



DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION

COURSE OUTLINE – FALL 2013

SO1020 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Section A2

(University Transfer: Alberta, Calgary, Lethbridge, Kings, Concordia,
Canadian, Athabasca, Augustana, Grant MacEwan)

INSTRUCTOR: Alan Segal

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OFFICE HOURS:

Mondays and Wednesdays: 14:30 – 15.30

PREREQUISITE(S)/CO-REQUISITE: None

REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS:

Social Problems, Second Edition - Joel Best

Reading Sociology: Canadian Perspectives, Second Edition - Edited by Lorne Tepperman & Angela Kalyta

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: *Social Problems* analyzes the construction and creation of social problems. The analysis looks at concepts, assumptions, ideologies, politics, and perceptions of social problems.

CREDIT/CONTACT HOURS: 3 University Credits

DELIVERY MODE(S): Class and Group Discussion, Lectures, Film Analyses

GRADING CRITERIA:

TRANSFERABILITY: *** Grades of 'D' or 'D+' may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students must be aware it is their responsibility to contact receiving institutions to ensure transferability.

GRADING CONVERSION CHART			
Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Designation
A+	4.0	95 – 100	EXCELLENT
A	4.0	90 – 94	
A-	3.7	87 – 89	FIRST CLASS STANDING
B+	3.3	83 – 86	
B	3.0	80 – 82	GOOD
B-	2.7	77 – 79	
C+	2.3	73 – 76	SATISFACTORY
C	2.0	65 – 72	
C-	1.7	60 – 64	
D+	1.3	55 – 59	MINIMAL PASS
D	1.0	50 – 54	
F	0.0	0 – 49	FAIL
WF	0.0	0	FAIL, withdrawal after the deadline

NOTE: On the College's marking grid there is no D-. Therefore no such final mark will be recorded. However, for the course assignments, I will use D- as an additional non-failing mark.

EVALUATION:

Academic assignments for this course emphasize synthesis of ideas from a sociological standpoint, and the best questions you can think of to advance that synthesis. Analysis does not mean just reporting what others have said on a topic. Important as this is, other authors' ideas or conclusions are valuable because they add insight or specific details that help you to ask questions about the

topic you have selected. My assignments are a philosophical inquiry that is advanced through your and others` investigations. Deciding what questions are worth raising is an important part of analysis. Conclusions can be valuable but aren't obligatory for any of my assignments.

Tabulating Grades:

All of your assignments will receive a letter mark. At the end of the course I will add the Total Grade Points you have received based on the letter-grades your assignments have received. The grid above shows you the Grade Point Value for each letter. Maximum Grade Points available from all your assignments for this course is 12.6. Attaining a Grade Point Total of 12.6 is the same achievement as receiving 100%. When I have your Total Grade Point I will divide it by 12.6. A percentage will be worked out and a final grade determined according to the grid.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

In an academic setting, presenting others' work as your own is a serious violation. However, referencing articles and books and online academic products do not prevent you from building on their ideas and speculations. For a more precise definition of plagiarism and its consequences, refer to the Student Conduct section of the College Admission Guide at <http://www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/> or the College Policy on Student Misconduct: Plagiarism and Cheating at www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/**

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Midterm Essay: Due the First Class of March (F, D- to A+)
Maximum 4 Points Out Of 12.6 = 32%
Minimum length for this assignment is 1200 words.

Select at least one article from the *Reading Sociology* book that is not assigned. feature of our sociocultural lives that is seen as a social problem or, from your position, should be seen as one. Use ideas communicated in the Best book and any other pertinent source, to discuss to what degree and why, what is mentioned in the article should or should not be considered a social problem. This is NOT an opinion piece. The paper must also communicate the author(s) purpose of and logic in the article. You may advocate for or against what is understood as a problem, or overlooked as one, but you must utilize critical analysis while doing so. Do not permit your opinions to overwhelm your analysis. A viewpoint based on analysis is not the same as an opinion. Both a viewpoint and analysis are possible, but not if you overlook either in favour of the other. *As this is a Sociology course, sociological concepts among others, must be incorporated into your discussion.* Research is expected (using MLA Style). YouTube or anything similar to it is not an academic source. You may use it but not to exclude, or reduce the number of, more reliable sources. At least 3 sources must be utilized.

Film Analysis (One): Due Date TBA (F, D- to A+)
Maximum of 4 Points Out Of 12.6 = 32%
Minimum length is 1000 words

Throughout the term a variety of films may be shown. I will select one, later in the semester, for which you will submit a discussion paper exploring the concepts of problem-creation or problem-debunking, as they might apply to the film you are analyzing. What do the makers of the movie want us to think after viewing it? How do they build their case? Is the film persuasive or not, and what makes it so? No research is necessary.

Two Journals: Due Dates: Second Class of October, Third Class of November (F, C- to C+)
Maximum of 4.6 Points In Total Out Of 12.6 = 36%
Minimum length is 350 words

Anything pertaining to the sociology of creating, encouraging, criticizing, or averting the construction of social problems is open for journal discussion. Whatever we touch on in class discussions or lectures, class interaction; details from your personal life that are relevant to our course observations and suggestions, is a suitable topic. No research is necessary or expected. The purpose is to allow informal communication with the instructor. Grammar and general writing clarity are expected in all written assignments in university courses. While recognizing that we speak and write informally when communicating our personal observations, the journals should be coherent and as articulate as possible. Evaluations will reflect this expectation.

***Grammar is important to communicating precise meaning. Therefore, while it will not be valued as highly as content, it will be evaluated and therefore can affect your mark.**

**** JOURNALS ARE SUBJECT TO LATENESS PENALTIES OF ONE GRADE FOR EACH DAY PAST THE DEADLINE. THERE IS ALSO A ONE-GRADE PENALTY FOR ASSIGNMENTS THAT ARE LESS THAN THE MINIMUM LENGTH.**

*****ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SENT BY EMAIL, TO MY COLLEGE ACCOUNT:
asegal@gprc.ab.ca ALSO, YOU MUST INCLUDE THE WORD 'ASSIGNMENT' IN THE SUBJECT LINE, AND INDICATE WHICH ASSIGNMENT IT IS.**

Discussion Bonus: (A, B, C, D)

Every person in the course **may** receive a bonus mark based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation. Discussion postings to a Moodle discussion forum also will be considered class participation. You will be eligible for a bonus mark only if you display commitment to the course by reading the books and completing all written assignments. Although attendance is not relevant to the regular assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. If you receive a bonus mark, it will be added to your overall grade total prior to working out a final mark. Eligibility for the bonus is nullified if you are absent for more than 2 classes. The bonus will not result in more than a 3-level rise in final grades.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

University courses provide the best intellectual and perhaps social experience, when students arrive prepared for the day's work. My classes are heavily discussion-oriented and therefore require commitment from students.

1. Read assignments.
2. Participate in class conversation about the material.
3. Complete all written work.
4. Indicate on submitted material your name; section and course number; and which assignment is being sent to me.
5. All written work must be sent via email to asegal@gprc.ab.ca You MUST use the word 'assignment' in the subject line.
6. *** Electronic Devices: People who must have contact with others during class time may leave their cell phones on 'vibrate', and leave the room if a response is required. Otherwise, texting or use of phones will result in you having to miss that particular class. Please do not put me in a position of having to do this.

DISCUSSION SCHEDULE:

1. Introduction to SO1020
2. SP: A Note to the Reader; Chapter 1 - The Social Problems Process

Class Discussion:

What criteria for determining a social problem, does Best present? Prepare to explain his understanding of a social problems process. Identify the elements of this process. Are social problems determined or defined? Are these actually distinctive from each other?

3. SP: Chapter 2 - Claims

Class Discussion:

Frequently in daily conversation we allege claims of all kinds. Are these assertions different qualitatively from the claims Best refers to? Are all claims similar to each other? Explain the logic of a claim that Best outlines for us. Has he persuaded you that the power of a claim has merit only if it possesses the structure he recommends?

4. RS: Chapters 2, 3, 4 - Anticipating Burawoy...; Indigenous Spaces...; Reading Reflexively

Class Discussion:

These chapters make claims about the scope and purposes of sociology. Prepare to discuss each of them, and to discuss if the authors might perceive a social problem existing or not around the topic of what they have said in these excerpts.

5. SP: Chapters 3 & 4 - Activists as Claimsmakers; Experts as Claimsmakers

Class Discussion:

Can anybody be a claimmaker? Is any statement asserting truth or accuracy a type of claim, and therefore the person expressing the assertion also a claimmaker? Political Science and Sociology come together when referring to the *polity*. What is the polity, and why does Best link it to establishing claims? Chapter 3 indicates not all claimmakers are equal. In what various ways are claims, and their advocates, assessed? By who? Prepare to discuss the full purpose and logic of both chapters, and whether it matters if one is an 'expert' or not.

6. RS: Chapters 7, 7, 10 - Maintaining Control?...; What a Girl Wants, What a Girl Needs...; Online Interactions Among Men...

Class Discussion:

Whether we consider the sociological effects of casual conversations, or the combat of social positions on sundry questions, all claims, expertise, strategies, etc., occur within culture. But culture contains local variants; not all regions of Canada respond similarly to challenge and options. Do the three assigned articles look to a backdrop of similar culture? Be prepared for an in-depth analysis of each of these items.

7. RS: Chapters 14, 15, 16, 20 - Emotions Contests...; Dirty Harry...; Legislative Approaches...; Love and Arranged Marriage...

Class Discussion:

If Joel Best were sitting with us for today's class, what ideas from the first three chapters of his book would he remind us of? After we discuss each of the articles, we will review them again from a 'Bestonian' perspective.

8. SP: Chapter 5 - Media and Claims

Class Discussion:

When making a claim persuasive, of what true value is the media? Are certain aspects of the media more significant than others, according to Best, in giving claims momentum? What characteristics of the a consuming audience render some types of media more effective than others? Does it really matter if an event becomes news? What is the relationship between issue ownership and dominant narratives, and media activation or activism toward particular goals?

9. RS: Chapters 23, 38, 39 - Education, Ethno-nationalism...; Red Zones...; Parents and Traffic

Class Discussion:

As we do with most significant social institutions, we ascribe to media a great power of influence and direction. This is in part because we are taught to believe in, and to believe, some sources more than, or instead of, others. How do these articles fit into this framework?

10. SP: Chapters 6 & 7 – Public Reaction; Policymaking

Class Discussion:

What is the/a public? Can a society have more than one at a time? Who or what comprise a public? How do claimsmakers and policymakers assess the importance of a public? Can a movement be successful without securing changes in policy or law?

11. RS: Chapters 41, 43, 45, 52 – Gold Diggers...; Contested Imaginaries...; Fleshy Histories...; Policing Terrorism...

Class Discussion:

Do these chapters reveal to us different publics? What challenges and opportunities do they pose to claimsmakers?

12. SP: Chapters 8 & 9 - Social Problems Work; Policy Outcomes

Class Discussion:

How does Best evaluate policy outcomes? When might he, or we, consider social problems work to have been a failure, or a success?

13. RS: Chapters 56 & 64 - Canada's Rights Revolution...; Fallen Women...

Class Discussion:

We will discuss these on their own terms, but also from the question of a failed, or insufficient, or successful, or something else, policy outcome.

14. SP: Chapters 10 & 11 - Claims Across...; Uses of...