

# Syllabus

Spring 2021

SOCI 201: Social Problems



**Meets online every Wednesday 10-11am by video on MS Teams**

(you will be sent a link)

**Professor Kurt Reymers, Ph.D.**

**Office Location:** 205 Crawford Hall  
(not present spring 2021)

**Office Hours:** I will be generally available by email on weekdays (M-F) during business hours (9am-5pm). Please do not expect an email back immediately outside of these hours.

**e-mail:** [reymers@morrisville.edu](mailto:reymers@morrisville.edu)

## Course Description:

A consideration of problems confronting our urban, post-industrial civilization and society. Topics may include poverty, racism, stratification and changing social roles and institutions in American and global society. *Prerequisite:* Introduction to Sociology (SOCI 101) -or- U.S. History 1900-present (HIST 103). *3 credits (3 lecture hours; spring semester)*

## Course Objectives and Outcomes:

The goal of this class is to further embrace "the socio-historical perspective" that you should have gained in the Introduction to Sociology and/or American History courses. This involves *critical reflection and reaction* to the society that surrounds you and the problems that we face that stem from our social arrangements and institutions. Some of the main concepts employed in analyzing society and which we will come to understand in the class are *cultural relativism, ethnocentricity, bias, objectivity and subjectivity, conflict/critical social theory, institutional dysfunction, deviance, norms, values, and globalization*. Each student should come out of the course utilizing the sociological imagination they have cultivated during the semester in order to better understand the nature of social problems at home and abroad.

The outcomes of the course include:

- understanding sociological theory and methods and how they can be applied to the study of social problems;
- demonstrating concrete facts about and abstract theory regarding specific social problems;
- demonstrating an understanding of modern globalization as it applies to social problems;
- demonstrating the ability to describe the relationships between individual, society, and social problems;

Attending virtual class, taking notes, participating, and *especially* reading the assignments on time should allow you to successfully complete the objectives of the course. Your grade will reflect the effort which you put into achieving these objectives.

## Required Resources:

 **Online Textbook: *Social Problems: Continuity and Change*.** 2016. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, ISBN 13: 9781946135230. Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike CC BY-NC-SA. Download: <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/social-problems-continuity-and-change>



 **Electronic reserve materials.** Available on Blackboard.

The Blackboard page will offer required readings and viewing/listening assignments. You will be responsible for acquiring all resources as they become available on the website. You should **annotate your readings** (i.e. take notes as you read/write on the paper margins or scribble a PDF note on your tablet or phone). These annotations will remind you of what you read and should prompt questions when we meet by video.

 **Notebook & writing implement.** Even though this is an online class, it's still an important idea that you should be writing notes. Takes notes in a notebook on anything you read – be sure to DATE all of your notes so you know when you were thinking them. Making notes is the first step to good studying. It really helps. Do it!

## Required Graded Course Assignments:

### 1) Weekly Problems Journal (10% of final grade) – due every SUNDAY by end of day

The **Blackboard Journal** will be a regular, credit/no credit (1/0) assignment designed to allow you to think out loud, in writing, and share your thoughts with me, your sociology mentor. Note, JOURNAL ENTRIES WRITTEN LATE WILL NOT BE GIVEN CREDIT. You either get it done by SUNDAY MIDNIGHT in the week it's assigned or you do not get credit (certainly you may still do it for your own purposes though).

### 2) Music Blog (15% of final grade)

**Four "Music Blog" entries on Blackboard** will be due periodically (see schedule). In reflecting on the class topics, it's not hard to come up with an example of a social problem that has been related to in music. For this portion of the class grade, you will be asked to periodically complete a short reaction to the weekly reading assignments in the form of a "music interpretation," **a brief, but concise (at least 250 word) description posted on the course Blackboard page.** More information can be found on Blackboard.

### 3) Section Quizzes (20% of final grade)

On **Blackboard** and complete a **quiz for each of the four sections of the course.** Each quiz will test comprehension and memory of the assigned readings and online resource assignments for that section of the course. Each quiz will make up 5% of the course grade.

### 4) Research Paper (25% of final grade)

The **research paper** will involve the analysis of a social problem. The paper will be developed over **four steps (concept paper, citations and outline, rough draft, final draft)** and should be related to the sociological understanding of a particular social problem that you can do independent library research on. More information can be found on the course website.

### 5) Exams (30% of final grade)

**Two exams (midterm and final)** will be made up of multiple choice and short answer questions. They will be timed and administered through Blackboard. Each exam is worth 15% of your final grade.

#### **Grade Distribution:**

**10%** of grade: **Problems Journal**

**15%** of grade: **Music Blog**

**20%** of grade: **Quizzes**

**25%** of grade: **Research Paper** (each step is worth 5%)

(1): Concept paper (5%); (2): Citations (5%); (3) Outline (5%); (4): Rough draft (5%); (5): Final draft (5%)

**30%** of grade: **Exam** (each worth 15% of final grade)

**100%**

#### **Grade Converter:**

93 to 100+ = **A** = 4.0    90 to 92 = **A-** = 3.67    87 to 89 = **B+** = 3.33

83 to 86 = **B** = 3.0    80 to 82 = **B-** = 2.67    77 to 79 = **C+** = 2.33

73 to 76 = **C** = 2.0    70 to 72 = **C-** = 1.67    67 to 69 = **D+** = 1.33

60 to 66 = **D** = 1.0    59 and below = **F** = 0.0

#### **Asking about grades:**

**I DO NOT USE THE BLACKBOARD GRADE BOOK.** All your grades for this course will be available on the course webpage, by clicking the "Grades" link at the top and signing in with a password I will get from you early in the semester. Please refer to this page before emailing me with questions about specific grades on assignments and exams.

## Class Policies and Guidelines:

### Participation

- Students should make every attempt to attend all virtual class sessions. If you have too many absences and would like to have your case considered, please provide documentation of the reason for your absence, including date, evidence and explanation of the absence, by e-mail within two weeks of the absence. As an incentive for good attendance, two extra bonus points toward the final grade can be accrued for perfect (+2) or near-perfect (+1) attendance.
- **Internet Outage Policy:**  
In the event of an internet outage during the course (particularly while in MS Teams or on Blackboard taking a quiz or exam) that affects your ability to succeed in the course, you should contact the professor as soon as possible. If internet accessibility becomes a regular problem, the professor reserves the right to grade the student accordingly (*ut videre apta*).

### Academic Behavior and Honesty

- The classroom – or in the event of an online class, the internet-enabled virtual class webspace – is to me a sacred place. In an ideal world, everyone would be enthralled by the subject matter that I am so passionate about and participate because their heart is in it. We live in a less-than-ideal world, however, so all I ask is that you do your BEST to create the ideal, as I will in trying to make this a good learning experience. To reach the ideal, avoid the following distractions:
  - (1) **Lateness.** It is expected that you will show up on time. If you are late you may miss out on important reminders and other information that would be to your benefit. Remember, if that happens, it's on you.
  - (2) **Carnal Appetites.** *Eating, sleeping, reading, playing video games* are some examples of *unacceptable* behavior, even in an "MS Teams" session online. Just like in RL, a drink and maybe a candy bar would be cool for class, but not Taco Bell and Cyberpunk 2077.
  - (3) **Nudity.** Nobody wants to see it. You probably shouldn't be showing it. If you wouldn't go into a face-to-face classroom wearing it (or not wearing it), don't wear it (or don't *not* wear it) online (I think you know what I mean). I'm not asking for a black-tie affair and I'm not trying to police your fashion or symbolic representation; just be reasonable in your coverage and try to get out of your jammies!
  - (4) **Silence.** Talking in virtual class is not at all bad - civilized and disciplined argument, relevant questions, and notetaking/doodling are *strongly encouraged* behaviors for which you will be rewarded. However, as in any sacred place, RESPECT for the space of the classroom (this includes for the professor and for fellow students) is expected from ALL STUDENTS. If the norms of respect are not being observed, the professor reserves the right to take disciplinary action(s) against the offender(s), including but not limited to affecting the grade, removing posts, and the expulsion of students from the (virtual) classroom. Please note that, in general, attendance of college classes is directly correlated to the grades that students receive. If you want a higher grade, come to class, online or otherwise. So, in a nutshell, don't come to class late, with no shirt, holding a McDonald's bag that you open and eat, and then proceed not to add to the discussion. Bad form!
- Academic honesty promotes continued academic and occupational success. Maintenance of academic honesty and quality education is the responsibility of both faculty and students. Any written assignment (including all electronic media) submitted by a student must be *original authorship*. Representation of another's work as his or her own shall constitute plagiarism. See the student handbook for more information.

Plagiarism means theft of intellectual property, obtained from a print or electronic medium. A person has plagiarized if s/he quotes three or more words in sequence from a source and (1) doesn't use quotation marks ("The quick brown fox..."), and (2) doesn't identify the source (what is known as "citation"). A person has also plagiarized if s/he records or cites ideas, information, or other material from a source that is not identified, or if the individual paraphrases information from a source that is not acknowledged. The penalty for plagiarism could be failure on the assignment, failure in the course, or even expulsion from the college. *Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse for plagiarism.*

**IMPORTANT RULE ABOUT COPYING:** In an online setting, it may be tempting to “work together” with one or more other students to answer questions and complete assignments and exams. Please know that I have a keen eye and memory, and I have comparison software that can scan your assignment and compare the wording to other students’. IF THERE IS AN EXACT MATCH, BOTH/ALL STUDENTS INVOLVED WILL FAIL THE ASSIGNMENT (in the case of a first infraction; see plagiarism consequences, above). In the case of exams and quizzes, if answers to all questions match exactly or are statistically too close to another student(s), both/all students involved will face a penalty.

### ***Late/make-up/extra-credit Assignment Policy***

**Make-up exams will not be given**, unless you make arrangements with me more than 48 hours (2 days) in advance of the exam. In the event of an emergency, contact me as soon as possible, preferably by email. If you miss an exam without making timely arrangements to make it up, you will receive NO CREDIT for that particular exam.

**Late work** will receive a 10% deduction in the grade. Late work will not be accepted after two weeks from the time the assignment was due. However, this semester only due to COVID-19, I will be offering occasional “**Amnesty Periods**,” announced on Blackboard, when you can turn any late work in since the previous Amnesty Period without a late penalty.

**Extra credit** assignments will not be assigned to individuals – any extra credit will be on a class-wide basis (and there is no guarantee of ANY extra credit assignments in any given semester).

### ***Students with Learning and/or Physical Challenges***

SUNY As part of SUNY Morrisville’s pledge to a diverse, equitable and inclusive campus, we seek to provide students with equal access to all courses - whether in person or virtual. If you require accommodations in this course, please reach out to the **Accessibility Services Center** (“ASC”) at [ASCTesting@morrisville.edu](mailto:ASCTesting@morrisville.edu) or call 315.684.6349. If you are a **Norwich Campus** student, please contact Pat Davis at [davispm@morrisville.edu](mailto:davispm@morrisville.edu) or call at 607.334.5144 ext. 5055. Your timely contact with the ASC is important (preferably early, before or immediately after the semester starts), to provide the staff and faculty ample time to address your academic needs. All students should consider scheduling a meeting with course instructors, in person or online, as these conversations may be throughout the semester toward meeting mutual academic goals.

*Temporary Disability Syllabus Statement:*

Students recovering from an injury (NCAA-athletic or other), serious illness or medical procedure may wish to use temporary academic accommodations during their recovery. If you are pregnant, pregnancy-related conditions may qualify you for temporary reasonable accommodations. Please contact the Accessibility Services Center (“ASC”) for further information.

### ***Starfish***

This course participates in the Starfish Early Alert System (accessible through Blackboard), an early intervention system designed to enable academic success, student persistence, and graduation. When an instructor observes student behaviors or concerns that may impede academic success, the instructor may raise an alert flag that 1) notifies the student of the concern, 2) requests an individual contact to discuss the issue, and 3) in most cases, refers the student to the academic advisor. If you receive an email notification of an early alert, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss the issue. The purpose of the contact is to determine the severity of the issue, accurately assess its potential impact on your academic success, and to plan actions to prevent negative consequences and enable academic success. For more information about harnessing your success, contact your academic advisor.

Note that this schedule is **tentative and subject to change** – check the website to find out what changes are made.  
<http://sociology.morrisville.edu/> > Social Problems    Questions? e-mail [reymers@morrisville.edu](mailto:reymers@morrisville.edu)

### COURSE SECTIONS:

Introduction	Feb 8 – Feb 12
1) Public Health Crisis	Feb 15 - Mar 5
2) Economic Inequality and Political Instability	Mar 8 – Mar 25
3) Racial Injustice	Apr 5 – Apr 23
4) Climate Change	Apr 26 – May 14

#### Week 1. *Return to Sociology: Where Do Social Problems Come From?*

- Feb 8, 9:        Gain access to the [Blackboard](#) site  
                     Review [Syllabus and Course Schedule](#)  
                     Download textbook ([Social Problems: Continuity and Change](#)\*, 2016)  
                     Read [The Sociological Imagination](#) (1959)
- Feb 10:        Meet online at 10am (see email for link)
- Feb 11, 12:    Read *Introduction to Sociology* [Chapter 1.3](#) and [Chapter 4.2](#)  
                     Read [Chapter 1](#) in the online textbook (SP\*)

[\*The Social Problems textbook will be abbreviated "SP"]

## Section 1: Public Health Crisis

#### Week 2. *What's Public about Public Health?*

- Feb 15, 16:    Read [SP Chapter 13](#) (pps. 558-603)
- Feb 17:        Meet online at 10am
- Feb 18, 19:    [Take Quiz](#) on Blackboard on Chp 1; Submit [journal](#) entry  
                     \* *Concept Paper due Friday Feb 26*

#### Week 3. *How to Get Out of a Pandemic: Sociology, Epidemiology, and Public Policy*

- Feb 22, 23:    Read [The Sociology of Covid-19, 2020](#)
- Feb 24:        Meet online at 10am
- Feb 25, 26:    Submit [journal](#) entry and write [Music Blog](#)

#### Week 4. *The Opium Epidemic*

- Mar 1, 2:        Read [Opioids and the Social Construction of Social Problems, 2017](#)  
                     Read [Understanding the Rural–Urban Differences in...Opioid Use..., 2014](#)
- Mar 3:        Meet online at 10am
- Mar 4, 5:        [Take Section 1 Quiz](#) on Blackboard; Submit [journal](#) entry

## Section 2: Economic and Political Instability

### Week 5. *Poverty Amidst Great Wealth*

- Mar 8, 9: Read [SP, Chapter 2](#)  
Read [The American Middle Class Is Losing Ground, Page 1, Pew Research Center](#)  
Read [Inside the Panama Papers, Salon, 2016](#)
- Mar 10: Meet online at 10am
- Mar 11, 12: Submit [journal](#) entry  
\* *Annotated Citations and Outline due Friday Mar 12*

### Week 6. *Wealth, Work, and Opportunity*

- Mar 15, 16: Read [SP, Chapter 12](#)  
Read [The Super-Rich, 2002](#)
- Mar 17: Meet online at 10am – Review for Midterm exam  
\*\* *Complete Midterm Exam on Blackboard by Wednesday end of day*
- Mar 18, 19: Submit [journal](#) entry and write [Music Blog](#)

### Week 7. *Conspiracy Theory, Politics, Education, and Democracy*

- Mar 22, 23: Read [Eternal Fascism, 1996](#)  
Read [Reflection on Dewey's Democracy and Education, 2016](#)
- Mar 24: Meet online at 10am
- Mar 25, 26: [Take Section 2 Quiz](#) on Blackboard; Submit [journal](#) entry

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### Week 8. LIBRARY RESEARCH WEEK

- Mar 29, 30: **Independent research week - no assigned readings**
- Mar 31: Meet online at 10am - OPTIONAL
- Apr 1, 2: *No Journal Entry* this week – work on research paper
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## Section 3: Racial Injustice

### Week 9. *An American History of Discrimination*

- Apr 5, 6: Read [SP, Chapter 3](#)
- Apr 7: Meet online at 10am
- Apr 8, 9: Submit [journal](#) entry  
\* *Rough Draft due Apr 9 end of day*

**Week 10. Black Lives Matter: The Continuation of an American Project**

- Apr 12, 13: Read, [The Early History Of The Black Lives Matter Movement...](#), 2018  
Apr 14: Meet online at 10am  
Apr 15, 16: Submit [journal](#) entry and write [Music Blog](#)

**Week 11. BLM vs. the World**

- Apr 19, 20: Read (TBA)  
Apr 21: Meet online at 10am  
Apr 22, 23: [Take Section 3 Quiz](#) on Blackboard; Submit [journal](#) entry
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## Section 4: Climate Change

**Week 12. Global Warnings about Global Warming: A Brief History**

- Apr 26, 27: Read [SP, Chapter 15](#)  
Apr 28: Meet online at 10am  
Apr 29, 30: Submit [journal](#) entry

**Week 13. Hot Politics: How Climate Change Became Contested**

- May 3, 4: Read Sagan, *Climate Change: What Are Conservatives Conserving?* (TBA)  
May 5: Meet online at 10am  
May 6, 7: Submit [journal](#) entry and write [Music Blog](#)  
\* Final Paper due Friday May 7 end of day

**Week 14. Climate Futures: The Importance of Youth**

- May 10, 11: Read Rob White, *Climate Change and the Sociology of Youth* (TBA)  
May 12: Meet online at 10am  
May 13, 14: [Take Section 4 Quiz](#) on Blackboard; Submit [journal](#) entry

**Week 15. Final Exam**

- May 17 – 19: Final Exam will be available on Blackboard (see announcements for details)