

SOC 2010 “Critical Issues in Sociology”

Section A01, Slot 10 3 credit hours

September – December 2009

Instructor: Dr. Jane Ursel
Office: 108 Isbister Building
Telephone: 474-8979 (with voice-mail)
E-mail: jursel@cc.umanitoba.ca

Class time: 1:00 -2:15, Tuesday and Thursday
Class Room: 320C Isbister
Office Hours: 2:30 – 5:00pm Tuesdays & Thursdays (or by appointment)

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, with a largely local focus. We will consider how various phenomena, 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 social problem-solving initiatives. The course is organized around a major research essay, in which students explore a social problem and its social-problem efforts associated with it, drawing on both primary (interview) and secondary data. 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 definitions of, and problem-solving associated with, social problems.

This course is designed 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 an opportunity for substantive study of a social problem, the course. will also provide an introduction to:

- applied research methods – preparing a research ethics application & qualitative interviewing
- social policy analysis
- theories of social change

The course will further:

- develop students' ability to communicate orally; to lead seminars; to work together as a team; research and write papers; and
- introduce students to careers in applied sociology.

Required Readings – see schedule

- Most readings are available by photocopy in the Sociology mail room
- Some supplementary readings can be downloaded directly (see addresses in schedule) and all others are available from the Elizabeth Dafoe Library.

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

Students should familiarize themselves with the University policy on appeal of term and final grades, found in the University of Manitoba's 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.

Only documented reasons will be accepted for missing an oral assignment or late submission of written assignments. It is the student's responsibility to inform me as soon as possible of requests for deferrals for reasons of health, compass or disability. Ordinarily missed assignments must be made-up within one week. With prior approval from the instructor a late submission will be marked without penalty. **Without prior approval** a late submission will be docked one grade point per day overdue.

The University acknowledges the right of all students to observe recognized Holy Days of their faith that 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.

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is a core academic value, and so academic dishonesty is a serious offense, with grave consequences. Students should acquaint themselves with the University of Manitoba's policy on plagiarism and cheating (section 7.1) and examination (section 4.2.8) found in the Undergraduate Calendar. 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.

Evaluation

Oral Assignments:

		Due Date
Presentation No. 1	10%	Sept. 22
Presentation No. 2	10%	Oct. 22
Presentation No. 3	10%	Dec. 3 & 8
Seminar Participation	<u>10%</u>	
	40%	

Written Assignments:

		Due Date
Ethics Assignment	10%	Sept. 29
Synthesis paper	20%	TBA
Research Essay	<u>30%</u>	Dec. 10
	60%	

Oral Assignment Guidelines:

Presentation No. 1: Situating Research Topic - Students will make a 10 minute oral presentation and respond to questions from classmates and the instructor. The presentation will identify the selected social problem topic and will explore its relationship to the literature theorizing social problems. This presentation is worth 10% of final grade.

Presentation No. 2: Report on Interviews - Students will make a 15 -20 minute oral presentation on the interviews they conducted with representatives from Problem Solving Organizations and respond to questions from classmates and the instructor. Students will be assessed on their ability to present the results of their interviews in a concise and coherent manner and address some of the social problem theory issues discussed in class. The presentation is worth 10% of final grade.

Presentation No. 3: Research Essay Overview - Each student will make a 30 minute scheduled presentation to present their research essay, and to respond to questions from classmates and the instructor. 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 and is not 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 are the product of group interaction. Each class we will identify and review the major concepts, ideas and techniques contained in the day's reading(s). 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 reading(s), including (a) being willing to raise questions about any aspect of the reading that is unclear and (b) offering comments on content to dispute or explore further.

Students will rely on each other in their learning. 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 – including peer assessments of your contribution.

Written Assignment Guidelines:

Ethics Assignment:

Each student will be required to fill out an ethics proposal and submit the written application. We will do a classroom workshop on ethics applications before the assignment is due. The written submission is due the next class and is worth 10% of total grade.

Synthesis Paper

The objective of the paper (approx 1,500 words, or about 8 pages) is to explore the theoretical issues associated with studying social problems. Through the synthesis paper, students will provide evidence of their mastery of theory as well as their capacity to apply the information. The synthesis paper is worth 20% of the final grade.

Research Essay

The essay is designed to help build a scaffold to the Honours thesis. Students will identify and research a social issue that interests them. Research essays (approx 4,000 words, or about 13- 14 pages) must integrate theoretical and empirical material, and they must include some discussion of social-problem solving, as well as content from two original interviews with a representative of a social problem solving organization. More information on preparing the essay will be presented in-class. The research essay is worth 30% of your final grade.

Voluntary Withdrawal

Last day for voluntary withdrawal from the course without academic penalty is November 18, 2009. Students will have received 30% of their grades before that date.

COURSE SCHEDULE – handed out on the first day of class.