

Social Problems

SOCY 2

Winter Quarter 2008 10: WMF 10-11:05 a.m.

X-hour: Th 12-12:50

Instructor: Denise Anthony

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Office hours: M 1:45 – 4:00 PM, or by appointment

Course Description: Daily news reports direct much of our attention to social problems such as crime, prejudice and poverty. Yet rarely are such reports accompanied by a discussion of the systematic causes of these problems. More often we become witness to an endless stream of media coverage reporting seemingly isolated incidents and events. And seldom are we informed of the process by which some events or behaviors come to be defined as a social problem, or the decision-making process by which some social problems are selected for coverage, while others are ignored. The purpose of this course is to subject a selection of social problems, as well as the coverage of those problems, to a sociological analysis. We will attempt to answer such questions as, how does a social problem become defined as such? What are the causes of various social problems? Throughout the course we will ask “what can be done?” directing some of our attention to those organizations, individuals, and programs that have implemented constructive responses to issues of public concern.

This class is designed to encourage discussion between and among students and instructor. It is essential that students come to class prepared to discuss the reading material for that day’s class. Students are expected to not only read, but also reflect upon the assigned readings before coming to class.

You will be graded on **class participation** overall. Class attendance, contributions to in-class discussions, and participation in group activities all contribute to your class participation grade. Because it is necessary to be in class to participate, **missing more than four class periods means you cannot receive any better than a C for your class participation part of the grade.**

There will be opportunities for extra-credit to contribute toward your class participation grade.

Each student will write **two 3-page papers** analyzing one of the assigned books. You will need to sign-up for a book by Friday January 11. (See the attached assignment description and **policy on late papers**).

There will also be a **group project** (details after midterm).

In addition to **class participation**, the **two short papers**, and the **group project**, there will be an in-class **mid-term exam** (20%) as well as a **final take-home exam** (25%).

Grades are based on:

Class participation	10%	Mid-term exam	20%
Discussion papers	15% each	Take home Final exam	25%
Group Project	15%		

Course Requirements

The following materials are required, and can be purchased from the Dartmouth Bookstore or Wheelock Books. They are also available on reserve in Baker/Berry library.

- 1) Conley, Dalton. 1999. *Being Black, Living in the Red*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2) Croteau, David and William Hoynes. 2003. *Media/Society. Industries, Images and Audiences*. Third Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- 3) Dohan, Daniel. 2003. *The Price of Poverty*. Berkeley: University of CA Press.
- 4) McChesney, Robert. 2004. *The Problem of the Media*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- 5) Miringoff, Marque-Luisa and Sandra Opdycke. 2008. *America's Social Health*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- 6) Warschauer, Mark. 2003. *Technology and Social Inclusion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

***** Students with learning, physical or psychiatric disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible, and by the end of the second week of classes (January 18, 2007).** All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Disability Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested. Also, stop by the Academic Skills Center in 301 Collis Center to register for support services. ***

*** For individual peer tutorial assistance with papers, research, and new media projects, students may use RWIT, the Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology. Make appointments online at www.dartmouth.edu/~rwit, or drop by the Center in Baker-Berry Library, Level One, from 4 to 6 pm and 7 to 10 pm, S-Th. ***

Honor Principle and work in this course: (1) Papers. You are encouraged to discuss your papers with other students in the class. You should cite concepts and materials from class appropriately in your papers, though it is possible that some papers will not have any citations other than the book you are analyzing.

(2) Exams. Exams are independent work ONLY. You are encouraged to study for the in-class mid-term with other students from class, but the exam is completely independent. The take-home final exam is also completely independent – you should not discuss the exam with any other students from the course.

A comment about classroom discussion: Focused class discussion is possible only if people are willing to abide by the conventions of civilized discourse. This does not mean “political correctness” in speech, but does mean that all points of view must be expressed with due respect for the differing opinions of others.

Course Outline

WEEK 1

Jan 7: Introduction to Course

Jan 9: Social Construction of Social Problems

Class lecture Sign-up for Papers Poverty Survey on Blackboard

Jan 11: The Media

Croteau, David and William Hoynes. 2000. Media/Society. Chapters 1, 2.
Sign-up for Papers Poverty Survey on Blackboard

WEEK 2: Inequality: The Reality of Life in America

Jan 14: Racial and Economic Inequality

Conley, Dalton. 1999. Being Black, Living in the Red. Chapters 1-3.

Jan 16: Racial and Economic Inequality

Conley, Dalton. 1999. Being Black, Living in the Red. Chapters 4-6.

Recommended reading: "What Katrina Teaches about the meaning of racism" by Nils Gilman

See link in Course Blackboard site under "Links"

**Recommended activities:

Tech@Tuck: Web 2.0: Tuck's Center for Digital Strategies hosts a conference on Web 2.0 and its growing impact on business strategy:

<http://mba.tuck.dartmouth.edu/digital/Programs/TechAtTuck/Web.html>

11:30am – 1:30pm Company Demonstrations, Tuck TBA

4:30 - 6:15pm Panel Discussion, Tuck TBA

Pan Asian Community Dinner: "COLOR OF WEALTH: The Story Behind the US Racial Wealth Divide" Featuring Author and Activist- Meizhu Lui

6 - 7:30 pm Collis Commonground

(RSVP to "PAC") Open to the entire campus

X-Hour Jan 17: Guest Speaker: Meizhu Lui, author of "Color of Wealth"

Jan 18: Inequality and the Media

Croteau, David and William Hoynes. Media/Society. Ch 6

WEEK 3: Inequality: Race and Class

Jan 21: Martin Luther King Jr. Day – NO class

**Recommended activities:

Community Lunch: Roundtable discussion of Intersections of Race, Class, and the King Legacy.

Noon - 1:30pm Collis Common Ground

Keynote Address by Marian Wright Edelman, 7 p.m. Spaulding Auditorium, ticket required

Jan 23: Class held in **COLLIS Commonground**

Class Activity in Collis

X-Hour Jan 24: What we think we know about poverty; the organization of media
Croteau, David and William Hoynes. Media/Society. Ch 4

Jan 25: Rural Poverty

WEEK 4: Ethnicity and Poverty

Jan 28: Experiencing Poverty

READ: Dohan, Daniel. Price of Poverty, Chs 1-4

Jan 30: Institutions and poverty

READ: Dohan, Daniel. Price of Poverty, Chs 6-7

X-Hour Jan 31: READ: Dohan, Daniel. Price of Poverty, Chs 8-10

Recommended activity:

Film: People Like Us: Social Class in America

7 – 10pm

February 1: Guest Speakers: Andrew Kolker and Louis Alvarez

Producers and directors of film, People Like Us

WEEK 5: Mid-term

February 4: Review for exam

February 6: In-class Mid-term **9-11am

February 8: No class **Winter Carnival**

WEEK 6: Information Inequality

Feb 11: Technological Inequality

Warschauer, Mark. Technology and Social Inclusion chs Intro – 4 (pp.1 – 108)

February 13: Technological Inequality

Warschauer, Mark. Technology and Social Inclusion chs 5 – 7 (pp. 109 – 216)

X-Hour Feb 14: Group Project Assignments

February 15: Technological Inequality

Croteau, David and William Hoynes. Media/Society. Chs 9, 10.

WEEK 7: Media as a Social Problem

February 18: Social Construction of “Problems”

McChesney, Robert. The Problem of the Media. New York: Monthly Review Press. Chs 1,4,5

February 20: Social Construction of “Problems”

McChesney, Robert. The Problem of the Media. New York: Monthly Review Press. Chs 6-7

February 22: NO CLASS

WEEK 8: Addressing Social Problems to improve Social Health

February 25:

Miringoff, Margue-Luisa and Sandra Opdycke. America's Social Health. Chs 1-3

February 27:

Miringoff, Margue-Luisa and Sandra Opdycke. America's Social Health. Chs 4-7

X-Hour February 28: What do we want from media?

Croteau, David and William Hoynes. Media/Society. Chs 3, 5

February 29:

Miringoff, Margue-Luisa and Sandra Opdycke. America's Social Health. Chs 8-conclusion

WEEK 9: Group Projects

March 3: Group Presentations

March 5: Group Presentations

X-HOUR March 6: Group Presentations

March 7: Last day Review

Receive Take-home Final **DUE: March 12 at 5pm**

Policy on Late Papers

Discussion papers handed in any time after the beginning of the class in which they are due will receive a full letter grade reduction. (Basically this means the highest possible grade you can get on a late paper is a B). Because your paper is expected to be a source of discussion for the class, **if you do not come to class on the day your discussion paper is due, you will receive an additional letter grade reduction, meaning the best possible grade you can receive is a C.** I will deduct an additional half a letter grade for each additional class period your paper is late. **Any paper more than two weeks late will not be accepted.**

Extensions may be given for extreme individual circumstances. If you are having problems completing an assignment, for whatever reason, it is best to talk with me as soon as possible. Talk to me after class, come to see me in my office, or email me. I may be able to help you get the paper done on time, and I will be more sympathetic than if I hear of your problem the day before or day (!) the assignment is due. **Please note** that talking with me will not necessarily lead to an extension.

Also Note Well: Computer failure is never considered a justifiable excuse for a paper extension. Computers sometimes freeze or breakdown; power outages happen. The way to deal with these possibilities is to **SAVE YOUR WORK.**

Discussion Paper Assignment

In this assignment you are to write a brief review and analysis of the book. Use the questions below as a guide to your analysis. The assignment is split into two papers, but it is **highly recommended** that you read the entire book *prior* to writing the papers.

Paper I: Discuss issues #1-3 below in 3 pages. **Due:** In class first day book assigned

Paper II: Discuss issues #4-7 (begin with a 1-3 sentence summary of the book's thesis) in 3 pages. **Due:** In class second day book assigned

1. Summary

Provide a brief summary of the social problem identified in the book (1-3 sentences).

2. Thesis

What is the author's thesis? I.e., what exactly does the author argue is the problem, and what is primary cause of the problem?

3. Causes of the Problem

Expand on the thesis. What factors (causes) does the author explain produce this problem? How is this author similar or different from other theories on this problem? I.e., how does the author say his/her work differs from others who have analyzed this problem?

4. Context of the Problem

According to the author, why should we care about this problem?

- a. What is the history or background of this problem?
- b. What are the effects or consequences of this problem (negative and positive)?

5. Evidence

What kind of evidence does the author use to examine this problem? What does this type of evidence reveal about the problem? How is it helpful for enhancing our understanding of the problem? Is the evidence adequate to address the questions raised by the author? How might additional information or data affect the author's thesis?

6. Addressing the Problem

- a. How does the author's work affect our understanding of this social problem? E.g., will this book affect the way we think about the problem, how we *define* the problem, how we might address the problem, etc?
- b. What are the typical solution(s) proposed for this problem? What, if any, are the solutions offered by the author?

7. Take a personal position(One paragraph)

What are your own reactions to the author's examination of this problem? Do you agree with the author? Why or why not? What do you think are the best ways to address the problem?