

SOC 203 X50: Social Problems
Course Syllabus, SUMMER 2018
University of Alberta

Instructor: Dr. Erwin Selimos

Email: selimos@ualberta.ca

Office: T 1-62C

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM

Location and Time:

- M W 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM
- BUS 1-6

Required Course Texts:

- Holmes, M. M., Mooney, L. A., Knox, D., & Schacht, C. (2015). *Understanding social problems, fifth Canadian edition*. Nelson Education.
- Additional readings provided by instructor. See Course Schedule for required readings and eClass for pdf copies of the readings.

Policy about course outlines can be found in the section on [Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures, and Grading](#) of the University Calendar.

Course Description

In this course, we examine selected social problems with special attention paid to Canadian society. Topics explored include health and illness, poverty, crime and violence, gender inequality, and racism. The method of instructional delivery is lecture.

Course Objectives

1. You will be introduced to sociology and its role in identifying and understanding social problems.
 2. You will learn and articulate sociological concepts and theories toward developing a deeper understanding of why social problems recur and endure.
 3. You will understand and develop proficiency in applying sociology's key perspectives to societal issues.
 4. You will develop an ability to critically analyze social problems that are encountered in everyday life.
-

Course Policies

Attendance:

Although I do not give you a specific grade for attendance, please be advised that there is a strong correlation with your presence in class and your success in the course. Your presence in class is essential if you want to succeed in this course. If you **MUST** miss class due to illness or other circumstances beyond your control, it is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to find out what you missed, to get any handouts, and to borrow and copy the class notes for the day(s) you were absent. Should there be any circumstances that may prevent you from regular class attendance notify me at the beginning of the semester for a possible solution.

Office hours:

I encourage you to drop by my office hours to discuss any issue relevant to the course. If you have class during my office hours, we can schedule appointments at other times with advanced notice.

Communication by email:

For many, email is the quickest and easiest form of communication. However, it is not instantaneous. Although I am usually quick to respond to emails, my policy is that I try to respond within 48 hours of receiving an email. When emailing me, please keep in mind several things. First, introduce yourself and provide an appropriate subject to the email. Second, emails should be used only for brief clarification questions. Email is not the place for me to repeat or re-explain complex sociological ideas and materials. This must be done in person during my office hours or before or after class. Third, before sending me an email about the class, check the syllabus first. Often the answer is in there. Fourth, I do not discuss grades over email. Fifth, as per university policy, I only answer emails from a ualberta email account.

Exam Policies:

Your first two tests will be written during our regular course times and in our regular meeting place. Your third test will be written during the designated final exam time and place.

University policy states students may not enter the exam area after the first half-hour has elapsed, and they may not leave the exam area until one half-hour has elapsed. Looking at or having your phone or any electronic gadget out during an exam is considered cheating. No headphones may be worn.

Make up exams, in the cases of legitimate reasons for missing a test, will be arranged between me and the student. If a test is missed and a documented excuse is provided to my satisfaction, a re-write will be undertaken on a date and time decided together. If the rewrite is missed for whatever reason, you will receive a zero grade.

I cannot reschedule the final exam. Under extenuating circumstances, students who cannot write the final exam during the exam period must provide documentation and apply to their Faculty for a deferred exam within two working days following the missed exam, (or as soon as possible, given the circumstances underlying the absence). Please note that, procedures for a

deferred exam will follow policies of the Attendance section of the calendar (<https://calendar.ualberta.ca/content.php?catoid=28&navoid=6961#Attendance>). If a deferred exam is approved, I will coordinate a time and place for you to take the exam.

Posting grades/Handing back quizzes and tests:

Grades will be posted in eClass. eClass sometimes makes errors in grade calculations. As such, I maintain my own separate grade sheet. I reserve the right to override eClass grade calculations. Sometimes I make errors recording or calculating grades. It is good habit to double check your grade calculations. I will not return quizzes or tests. If you want to see them you must arrange a time to do so in my office. Feel free to speak with me about your grades and progress in class at any time.

Phone or any other electronic device usage policy:

I do not allow use of cell phones during class. The use of cell phones during class interferes with the instructional process and is therefore prohibited. All in all, it is generally inappropriate to use cell phones, including texting, in any professional environment, including an educational setting. The problem I see with cell phones is that they are distracting. This puts you at a disadvantage as you may miss information. It is also somewhat disrespectful to me and other classmates. I will make accommodations for emergency situations. But I must preauthorize any accommodations. If a call does come in, be as unobtrusive as possible and leave the classroom to take the call.

Students also report that the use of laptops by other students is distracting when used for non-academic purposes. Students who have laptops may use their laptop for teacher directed textbook activities or note-taking. If you are using a laptop for any other use, you will be asked to shut your laptop down and will not be permitted to use your laptop in class again.

With prior approval, lectures can be recorded.

Every effort must be made to avoid distracting others because of operating technological equipment.

Food:

Feel free to bring in coffee, tea, or any other drinks to class. Small snacks are also appropriate, but certainly not large lunches or meals. Use common sense when consuming your drinks or food. Please do not bring in food or food packaging that is distracting (i.e., gives off a strong smell).

Disability accommodations:

Students who require accommodations in this course due to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, mental, or physical health are advised to discuss their needs with Student Accessibility Services, SUB 1-80, 492 3381 (phone) or 492 7269 (TTY). Students registered with SAS who will be using accommodations in the classroom or writing exams through SAS are required to provide a "Letter of Introduction."

Electronic recording of lectures:

As per the University Calendar: “Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).”

Plagiarism and cheating:

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behavior (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

Evaluation and Assessment

Test 1:	25%
Test 2:	25%
Test 3:	25%
Reading Quizzes	15%
Processing and Review Activities	10%

TEST 1: This test will cover both readings and lectures from July 9 to July 18. The test will consist of a mix of multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and two extended response questions. The date of the test is July 23. The test will be held during regular class time.

TEST 2: This test will cover both readings and lectures from July 25 to August 1. The test will consist of a mix of multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and two extended response questions. The date of the test is August 8. The test will be held during regular class time.

TEST 3 (FINAL EXAM): This test will focus on readings and lectures from August 13 to August 15, but material from earlier in the course will also be included. The test will consist of a mix of multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and two extended response questions. The tentative date of the test is August 17, 2018 from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM. The test will be held in a room designated by the Registrar. Please check Bear Tracks closer to the date for more information on the time and place of your test.

PROCESSING AND REVIEW ACTIVITIES: Throughout the course, I will be asking you to complete various in-class exercises and review activities. These exercises are designed to help you process the material and achieve deeper thinking and understanding about a topic. These exercises can only be completed in class during the assigned work time. Exercises may include

group work, in-class writing assignments, and other activities. They will be graded for completeness and general quality out of a scale of 3. The scale is as follows: 3 points for complete exercises that demonstrates care, thoughtfulness, and professionalism; 2 or 2.5 points for complete exercises that demonstrate may be somewhat incomplete or lack some degree of thoughtfulness; 1 or less for incomplete or poorly executed exercises. If you are not in class and miss an exercise or review activity you will receive a zero. If you know that you will miss a class for legitimate reasons, please speak with me before the lecture, so you are not penalized. These grades are qualitative, holistic evaluations of the work. Do not expect extensive feedback.

READING QUIZZES: Throughout the course, I will administer five [5] reading quizzes. Reading quizzes are not designed to be “impossible,” but to assess that you completed your assigned reading and prepare you for a class activity or discussion. If you are not present during the administration of a reading quiz, you will receive a zero. If you know that you will miss a class for legitimate reasons, please speak with me before the lecture, so you are not penalized. Please see “COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS” section of the syllabus for the days there will be a reading quiz and on what reading you will be quizzed.

Please note: If you are having issues keeping up with course work for any reason, notify me as soon as you start to have a problem. We will be more likely to come to an acceptable arrangement if we can attack the problem sooner rather than later. Counseling and Clinical Services are also available. Please see the following website for more details: uofa.ualberta.ca/current-students/counselling.

Determination of final grades:

Final grades for SOC 203 are determined using the following contract:

Percentage	Letter Grade	4-Point Value
96 – 100	A+	4.0
90 – 95	A	4.0
85 – 89	A-	3.7
80 – 84	B+	3.3
75 – 79	B	3.0
70 – 74	B-	2.7
66 – 69	C+	2.3
62 – 65	C	2.0
58 – 61	C-	1.7
54 – 57	D+	1.3
50 – 53	D	1.0
0 – 49	F	0.0

Classroom Etiquette

I would like to say a few words outlining the behavioral expectations for this class. I do this to communicate the norms of class as clearly as possible. The purpose of doing so is to create mutual understanding of how to behave in a professional environment.

TARDINESS. *Don't do it!* Being late for class is incredibly distracting and often interferes with the flow of a class. However, it is better to come late to class than not come at all. Should you be late, please enter the room quietly and unobtrusively as possible. If you know you will be late, please contact me and let me know.

LEAVING EARLY. *Don't do it!* Once class begins, it is not polite to get up and leave the room. In fact, I think walking out of the room during a lecture is worse than coming late to class. It disrupts the learning process, the flow of teaching, and creates the impression that you are not a serious student. If you have an unavoidable conflict in your schedule and you must leave early, the courteous thing to do is tell me ahead of time and place yourself in the classroom that allows for easy exit. If an illness or other unanticipated need arises during class, please give me some indication of the need to leave the class room.

ABSENTEEISM. *Don't do it!* Absenteeism is a big problem and class attendance is a serious matter. Examinations include material covered only in lectures. So, get to class regularly. If you have more than five absences, I will suggest that you drop the class.

PAYING ATTENTION/SLEEPING IN CLASS. Don't sleep, text message, surf the internet, or read a book during class. Pay attention to lectures, take notes, and ask questions.

TALKING DURING LECTURES. It really goes without saying, but I will say it anyway: Do not talk during lectures. This is incredibly rude and significantly interferes with the delivery of lessons and other students' learning.

CELL PHONE/TECHNOLOGY USE. All in all, it is generally inappropriate to use cell phones, including texting, in any professional environment, including an educational setting. The use of laptops by other students is distracting when used for non-academic purposes.

LISTENING TO OTHERS. When other people speak, it is important to listen carefully, respectfully, and considerately to what they are saying. Let them finish talking, do not interrupt, and wait your turn.

INTERFERING WITH THE LEARNING OF OTHERS. Classroom behavior that interferes with the instructional process and learning of others is not tolerated.

How This Course Works and How To Do Well In It

In this course, you will be receiving information from two basic sources: your readings and lectures/class activities. Although there will be significant overlap between readings and lectures, I will be covering things in my lectures that will not be in the textbook. You will be expected to know this material. There also may be things covered in your textbook that I do not explicitly go over during lectures. You will also be expected to know this material. Therefore, it is important that you attend lectures and take notes, as well as complete your assigned readings.

My Role as Professor

As the professor, I am responsible for creating a safe, interesting, and maybe even fun learning environment for all students. I will try my best to provide clear and organized explanations of concepts and materials. I will help students learn the course material by providing lectures, activities, discussion topics, and, when needed, individualized attention. I will try my best to be a thought-provoker, a source of information, and an educational trainer pushing you to reach the high expectations I have for you in this class. As a professor, I am not responsible for telling you “what to study for the test”. I will not go over every piece of information that you will need to know for the quizzes. If you hoped that I, as the professor, would be a resource for you to find how you can put out the least amount of energy while still earning a good grade, I am probably not the professor you are looking for. I respect you and your other time commitments enough to share this with you up front.

Your Role as Student

As a student in this class your primary responsibility is to come to class prepared. That includes doing the assigned reading and taking the time to think about how it relates to your experiences and the world around you. To put it simply, if you hope to do well in this class you must be an active participant in your own education. Many sociological ideas are clear and straight-forward, while others are highly theoretical and sometimes confusing. The expectation is that you will work hard to understand these concepts and connect them to your understanding of the world.

What to Expect During Class Time

In class I will lecture about main ideas of a topic, discuss the main ideas in the assigned readings, and then apply them with activities, discussions, etc. We may also extend beyond what the readings covered through lecturing on specific topics, watching a video, or having a guest speaker. Classes will include a mix of lectures, activities, and discussions. **Our class time is a supplement to the readings NOT a replacement for doing the readings.**

Studying Strategically

We will cover a lot of ideas in this course. The pace of the class may be faster than you are accustomed to in your previous educational history. The fast pace and specialized language of the course and its material requires that you work hard to make sense of the information. If you are struggling with making sense of concepts or keeping up with the material, please come see me and we can discuss strategies to address the issue. Success in this course is, however, rather simple. **It requires discipline, organization, and hard work.** This is what you should do to find success in this course:

1. **Be curious and open-minded.** Your definition of the situation determines your reaction to it. A curious and open-mind goes a far way in successful learning.

2. **Organize and systematize your reading.** Develop a schedule and a system for your studying. Block out time every week where you will do your readings. Remove all distractions, including placing your phones out of eye-sight. I suggest you do your readings for each topic before that topic is covered in class. This way you will come to class with some context to better

understand the material covered in lectures. PLEASE NOTE: some classes are more reading intensive than others, so plan accordingly. Furthermore, we will not cover everything in your readings in class, but you are still responsible for having an in-depth knowledge of them.

3. **Pay attention and take detailed notes** during lectures. Learning is not rocket science. All it requires is a sustained amount of attention for a brief period.

4. For each topic covered in class, **compare** what is discussed during lectures with what is discussed in your readings. If there is overlap, IT IS IMPORTANT.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Day	Topic	Key Concepts/Topics/Activities (Subject to change depending on progression of class)	Readings
July 9, 2018	Sociology and the Study of Social Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction and Overview of Course ○ What is Sociology? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Selimos' Three Rules of Sociological Thinking ○ The Sociological Imagination ○ Emile Durkheim and the Problem of Suicide ○ Social Problems v. Solutions without Problems ○ Functionalism, Conflict Theory, and Symbolic Interactionism 	Required: Chapter 1 C. Wright Mills, "The Promise"
July 11, 2018	Health and Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vital inequality ○ Measures of Population Health – Longevity and Mortality ○ Vital Inequality in the World and in Canada ○ Epidemiological Transition ○ Social Determinants of Health ○ Documentary Viewing: <i>Unnatural Causes</i> 	Required: Chapter 2 Therborn, "Human, Nasty and Short: Life Under Inequality"
July 16, 2018	Crime and Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sociological Definition of Crime ○ Types of Crime ○ Patterns and Trends of Crime in Canada ○ Culture of Fear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading Quiz and Discussion of Glassner's "Crime in the News" ○ Non-sociological and Sociological Explanations of Crime ○ Test 1 Essay Questions 	Required: Chapter 4 Glassner, "Crime in the News"
July 18, 2018	Family Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sociological Definition of Family ○ Kinship Systems ○ Social Functions of Families ○ Changing Patterns in Canadian Families and Households ○ Intimate Partner Violence ○ Documentary Viewing: "The War at Home" ○ Preparing for Test 1 	Required: Chapter 5 "These domestic abuse survivors are changing the conversation by sharing their stories." Retrieve at http://www.cbc.ca/firsthand/features/war-at-home-domestic-abuse-survivors-changing-conversation

July 23, 2018		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attending to Loose-Ends and Test 1 Review Activity ○ TEST 1 	
July 25, 2018	Youth and Aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sociological Understanding of Age, Age Relations, and Age Inequality ○ Patterns and Trends in Canada's Population Structure: The 'Greying' of Canada and its Implications ○ Problems facing Children and Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading Quiz and Discussion of Silva's "Working Class Growing Pains" ○ Problems facing the Elderly 	Required: Chapter 6 Silva, "Working Class Growing Pains"
July 30, 2018	Race, Ethnicity, and Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Defining Race, Ethnicity, Minority Group ○ The Social Construction of Race ○ Racism ○ Individual versus Institutional Racism ○ Patterns and Prevalence of Racial Discrimination in Canada ○ Theories of Prejudice ○ Documentary Viewing: <i>A Class Divided</i> ○ Test 2 Essay Questions 	Required: Chapter 8 Gilmore, "Canada's race problem? It's even worse than America's"
August 1, 2018	Gender Inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sex versus Gender ○ Feminist Theory and Gender Inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sexism, Structural Sexism, and Cultural Sexism ○ Reading Quiz and Discussion of Brym's "Gender Risk" ○ The Status of Women in Canada <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Historical Gains ○ Enduring Issue 1: The Gender Wage Gap ○ Enduring Issue 2: Political Under Representation ○ The Global Gender Gap 2017 ○ Preparing for Test 2 	Required: Chapter 7 Brym, "Gender Risk"
August 6, 2018		No Class	
August 8, 2018		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attending to Loose-Ends and Test 2 Review Activity ○ TEST 2 	

August 13, 2018	Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Defining and Measuring Poverty ○ Trends and Patterns of Poverty in Canada ○ Public Beliefs About Poverty ○ Causes and Consequences of Poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading Quiz and Discussion of Gans' "The Benefits of Poverty" ○ Child Poverty in Canada: A Brief Overview ○ Documentary Viewing: <i>Four Feet Up</i> ○ Test 3 Essay Questions 	Required: Chapter 10 Gans, "The Benefits of Poverty"
August 15, 2018	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social Functions of Schools ○ Global Context of Schooling and Educational Attainment ○ Inequality in Educational Attainment in Canada <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading Quiz and Discussion of Carter's "Education's Limitations and its Radical Possibilities" ○ Review for Test 3 	Required Chapter 12 Carter, "Education's Limitations and its Radical Possibilities"
August 17, 2018		TEST 3 (Final Exam)	