

**Sociology 1020, Social Problems**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Tuesday & Thursday 1:00 - 2:15pm**  
**Dixie State University**

**Matthew Smith-Lahrman, Instructor**  
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**Office**  
**Hours:            Monday-Friday 11:00am - 12:00pm**  
**Or by appointment**

**The Course:**

This course examines the "problems" of our world as social constructions. We will investigate the processes by which activists, experts, and the media make claims about what they perceive as injustices and inequalities in their worlds. We will examine the roles of the public, policymakers, and social problems workers in the social problems process. By the end of the course you will understand that what are popularly considered problems are culturally relative. The only thing that all social problems have in common is that people claim them to be.

**Course Objectives:**

Students completing Social Problems should:

- demonstrate an understanding of the ideas, people, and events that are generally thought to be important by sociologists of social problems;
- demonstrate an understanding of the sociology of social problems as a scientific discipline (i.e. the gathering and analyzing of empirical data in a systematic fashion);
- demonstrate an understanding of the various theoretical perspectives (i.e. functionalist, conflict, constructionist) sociologists use to understand social problems.

**Texts:**

Joel Best. *Social Problems*. W. W. Norton.

Ira Silver. *Social Problems Readings*. W. W. Norton.

**Evaluation:**

Grades will be based on the following:

- Three exams, each worth twenty-five percent of your final grade.
- A term paper worth twenty-five percent of your final grade.

**Exams :**

You will take three exams. Each will be a mix of multiple choice and essay questions. Exam dates are September 19, October 29, and December 10.

**Paper :**

You will write a paper that applies the concepts we learn in class to a social problem of your choice. I will make available the paper assignment on September 24, the paper is due on November 26. LATE PAPERS WILL BE GRADED DOWN ONE FULL GRADE.

**Attendance :**

Attendance is not mandatory. However, I lecture on material that is not in the text. There will be exam questions from my lectures that are not from the text. If you miss class you risk missing information that will be on the exam.

NOTE: Your final grade is based on your lettergrades, not on your accumulation of points.

ANOTHER NOTE: You must complete all exams and assignments to pass this class.

FINAL NOTE: I reserve the right to (a) adjust individual grades based on my evaluation of your participation and enthusiasm in the course and (b) make changes to the syllabus during the course if I feel it will benefit the class.

ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE POLICY: Academic dishonesty in any form, including, but not limited to, plagiarism on written assignments, submitting other person's work as one's own, and cheating on exams or quizzes will not be tolerated at Dixie State College of Utah.

Teachers at Dixie State College have the right to manage their classroom environments to ensure a good learning climate.

If you suspect or are aware that you have a disability that may affect your success in the course you are strongly encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) located in the North Plaza Building. The disability will be evaluated and eligible students will receive assistance in obtaining reasonable accommodations. Phone 435-652-7516.

Important class and college information will be sent to your dmail email account. This information includes your DSC bill, financial aid/scholarship notices, notification of dropped classes, reminders of important dates and events, and other information critical to your success in this class and at DSC. All DSC students are automatically assigned a dmail email account. If you do not know your user name and password, go to [www.dixie.edu](http://www.dixie.edu) and select "dmail" for complete instructions. You will be held responsible for information sent to your dmail email, so please check it often.

## Course Schedule

### Week & Topics

### Readings

#### Week #1

August 20 & 22  
INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

#### Week #2

August 27 & 29  
THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS PROCESS

Best: Chapter 1  
Silver: 5 & 26

#### Week #3

September 3 & 5  
CLAIMS

Best: Chapter 2  
Silver: 20

#### Week #4

September 10 & 12  
ACTIVISTS AS CLAIMSMAKERS

Best: Chapter 3  
Silver: 9 & 12

#### Week #5

September 17 & 19  
**Exam #1, Thursday, September 19**

#### Week #6

September 24 & 26  
**Hand out Term Paper Assignment, Tuesday, September 24**

#### Week #7

October 1 & 3  
EXPERTS AS CLAIMSMAKERS

Best: Chapter 4  
Silver: 6 & 13

#### Week #8

October 8 & 10  
THE MEDIA AND CLAIMS

Best: Chapter 5  
Silver: 1 & 11

**No Class, Thursday, October 10**

#### Week #9

October 15 & 17  
PUBLIC REACTION

Best: Chapter 6  
Silver: 16 & 21

#### Week #10

October 22 & 24  
POLICYMAKING

Best: Chapter 7  
Silver: 2 & 24

#### Week #11

October 29 & 31  
SOCIAL PROBLEMS WORK  
**Exam #2, Tuesday October 29**

Week #12  
November 5 & 7  
POLICY OUTCOMES

Best: Chapter 8  
Silver: 15 & 25

Week #13  
November 12 & 14  
CLAIMS ACROSS SPACE AND TIME

Best: Chapter 9  
Silver: 30 & 33

**No Class, Tuesday, November 12**

Week #14  
November 19 & 21  
USING THE CONSTRUCTIONIST STANCE

Best: Chapter 10  
Silver: 17

Week #15  
November 26 & 28  
**Term Paper Due, Tuesday, November 26**  
**No Class, Thursday, November 28**

Best: Chapter 11

Week #16  
December 3 & 5  
**Last Class, Thursday, December 5**

**Exam #3**  
**Tuesday, December 10, 12:30 - 2:30pm**