

“Critical Issues in Sociology” -- 077.201 Section L01
Department of Sociology, University of Manitoba
3 Credit Hours
Fall 2005

Instructor	Dr. Susan Prentice
Office	329 Isbister Building
Telephone	474-6726 (with voice-mail)
e-mail	Through the course website, at www.umanitoba.ca/webct
Office Hours	Posted on instructor’s door and by special appointment
Class Times	320C Isbister, Mon-Wed-Fri, 10:30 - 11:20

Course Overview

The *Undergraduate Calendar* description of this course reads: “A form-specific, content variable course especially designed for Honours students. The intent of this course is to develop critical thinking and improve students' oral, writing and research skills. It is also designed to create a cohesive cohort of Honours students through the use of group work and assignments.”

This year, the course will focus on social problems and social problem-solving in Winnipeg. We will consider how various phenomenon, once labelled “social problems,” are addressed in attempts to solve them. The first part of the course will focus on how sociology as a discipline has theorized and approached ‘social problems.’ From this general overview, we will concentrate on understanding selected ‘social problems’ in Winnipeg alongside community-based social problem-solving initiatives. In the last third of the course, students will present case studies of an issue they have selected for intensive study. Through this study, we will be alert to the complex intersection of social interaction and social institutions, exploring if, when and how race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity and other processes are relevant to struggles over the definition of and solving of a social problem.

This course is designed to run as a seminar. This will require the active participation and involvement of every student.

Honours Seminar

As an introduction to the Honours program, this course will also accomplish a series of cognate objectives. In addition to (a) introducing students to theoretical debates about social problem definition and social-problem solving and (b) providing empirical material about Winnipeg, the course will also provide an introduction to:

- applied research methods
- careers in applied sociology
- social policy analysis
- theories of social change
- urban sociology

• as well as developing students' ability to communicate orally, to lead seminars, to work together as a team, and to research and write papers.

Required Readings

• Silver, Jim (Ed.). 2000. *Solutions that Work: Fighting Poverty in Winnipeg*. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax and CCPA-MB: Winnipeg. ISBN 1-55266-021-4

• *Additional readings:*

Some supplementary readings can be downloaded directly (see addresses in schedule) and all others will be made available to students through a course mailbox in the Sociology mail room.

Grading Scheme

Synthesis paper	20%	Due in-class in October
In-class Test	20%	Held in November
Research Essay	40%	Due in-class in December
Case Study Presentation	10%	Over late November
Seminar Preparation & Participation	10%	All-term

Policy on Grades, Tests and Assignments

Generally speaking, the following letter/percentage/GPA/descriptive scale will be used, however students should note that these are guidelines only, and may be altered depending on the final grade distribution.

A+	90 - 100%	4.5	Exceptional
A	80 - 89%	4.	Excellent
B+	75 - 79%	3.5	Very Good
B	70 - 74%	3.	Good
C+	65 - 69%	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60 - 64%	2.	Adequate
D	50 - 59%	1.	Marginal
F	49% or less	0	Failure

Only documented reasons will be accepted for missing the test. If you miss the test for a health-related reason, you must get in touch with me as soon as possible to present a signed medical certificate and to arrange a make-up test. Makeup tests *may* be granted for disability or compassionate reasons, at the discretion of the instructor. Responsibility for initiating a make-up test lies with the student. Ordinarily, tests must be made-up within one week. Failure to communicate effectively with the instructor about a missed test within the expected time frame may result in ineligibility for a make-up test. A missed test will receive a grade of 0. Note that makeup tests will differ from the test originally scheduled.

Grades will be posted exclusively on the course's private webct site. Students must consult the course website to learn their grades. Assistance on accessing webct will be provided in-class and by the instructor.

Students should familiarize themselves with the University policy on appeal of term and

final grades found in the University of Manitoba's 2005-06 *Undergraduate Calendar*. Please note that concerns about term work must be discussed with the instructor in the first instance; then can be appealed up to ten working days after grades have been made available to students. For this purpose, dates will be based on time of posting to the webct bulletin board.

The University acknowledges the right of all students to observe recognized Holy Days of their faith which fall within the academic year. Please notify me of your intended absence at least three weeks in advance.

Students with special learning needs (who, for legitimate reasons, require extra time to write a test or who require aids or other supports) should introduce themselves to the instructor at the beginning of the term in order to arrange suitable testing arrangements.

Synthesis Paper

The objective of the paper (approx 1,700 words, or about 6 pages) is to explore the theoretical issues associated with studying social problems. Through the synthesis paper, students will provide evidence of their mastery of basic information and comprehension as well as their capacity to apply the information. The synthesis paper is worth 20% of the final grade.

Test

The test will be short-essay answer, and will assess student's knowledge and comprehension of selected social problems in Winnipeg. Test questions will require students to apply theoretical material to empirical evidence. This test is worth 20% of the final grade.

Research Essay

Students will identify and research a social issue that interests them. Research essays (approx 3,500 words, or about 12- 14 pages) must integrate theoretical and empirical material, and they must include some discussion of social-problem solving. More information on preparing the essay will be presented in-class. The research essay is worth 40% of your final grade. No time extensions will be granted, so you should plan your time carefully to meet this deadline.

Case Study Presentation

Each student will make a 20 - 30 minute scheduled presentation to present their case study, and to respond to questions from classmates and the instructor. You will need to prepare a handout to accompany your presentation. Students will present on the issue that they have selected for their research essay. Your presentation is worth 10% of your final grade.

Seminar Participation

This course will operate as a seminar instead of a lecture-based course. Each student must arrive in class ready to participate (by having read that day's assigned reading). Then, being ready, students must *actively participate*.

Effective seminars don't happen magically: they are a product of group interaction. Each class we will identify and review the major concepts, ideas and techniques contained in the reading. Each class will begin with a discussion of basic information (definitions, key facts, etc.)

and will move toward discussions that integrate comprehension and application. It is every seminar participant's job to address the day's readings, including (a) being willing to raise questions about any aspect of the reading that is unclear and (b) offering comments on content you wish to dispute or explore further.

Students will rely on you to help them in their learning, just as you will rely on them. As a seminar, learning in this course will happen through mutual engagement. Ten percent of your final grade will be based on evaluations of your preparation for, and participation in, the weekly seminar.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense, with grave consequences. Students should acquaint themselves with the University of Manitoba's policy in the *Undergraduate Calendar* (pp. 26-27).

Penalties for plagiarism and academic honesty are severe. The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism in a written assignment, test or examination is "F" on the paper and "F" for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as the purchase of an essay or cheating on a test or examination, the penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department in Arts or from all courses taught in the Faculty. The Faculty of Arts also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

Last day for voluntary withdrawal from the course without academic penalty is November 16, 2005. Students will have received at least one grade before that date.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Handed out first day of class
(Subject to change without notice)