

**Sociology 1020, Social Problems**  
**Spring 2014**  
**Tuesday & Thursday 1:00 - 2:15pm**  
**Dixie State University**

**Matthew Smith-Lahrman, Instructor**  
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**Office:** MCD 230  
**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 interactional processes, they are the results of people doing things together.

**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 constructionist model of social problems;
- demonstrate an understanding of the natural history of social problems and its concomitant parts.

**Texts:**

Joel Best. 2008. *Social Problems*. W. W. Norton.

Ira Silver. 2008. *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 February 6, March 20, and May 1.

**Term Paper:**

You will write a paper that applies the concepts we learn in class to a social problem of your choice. I will make the paper assignment available on February 6, it is due on April 10. 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 letter grades, 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.

Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring reasonable academic adjustment, accommodations, or auxiliary aids to be successful in this class will need to contact the DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER Coordinator (Baako Wahabu) for eligibility determination. Proper documentation of impairment is required in order to receive services or accommodations. Visit or call 652-7516 to schedule appointment to discuss the process. DRC Coordinator determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of services.

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 email, so please check it often.

### Course Schedule

#### Week & Topics

#### Readings

##### Week #1

January 7 & 9

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

##### Week #2

January 14 & 16

THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS PROCESS

Best: Chapter 1

Silver: 5 & 26

##### Week #3

January 21 & 23

CLAIMS

Best: Chapter 2

Silver: 20

##### Week #4

January 28 & 30

ACTIVISTS AS CLAIMSMAKERS

Best: Chapter 3

Silver: 9 & 12

##### Week #5

February 4 & 6

**Exam #1, Thursday, February 6**

**Make Term Paper Assignment Available, Thursday, February 6**

##### Week #6

February 11 & 13

EXPERTS AS CLAIMSMAKERS

Best: Chapter 4

Silver: 6 & 13

##### Week #7

February 18 & 20

THE MEDIA AND CLAIMS

Best: Chapter 5

Silver: 1 & 11

##### Week #8

February 25 & 27

PUBLIC REACTION

Best: Chapter 6

Silver: 16 & 21

##### Week #9

March 4 & 6

POLICYMAKING

Best: Chapter 7

Silver: 2 & 24

##### Week X

March 11 & 13

**No School**

Week #10  
March 18 & 20  
**Exam #2, Thursday, March 20**

Week #11  
March 25 & 27  
SOCIAL PROBLEMS WORK

Best: Chapter 8  
Silver: 15 & 25

Week #12  
April 1 & 3  
POLICY OUTCOMES

Best: Chapter 9  
Silver: 30 & 33

Week #13  
April 8 & 10  
CLAIMS ACROSS SPACE AND TIME  
**Term Paper Due, Thursday, April 10**

Best: Chapter 10  
Silver: 17

Week #14  
April 15 & 17  
USING THE CONSTRUCTIONIST STANCE

Best: Chapter 11

Week #15  
April 22  
**Last Class, Tuesday, April 22**

**Exam #3**  
**Thursday, May 1, 12:30 - 2:30pm**