Sociology 103

SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF YOUTH

Mr. Imber

Office Hours: M: 9-9:45
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and by appointment

Spring 2011
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PROBLEM (OED) literally, a thing thrown or put forward; hence, a question propounded for solution.

1) A difficult or puzzling question proposed for solution, a riddle, an enigmatic statement, obs.
2) A question proposed for academic discussion or scholastic disputation.
3) A doubtful or difficult question, a matter of inquiry, discussion thought; a question that exercises the mind: 1795: Burke, Th. Scarcity Wks. VII 416: “It is one of the finest problems in legislation ... ‘What the state ought to take upon itself to direct ... and what it ought to leave, with as little interference as possible, to individual discretion.’”
4) Geometry - a proposition in which something is required to be done: opposed to theorem.
5) Physics and Math - a question or inquiry which starting from some given conditions investigates some fact, result, or law.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Joel Best
Social Problems

Joel Best and
Donileen R. Loseke
Social Problems: Constructionist Readings

John C. Burnham
Bad Habits: Drinking, Smoking, Taking Drugs, Gambling, Sexual Misbehavior, and Swearing in American History

Cynthia Kuhn, et al.
Buzzed: The Straight Facts about the Most Used and Abused Drugs from Alcohol to Ecstasy

Irene Thomson
Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

General Expectations:

All students are expected to attend class. I do not calculate an exact percentage of the grade based on attendance and participation, but I will take attendance occasionally and keep note of participation and use that record when making close decisions about a final grade. Class participation in the form of raising questions and furthering discussion is a vital part of an interesting class. Your enrollment in this course means that I may call upon you at any time in class.

Newspaper Subscriptions:

It is impossible to think sociologically unless one is thinking about concrete historical or contemporary issues that affect large numbers of human beings, most often in their daily lives. A course in social problems can help students to confront those issues more critically and with greater self-confidence, if they acquire the habit of reading a newspaper daily. For the purposes of this course, students are asked to read one of three papers: The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, or The Boston Globe. You may subscribe to the paper versions of these media, or should review the web-based versions on a daily basis.

Examinations: All examinations are take-home and open-book.

A. Midterm Exam (short essay questions on readings):
   
   Distributed March 7, DUE March 10 (by 5PM) as an email attachment.

B. Final Exam (Distributed the Last Day of Class and due at the end of exams)

Papers: All assignments are due on the date indicated and must be submitted as email attachments. Papers handed in late will automatically be penalized, a third of a grade per day.

1) 5 page paper on social problems of dependence and their proposed solutions
    NO PAPER MORE THAN OR LESS THAN 5 PAGES WILL BE ACCEPTED.
    DUE: February 17.

2) 5 to 8 page paper on social problems of independence and their proposed solutions
    DUE: April 19.
COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

January 24: Introduction to the course. Explanation of assignments.

January 27: What is a social problem?


I. Problems of Dependence: Old Problems of Trust


(Also consider, Joel Best, “Claims,” in Best, Social Problems, Chapter 2, pp. 29-63.)


II. Problems of Dependence: New Problems of Trust

February 14: Joseph E. Davis, Adolescents and the Pathologies of the Achieving Self, in The Hedgehog Review, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring 2009, pp. 37-49. (Access at: http://0-find.galegroup.com.luna.wellesley.edu/gtx/retrieve.do?contentSet=IAC-Documents&qrySerId=Locale%28en%2C%2C%29%3AFQE%3D%28JN%2CNo%2C17%29%22Hedgehog+Review%22%3AAnd%3ALQE%3D%28DA%2C%2CNone%2C8%2920090322%24&inPS=true&tabID=R1&retrieveFormat=PDF&currentPosition=6&userGroupName=mlin_m_wellcol&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&sort=DateDescend&docId=A201105959&noOfPages=13)


FIRST PAPER DUE


Joel Best, “Experts as Claimsmakers,” in Best, Social Problems, Chapter 4, pp. 97-128.


\textbf{MIDTERM EXAMINATION DISTRIBUTED}

\section*{III. Problems of Independence: The New Risk Culture}

March 10: Why are some problems, problems of independence?

\textbf{MIDTERM DUE (5PM)}

March 14: John C. Burnham, \textit{Bad Habits}, chapters 1, 2, and 3: Drinking, pp. 1-85.


March 31: Burnham, Chapter 4: Smoking, pp. 86-111.


April 7: Burnham, Chapter 6: Gambling, pp. 146-169.


27-39 (Access at: http://www.springerlink.com/content/u78v88k413w3q4m1/fulltext.pdf)


IV. The Convergence of Social, Political, Economic and Moral Problems

April 14: Burnham, Chapter 8, “Swearing,” pp. 208-229

Steven Pinker, “What the F***?” (Access at: http://pinker.wjh.harvard.edu/books/stuff/media_articles/TNR%20Online%20%20What%20the%20F%20%281%20of%203%29%20%28print%29.htm)


SECOND PAPER DUE

April 21: The Case of Jared Lee Loughner (reading assignment will be provided in March)

April 25: Irene Taviss Thomson, Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas, Chapters 1-4.

April 28: Thomson, concluded, Chapters 5-9.

May 2: Revisiting Global Warming as a Social Problem


May 5: Review for Final Exam, Take-Home Exam Distributed in Class
DATES TO REMEMBER: SOCIAL PROBLEMS 2011

February 17: First Paper Due
March 12: Midterm Exam (DUE March 10)
April 19: Second Paper Due