SYLLABUS

This course is designed to present each student with a perspective of American social issues as they pertain to the growth and development of the American culture. Sociology is the study of human societies and involves the process of change over a period of time – change that, in the context of American society, is paramount to social relationships between people of different cultures, different heritage, and different gender perspectives. The essential essence of sociology is interaction: how people relate to each other within a community and the larger societal culture, to their environment, and to the larger world in which they live. Sociology is also concerned with the individual’s view of themselves and their place in life. Sociology helps us to understand who we are as individuals and as a society. Together with history, we can gain a sense of how we have arrived at our present human condition; indeed, sociology helps us understand our humanity and the issues that threaten our world and existence. Hopefully, we can learn from sociology and the historical past to understand where we are going.

Sociology is not simply reading about the issues and problems that threaten the societal environment. Sociology is discussion and searching. It is essential that EACH STUDENT PARTICIPATE IN CLASS and complete the reading. Sociological research will help each student develop problem solving and critical thinking skills, as well as reading comprehension and writing abilities: skills that are essential no matter what field you are endeavoring to pursue. However, the essence of understanding is asking questions and learning how to find the answers. Sociology is not merely memorizing facts and theories. Sociology is discovering WHY, along with the who, what, where, and when.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Current Social Problems is a survey course that will explore the current relationships and complex issues that exists within American social culture. Students will endeavor to first define the essence of what sociology is and how a “social problem” is identified. The class will examine and discuss the various levels of the social hierarchy, how social distinctions came into existence, and how American communities have been affected over time. Students will explore the causes and consequences of issues such as poverty, racism, gender inequity, age discrimination, sexual orientation, crime and violence, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, marriage and family, urbanization, and the environment. History will play a major role in understanding the
current condition of the American culture. Some of the additional questions to be answered are: “who are Americans,” “can we define a single uniform American culture,” and “how has the sociological-historical process shaped the American landscape?” Hopefully, the class can identify possible remedies that may engender plausible solutions.

**REQUIRED READING & MATERIALS**

- **Main Text:** *SOCIAL PROBLEMS*, James William Coleman & Harold R. Kerbo (Pearson / Prentice Hall, 2006 / 2002)

- **Supplemental Materials:** Instructor Handouts & Videos

**METHODS OF EVALUATION**

1. **Exams:** There will be a total of two (2) Exams: one Mid-term Exam and one Final Exam. Material for exam purposes will come from a combination of lectures, discussions, video presentations, handouts, and the required reading. The exam may vary consisting of true & false, multiple choice, short essays worth ten to twenty points, and/or longer essays worth thirty to fifty points.

2. **Analytical Papers:** Each student will complete **four (4) analytical papers** in the Explanatory and/or Persuasive mode that respond to a certain reading and/or discussion in class. These papers **must be typed**. When you read a document or engage in a discussion, you should experience a “reaction” that in turn results in a response. In other words, you develop an opinion about the issue based on your perception of what the various arguments consist of. Students may respond using the explanatory method (explains or informs using ideas and facts), and/or the persuasive method (convince the reader to agree with your point of view using facts and opinions). In writing a Sociological Analytical paper each student should state the issue, the various arguments and perceptions surrounding that issue, formulate your own perspective arriving at a conclusion based on the evidence, and write an essay. Each student must **complete all four (4) analytical papers** consisting of at least **three (3) to five (5) typed pages** each (with the exception of Community Service). Topics for reaction papers will be chosen by the instructor.

3. **Community Service:** Includes one (1) Analytical Paper, 10 (10) hours of Community Service, a Paper reflecting on the experience, completion of a questionnaire about the organization, an evaluation by the organization’s supervisor/director, and a presentation to the class. The Community Service must reflect an attempt to solve or lessen the effects of a current social problem. The Reflection Paper should consist of a description of the organization, a summary of the experience, a critique of the methods utilized by the organization, and your own personal opinion of the process. Students will present these findings to the class. In addition, students who elect the Community Service may be exempt from the Mid-Term and Final Exams.
Summary of Community Service:

- Students must complete an application/statement of purpose to be approved by Professor Derr
- Complete at least ten (10) hours of Community Service related to a social problem
- The Community Service may **NOT** be at your current job and it must be with a non-profit organization dedicated to easing the effects of a social problem on human society
- Complete a paper of at least six (6) to ten (10) pages reflecting on the Community Service experience and presenting those findings to the class
- Complete a questionnaire about the organization
- Hand in an evaluation by the organization’s supervisor/director
- Students would complete one (1) Analytical Paper
- Students would **NOT** be required to complete three (3) of the four (4) Analytical Papers
- Students may be exempt from the Mid-Term and Final Exams

**NOTE:** Professor Derr is not only an Adjunct Instructor at Three Rivers Community College, but is also the Principal of Thames River Academy (formerly Norwich High School), which is a Regional Alternative High School under the direction of the Norwich Board of Education. Thames River Academy is always in need of interns interested in working with at-risk youth. Interested candidates must complete an application and interview process. Student interns must possess an academic skill such as math, writing, reading, or artistic ability. **Thames River Academy does not need mentors.** See Professor Derr for details.

**MAKE-UP POLICY**

All exams must be made up and all required papers completed. If you miss an exam see me at the next class. **This is your responsibility.** All make-up exams must be conducted at the instructor’s convenience. The make-up exams will be different than the regular exam. In addition, each student must complete ALL Reaction papers.

**ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to be in class and participate in discussions. Absences will have a detrimental effect on a student’s finale grade. Three absences are allowed, not counting weather cancellations. Every absence over three may result in a drop in your grade, for instance from a B+ to a B for one additional absence, and a B to a C+ for two, etc. **ATTENDANCE IS ESSENTIAL!**
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**Civility in the Classroom**

Ideally, a classroom is a safe environment of learning. In an ideal setting all opinions are heard and respected, although you may disagree. In this class we want to create as safe an environment for learning as possible. Thus, there will be no sexist or racist insults tolerated in the class. Neither physical nor verbal abuse nor violence in any form will be tolerated in class. Students must RESPECT each other and follow the rules and guidelines set down in class. Any behavior diverging from these guidelines, or disrespecting anyone in the class, will NOT BE TOLERATED.

**College Withdrawal Policy**

A student who finds it necessary to discontinue a course MUST complete a withdrawal form obtained from the Registrars Office. Students may withdraw from class anytime during the first ten weeks of the semester without being in good standing or obtaining prior permission of the instructor. After that period, a student wishing to withdraw must obtain written authorization of the instructor to receive a “W” grade for the course. Students, who fail to properly withdraw, and discontinue coming to class, will be assigned an “F” grade. Eligibility for refund of tuition is based upon date of withdrawal when received by the registrar. Verbal withdrawals will not be accepted.

**Learning Disabilities Statement**

If you have a hidden or visible disability that may require classroom or test-taking modifications, please see the professor as soon as possible. If you have not already done so, please be sure to register with either Chris Scarborough or Judy Hilburger. It is imperative that the student speaks to Professor Derr during the very first session and explains the particular issue so that an adequate strategy for modification can be ascertained. If the student waits past the 2nd week of classes, chances for successful completion of the course are diminished.
COMMUNICATION

The instructor is dedicated to guiding each student toward an understanding of the course material and connecting the past with the present and gaining an understanding of where humankind is proceeding for the future. The instructor is committed to helping each student in any way possible to pass the course and achieve success in her/his college experience. Communication is the only means possible for this success. The instructor’s daytime number is listed in the Syllabus heading (823-4256). This provides each student ample opportunity to contact the instructor in cases of emergencies and difficulties. The instructor is prepared to make pre-arranged appointments for extra help. Please take advantage of your college educational opportunities – let your mind take flight and prepare yourself for the future. And, always hold on to your dreams.
SCHEDULE & AGENDA

There are Fourteen (14) weeks of classes from Wednesday, January 24 through Wednesday, May 2, 2007.

Analytical Papers Schedule:

1. February 14
2. March 14
3. April 11
4. May 2

Exam Schedule:

1. Mid-term Due March 28
2. Final Due May 2

1. Poverty & American Society: Due February 14, 2007

- "William Graham Sumner on Social Obligations: What Social Classes Owe to Each Other, 1883," Reading the American Past, Volume II: From 1865
- "President Lyndon B. Johnson Describes the Great Society: Address at the University of Michigan, 1964," Reading the American Past, Volume II: From 1865
- "President Ronald Reagan Declares Government the Problem: Inaugural Address, 1981," Reading the American Past, Volume II: From 1865

2. The legacy of the Civil Rights Movement: Due March 14, 2007

- Have African Americans achieved the “American Dream”? Or reached their goals based on ideologies of the Civil Rights Movement?
- Is Racism still an issue in America, and if so, what areas still require focus?
- What are the central issues surrounding Affirmative action, desegregation of inner city school systems, multicultural education, racial profiling and racial bias in the court systems? Are these issues still relevant within American society today?
- Is Barak Obama an extension of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther king and the Civil Rights Movement?

- “Racism Defined – Racist and Egalitarian Ideologies in Modern American Culture”
- Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream”
- “Measuring Employment Discrimination”
- “Is the Criminal Justice System Biased?”
- “Affirmative Action: Do We Still Need It?”
Richard Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow.”
“The L.A. Riots”
Byron Bain, “Walking While Black: The Bill of Rights for Black Men”

3. Education: Due April 11, 2007


* NOTE: ALL STUDENTS INCLUDING THOSE COMPLETING COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS MUST COMPLETE THIS PROJECT

4. Urban Renewal and Revitalization: Due May 2, 2007
AGENDA

SESSION 1  JANUARY 24

- Introduction to the course
- Sociological Theorems

Text: Sociology and Social Problems


SESSION 2  JANUARY 31

Sociology and Social Problems continued . . .

Text: The Poor

- Handouts:
  - “William Graham Sumner on Social Obligations: What Social Classes Owe to Each Other, 1883,” Reading the American Past, Volume II: From 1865
  - “President Lyndon B. Johnson Describes the Great Society: Address at the University of Michigan, 1964,” Reading the American Past, Volume II: From 1865
  - “President Ronald Reagan Declares Government the Problem: Inaugural Address, 1981,” Reading the American Past, Volume II: From 1865
  - Pros and Cons: “Welfare Reform”
  - Analyzing Social Problems: “Inequality and Stratification”
  - “The Uses of Poverty: the Poor Pay All”
SESSION 3 – FEBRUARY 7

- Poverty continued . . .

- The Ethnic Minorities ................................................................. Chapter 8

- Video: “Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Man and the Dream”

- Handouts:
  - “Racism Defined – Racist and Egalitarian Ideologies in Modern American Culture”
  - Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream”
  - “Measuring Employment Discrimination”
  - “Is the Criminal Justice System Biased?”
  - “Affirmative Action: Do We Still Need It?”
  - Richard Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow.”
  - “The L.A. Riots”
  - Byronn Bain, “Walking While Black: The Bill of Rights for Black Men”

SESSION 4 – FEBRUARY 14

- ANALYTICAL PAPER 1: “POVERTY AND AMERICAN SOCIETY”

- The Ethnic Minorities continued . . .

- Video: “Class Divided”: The Brown Eyes / Blue Eyes Experiment by Jane Elliot
SESSION 5 – FEBRUARY 21
Discussion on “The Ethnic Minorities”

SESSION 6 – FEBRUARY 28
Final Discussion on “The Ethnic Minorities”

- Women and Men / Sexual Behavior ____________________________________ Chapters 10 & 11
- Video: “Killing Us Softly”

  Handouts to Be Determined

SESSION 7 – MARCH 7
Women and Men / Sexual Behavior continued . . .

  “First They Came After the Homosexuals – Gender and Sexual Orientation”

- Problems of the Family ____________________________________________ Chapter 2
- Handouts: “Children and Divorce – Violence in U.S. Families”
- Problems of Education _____________________________________________ Chapter 3

  Handouts to be Determined

  GUEST SPEAKER: AMY DERR

SESSION 8 – MARCH 14
ANALYTICAL PAPER 2: “THE LEGACY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT”

MID-TERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED

Problems of Education continued . . . . . . 

GUEST SPEAKER: DAWN SAARI

MARCH 21 - NO SCHOOL

SESSION 9 – MARCH 28

MID TERM EXAM DUE

- Urbanization Chapter 14
- Handouts:
- “Cities”
- “Connecticut Demographics”
- Other Handouts to be Determined

SESSION 10 – APRIL 4

- Urbanization continued . . .
- Crime and Violence Chapter 13
- Video: “Shot by a Kid,” Investigative Reports
- Handouts to be Determined
SESSION 11 – APRIL 11

鞍山 Paper 3: “EDUCATIONAL REFORM”

- Crime and Violence continued . . . .
- Drug Use Chapter 12

Handouts to be Determined

SESSION 12 – APRIL 18

Warfare, Terrorism, and International Conflict Chapter 18

Community Service Presentations: Papers, evaluations, and questionnaire due with presentation

SESSION 13 – APRIL 25

Final Exam Distributed

Community Service Presentations: Papers, evaluations, and questionnaire due with presentation

SESSION 14 – MAY 2

鞍山 Paper 4: “URBAN RENEWAL”

鞍山 Final Exam Due

Community Service Presentations: Papers, evaluations, and questionnaire due with presentation
😊 Final thoughts on American Society and the Future