

Social Problems

University of Colorado at Boulder

Class: Socy 2031

Days: Tuesday & Thursday

Time: 8:00am-9:15am

Room: HUMN 135

Semester: Spring 2011

Instructor: Colter Ellis

Office: Ketchum 409

Contact: colter.ellis@colorado.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday from 9:30am-11:00am or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the social construction of social problems. In this class, we will explore the socio-historical origins of inequality, emphasizing the way past constructions of race, class, and gender intersect with our everyday lives. We have all experienced inequality and each of us is oppressed and privileged in different ways. For many of us, the social systems that shape inequalities remain unseen, unrecognized, or unnamed. My goal in this class is to expose these systems and give students the tools to recognize, name, and understand them sociologically. In this class, we will discuss how people socially construct “problems” and how these constructions influence our everyday lives.

A Word of Caution

The sociological study of social problems presented in this class concerns social oppression and inequality. We will discuss how inequality manifests in ourselves, social interactions, and social institutions. We will be *critically* examining oppression in our society and the role *we* play in its reproduction. If you are not prepared to critically examine society and yourself, this class may not be for you.

Required Text

Konradi, Amanda and Martha Schmidt. 2004. *Reading Between the Lines: Toward an Understanding of Current Social Problems*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Additional readings will be posted on CU Learn.

Classroom Decorum

Some subject matters introduced during this class deal with sensitive subjects. I cannot guarantee the environment of this class will be comfortable at all times for everyone. That said, one of my primary goals is to foster a classroom in which everyone is able to express ideas and opinions. As a means to this end, I absolutely require that everyone behave respectfully within this forum, including giving others the benefit of the doubt, listening attentively, and understanding the effect your words will have on others. Insensitive comments concerning race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, disability, and so forth will not be tolerated.

Tools for Success

- Attend and participate (if only with your attentive listening). Studies suggest that listening is highly correlated with grades.
- Keep up with the reading. You cannot expect to understand the material or have fun with the discussions if you have not done the readings.
- Become a person to your instructor. You can do this by asking questions, coming to office hours, and engaging with the material.
- Read and follow instructions carefully.
- Ask for assistance when you need it.
- Speak up and participate in discussions by asking questions, answering questions, giving opinions, or tying together others' comments. Do this even if you do not think you have the right or best thing to say. You will learn something by doing it.

Classroom Expectations

- Arrive in the classroom prepared to begin on time. Please stay for the entire class period.
- Turn off phones. If you have an emergency, please notify me prior to class.
- Do not read newspapers, text message, or otherwise distract from the learning/teaching environment.
- Please participate in the main conversation by being attentive and abstaining from reading other materials and by not carrying on side conversations during class.
- Turn in assignments on time. Adhere to university policies regarding academic honesty.
- Familiarize yourself with CU Learn. If you have problems with the system, please contact ITS at 303-735-HELP.
- Keep all returned papers and tests until the end of the semester. In the case of a grade dispute, it is the student's responsibility to provide the graded paper or test.

Course Requirements and Grading

Requirements for this class include three tests and a series of short quizzes.

Tests

There will be three tests, each worth 50 points. Tests are composed of multiple choice, matching, and sometimes short answers. My primary intent in administering these exams is to test your conceptual understanding of vocabulary, concepts, and perspectives. No study guide will be provided.

- Test 1: February 10th (50 pts.)
- Test 2: March 15 (50 pts.)
- Test 3: May 2 7:30 pm (50 pts.)

Quizzes

Quizzes will be short. Some quizzes are intended to give you practice for the tests and will be in the same format as the test questions. Other quizzes will be in the form of reading responses and will ask you to write a short response or summary of the reading for that day. Quizzes will be unannounced. If you are more than five minutes late or if you leave early, you will not be able to take the quiz. There are no make-ups for quizzes without a documented and acceptable excuse. I will drop your lowest quiz score. There will be at least six quizzes.

- Quizzes: Throughout the semester (50 pts.)

Test Dates and Values

Test 1: February 10th	50 pts.
Test 2: March 15	50 pts.
Test 3: May 2 7:30 pm	50 pts.
Quizzes: Throughout the semester	50 pts.
Total	200 pts.

Late Policy

Absolutely no late quizzes or tests will be accepted without prior approval or an acceptable *and* documented excuse. If you have a family vacation, wedding, or similar engagement that will conflict with the class schedule, I expect you to notify me within the first two weeks of class.

Attendance

There is no attendance requirement for this class. However, you cannot expect to pass this class without attending class regularly. If you must miss a class, first contact a classmate to find out what you missed. If you need further information, please contact me.

Record the names and numbers of three classmates here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

My Policies

Schedule Conflicts

If you have a religious holiday, family vacation, wedding, or similar engagement that will conflict with the class schedule I expect you to notify me within the first two weeks of class. You have until the start of class on *January 25th* to notify me of conflicts. If you do not notify me by this date, I will be unable to make alternative arrangements for you.

Email Policy

It is often tempting for students to email their instructors for “quick answers” to questions. For instructors, this often leads to many repetitive emails and it is difficult to thoughtfully respond to all of them. With this in mind, I would like you to respect these emailing parameters.

I strongly encourage you to email me if you have a question that you would like addressed in class or if you have information/articles/media that is pertinent to class material. Please email me to set up appointments outside of office hours or if you are unable to meet in person for a legitimate reason, such as a personal/family emergency.

Please never contact me via email regarding grades. It is technically against school policy to discuss grades over email. Please do not email me for answers to questions that can be answered by this syllabus. Please try not to email me for answers to questions regarding assignments or tests. Instead, please email questions and ask that they be addressed during class time. If you have questions specific to you, please come to my office hours or make an appointment.

Academic Integrity

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include cheating, plagiarism, aiding academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). For other information on the Honor Code, see <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>.

Disability Policy

Students with documented disabilities, including non-visible disabilities such as a chronic disease, learning disability, head injury, attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, or psychiatric disability should see me after class or during my office hours (preferably during the first two weeks of class) to discuss possible reasonable accommodations. For more information, consult the Office of Disability Services, Willard 322 (303-492-8671).

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have the responsibility to maintain an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty members have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity, and respect; to guide classroom discussions; and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the students' legal names. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information on these policies, see

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and
http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code.

Discrimination and Harassment

The University of Colorado at Boulder's policies on discrimination and harassment (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html>), sexual harassment, and amorous relationships apply to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. For information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment, see <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

Rescheduling Final Exams

“If you have three or more final exams scheduled on the same day, you are entitled to arrange an alternative exam time for the last exam or exams scheduled on that day. To qualify for rescheduling final exam times, you must provide evidence that you have three or more exams on the same day, and arrangements must be made with your instructor no later than the end of the sixth week of the semester (Friday, October 2, 2009).” See http://registrar.colorado.edu/calendar/exam_sched_fall09.html for more information.