

COURSE OUTLINE

Contemporary Social Problems

Course Description

BS 110. Contemporary Social Problems. 3 hours credit. This course will enable the student to examine major problems of contemporary society through differing sociological perspectives. The student will consider the social causes of these problems and the public policy consequences of solutions. The student will engage in research and field observation related to the problems of inequality, crime and violence, substance abuse, deviance, and family problems.

Course Relevance

Key to understanding and addressing contemporary social problems is the need to examine how these problems impact diverse populations. The concepts learned in this course give the student the skills needed to investigate, analyze, and understand the causes and effects of social problems.

Required Materials

Henslin, J. M., *Social problems*, (9th ed.). Prentice-Hall Inc

Learning Outcomes

The intention is for the student to be able to:

1. Critique current theories used to explain social problems
2. Employ the appropriate methods and data that social and behavioral scientist use to investigate the human condition
3. Identify and understand differences and commonalities within diverse cultures
4. Evaluate the validity of historical evidence and social research

Primary Learning Pact Skills that will be developed and/or documented in this course

Through the student's involvement in this course, he/she will develop his/her ability in the following primary PACT skill areas:

1. Valuing Diversity
 - The student will expand his/her awareness of diversity throughout the class and provide feedback on what he/she has learned through a self-assessment inventory.
2. Critical Thinking
 - The student will develop critical thinking and analytical skills through written assignments and other activities conducted in class.

Secondary Skills (developed but not documented):

Teamwork
Effective Citizenship

Ethical Conduct
Problem Solving
Historical Interpretation
Reading
Writing
Listening
Speaking
Computer Literacy

Major Summative Assessments Task(s)

These learning outcomes and the primary learning PACT skill will be demonstrated by:

1. Completing a written research-based assignment in which the student explains how a given social problem affects individuals from various demographic groups such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, and occupation
2. Completion of a self assessment diversity inventory (diversity rubric)

Course Content

- I. Themes – Key recurring concepts that run throughout this course:
 - A. Scientific method
 - B. Different sociological perspectives
- II. Issues- Key areas of conflict that must be understood in order to achieve the intended outcome:
 - A. Differing approaches to understanding social problems
 - B. Individual perceptions pertaining to race, ethnicity and gender
 - C. Traditional and radical theories discounting the importance of human diversity (individual differences)
- III. Concepts – Key concepts that must be understood to address the issues:
 - A. Where demographics fit within the various theories of social science
 - B. The crucial role of research in theory development and effective practice
 - C. The major ideas underlying policy in criminal justice and corrections
 - D. The range and limits of stereotypes
- IV. Skills/Competencies –Actions that are essential to achieve the course outcomes:
 - A. Reading
 - B. Writing
 - C. analytical thinking
 - D. Research skills
 - E. Application of concepts

Learning Units

- I. How Sociologist's view social problems: the abortion dilemma
 - A. Define the essential elements of a social problem
 - B. Explain the natural history of the development of social problems
 - C. Appraise how social problems affect the development of the field sociology
- II. Interpreting social problems: aging

- A. Understand the development of sociological theory and social problems
 - B. Apply sociological theory and social problems
 - C. Consider the future of problem solving social problems
- III. Human sexual behavior
- A. Define the objective and subjective concerns
 - B. Describe the development of social policy regarding sexual behavior
 - C. Assess future problems with sexual behavior
- IV. Alcohol and other drugs
- A. Comprehend the sociological perspective regarding drugs and alcohol
 - B. Define the problem
 - C. Analyze the problem from a theoretical view
 - D. Appraise current research and its policy implications
- V. Violence in society: rape and murder
- A. Comprehend the sociological perspective regarding violence
 - B. Define violence
 - C. Examine the historical overview of family violence
 - D. Identify the factors that contribute to violence
 - E. Compare and contrast the conservative and liberal perspective on solutions to violence
- VI. Crime and criminal justice
- A. Analyze the relationship between norms, law, and crime
 - B. Become familiar with the extent of crime and how its defined
 - C. Become familiar with the dimensions of the crime problem
 - D. Compare and contrast the theoretical perspectives on crime
 - E. Appraise current research and its policy implications
- VII. Wealth and poverty
- A. Identify the consequences of social stratification
 - B. Identify social problems in the United States linked to poverty
 - C. Compare and contrast the theoretical perspectives on issues of poverty
 - D. Profile the United States poor by demographics
 - E. Appraise current research and its policy implications
- VIII. Race and ethnic relations
- A. Explain the difference between race and ethnicity
 - B. Discuss the consequences of classifying people in to racial and ethnic categories
 - C. Discuss the effects of immigration
 - D. Discuss minorities: their visibility, disadvantage, and their numbers
 - E. Compare and contrast the theoretical perspectives on racial and ethnic inequality

- F. Appraise current research and its policy implications
- IX. Sex discrimination
 - A. Explain the difference between sex and gender
 - B. Explain how patriarchy and the devaluation of women contribute to prejudice against women
 - C. Discuss gender bias in the mass media
 - D. Define sexual harassment and identify the forms that it can take
 - E. Compare and contrast the theoretical perspectives on gender inequality
 - F. Appraise current research and its policy implications
- X. Medical care: problems of physical and mental illness
 - A. Discuss how and why patterns of health differ around the world and among categories of the U.S. population
 - B. Discuss why many people argue that the U.S. health system is in crisis
 - C. Compare and contrast the AIDS epidemic in the United States with its impact around the world
 - D. Identify the social problems that surround the health-care system in the U.S. today
 - E. Provide an overview of the historical treatment strategies for dealing with the mentally ill
 - F. Be able to summarize the insights provided by sociology's major paradigms into problems of physical and mental health
 - G. Appraise current research and its policy implications
- XI. The changing family
 - A. Identify the issues in the debate over the definition of "family"
 - B. Discuss the pros and cons of cohabitation
 - C. Discuss the role conflict that exist between work and family life
 - D. Identify the factors that have contributed to the current high divorce rate among Americans
 - E. Apply the three theoretical perspective as they relate to issues surrounding the family
 - F. Appraise current research and its policy implications
- XII. Urban problems
 - A. Discuss the evolution of U.S. cities
 - B. Identify the problems faced by cities today
 - C. Describe the recent demographic trends and consequences they have had Snowbelt and Sunbelt cities
 - D. Be able to look at urban problems from the three theoretical perspectives
 - E. Appraise current research and its policy implications

XIII. Population and food

- A. Describe present explanations for the inequality found around the world and the poverty and hunger that accompanies this inequality
- B. Identify the reasons population is increasing and suggestions to slow the trend
- C. Identify possible solutions to world hunger and poverty
- D. Compare and contrast Malthusian theory
- E. Apply the three theoretical perspective as it relates to issues regarding population growth and poverty
- F. Appraise current research and it policy implications

XIV. The environmental crisis

- A. Be aware of the strains that the lifestyles of rich nations have placed on the natural environment
- B. Understand the jeopardy that existing lifestyles put the future of the planet in
- C. Identify the state of the natural environment and the environmental issues that exist today
- D. Apply the three theoretical perspectives as they relate to environmental issues.
- E. Appraise current research and its policy implications

XV. War, terrorism, and the balance of power

- A. Identify the magnitude of the threat
- B. Compare and contrast the scope of the problem from different countries
- C. Apply the three theoretical perspectives as they relate to war, terrorism and the balance of power
- D. Appraise current research and its policy implications

Learning Activities

Lecture, instructor-led class discussions, group study, field trips, library research, various audio/visual aids, case studies, guest speakers and student presentations. The student will be required to examine professional journals in this course.

Grade determination

The student will be graded on completion of assessment tasks, research papers, tests, daily work, class participation, out-of-class assignment and other methods of evaluation at the discretion of the instructor