



**SYLLABUS: Global Social Problems Spring 2019**  
**SOCL 2233 Section 201**  
**Spring Semester 2018 CRN = 20116**  
**Days: T and R; Time: 11:00am to 12:20**  
**Building and room: Protho-Yeager (PY) 100**

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Contact information

Instructor information

Isaac Christiansen, PhD, Assistant Professor of Sociology

Office location

Protho-Yeager Hall, Room O-134

Office Hours

MW 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. TR  
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**Course Overview and Objectives:**

This course on Social Problems is designed to give the student a good introduction and overview of a range of social problems both in the U.S. and globally. We will examine inequality (national and international), racial discrimination, crime and prisons, war and empire, and the environmental crisis from a sociological perspective. We will collectively investigate the ideological, socio-economic and structural origins of these problems and their theoretical explanations. We will also examine the U.S. criminal justice system and the effects of “getting tough on crime”. Towards the latter half of the course we will examine U.S. foreign policy, empire and war. We will close the course with an examination underdevelopment and a look at an environmental crisis already upon us. This course seeks to impart on the students a critical understanding of these issues and how they impact our global society. Underlying our examination of each problem is a commitment to the ideals of social justice.

**Instructional Objectives**

1. Think critically about social problems, their origins and solutions and the challenges in implementing solutions.
2. Understand and be able to explain poverty, crime, inequalities, war, and under or mal-development from a sociological perspective. Utilize sociological theories to further develop that understanding.
3. Understand how inequality is structural and leads to unequal life chances.
4. Develop a more accurate picture of the social world, and contemplate ways in which critical social problems could be better addressed.

## Required Books:

Heiner, Robert. 2016 *Social Problems: An Introduction to Critical Constructionism* 5<sup>th</sup> Edition”  
Oxford University Press

## Required Articles on D2L:

- Abunimah, Ali. 2014. “Does Israel Have a Right to Exist as a Jewish State” Pp. 21-44 in *The Battle for Justice in Palestine*. Haymarket Books. Chicago.
- Avnery, Uri. 2010. “Truth Against Truth: A Completely Different Look at the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” Gush Shalom. Tel Aviv.
- Blum, William. 2004. “Guatemala 1953-1954: Why the World Watched” Pp. 72-83 in *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*. Common Courage Press. Monroe, Maine
- Blum, William. 2004. “Cuba 1959 to 1980s: The Unforgivable Revolution” Pp 184 to 193 in *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*. Common Courage Press. Monroe, Maine
- Blum, William. 2004. “Iraq 1990-1991: Desert Holocaust” Pp. 320 to 338 in *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*. Common Courage Press. Monroe, Maine
- Clear, Todd R. 2007. “The Problem of Concentrated Incarceration.” Pp. 1-13 in *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2017. “U.S. Health System”. *Z Magazine*. February 26, 2017.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2006. “Outlaw States” Pp 39-78 in *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*. Metropolitan Books. New York.
- Coburn, David. 2004. “Beyond the Income Inequality Hypothesis: Class Neo-Liberalism and Health Inequalities.” *Social Science and Medicine* 58:41-56.
- Davis, Kingsley and Wilbert E. Moore [1945] 2011. “Some Principles of Stratification.” Pp. 16-19 in *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Dollar, David and Aart Kraay. 2004. “Growth is Good for the Poor” Pp 177-182 in *The Globalization Reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Edited by Frank J. Lechner and John Boli. Blackwell Publishing. Maiden MA.
- Farmer, Paul. 2005. “Listening for Prophetic Voices: A Critique of Market Based Medicine”. Pp. 160–178 in *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights and the New War on the Poor*. University of California Press. Berkley.
- Finkelstein, Norman G. “Israel Has the Right to Defend Itself” Pp. 135-153 in *Method and Madness: The Hidden Story of Israel’s Assaults on Gaza*. Or Books. New York and London
- Foster, John Bellamy and Brett Clark. 2012. “The Planetary Emergency” *Monthly Review*. 64:7 1-25.
- Furman, Rich, Alissa R. Ackerman, Derej Iwamoto, Nalini Negi, and Gladys Mondragon. 2013. “Undocumented Latino Immigrant Men at Risk” *Social Development Issues* 35(1):1-12
- Hagan, John, Joshua Kaiser, and Anna Hanson. 2016. “The Theory of Legal Cynicism and Sunni Insurgent Violence in Post-Invasion Iraq.” *American Sociological Review* 81(2):316-346.

- Hosseini-Zadeh, Ismael. 2006. "The Political Economy of U.S. Military Spending" Pp 203-245 in *The Political Economy of U.S. Militarism*. Palgrave Macmillan. New York.
- Navarro, Vicente. 2014. "Neoliberalism as a Class Ideology; Or, The Political Causes of the Growth of Inequalities". Pp. 8-22 in *The Financial and Economic Crises and their Impact on Health and Social Well-Being*. Edited by Vicente Navarro and Carles Muntaner. Baywood Publishing Company. New York.
- Oxfam. 2017. "An Economy for the 99%" *Oxfam Briefing Paper*. Accessed online 09/25/17  
[https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-en.pdf)
- Thompson, Heather Ann. 2012. "The Prison Industrial Complex: A Growth Industry in a Shrinking Economy" *New Labor Forum* 21(3) 39-47.
- Torgerson, Jon. Taking Economic Rights Seriously
- Yates, Michael. 2003. "A Radical Economic Perspective" Pp 159-191 in *Naming the System: Inequality and Work in the Global Economy*. Monthly Review Press. New York.
- Yates, Michael. 2016. "Measuring Global Inequality." *Monthly Review* 68(6) 1-13.

## Further Reading

- Berry, Albert and John Serieux. 2006. "Riding the Elephants: The Evolution of World Economic Growth and Income Distribution at the End of the Twentieth Century." DESA Working Paper 27, United Nations.
- Blauner, Robert. 1969. "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt." *Social Problems* 16(4):393-408.
- Bonacich, Edna. 1972. "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market." *American Sociological Review* 37(5):547-559.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 1997. "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation." *American Sociological Review* 62(3):465-480.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2006. *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*. Metropolitan Books
- Foster, John Bellamy and Robert W. McChesney. 2012. *The Endless Crisis: How Monopoly Finance Capitalism Produces Stagnation and Upheaval from the USA to China* Monthly Review Press. New York, NY
- Joab-Peterside, Sofri and Anna Zalik. 2008. "The Commodification of Violence in the Niger Delta". Pp 199-219 in *The Socialist Register 2009: Violence Today: Actually Existing Barbarism*. Edited by Leo Panitch and Colin Leys. London: Merlin Press and Monthly Review Press
- Mandel, Hadas and Moshe Semyonov. 2016. "Going Back in Time? Gender Differences in Trends and Sources of the Racial Pay Gap" *American Sociological Review*. 81(5) 1039-1068.
- Marx, Karl [1847] 1978. "Wage Labour and Capital." Pp. 203-217 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert Tucker.
- Navarro, Vicente and Leiyu Shi. 2012. The Political Context of Social Inequalities and Health. *Social Science and Medicine* 52:481-491
- Parenti, Michael. 2011. *The Face of Imperialism*. Paradigm Publishers. Boulder.

Reiman, Jeffrey and Paul Leighton 2010. *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison: Ideology, Class, and Criminal Justice*. Ninth Edition ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Wilkinson, Richard G. and Kate Pickett. 2006. "Income Inequality and Population Health: A Review and Explanation of the Evidence." *Social Science and Medicine* 62:1768-1784.

Williams, David R. and Chiquita Collins 2013. "Racial Residential Segregation: A Fundamental Cause of Racial Disparities in Health." Pp. 331-353 in *Race, Ethnicity and Health: A Public Health Reader*, edited by Thomas A. Laveist and Lydia A. Isaac. San Fransisco , CA: Jossey-Bass.

Wolff, Richard. 2012. *Democracy at Work: A Cure for Capitalism* Haymarket Books

Yates, Michael. 2012. "The Great Inequality." *Monthly Review* 63(10).

**Basic skills necessary for the assimilation of sociological knowledge and success in this course:**

**1. Self-discipline:** You will need to be sufficiently dedicated and take the time necessary to not only read through all of the assigned material, but to truly learn and absorb it. You will need to ask yourself questions as you read to ensure that you can identify and recall the main points. After reading you should be able to answer questions related to the material and see its personal and/or social/economic/political implications.

**You are responsible for knowing the material in the text and other readings according to the syllabus schedule as well as the material covered in class lecture.** Chapters should be read by the time the material is covered in class. In this way you will gain more from the lecture, be prepared for quizzes, and reduce the need to cram for exams. To test your own knowledge, you should be able to answer the questions at the end of each chapter correctly.

**2. Attend every class. Come prepared and pay attention in class, take appropriate notes according to your best learning style and method. No cell phone or computer use is allowed during class.**

**3. A willingness to challenge dominant beliefs and perceptions.** The sociologist must not fear information, data, and iconoclastic perspectives, which may clash with their preconceptions. The sociologist must not shy away from information, data or truths that may be distasteful to powers that be- or to their own preconceptions.

Course Schedule	Topics	Readings	Due dates
<b>Week 1</b>			
1/15	Introduction to course.		
1/17	Sociology and social problems	Heiner 1	

<b>Course Schedule</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Due dates</b>
<b>Week 2</b> 1/22	Inequality-Overview and theory	Heiner 2;	
1/24		(Finish Heiner 2)	
<b>Week 3</b> 1/29	Inequality	Yates 2003; Davis and Moore	
1/31	Global Inequality	Oxfam Report Summary (pg 1-8)	<b>QUIZ 1 1/31</b>
<b>Week 4</b> 2/5	Global Inequality Cont.	Dollar and Kaay (2004); Yates 2016	
2/7	Global Inequality	Navarro 2014	<b>QUIZ 2 2/7</b>
<b>Week 5</b> 2/12	Inequality and Health	Heiner pp 90-96; Farmer (2005)	<b>2/12 Reflection on inequality due (If selected)</b>
2/14	Inequality and Health	Coburn (2004); Chomsky (2017)	<b>Quiz 3 2/14</b>
<b>Week 6</b> 2/19	<b>First Exam</b>	Heiner 3;	
2/21	Racial Inequality	Heiner 3;	
<b>Week 7</b> 2/26	Racial Inequality	Furman et al 2013	<b>QUIZ 4 2/26</b>
2/28	Crime (National focus; sociological theory)	Heiner 5	
<b>Week 8</b> 3/5- 3/7	Crime and Prisons	Clear, Alexander	

<b>Course Schedule</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Due dates</b>
<b>Week 9</b>			
3/12	Prisons	Thompson	<b>Quiz 5 3/12</b>
3/14	War and Empire	Blum: Chapters 10 (Guatemala), 30 (Cuba)	<b>Article Review Due 3/14</b>
<b>SPRING Break</b> 3/19-3/21	SPRING BREAK		
<b>Week 10</b>			
3/26	War	Blum 52 (Iraq)	
3/28		Chomsky 2006;	
<b>Week 11</b>			
4/2	War Explanations	Hagan et al. 2016 and Zadeh	<b>Quiz 6 4/2</b>
4/4		Documentary in class	
<b>Week 12</b>			
4/9	<b>Second Exam</b>		
4/11	Democracy and Human Rights	Torgerson, Avnery	<b>4/11 Reflection on War and Imperialism Due if selected</b>
<b>Week 13</b>			
4/16	Democracy and Human Rights	Finkelstein	
4/18	<b>Holiday Break</b>		
<b>Week 14</b>			
4/23	Human Rights	Abunimah;	<b>Extra Credit Article Review Due 4/23 and Quiz 7 4/23</b>
4/25	Sociology and the Environment	Heiner 6	
<b>Week 15</b>			
4/30	Sociology and the Environment	Foster and Clark	
5/2	Conclusions/ Review	Heiner 7	<b>Final Paper Due 5/2</b>
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>FINISHED</b>		

**Grading Criteria:**

## **Assignment weights**

Attendance = 20  
Quizzes over readings  $7 * 10 = 70$   
Reflection Paper *1 or 2* = 75  
Article Review = 50  
Final Paper 100 points  
1<sup>st</sup> Exam 100 points  
2<sup>nd</sup> Exam 100 points  
TOTAL = 515

## **Grading Scale**

90% to 100% A  
80% to 89% B  
70%-79% C  
60%-69% D  
59% or below F

## **Quizzes over readings**

Be sure to keep up with all the readings so as not to lose points on the quizzes, and to be able to perform well on exams. The quizzes will cover the entirety of the readings in each section.

**YOU MAY SELECT EITHER REFLECTION PAPER 1 on Inequality DUE September 25 or Reflection Paper 2 on War and Conflict Due November 16**

### **Reflection Paper 1:**

**Global Inequality Reflection Paper:** After completing the class readings on national level and global inequality from the past few weeks and viewing the documentary “The End of Poverty?” reflect on the historical, social, political and economic processes that help generate and reinforce the sharp dichotomy between poverty and wealth that characterizes our world. We have seen average real wages remain largely flat in the United States since the mid-1970s, as productivity has risen. Around the world we have also seen inequality in other countries increase. Regarding global inequality, some argue that the gap between countries is increasing and others that it is decreasing. Think through what explains the contradictory accounts? In your reflection paper address the following:

1. Specifically, what processes could you identify that help produce and reproduce this level of inequality? Class discussions and readings that covered theoretical explanations of inequality are critical to adequately address this question.
2. What are some of the consequences (deleterious or otherwise) of this inequality? Are there problems with the argument that states that as long as there is economic growth, we should not worry about inequality?

3. What types of ideological justifications are used to justify or rationalize the transfer of wealth (through cheap labor/ primary goods) from poor countries to wealthy corporations often located in wealthy nations?

4. Given the insights of sociological theories on inequality and what you have learned thus far, what could potentially be done to address inequality and make society more equitable?

5. Finally, think about the critical constructions paradigm presented by Heiner, does it seem odd to you that the level of global inequality that characterizes the divide between the so-called Global North and South does not make it high onto 'our' list of social problems worthy of our attention? Why or why not?

This essay must be supported from evidence from the text, class readings, relevant academic journal articles and/or valid organizational reports such as Oxfam or United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) reports on inequality. Please include a complete bibliography and use correct in-text citations (discussed in the syllabus) at the end of this assignment. The bibliography does not count towards your page minimum.

**Write a minimum of three pages, in twelve-point Times New Roman or Arial font, double-spaced. Due September 21<sup>st</sup>.**

## **Reflection Paper 2:**

**War and Conflict Reflection Paper.** Reflecting on the material covered in this section (Blum chapters, Chomsky, Hagan et al. and Hossein-Zadeh) and on the general thrust of Heiner's work think deeply about the following questions. As Heiner (2016) indicates a problem that affects society often comes to the attention of society not due to the degree of actual harm that the phenomenon causes or reflects nor due to the numbers of those affected (scope) but for other reasons. It is difficult to imagine a phenomenon that creates more harm with greater numbers affected than does war and conflict. (Think of the numbers of people killed in all sides + wounded + property destruction + homeless + infrastructure damage + disease/health impacts + psychological trauma). Why might it be that war, instead of being seen as a major social problem, is often presented as a solution? Think of and identify a particular recent conflict of which the United States was a party. What were the stated objectives of the war/conflict? What other variables/factors helped lead to the war/invasion? Where were there any social or economic sectors that stood to benefit from the conflict? What suffering was caused as a result? Which parties were affected? What was the end result? Finally, why do you think Chomsky opens his discussion of Outlaw States with a reference to the Nuremberg Trials and the Geneva Conventions? What is his message and to whom is he conveying it? Your analysis should identify social/economic/political forces that go beyond attributing conflict to this or that personality. **Write a minimum of three pages, in twelve-point Times New Roman or Arial font, double-spaced.**



**Your Reflection Papers will be evaluated according to the following criteria:**

1. Clarity in presenting your argument/addressing the specific questions of the reflection paper. (30% weight)
2. Evidence provided in support of your argument. Do you refer to class readings and/or other relevant scholarly material? (Particularly for Reflection 2) (30% weight)
3. Does your position take into account the complexity of the problem under consideration? Does it account for the various social/economic forces explain the problem. Does it consider alternative explanations? (30% weight)
4. Writing quality. Does the writing reflect good grammar etc. (10% weight)

**Article or chapter reviews:**

Select an article to review **from the required article readings** that we have covered in the syllabus prior to its due date. You may NOT select from the textbooks' readings (Heiner) and you may not select just any article off of the internet, but you **MUST** select from the articles that we have been reading for class. Each article review will be valued out of a total of 50 possible points and should be two full pages in length. Some articles are clearly based on quantitative or qualitative research with the methodology made explicit. For the purpose of simplicity, I refer to those as "research articles" because they follow clearly identifiable research methodologies. Usually research articles are divided into clearly defined 'introduction, methods, results and discussion section. The research articles are Coburn, Hagan et al, Yates 2016, and Dollar and Kray. In this case, you will follow the research article review questions to organize your review. Even though all articles pull on research to build arguments, for the rest of the articles use the 'theory or narrative' based format to review the article. Article reviews must include the **name of the article**, the **major question(s) or research question** that the article was asking and **the major arguments of the article**. The *best* reviews will reflect that you engaged with the article, and may even include other academic sources that support or disagree with the articles findings. ***NO PLAIGERISM WILL BE TOLERATED.***

Once again: your article review **MUST** be from the course article readings identified above.

If the article is a research article, the review should answer the following:

1. What is the central research question guiding the research?
2. What methods are used to investigate this question
  - a. How were the data obtained?
  - b. How were the data analyzed?
3. What were the results of the study?
4. Why are these results important?

For theory or narrative based articles answer the following:

1. What is the phenomenon under scrutiny?
2. What is the primary argument of the article?
3. What supporting evidence was provided?
4. Does the theory make sense? Why or why not?
5. Why is it important?

## **Final Paper**

You must write a 5 to 7 page, double-spaced paper that investigates a particular social problem covered in this course. Your paper must explain/show the severity of the social problem (its impact), examine theoretical explanations of the social problem, and examine the ethical dimensions/implications that are connected to the social problem. Any problem selected should have a global or international dimension to it. In some cases, this can be best included by contrasting different countries approaches to the social problem (this works well for issues of healthcare, crime, and forms of inequality) or it may take on a broader global analysis (this may be appropriate for environment, war and conflict, global inequality etc.)

You will have considerable freedom to develop your paper but there are certain rules by which your paper must abide:

**1. You must include at least 5 bibliographic references.** These must be appropriately cited at the end of the paper. All references must include the authors' or author's last and first name(s), the year published, the title of the article or book, the name of the journal or publisher, and where it was published.

**2. To count towards the bibliographic reference requirement, the references must be scholarly.** This means they must come from either books of scholars or must be articles published in scholarly journals. If you have questions on this please see me.

**3. Your work must include in-text citations.** All references must be cited in the text and all work cited in the text must be fully referenced in your bibliography or works cited section at the end of the paper. All quotations of authors must be in quotation marks and the in text citation for quotations must include the page number. All in text citations must include the author's last name and the year the work was published in parenthesis. For example, (Blum 2004) or (Blum 2004: 328) when quoting.

**4. In no circumstances will plagiarism be tolerated.** A zero will result in this case. This means that you must not copy the works of either your classmates (this is not a group project) or other scholars and pass it off as your own. Honesty and integrity must be upheld in academic work.

## **Course Policies**

**Class Participation and attendance:**

The attendance and participation of students is vital for a positive and rewarding learning experience for everyone. Your presence is expected and students will be evaluated on their sharing of thoughts and class contribution. You will miss vital information if you are not present and alert in class. In the end it is your grade and your responsibility to know the information in the exams and to incorporate the information from class in your assignments. Individuals that miss class and/or are not engaged during class, tend to hand in poorer work, and do more poorly in exams. Thus, by attending class not only do you ensure gaining these twenty attendance points, but also you increase the likelihood that you will perform better in the other aspects of the course.

**You are allowed two absences after which your grade will suffer a 4-point deduction for each day absent. There are a total of 20 attendance points possible. Only under extreme circumstances or university activities that conflict with class will this penalty be waved.**

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**Late Assignments: Late assignments will have 5 points deducted per day late.**

**Missed exam policy:** No missed exams will allowed to be retaken without instructor approval based on *evidence* (doctor's note, university letter) that indicates the person missed the test due to a legitimate emergency, illness and/or school function. **All missed exams must be made up within one week.** The exam *may* also be different than the exam given to the rest of the class, and no bonus question will appear on the make-up exam. No exam may be made up after the week prior to final exams.

**Learning Environment** Please keep in mind that everyone has a different learning style and we need to collectively keep distractions to a minimum. ***PLEASE STAY OFF YOUR CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN CLASS.*** I will respect you and I also expect you do give your fellow classmates and me that same respect. If you are disruptive in class you will first be given a warning, the second time it occurs, you will be asked to leave.

**Show up on time and do not leave early. An early exit will hurt your attendance.**

**Extra credit:** A student may gain extra credit by conducting an additional article review. The amount awarded depends on the quality as assessed by the stipulations under 'Article Reviews'. Extra credit is available only to students who have turned in all of their assignments.

**Cell phones and electronic devices:** Not permitted during class time. Turn off or silence your cellular telephones before coming to class. Sending text messages is distracting and is strictly prohibited. Laptop use is generally prohibited during class time. No use of iPods or other listening devices will be tolerated. Please focus on the task at hand.

**Syllabus modifications:** The professor reserves the right to make adjustments or improvements to the syllabus during the semester. You will be notified of all changes.

**Cheating, Plagiarism, and Academic Dishonesty:**

At no time will any form of cheating or plagiarism of any kind be allowed. Students are attending the university to learn and cannot do so if they do not complete their own work. Academic dishonesty is a serious ethical violation and will not be tolerated. I expect that these standards will be met, and I will hold students to them.

Plagiarism is according to the New Oxford Dictionary is “the practice of taking someone else’s work and passing it off as your own”. This means in academic practice copying someone else’s work and ideas, without quoting and citing as appropriate.

**Potential consequences of plagiarism or academic dishonesty include failing the article review, assignment, exam and/or quiz at a minimum. Other consequences include failing the entire course and the filing of the Academic Misconduct Form that will remain on your college records.**

**Americans with Disabilities Act:**

If a student has an established disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADAAA) and would like to request accommodation, that student should please contact me as soon as possible. Any student requesting accommodations should first contact Disability Support Services at 940-397-4140 in room 168 Clark Student Center to document and coordinate reasonable accommodations if they have not already done so.

**Campus Concealed Carry**

Senate Bill 11 passed by the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective August 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to the University’s webpage at <https://mwsu.edu/campus-carry/rules-policies>.