

Social Problems and Issues (SOC 206)  
MW 2:30-3:50 (RCH 202)  
Spring 2018

Instructor: Arfa Aflatooni, PhD.  
Office: SSH 105  
Office hours: Weekdays 10-11  
or by appointment

E-mail: AFLATOA@linnbenton.edu

Phone: 541-917-4537

My LBCC Web Page:

[http://cf.linnbenton.edu/artcom/social\\_science/aflatoa/web.cfm?pgID=86](http://cf.linnbenton.edu/artcom/social_science/aflatoa/web.cfm?pgID=86)

### **Course Description**

This course examines how some social conditions come to be defined and labeled as “social problems”. In this class, we will be learning about the social construction of social problems, methods of analyzing their emergence and the reactions to social problems by the general public, the media, advocacy groups and the governmental institutions. The course provides an academic platform for discussion that encourages critical thinking and finding remedies to our social problems. I strongly encourage the students in this class to participate in class discussions, present their views and experiences **politely** in relation to various issues that will be discussed in class.

### **Prerequisite**

**Introduction to Sociology or Soc 204 is the prerequisite for this class.**

If you have not taken Soc 204, then you need to have my permission to take this class. It is also highly recommended that you take **Reading 120 (Critical Thinking) and Writing 90 (the Write Course) or Writing 121 before you take this class.**

### **Course Outcomes**

1. Increase awareness of the existence of social problems in our community, country and world at large.
2. Understand the past, present and future trends( policies) within identified social problems.
3. Understand the importance of community involvement by both individuals and groups to achieve real remedies.

### **Required Readings**

**Social Problems 3rd edition by Joel Best**

**Social Problems: Readings by Ira Silver**

### **Exams and Grading**

There will be **two in-class tests (one midterm and one final)** for this class. The questions on each test come from chapters, lectures, videos, and class discussions. **Your final test is NOT cumulative.**

### **Case Study Reports from Joel Best's Social Problems**

You will read a case study presented in each chapter in Joel Best's book and then answer the questions at the end of each case (nine case studies all together). You **type your answers** and turn them at the beginning of class on **Monday (for week one you will turn it in on Wednesday)**.

### **Readings from Ira Silver's Social Problems**

You will also read some selected articles from Ira Silver's **Social Problems: Readings**. I have selected and assigned a number of readings that you can choose from each week. You will write a short summary of the article that you have read and then answer the questions stated at the end of each article. **Your paper must be typed ( not exceed two pages) and turned in on Wednesday.**

**I will NOT accept emailed papers.**

### **Grassroots Paper and Presentation**

Each student is also required to find a grassroots organization that addresses and tries to remedy a social problem. Please read the following article on the **Natural History of a Social Problem** before you start researching your chosen organization:

[https://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/3064?e=barkansoc\\_1.0-ch01\\_s01](https://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/bookhub/reader/3064?e=barkansoc_1.0-ch01_s01)

**You will not receive full credit for your report if you do not present it to the class. You need to submit to me the name of your chosen organization by May 2. Two students can not choose the same organization and if they do, one of them needs to choose a different organization. Your class presentation should not exceed 10 minutes. You can make some PowerPoint slides for your presentation or just give an oral presentation. Your report should be typed and double spaced (3-4 pages) and turned in on the day of your presentation.**

### **Here are the criteria for choosing a Grassroots Organization:**

- The organization must be a **non-governmental organization (NGO)**.
- It has to be founded by an individual or a group of individuals (**claims makers**) who sought to define a condition as a social problem and remedy it. Make sure you discuss how the organization **frames** its cause as a social problem.
- It has to address **a very specific** social problem. (i.e., racial or gender discrimination, crime and drug problems, health and educational disparities, environmental issues, effects of war on society, etc.).
- It has to have a history of **nonviolent activism** at the local, national or international level and was able to foster some kind of social change. Also,

- how has the organization used the media or other outlets (political, religious, etc.) to **legitimize** its cause?
- It has to offer some **realistic and workable and solutions** to the problem ( history of some of its achievements). What has it accomplished?

### **Class Participation and Attendance**

Sociology is an interactive discipline and therefore you will be an active participant during each class. **You are expected to attend the class having read the assigned chapters or any other readings for each class session. Habitual absences and tardiness are distracting to others as well as to your own learning process. I reserve the right to dismiss students who are late or disruptive in class.**

### **Extra Credit**

If you want to do some extra credit work to ensure a higher grade in this class, then do the following:

Go to this site every week and read one of the articles posted on the site. Write a one page (**typed and double spaced**) personal reflection essay on the article you read and turn it in each week.

<https://www.nytimes.com/spotlight/race?mcubz=0>

Each reflection essay counts for 5 points that will be added to test scores (midterm and the final). You have to turn in your essays before each exam to get the points for them.

### **Final Grade Breakdown:**

**Two Tests = =40% (20% each)**

**Case Study Papers: 15%**

**Grassroots Paper and Presentation = 20%**

**Papers on Readings=15%.**

**Attendance and Class Activities: 10%**

### **Class policy on Plagiarism**

Students who use someone else's work as their own will receive an **"F"** for their work. **Do Your Own Work!** Please always have a pen and a pencil and notepad along with your textbook in class at all times. **These are the tools of your trade as a student. Do not expect me to provide you with them!**

### **Students with Disability**

Students who have some type of disability or medical condition that will require them to take their tests either at the **Student Assessment Center (RCH Room 111)** or the **Center for Accessibility Resources(RCH-105)** should contact me at the beginning of the term (the first week) and provide

documentation from the **Center for Accessibility Resources** so that I can make the appropriate arrangements with them to take their tests there.

### **Missed Exams and Late Papers**

Missed exams will be counted as zeros except for **extraordinary circumstances**. Acceptable reasons for missing an exam would include major health problems, a death in the family, etc. **Please note that the arrangements should be made with me before the exam. I do accept late papers but late papers will receive 1/2 credit. All late work should be turned in by November 29 . I will NOT accept late work during the finals week.**

### **Limited Use of Email and Electronic Devices in Class**

This is **not** an online class and therefore I expect that most of our communications will take place in person and in class. If there is something that you need to discuss with me please come and see me in my office during my office hours. On rare occasions where you are out of town or very ill and need to communicate with me you can send a short message or email you work to me. Also, **out of respect for your classmates and me, please turn off your cell phone before class.**

## **Lecture Topics**

### **Week 1**

**The Social Problems Process: Chapters 1 in Joel Best Social Problems  
Claims: Chapter 2**

**Case Study: Threats to The American Dream as A Cultural Resource  
(Pages 62-65)**

**Readings: choose one from these articles: Spotlighting Disaster,  
Waging War on Drugs, or Viewing Bodily Imperfection as a Health  
Problem**

### **Week 2**

**From Best: Activists as Claimsmakers: Chapter 3**

**Case Study: Mobilizing Over Income Inequality (pages 95-98)**

**Readings: Choose one from the following: Seeing Police Mistreatment  
of Blacks as a Necessary Evil, Making Road Dangers Invisible or  
Making School Shootings More Thinkable**

### **Week 3**

**Experts as Claimsmakers: Chapter 4 in Best Social problems**

**Case Study: Forecasting The Future**

**Readings: Random Violence, The Horrors of Child Abuse, or Injustice Based on Sexual Orientation**

**Week 4**

**Media and Claims: Chapter 5 in Best Social Problems**

**Case Study: Democratizing The Means of Media Production and Reproduction (pages 161-164)**

**Readings: PMS and Biological Flaws of Womanhood, Black and Undeserving: Exposing Myths About America's Poor or Treating Social Problems as Emergencies.**

**Week 5**

**Public Reaction: Chapter 6 in Best Social Problems**

**Case Study: Public Reactions to Epidemics(195-198)**

**Readings: Killer Tales about Serial Killings. Stalking as a Danger Potentially Menacing All Women, or A Picture Worth a Thousand Words**

**Midterm: May 7**

**Week 6**

**Policymaking: Chapter 7 in Best Social Problems**

**Case Study: Legalizing Marijuana and Same-Sex Marriage(pages 227-230)**

**Readings: Selling Environmental Problems, Compensating for Deficit v. Enhancing Performance, or The Crimes that Come to Mind**

**Week 7**

**Social Problems Work: Chapter 8 in Best Social Problems**

**Case Study: Responding to Police Violence(pages 260-263)**

**Readings: Babies Having Babies, Homeless, Not Poor, or Catastrophes That Count**

**Week 8**

**Policy Outcomes: Chapter 9 in Best Social Problems**

**Case Study: Modifying Student Loan(pages 292-295)**

**Readings: The War on Terror and a Terrified Public, Fostering Personal Responsibility among Women on Welfare or Providing Free or to the Homeless**

**Week 9**

**Claims across Space and Time: Chapter 10 in Best Social Problems**

**Case Study: Is a Social Problem Theory Ethnocentric? (pages 325-328)**  
**Readings: Labor Strife Produces Disgruntled Consumers, The Colored Stigma of Imprisonment or Gaming on Native American Reservations**

**Week 9 and 10**  
**Presentations of Grassroots Organizations**

**Final Exam: Wednesday June 13 3 pm**

**If you have a difficult time finding a grassroots organization, here's a list of some grassroots organizations (as suggestions) that you can choose from :**

Bread for the World

Food For The Hungry

Foods Not Bombs

Freedom From Hunger

The Hunger Project

National Center for Children in Poverty

National Coalition for the Homeless

Children's Defense Fund

Sisters of the Road ( Oregon based)

Oregon Rural Action

Southern Poverty Law center

Urban League

Catalyst Project

Anti Racist Alliance

Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training

The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization

Urban Institute

National Organization for Women

Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER)

The WAGE Project: Closing the Gender Wage Gap

Men's Work: Violence Reduction

Techbridge: Encouraging Girls to Pursue Science

Human Rights Campaign

GLAAD

Matthew Shepard Foundation

The Grassroots Education Movement  
The Center for Education Reform  
The Grassroots Education Project  
Teachers Without Borders  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Green Peace  
Sierra Club  
Doctors without Borders  
Iraq Veterans Against the War  
Peace One Day  
Amnesty International  
The Brady Campaign  
Citizens for Tax Justice  
Teach for America  
The Women's Trust (microfinance organization)  
Volunteers of America