text messages during class.**

Grading Policy

Chapter Test	20%
Class Discussion	20%
Exams	60%

Grading Scale is as follows

Number grade	Letter grade	GPA
90-100	A	4
85-89	A-	3.7
80-84	B+	3.3
75-79	B	3
70-74	B-	2.7
67-69	C+	2.3
65-66	C	2
62-64	C-	1.7
60-61	D	1
≤59	F (Failure)	0

Note on Grading -- The professor reserves the right to assign additional work and/or tests if it becomes apparent students are not actively engaged in the material. Course grading will be adjusted accordingly. Grade Appeals -- If you dispute an assignment or test grade, submit a written complaint via email to the professor within one week of receiving the grade. In writing the complaint, address all comments given to you on the assignment/exam by the professor. Write a clear, rational paragraph addressing these comments and explain why you feel you didn't earn the assigned grade. If you have extenuating circumstances that are prohibiting you from completing course requirements, contact the professor immediately, not at the end of the semester.



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Contact Information

Communication: I prefer that you communicate with me via email as the standard methods of communication for this class. If you have a personal concern or question, please email me at ztmeng99@yahoo.com or meet with me during my office hours or make an appointment to meet with me during non-office hours. I will make every effort to response to you within a 24-hour window. Exceptions to this will be weekends.



Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

Date	Day	Lecture	Readings
June 29 Monday	1	Social Problems	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 1
June 30 Tuesday	2	Economic Inequalities	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 2
July 1 Wednesday	3	Racism and Racial Inequalities	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 3
July 2 Thursday	4	Gender Inequalities	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 4
July 3 Friday	5	Sex and Sexualities	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 5
July 6 Monday	6	Exam 1	
July 7 Tuesday	7	Aging Societies	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 6
July 8 Wednesday	8	Migration and Immigration	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 7
July 9 Thursday	9	Environmental Problems	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 8
July 10 Friday	10	Contesting Crime	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 9
July 13 Monday	11	Exam 2	
July 14 Tuesday	12	War and Terrorism	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 10
July 15 Wednesday	13	The Criminal Justice System	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action,



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			Chapter 11
July 16 Thursday	14	Family	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 12
July 17 Friday	15	Education	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 13
July 20 Monday	16	Exam 3	
July 21 Tuesday	17	Health and Health Care Inequalities	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 14
July 22 Wednesday	18	Institutions	Atkinson/Korgen/Trautner, Social Problems: Sociology in Action, Chapter 15
July 23 Thursday	19	Final Exam Review	
July 24 Friday	20	Final Exam	