

**Camosun College**  
**School of Arts & Science**  
**Social Sciences Department**  
**Sociology 162 Social Problems**

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**Instructor:** Dr. Paul Brady  
**Office hours:** Mon/Wed 4:30-6:00 Tue/Thu 3:30-4:00 or by appointment  
**Location:** Paul 334  
**Phone:** TBA  
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**Class Time/Place** 6:30-7:50/ Monday and Wednesday/ Young 310

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

A critical discussion of the nature of social problems in modern society. Issues at the regional, national and global levels will be analysed, as chosen by the instructor. Various theoretical approaches will be considered and alternative solutions addressing these issues will be presented.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

As with all courses which are educational rather than "how-to" in nature, a major aim will be to assist students to develop their capacity for disciplined, critical, and independent thinking in an analysis of social problems. This ability should aid students in understanding the ways in which social problems are interrelated and how they are connected to power relations in Canadian society.

### **INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The student will be able to:

1. Critically assess the major theoretical perspectives on social problems.
2. Apply various sociological theories to the analysis of contemporary social problems, to see patterns and processes rather than isolated facts, and to interpret events in the broader framework of societal structure.
3. Demonstrate an ability to think critically and to communicate ideas effectively in writing.

### **REQUIRED TEXT**

Lorne Tepperman and Jamie Curtis, *Social Problems A Canadian Perspective*. 2004. Oxford University Press  
ISBN: 0-19-541649-X

### **METHOD OF INSTRUCTION**

This course will consist of lectures and seminar-type class discussions. Students are required to attend class regularly and to read each assigned reading by the date indicated. Students are responsible for all lecture material, some of which is not available in the assigned readings.

### **REQUIRED READINGS**

Recommended readings for each of the topics are indicated in the following detailed course outline. The course text provides comprehensive coverage of most the topics that we shall examine. The chapters from the textbook and the discussion question readings will constitute the main body of required reading each week.

### **EVALUATION**

The grade for this course will be based on discussion unit questions and attendance as well as two in-class examinations and a final examination during the December examination period. Examinations will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions and will cover all lectures, other presentations, and assigned readings. They will be aimed at testing one's conceptual as well as factual knowledge. Please note that the ownership of all examination papers belongs to the College.

An essay assignment is optional for the course and topics must be discussed with me before proceeding.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU

'Teaching at the University Level', Stephen Zucker, *Notices Amer. Math. Soc.*43, 1996:863

### 1. **You are no longer in high school.**

The great majority of you, not having done so already, will have to discard high school notions of teaching and learning and replace them by university-level notions. This may be difficult, but it must happen sooner or later, so sooner is better. Our goal is more than just getting you to reproduce what was told you in the classroom.

### 2. **Expect to have material covered at two to three times the pace of high school.**

Above that, we aim for greater command of the material, especially the ability to apply what you have learned to new situations (when relevant).

### 3. **Lecture time is at a premium, so it must be used efficiently.**

You cannot be "taught" everything in the classroom. **It is YOUR responsibility to learn the material.** Most of this learning must take place *outside* the classroom. **You should be willing to put in two hours outside the classroom for each hour of class.**

### 4. **The instructor's job is primarily to provide a framework,** with *some* of the particulars, to guide you in doing your learning of the concepts and methods that comprise the material of the course. It is not to "program" you with isolated facts and problem types or to monitor your detailed progress.

### 5. **You are expected to read the textbook for comprehension.**

It gives the detailed account of the material of the course. It also contains many examples of problems worked out, and these should be used to supplement those you see in the lecture. The textbook is not a novel, so the reading must often be slow going and careful. However, there is the clear advantage that you can read it at your own pace. Use pencil and paper to work through the material and to fill in omitted steps.

### 6. **Lastly, be proud of your status as a student in higher education and take your studies seriously – your future depends on it.**

Your studies are your priority not other activities. This should be evident in your attitude and demeanor especially in the classroom and in interactions with your professors.

Don't think so? Well guess what? This is the place where futures are decided. That's right. All the available scientific evidence clearly shows those who succeed at higher education are much more likely to have higher incomes, higher social status, and are much more likely to experience conventional notions of success than those who do not.

## GRADING

Discussion Unit Questions and Attendance		20%
Mid-term # 1	Monday October 4	25%
Mid-term # 2	Monday November 8	25%
Final Examination	TBA	30%

## GRADING SYSTEM

The following percentage conversion to letter grade will be used:

A+	= 95 - 100%	B	= 75 - 79%	D	= 50 - 59%
A	= 90 - 94%	B-	= 70 - 74%	F	= 00 - 49%
A-	= 85 - 89%	C+	= 65 - 69%	I	= See Calendar for Details
B+	= 80 - 84%	C	= 60 - 64%	AUD	= Audit

*W = Official withdrawal has taken place.*

## EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

The dates of the first and second examinations are indicated above. The third examination will be held during the exam week. Students are strongly advised not to make travel plans until after the Christmas final examination schedule is posted. I cannot schedule other examination times for students who make travel plans that disregard the examination schedule set by Camosun College. All examinations must be written in the section of the course in which the student is officially registered.



Wed Oct 6 *Crime and Violence* Read: Chapters 3  
**Mid-Term #1: Monday October 4 includes Introduction and chapters 1, 2, and lectures**

Week 6: Mon Oct 11 **Thanksgiving Day College Closed**  
Wed Oct 13 *Crime and Violence* Read: Chapters 3

Week 7: Mon Oct 18 **Debate Unit 2**  
**October 18 Debate Unit 2: Prepare 3 questions from the article: 'Shielded from Justice Police Brutality and Accountability in the United States: Overview' Human Rights Watch.**  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports98/police/uspo14.htm>

Wed Oct 20 *Crime and Violence* Read: Chapters 3

Week 8: Mon Oct 25 *Race and Ethnic Relations* Read: Chapter 4  
Wed Oct 27

Week 9: Mon Nov 1 *Sexism and Gender Inequality* Read Chapter 5  
Wed Nov 3 **Debate Unit 3**

**November 3 Debate Unit 3: November 24 Debate Unit 4: Prepare 3 questions from the article "Manhood on the Mat: The Problem is Not that Pro Wrestling Makes Boys Violent. The Real Lesson of the Wildly Popular Pseudo-Sport is More Insidious." Jackson Katz and Sut Jhally. Web Address: <http://www.jacksonkatz.com/manhood.html>**

Week 10: Mon Nov 8 **Mid Term # 2**  
Wed Nov 10 *Sexism and Gender Inequality* Read Chapter 5

**Mid-Term #2: Monday November 8 includes chapters 3, 4, 5, and the lectures**

Week 11: Mon Nov 15 *Family* Read: Chapter 7  
Wed Nov 17 **Debate Unit 4**

**November 14: Debate Unit 4: Prepare 3 debate questions from the article: 'The Changing Face of Conjugal Relationships'. Celine Bourdais et. al. Web Address: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/ads/11-008-XIE/conjugal.pdf>**

Week 12: Mon Nov 22 *Family* Read: Chapter 7  
Wed Nov 24

Week 13: Mon Nov 29 *Urban Problems and Homelessness* Read: Chapter 9  
Wed Dec 1

Week 14: Mon Dec 6 *Environment and Technology* Read: Chapter 10  
Wed Dec 8 *Last Class*  
Final Examination (T.B.A.) includes remaining chapters and lectures

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR DEBATE QUESTIONS

### How to complete the assignments:

1. Read the assigned reading and write down the main points or key concepts. Using these main points or concepts prepare 3 debate questions. At the heart of it, these questions cause debate. These are not questions where there is obvious answer or one answer. These questions raise different points of view and provoke debate and discussion. For example the question, "What are the gun control laws in Canada"? This is not a debate question. A direct answer can be found in the criminal code of Canada. On the other hand, the question "Should people be forced to register their firearms in Canada"? is a debate question.  
Please note also that you do not have to keep your questions directly focused on the reading but can also create debate questions as a result of applying concepts or ideas from the reading to other areas of social life. For example if the reading argues that that in medieval times the church started witch burning because it needed an enemy to legitimate it's existence and power, your question could expand on that idea to ask about if modern day organizations such as the police create enemies (pot users) in order to expand their power?

2. Your questions must be genuine questions not statements. Keep your questions as concise as possible and wherever you can use your own words and avoid quoting directly from the readings.
3. Remember to phrase your question in an open-ended format or in such a way as to invite debate. Be careful to avoid questions, which can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no", and questions that ask what the author(s) wrote (content question) or questions that simply ask others if they agree or disagree with what the author(s) have written. You should also avoid questions that begin with "explain", "compare", "list", "describe", "how" or any other questions that ask the respondent to provide information/data to you rather than a debate. A questions asking, "What do you think?" aside from simply being a variant of the "Do you agree with the author?" question (which is weak to begin with) is not very challenging and thought provoking.
4. Please be sure that you are not simply asking a question raised in the reading but rather create you own debate questions.
5. Please note that only a TYPED copy of your written questions will be accepted. Students will receive a mark out of 4 for each of the debate units. Grading will be based on the quality of the questions according to the advice given above.

### **OPTIONAL RESEARCH PAPER**

1. Select a topic about social problems that you are interested in examining by using one of the major theoretical perspectives or concepts for your analysis.
2. Develop a clear problem statement. The problem statement must be a question about your topic that your paper should help you to answer. Examples of problem statements include:  
How valuable is the conflict perspective in explaining the lack of housing access for poor people and the social problem of homelessness? How valuable is Durkheim's concept of anomie in explaining the incidence of suicide among a particular group in society (i.e. the homeless, teenagers, or First Nation's peoples)?
3. Whatever the topic you must pose one or two questions about it and use the paper to answer them in light of theoretical analysis and empirical research. A paper that simply describes a topic is not acceptable. The research paper is intended to provide the opportunity to conduct research on the social problems and to demonstrate your capacity for divergent learning, i.e. where one takes up a problem and uses as many sources a possible to answer it. The primary sources are located in the library.
4. The completed paper must be typewritten (font size 12) and no longer than 8 pages of double spaced typing excluding the bibliography, references, and tables.
5. The following will be the basis for evaluation of term papers:
  - a. The *sociological* quality of the approach taken to the problem and in particular the use of *theory and analysis* for explanation or making critical distinctions.
  - b. The complexity and clarity of the problem to be examined and the *analytical* skills used to examine the various components of it.
  - c. The quality of *data, evidence, and other materials* presented in support of the Debate.
  - d. The degree to which the points made in the paper are presented in a *coherent, clear, and well-organized* manner. There should be both an introductory and a concluding section to the paper. The limit on the length of the paper is intended to test your ability to organize material.

### **RECOMMENDED MATERIALS OR SERVICES TO ASSIST STUDENTS TO SUCCEED THROUGHOUT THE COURSE**

Students are encouraged to utilize support services available at the Writing Centre to prepare for their essay exams. There are a variety of services available for students to assist them throughout their learning. This information is available in the College Calendar, Registrar's Office, or the College web site at <http://www.camosun.bc.ca>