Welcome to Social Problems. This course examines contemporary social problems from a sociological perspective. Social problems are complex, as the very definition of a “social problem” can be difficult to articulate. Additionally, social issues have shifted in and out of the spotlight historically, considered problems in some places and periods, and remaining invisible or even expected in other contexts. Over time, various social forces have created, exacerbated, or mitigated social problems. A common feature of social problems is that their consequences are negative for many people. However, the consequences of social problems are also unequal, as they affect demographic groups differently; some groups are disproportionately disadvantaged and others disproportionately benefit. People tend to blame individuals for social problems, but research indicates that the root causes of social problems often lie in the very structures of society. These structures create unequal conditions that shape life experiences differently and unequally. Many policies exist for addressing social problems that may be more or less successful in reducing or eliminating social problems. Applying the sociological perspective to the study of social problems illuminates the ways in which society shapes the definition of social problems and the consequences and experiences attached to social problems.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog Description
An introduction to the study of contemporary issues such as poverty, military policies, families, crime, aging, racial-ethnic conflict, and the environment.

Writing Designation
This course is designated as writing-focused. This means that students participate in writing opportunities that are assessed for content and mechanics (grammar, spelling, punctuation, organization). Additional writing assistance is available at the Writing Center (http://www.cwu.edu/learning-commons/university-writing-center).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the core elements of social problems from a sociological perspective, including:

- Approaches for studying social problems
- The complexity of defining social problems
- Types of social problems
- The sociological imagination as it relates to social problems
- The distinction between various explanations of social problems (individual, structural); person-blame and system-blame approaches
- Research designs and research methods used to study social problems
- The nature and consequences (costs) of specific social problems
- Policies directed toward specific social problems, and the outcomes of these policies
- Potential solutions to various social problems, as well as obstacles to solutions

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### REQUIRED READING

Reading course materials is vital for success. You are responsible for thoroughly reading the assigned materials, integrating the information into assignments and discussions, and studying the materials in preparation of quizzes and exams. Taking notes on readings is highly recommended. Your notes will help to remind you of important points and allow you to locate information quickly.

The required textbook for this course is:

![Book Cover](image)

**Authors:** Joel Best  
**Title:** Social Problems  
**Edition:** 3rd Edition  
**Year:** 2016  
**Publisher:** W. W. Norton

Additional required readings are available online via Canvas, as necessary.

#### NOTE-TAKING

Students are expected to take notes on all class lectures, discussions, activities, readings, and videos. All information encountered in the course, in any form, may be represented on any form of evaluation. Students benefit by developing a thorough understanding of each topic and by incorporating detailed information into any discussion. Your goal is to be able to discuss topics in the most informed and developed ways possible.
ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION

Regular attendance and participation greatly enhance student performance. Students who attend class more regularly, and who participate in class activities and discussions, perform much better on assignments and exams than students who attend and participate less frequently.

ASSIGNMENTS

Discussions
Throughout the course, students participate in discussions with their peers. Discussions provide opportunities to summarize content, share insights, clarify concepts, and develop new ideas and questions. The specific prompts for each discussion are available in Canvas (Modules).

Guidelines for discussions will be posted in Canvas. Discussions must be completed and submitted in Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on the specified due date. Late discussions are not accepted.

Documentaries
Throughout the course, several documentaries provide additional information relevant to thinking about social problems. Students watch these during the assigned week and should take notes on the content to integrate into reflections, discussions, and exams.

Reflections
Throughout the quarter, students participate in reflection writing. Reflections are an opportunity to think creatively about connections between ideas, to consider criticisms, to develop additional questions, and to find more information. The specific kind of reflection assignment will vary. For example, some reflections may involve watching a film, exploring a website, reading a chapter or article that we do not formally cover in class, engaging in an independent activity outside of class, or other activities. All reflections involve a written component in addition to any specific materials that are assigned.

Guidelines for reflections will be posted in Canvas. Reflections must be completed and submitted in Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on the specified due date. Late reflections are accepted but penalized by 25% on the earned grade. Late reflections must be submitted within one week of the original due date in order to earn credit; beyond one week, no credit can be earned.

EXAMS

Exams are designed to help you demonstrate that you have carefully studied course materials and are able to answer questions concerning their content. Exams are not cumulative in terms of specific questions being repeated on more than one exam. However, the course materials build on each other. Thus, information that you learn early on will be necessary for understanding information that you learn later. Learning is cumulative.

Exam questions include standard types of questions (e.g., multiple choice, true/false, short answer, essay). Readings and notes are encouraged as references.
Canvas

Canvas is required for this course. You will use this online resource to access the syllabus (and any updated schedules), announcements, readings, handouts, assignments, grades, and to submit work (https://canvas.cwu.edu). Students are expected to check Canvas on a daily basis in order to remain apprised of announcements, due dates, and other important information. Please review the information available at http://www.cwu.edu/online-learning > Online Student Support, in order to familiarize yourself with Canvas.

It is each student’s responsibility to ensure that they have uploaded the correct file when submitting an assignment in Canvas; please double-check that you have submitted the correct file in Canvas. If you experience an issue with Canvas that potentially hinders your ability to complete work (e.g., online quiz) by the listed due date, contact your instructor immediately via email and describe the issue(s). If you are unable to submit an assignment via Canvas, or are unsure about whether a submission was successful, email your professor with a copy of your assignment as a back-up. Students who do not successfully submit work via Canvas, and who fail to send a copy via email, will not be granted leniency; the submission will not be counted and/or will be considered late (if re-submitted later).

If you experience ongoing problems with Canvas, please use any of the following technical support resources to find a solution.

**Canvas Technical Support 24/7**
- Toll Free Support Line: (877) 399-8897
- Email Canvas Support: support@instructure.com
- Finding Help with Canvas:
  - [http://www.cwu.edu/online-learning/canvas-help-and-support-students](http://www.cwu.edu/online-learning/canvas-help-and-support-students)
  - [http://www.cwu.edu/online-learning/finding-help-canvas-0](http://www.cwu.edu/online-learning/finding-help-canvas-0)

**LockDown Browser**
LockDown Browser is required for all online quizzes/exams. Campus lab computers are already equipped, but follow these steps to set up the browser on a personal computer:

1. Download LockDown Browser
   - Be sure to do this well in advance, as download and installation times may vary.
2. Launch the browser.
3. Sign in to your CWU account.
4. Navigate to the course in Canvas.
5. Select the quiz you wish to take and begin.
Grades can be accessed by logging in to Canvas and clicking Grades in the navigation.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>GPA Credit</th>
<th>Transcript Explanation</th>
<th>Definition of letter grade / Policy statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Meets all objectives of the course and fulfills all requirements; performs at a level that reflects excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Meets all objectives of the course and fulfills all requirements; performs at a high level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Meets all objectives of the course and fulfills all requirements; performs at a satisfactory level</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Marginal Pass</td>
<td>Makes progress toward meeting the course objectives; fulfills course requirements at a substandard level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66%</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>61-63%</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-60%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Fails to meet the course objectives; does not fulfill course requirements</td>
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Grade Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams (2 total)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

COURSE POLICIES

SYLLABUS

Remaining enrolled in this course indicates consent to the guidelines, policies, and requirements outlined in this syllabus. Periodic changes to the course schedule may be necessary. Students will be given sufficient notice of such changes. Students are responsible for following any current or revised schedules. Learning is flexible, and so is our academic itinerary.

ABSENCES and MAKE-UP WORK

There is no make-up work unless an absence reflects a legitimate reason (see below) and you provide documentation for the absence(s). You must either 1) contact me before the scheduled due date with documentation of the reason that will prohibit you from completing the work by or on the scheduled due-date, or 2) provide documentation of the extreme circumstances that prohibited you from completing the work by or on the scheduled due-date.
If you know in advance that you will need to miss work that has an associated due date, contact me at least one week in advance to provide documentation and to schedule a time to turn in the work. If you miss coursework unexpectedly, you must contact me within one week explaining the reason for the absence, providing documentation or stating your intention to do so, and making arrangements for how/when the work will be made up. Failure to make this contact within one week (barring extreme circumstances) will forfeit any associated grade points.

**Legitimate reasons** for missing due dates for coursework only include extreme illness, injury, surgery, hospitalization, death of someone close to you, accidents, other unpreventable and unpredictable rare events, disability-related concerns, military service, court appearances, religious observance, or participation in university-approved activities. You **must** have written documentation for all absences for which you wish to be able to make up work (e.g., medical release form, funeral program, court document, etc.). **Do not** ask to be excused or to make up work for coursework that you miss due to vacations, “personal days,” missing your alarm, getting lost, or any other reason. You cannot make up work for (potential) full credit in these cases.

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

In order to foster an environment that maximizes learning and prioritizes basic respect for others, students are required to uphold the following codes and practices:

- The Student Conduct Code in its entirety.
  - [https://www.cwu.edu/trustees/sites/cts.cwu.edu.trustees/files/OTS-7344.2_1.pdf](https://www.cwu.edu/trustees/sites/cts.cwu.edu.trustees/files/OTS-7344.2_1.pdf)
- Treat the course and all classroom participants with courtesy and respect.
  - Abstain from the following:
    - Dominating conversations. Make space for others to contribute.
    - Derogatory or sarcastic comments or devaluation aimed at others (students, professor, guests) in any way or form
    - Derogatory or sarcastic comments or devaluation of the course, class structure, and other course-related components in any way or form
    - Interruptions during class activities, discussions, lecture, videos, or any other component of the class
      - Interruptions include the following:
        - talking or making noise while others are speaking; during a class-wide discussion or activity; during a lecture; during a video; during any other component of class
        - reading during class
        - working on assignments for other classes
        - using electronic devices for purposes that are unrelated to taking notes
        - other rude, disparaging, or harassing behaviors as interpreted by other students and/or your professor
- Focus primarily on course-related activities and discussions during class.
- Mute volumes on cell phones and other devices.
Students who fail to practice appropriate classroom etiquette will face disciplinary action at the professor’s discretion. The first violation is subject to a verbal or written warning directed to the student. In the event of a second violation (or a severe first violation), any of the following actions (in isolation or in combination) are taken at the professor’s discretion:

1) An official university report is filed.
2) The student is asked to leave the classroom (or is removed by authorities). Students who are removed from the class are not permitted to return to any future class sessions until they meet with the professor and/or chair of the department and/or a representative from Student Success, at the professor’s discretion. During the period of removal from the classroom, the student is not welcome to attend class sessions and forfeits any associated grade points that might otherwise have been earned during the period of removal from the classroom.
3) The student is officially dropped from the course.
4) The student is subject to university-authorized disciplinary measures, including probation, suspension, or expulsion.

COMMUNICATION ETIQUETTE

Students may use their official CWU email account to correspond with the professor about course-related questions. Email messages from non-CWU accounts will not be addressed. Please abide by the following guidelines when using email to correspond about a course:

- Identify your full name and the course in which you are enrolled.
- Allow at least 24 hours for a response during the week.
  - During weekends, I am often able to provide a response; in the event that I am unable, you will receive a response on the next day on which the university is open. Do not necessarily expect responses during holidays; I will provide responses as I am able.

If your question is easily answered by information contained in the syllabus, I will refer you to the syllabus.

When communicating with any college/university instructors, the proper title is “Professor.” You may also refer to me as “Dr.” Please do not use titles such as Ms., Miss, or Mrs. My last name is pronounced Sam-bluh-nay.

Please exhibit courtesy and respect when interacting and communicating with everyone who is a member of the CWU campus (as well as people in all social situations and contexts outside of CWU).

GRADE BOOK

Students must retain all written and printed work (including the original computer document/file) throughout the quarter. In the rare event that a grade for completed work is not saved in the Canvas grade book, a student must be able to produce the physical copy of the work in order to receive credit. For printed (typed) work, the physical copy must include your professor’s original written feedback; reprinted copies will not be accepted. For online submissions, the computer document/file must be provided.
UNIVERSITY CLOSINGS and CLASS CANCELLATIONS

Class cancellations due to university closings
Class sessions that are cancelled due to official university closings waive all student responsibilities for in-class work, in-class submissions of work, and all online work that is due through Canvas. Due dates will automatically be shifted to the next day that the university is open.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

REGISTRATION

University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. For information about registration and withdrawal dates, access the Academic Calendar (https://www.cwu.edu/registrar/course-information).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to maintain academic integrity by avoiding dishonesty, cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication, and by reporting any violations to their professor. Academic honesty will not be tolerated in any form. Students identified as having violated academic honesty will fail the specific course requirement and be referred to the appropriate academic authorities. A list of prohibited student conduct, including academic dishonesty, is available at the Washington State Legislature website, WAC 106-125-020 (http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=106-125-020).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with what constitutes academic dishonesty. Regarding plagiarism, specifically, students are responsible for asking any questions before submitting written work. Use the following resource to understand plagiarism: http://libguides.lib.cwu.edu/content.php?pid=644922.


STUDENT ACCESSIBILITIES

Central Washington University is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning, discuss your concerns with your professor. Students with disabilities should contact Student Disability Services to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course, including accommodations. Student Disability Services is located in Hogue 126. Call (509) 963-2214 or email ds@cwu.edu for more information.
Readings and assignments are listed on the weeks during which they are due. Assignments are due at the end of each week at 11:59 p.m.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sep 19-23</td>
<td>W-Su</td>
<td>Ch. 1 The Social Problems Process</td>
<td>Chapter 1 Mills (1959)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Promise</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Sep 24-30</td>
<td>M-Su</td>
<td>Ch. 2 Claims</td>
<td>Chapter 2 Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Oct 1-7</td>
<td>M-Su</td>
<td>Ch. 3 Activists as Claimsmakers</td>
<td>Chapter 3 Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Oct 8-14</td>
<td>M-Su</td>
<td>Ch. 4 Experts as Claimsmakers</td>
<td>Chapter 4 Discussion</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Oct 15-21</td>
<td>M-Su</td>
<td>Ch. 5 The Media and Claims</td>
<td>Chapter 5 Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 22-28</td>
<td>M-Su</td>
<td>Ch. 6 Public Reaction</td>
<td>Chapter 6 Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 29-Nov 4</td>
<td>M-Su</td>
<td>Exam 1: Chapters 1-6</td>
<td>Chapter 7 Exam 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nov 5-11</td>
<td>M-Su</td>
<td>Ch. 7 Policymaking</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Nov 13-18</td>
<td>T-Su</td>
<td>Ch. 8 Social Problems Work</td>
<td>Chapter 8 Reflection</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Nov 19-20 and</td>
<td>M-T,</td>
<td>Wednesday-Friday (Nov 21-23):</td>
<td>Chapter 10 Reflection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>Sa-Su</td>
<td>Thanksgiving and Native American</td>
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<td>Heritage Day Recess</td>
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<td>Ch. 10 Claims Across Space and Time</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 26-Dec 2</td>
<td>M-Su</td>
<td>Ch. 10 (cont.)</td>
<td>Chapter 10 (cont.)</td>
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<td>Ch. 11 The Uses of the Constructionist</td>
<td>Chapter 11 Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec 3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Study day</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Dec 4-7</td>
<td>T-F</td>
<td><strong>FINAL EXAM WEEK</strong></td>
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<td>Exam 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exam 2: Chapters 7-11</td>
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* Final exam schedules: https://www.cwu.edu/registrar/course-information