

## SOCIAL PROBLEMS



**PROFESSOR EDWARD A. DERR \* THREE RIVERS COMMUNITY COLLEGE \* FALL 2010**

CRN 30315 \* SOC K103 \* SEC T03 \* WEDNESDAY 6:30-9:15 \* RM E227

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### 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 within American society. 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. Thus, the essential essence of sociology is interaction between members of that society and how people relate to each other within a community and the larger societal culture, in addition 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 within the social order. However, because we are, and always have been, a nation of diverse cultural groups, conflict, according to Marxist ideologists, appears inevitable.

Sociology can help 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 can help us to 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 today, and where we are going tomorrow.

Sociology is not simply reading about the issues and problems that threaten the societal environment. Sociology is discussion and research. It is essential that **EACH STUDENT PARTICIPATE IN CLASS** and complete the readings. 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. Due to the limited time frame of a semester as compared to the number of potential issues that can be discussed, the professor will choose those topics deemed appropriate at this time and by-passing other topics that may not fit into this semester’s agenda.

## REQUIRED READING & MATERIALS

- Main Text: **SOCIAL PROBLEMS**, James William Coleman & Harold R. Kerbo (Vango Books / Pearson Education, 2009, 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. **EXAM ESSAYS MUST BE TYPED.**

2. **Sociological Analytical Papers**: Each student must complete three **(3) Sociological Analytical papers** in the Explanatory and/or Persuasive mode that pertains to certain social issues. Utilizing critical thinking and problem solving techniques you must develop a sociological perspective about an issue based on the various arguments and perceptions of professionals, educators, writers, and members of society. Students may utilize 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. The paper should be **professional** in format and in content; you are approaching the assignment as a **sociologist!** Each student must **complete all three (3) Sociological Analytical papers** consisting of **three (3) to five (5) typed pages** (with the exception of Community Service). These papers should **not** be based on your emotional experience or your personal bias; the papers must be written from a Sociological perspective utilizing data, research evidence, and primary sources, with reference to particular readings that have been assigned. The professor will choose topics for these papers.

All papers must be typed, double spaced, and in the **MLA Format**. (If you do not have an MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers go online and access numerous sites providing “writing techniques”)

3. **Service Learning / Community Service**: Includes the Mid-Term Exam, one (1) Sociological Analytical Paper (the first assignment), ten (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 an in-class presentation-discussion. 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 and the population served, an explanation of the social problem that is being addressed, a summary of the experience, a critique of the methods utilized by the organization, and your own personal opinion of the process. Students will discuss these findings in class. In addition, students who elect the Community Service are exempt from the Final Exam.

### Summary of Community Service:

- Students must complete an application/statement of purpose to be approved by the Professor
- 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 the Mid-Term Exam
- Students would complete one (1) Analytical Paper
- Students would **NOT** be required to complete two (2) of the three (3) Analytical Papers
- Students are exempt from the Final Exam

**IMPORTANT:** Choosing to complete Service Learning / Community Service does not excuse students from attending class, Remember, **ATTENDANCE COUNTS!**

- **NOTE:** Professor Derr is not only an Adjunct Professor 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. In addition, Professor Derr is a member of the Otis Library Board of Trustees, where volunteer positions may be available. See Professor Derr for details.

### ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES:

The due dates for assignments are designated and explained in this syllabus. Due dates are now **YOUR** responsibility. If you lose this syllabus, ask for another. Loss of the syllabus is not an excuse for not knowing due dates. No more than two (2) total assignments will be accepted after **December 15<sup>th</sup>**, the official last night of classes. In other words, you should be completing assignments during the semester; you cannot pass in all of the assignments on the last night of classes! **No assignments will be accepted after Friday December 17<sup>th</sup>** unless the student has talked to Professor Derr and an agreement has been reached for an **INCOMPLETE!** Grades are due in the registrar's office on Tuesday, **December 21<sup>st</sup>**: as a general rule, I would rather **not assign incompletes**. If there is an issue, you must talk to me before or on the official last night of classes **December 15<sup>th</sup>**. Do not wait until after the last night of classes to discuss issues that may prevent you from passing in the assignments and as a result, fail the course!

**GRADING: CONTENT**

All assignments are graded with equal weight. Mid-Term and Final Exams are graded for **content and correct answers**. Grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph structure are **not** graded on Mid-Term or Final Exam essay questions.

**GRADING: THE WRITING PROCESS**

All Sociological Analytical papers and Service Learning papers are given two numerical grades: one for grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph structure; the second grade is for sociological content including the proper use of sources and the structure of the sociological thesis. The two grades are then averaged and a final grade given. Your papers must possess a “professional” tone; students must approach social issues as sociologists and your writings must reflect reference to the various readings, research, data, and the reaction of the people within society. Be very aware of your own personal bias and do your best to minimize its affect on your writings.

The professor does not have time to teach you how to write; you may need to access the Three Rivers Community College Writing Center and/or a tutor.

**MAKE-UP POLICY**

Professor Derr expects that all students will complete **all required assignments**. A passing semester grade and credit is dependent upon the completion of all assignments and Professor Derr will issue an incomplete or an “F” to any student who has not completed all assignments even if that student is only missing one (1) assignment. 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 professor’s convenience. The make-up exams may be different than the regular exam. In addition, each student must complete ALL Sociological Analytical papers.

## ATTENDANCE

Students are **expected to be in class** and participate in discussions. Absences will have a detrimental effect on a student's final 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!**

Students who miss class are missing valuable information. The professor will not stop a current class lecture to repeat information provided the previous week for those who have missed the class: those students who have missed a class must speak to the professor during break or request a meeting at the end of the evening's class. The professor could be busy before the start of class, and thus there is no guarantee that the student can speak to the professor before class begins. (If students were in attendance the previous week and are confused about some points of discussion or reading, or an assignment, feel free to speak-up and ask for clarification)

If a student disappears from class for more than 1 week (2 consecutive classes) without notifying the professor, that student may be unable to continue in class. If a student misses more than 2 consecutive classes even if the professor has been notified, that student may be unable to continue in the course. **This is NOT a correspondence course: students are expected to be in class.** Even if you assume that you can pass the course without attending class, it is unfair to the professor and the students who attend every week.

The professor is reluctant to receive assignments on the LAST night of class that should have been completed and passed-in on previous class nights. If there are issues, please speak to the professor, or email or telephone. Communication is the best solution for many of life's exigencies!

| GRADE | EQUIVALENT | QUALITY POINTS |
|-------|------------|----------------|
| A     | 94-100     | 4.0            |
| A-    | 90-93      | 3.7            |
| B+    | 87-89      | 3.3            |
| B     | 83-86      | 3.0            |
| B-    | 80-82      | 2.7            |
| C+    | 77-79      | 2.3            |
| C     | 73-76      | 2.0            |
| C-    | 70-72      | 1.7            |
| D+    | 67-69      | 1.3            |
| D     | 63-66      | 1.0            |
| F     | 0-62       | 0.0            |

## **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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

## SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYTICAL PAPERS & EXAMS SCHEDULE

There are fifteen (15) weeks of classes from Wednesday, September 1 through Wednesday, December 15, 2010.

### **Analytical Papers Schedule:**

1. Due October 6      **ALL students must complete the 1<sup>st</sup> Analytical Paper**
2. Due November 3
3. Due December 8

### **Exam Schedule:**

1. Mid-term Due October 27    **ALL students must complete the Mid-term**
2. Final Due December 15

Final Grades are submitted on Tuesday, December 21, 2010

## DESCRIPTION OF SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYTICAL PAPERS

1. **“Race, Poverty, and Culture in America.” ALL Students must complete this essay, which is due October 6**

Explain the connection between racial-social issues, poverty, and cultural differences in America. Conclude the essay with a persuasive pronouncement as to the legitimacy of using racism, poverty, and the denial of access to resources for the continuing gap between people of color and the white communities in America.

2. **Educational Reform: Due November 3**

**Educational Crisis in America:** An examination of **Education and Public Schools in America: “No Child Left Behind,”** National Testing standards, National Teaching standards, at risk youth, and the **Voucher Programs**.

Explain your perception of the educational crisis in America and the current attempts to raise the achievement level of American youth, decrease the drop-out rates, raise test scores, and narrow the achievement gap between white students and students of color and between high income and low income students. Conclude your essay with a persuasive pronouncement concerning the benefits of No Child Left Behind or your own strategy for educational reform.



### **3. Drugs, Crime and Violence in America: Due December 8**

Explain the “status” of drug use in America, and the social, economic, and political consequences of continued addiction and drug-related violence. Conclude your essay with your own strategy for “reform” and putting an end to the violence and crime surrounding drugs, as well as the toll on families, friends, and the work environment.

## SCHEDULE & AGENDA

THIS IS A “SUGGESTED” SCHEDULE & AGENDA AND IS SUBJECT TO REVISION

### SESSION 1            SEPTEMBER 1

-  Introduction to the course
-  Sociological Theorems

Text: *Sociology and Social Problems* \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 1

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### SESSION 2            SEPTEMBER 8

-  Sociology and Social Problems continued . . .

Text: *The Poor* \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 7

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### SESSION 3            SEPTEMBER 15


Text: *The Poor* \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 7

Introduction to Racism in America: *The Ethnic Minorities*

- Possible Video: [“Class Divided”: The Brown Eyes / Blue Eyes Experiment by Jane Elliot](#)
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| <p><b>SEPTEMBER 22    NO CLASS</b></p> |
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**SESSION 4            SEPTEMBER 29**

 ***The Ethnic Minorities*** \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 8

□ **Possible Videos:**

- [\*\*\*“Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Man and the Dream”\*\*\*](#)
  - [\*\*\*“Voices of the Civil Rights Movement”\*\*\*](#)
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**SESSION 5            OCTOBER 6**

 **ANALYTICAL PAPER 1 Due: ***“Race, Poverty, and Culture in America.”*****

**Final Discussion on *“The Ethnic Minorities”***

 ***Women and Men / Sexual Behavior*** \_\_\_\_\_ Chapters 10 & 11

□ **Possible Video: ***“Killing Us Softly”*****

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**SESSION 6            OCTOBER 13**

 ***Women and Men / Sexual Behavior*** continued . . .


 **GUEST SPEAKER: AMY DERR**

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**SESSION 7            OCTOBER 20**




 **Final discussion of Gender Inequality: “Women and Men / Sexual Behavior”**

 ***Problems of Education*** \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 3

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**SESSION 8            OCTOBER 27**

**MID TERM EXAM DUE**


 ***Problems of Education*** \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 3

 **GUEST SPEAKER:**

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**SESSION 9            NOVEMBER 3**


 **ANALYTICAL PAPER 2 DUE: Educational Crisis in America: Educational Reform**

 ***Drug Use*** \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 12

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**SESSION 10           NOVEMBER 10**

 **Drug Use continued . . .**

 ***Crime and Violence*** \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 13

□ **Possible Video: “[Shot by a Kid,](#)” *Investigative Reports***

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**SESSION 11      NOVEMBER 17**

 ***Crime and Violence continued . . .***

 ***Urbanization*** \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 14


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**SESSION 12      NOVEMBER 24**

**Urbanization continued . . .**

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**SESSION 13      DECEMBER 1**

 **Terrorism and American Society: “Warfare, Terrorism, and International Conflict”** \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter 18

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**SESSION 14      DECEMBER 8**

**ANALYTICAL PAPER 3 DUE: Drugs, Crime and Violence in America**

**COMMUNITY SERVICE PACKETS DUE**

**Final thoughts on American Society and the Future**

**SESSION 15      DECEMBER 14**



**FINAL EXAM DUE**