



## Social Problems

SOC 2601 (CRN: 23989)

Spring 2024: January 8 – May 4, 2024

Online, Asynchronous

### Contact Information

**Professor:** Dr. Amanda Fehlbaum

**Pronouns:** She/Her/Hers

**Office:** DeBartolo Hall 507

**Phone:** 330-941-2716 (Office) or 330-406-9490 (Google Voice/Text)

**Email:** afehlbaum@ysu.edu

**Preferred Contact Method:** Email

**Student Support Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 – 3 PM; Wednesdays from 1 to 4 PM.

I am also willing to meet by appointment (virtual or in person) at other times.

**Communication Expectations:** I typically respond to email within 24 hours on weekdays. I strive to grade assignments within one week.

### Catalog Description

A sociological overview of various contemporary social issues, analyzing significant discrepancies between standards of expectation and actual social behavior, attempting to ascertain possible causes, and discussing trends and possible changes.

### Course Description

Why are some social problems considered serious and others not? There are several social ills plaguing our society today, yet at various times and in different places, certain issues will become labeled by different people as being serious social problems.

This course provides students with an opportunity to examine major issues facing society. It also provides students with an opportunity to integrate sociological theories and concepts, and apply that integrated perspective to current social concerns presented to individuals, communities, nations, and the world. This course examines social problems as they relate to one's identity, social institutions, health and safety, and the global society.

The Social Sciences General Education knowledge domain goal will be met. With the successful completion of this course, you will demonstrate understanding of the development, diversity, and complexity of human behavior, institutions, and culture.

### Course Materials

Required Textbooks:

Best, Joel. 2020. *Social Problems*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. WW Norton. ISBN-13: 978-0393-537376

To successfully complete this course, you will need access to a computer with internet and Microsoft Office Suite ([available free](#)). Students are required to have access to [Blackboard](#) as this course takes place online. These are the [computer lab locations](#) on campus.

## Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the process through which social problems are identified, legitimized, and addressed.
  - Apply common sociological methodologies in evaluating issues and solutions to social problems.
- Identify how the major theoretical perspectives and the scientific method are used to evaluate and analyze social problems, develop proposals for addressing social problems, and compare and contrast specific social problems in cross-cultural context
- Analyze the effects of social structure and culture on social policy and the role of social policy in resolving or exacerbating social problems.
  - Interpret and utilize statistical data and research findings as evidence for enriching discussions and arguments about social problems.
- Describe impact of social structure in generating social problems, such as structures of inequality, the political system, and the economy.
  - Explain the role of social movements in constructing and/or resolving social problems.
- Evaluate claims related to social problems in a logical fashion
  - Apply ethical considerations and principles when discussing potential solutions to social problems.

Students will also meet the Social Sciences General Education Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate understanding of contexts and development of human cultures and institutions.
- Demonstrate understanding of individual and social behavior.
- Demonstrate an understanding of methodologies used in the social sciences.

## Design of the Course

Our course “weeks” run from Monday through Sunday. Each week includes readings, lecture, a quiz, and discussion. Students will also complete a syllabus quiz at the beginning of the course and two papers.

Students should expect to spend a minimum of 9 hours a week on reading and course assignments. Weekly assignments and quizzes must be uploaded no later than 11:59 pm on Sunday nights. Once the week is over, you can no longer go in and complete any assignments from the previous week. New assignments and discussion board questions will become available by 8:01 A.M. on Monday.

## Readings

Completing the assigned readings for each class is crucial to your success in this course. Quizzes are based, in part, on the assigned readings. Discussion posts require a comprehension of the readings. Thus it is to your advantage to keep up with reading assignments.

**Lectures**

In this class, I provide recorded Power Point presentations as videos. They are accessible through the through Blackboard with a link to Microsoft Stream. You will have access to the presentations throughout the course, but I suggest taking notes while you are viewing the presentations, just like you would in the classroom. Lecture content will be in the quiz.

**Quizzes**

There are weekly quizzes in this class. Each quiz is 10 questions. In general, the quizzes are available for you to take from 8:01 A.M. on Monday to 11:59 P.M. on Sunday (Example: Quiz 1 opens on January 15 at 8:01 A.M. and closes on January 21 at 11:59 P.M.). Quizzes are formatted to include a combination of multiple choice, true/false, matching, fill-in-the-blank, etc. Quizzes cover all class material, presentations, assigned readings, and videos for that week. Quizzes are closed book and closed note.

In the event there is a technological issue during the quiz, I will reset it for you once. You get one full reset due to technological issues per semester. Note: Blackboard does not always cooperate when quizzes are taken using smart phones. You are encouraged to take your quizzes on a computer. After taking the quiz, [you will receive a confirmation number that your submission was successful.](#)

If you have a problem with a quiz question, such as how it was worded or if you think the answers are incorrect or vague, you need to make an appointment or see me during my Student Support Hours to discuss it. I will not address quiz questions or answers during the quiz, over email, or in public.

Quizzes take the place of exams in this course. That is, you will not have a midterm exam or a final exam in the traditional sense.

**Syllabus Quiz**

In addition to the quizzes given during the course, a quiz worth up to ten points will be given. You have from the first day of class (January 8) to January 17 to take the syllabus quiz. The syllabus quiz grade cannot be dropped. For the quiz, you need to be familiar with the general policies, assignments, and expectations of the course.

**Course Project**

In this course, you will track one problem through multiple stages of the social problems process. Along the way, you will use your textbook, *Social Problems* by Joel Best, as both a toolkit and portable framework for thinking critically about the social world.

Each exercise in this project builds upon the previous and requires you to be actively involved in your learning. At certain times in the course, you will give periodic brief presentations of your work and receive/give feedback from/to classmates.

Each of the 11 assignments and the 2 mid-semester presentations are worth 10 points. The final project, which you will present to your classmates in the last week of class, is worth 100 points. It should reflect not only a semester's worth of work but also demonstrate that feedback from the professor and classmates was taken into consideration.

Submitting Assignments to the Safe Assign Folder on Blackboard

The reason you must submit assignments to the Safe Assign link on Blackboard is so that a plagiarism check can be run on your assignment. If you turn in your assignment early and see that you had a high plagiarism rating in the originality report, you may have the opportunity to see what you did and correct the assignment before it is due. You may contact me to clear your original assignment so that you can submit an improved paper. Plagiarism, regardless of intention, is taken seriously.<sup>1</sup>

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Please make sure you are submitting to the correct assignment file for the assignment. **If you have problems submitting to the assignment file, you need to e-mail me and let me know well before the assignment is due (e.g., two days, not two minutes).** Assignments should be submitted as .doc, .docx, or .pdf files. Other file types will not be accepted. You are responsible for converting your document, if necessary, into an acceptable format. Unless otherwise noted, **do not just copy and paste the assignment into the text box!**

Blackboard has the option of [uploading from Cloud Storage](#) such as Google Docs and Cloud Drive. Submitting just a link to a Google Doc or OneDrive document – [unless you have uploaded on Blackboard using Cloud Storage](#) - will result in a grade of zero because it does not allow for the plagiarism check to take place.

Please take care to ensure that your assignment properly uploaded to Blackboard.<sup>3</sup> After you submit your file to the Safe Assign folder, [you will receive a confirmation number that your submission was successful.](#)

You may submit a rough draft via email or hard copy one week before an assignment is due. I will give you feedback and tell you if you are headed in the right direction.

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<sup>1</sup> See section on Academic Integrity

<sup>2</sup> See section on Academic Integrity

<sup>3</sup> [This video shows you how to upload an assignment](#)

### Discussion Posts and Responses

This course is designed to be interactive. Please come to the discussion boards having completed the assigned readings and prepared to actively participate. I encourage vibrant and respectful interaction. Discussion should be directed to the entire class in hopes of having a dynamic discussion that lasts. Discussion forum participation provides an opportunity for members of the class to learn from one another based on the readings, different life experiences, and unique perspectives gained from studying course materials. It also assists you in learning how to effectively communicate ideas to a group in a professional and respectful manner.

Discussion posts are worth 10 points each. You are expected to complete at least 4 discussion posts. Your top 4 discussion posts will count toward your grade (meaning, if you do not perform as well on one, you can replace your poor grade with a better one).

You must make a post to the discussion board to have the option of responding to classmates' posts. Unless otherwise noted, most responses are optional. Responses, if made for extra credit, must be more than "I agree." They should follow the 3CQ format (compliment, connect, comment, question). Please see "About Discussions" located at the top of the Discussion Board page for details. **At least 2 discussion posts must be submitted by March 3. If you do not submit by that date, you will receive up to two zeros for the posts you missed.**

### Extra Credit

There are some extra credit opportunities to earn extra credit in this class. More details will be announced well before the extra credit is due.

You may also receive two extra credit points for responding to classmates' discussion posts (two points maximum per discussion post assignment, not per response made).

### How to Succeed in This Course

I truly want everyone in this class to succeed not only in this course but throughout their college careers. To succeed in this course, I expect students to attend class regularly, engage with the course, complete the assigned readings for each class, participate in class discussion, complete assignments on time, proofread their papers, and not plagiarize.

Levels of engagement can vary from above average to below average and may be reflected in your grade.

Above average engagement involves:

- Spirited intellectual engagement with the course readings and the class
- Conscientious and insightful preparation of assignments
- Written assignments that make and support sophisticated arguments, are well-written and interesting to read, and are free of errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar
- Active and thoughtful participation in class discussion

Average engagement involves:

- Clear demonstration in written assignments and in class discussion of understanding the sociological concepts we explore
- Written assignments with clear thesis statements and careful research
- Consistent participation in class discussion

Below average engagement involves:

- Work that shows minimal synthesis of concepts or original analysis
- Infrequent participation in discussion
- Assignments that are incomplete or late
- Written assignments that are not well-researched or are presented carelessly (not proofread or contain many mechanical errors)

My Student Support Hours (Office Hours) are held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 to 3 PM, Wednesdays from 1 to 4 PM, and by appointment. Please see me if you have any questions concerning the reading material, in-class assignments, quizzes, papers, study strategies, etc. If you are unable to meet me during these hours, but need to be seen, you can e-mail me to make an appointment

### How to Get Help

YSU is committed to your success. As a student you have access to several resources that may be instrumental in helping you succeed in this course and others. Please do not hesitate to utilize any of these [free support services](#) to support your academic success, physical and mental health, and help you navigate your time as a YSU student.

One such support service is the [Writing Center](#). They provide writing consultations for any discipline as well as basic computer literacy help.

If you are reading this sentence before the end of the second week of class, send me an email with the subject line “Water Bear, Don’t Care,” and include an image of a tardigrade. I will award you 5 points. Thank you for reading the syllabus.

### Attendance Expectations

[Youngstown State University’s Attendance Policy](#) reads as follows:

The faculty believes that classroom activities are essential to learning. The student is responsible for knowing and meeting all course requirements, including tests, assignments, and class participation, as indicated by the course instructor. The responsibility for work missed during absence rests with the student.

The instructor has no obligation to give make-up graded coursework or to review other class work missed by a student because of absence apart from absences due to participation in university-sponsored events, government-related activities, religious observances, death of a family member, and documented personal illness.

As this is an asynchronous online course, I will not be taking attendance. You are, however, responsible for completing the content of the course in a timely manner. This means you are

expected to regularly log-in to Blackboard to check for messages, complete assignments, and communicate with the class.

### Late Work Submission Policy

Late papers are eligible for credit according to the following schedule: one day past due = 75%, three days past due = 50%, one week past due = 25%. Papers cannot be accepted more than one week past the due date.

Due to the dynamic nature of discussion, late discussion posts are not accepted. Discussion posts made after 11:59 PM on Thursdays will receive a zero. Two replies to classmates must be made by 11:59 PM on Sundays.

Your lowest two quiz grades are dropped from final grade calculations. **Make-up quiz assignments will not be given for any reason.** Quizzes will only be given during the window for the quiz – not before or after. The dropping of the lowest two quiz grades is designed to accommodate people who experience unavoidable emergencies or conflicts during the semester (including, but not limited to: work, religious holidays or celebrations, doctor's appointments, extracurricular events, etc.). If your schedule requires that you must frequently miss this window, it may be in your best interest to drop this course. You may want to set a calendar reminder or alarm to remember to take the quiz each week.

### Please Note

Technological difficulties are not considered a valid excuse for tardiness. Please contact me – email, call, text - well before an assignment (paper, quiz, etc.) is due if you are having technical difficulties. I will do my best to work with you to address the situation.

### Class Conduct

The American Sociological Association states, ["As sociological scholars and citizens, we have a responsibility to study and speak out regarding all forms of racism and injustice."](#) I stand in solidarity and support the fight against systemic racism and the oppression of Black folks, Indigenous folks, and other People of Color, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and non-binary individuals.

In this class, we will discuss issues that are highly controversial. We all come from different perspectives on these issues. It is likely that we will disagree with one another. I welcome and encourage lively discussion, as that is necessary for true learning to occur. However, disagreements should not come in the form of personal attack. Mutual respect is required to maximize a healthy and fair learning environment. You may disagree with each other's ideas and the evidence used in the arguments, but you should respect each other as people.

I show several video clips from a variety of sources as part of the course curriculum and to aid your understanding of concepts that are sometimes abstract or hard to understand. If anyone is ever made to feel uncomfortable or feels something is inappropriate, I request that you talk to me about it to see if the issue can be resolved in a way that allows learning to occur on both of our parts.

## Communication Issues

### Email

I can best be reached by e-mail, but my response may not be immediate. Please indicate which course you are in when emailing me for the first time. You also need to always sign your emails at the end (write your name). I prefer emails to messages sent through Blackboard.

Students are expected to check their e-mail for university announcements or information from instructors, though announcements will typically be cross-posted on Blackboard. It is to your benefit to check your e-mail so that you have the most up-to-date information pertaining to this class. If you use an e-mail address other than your YSU account (in other words, it does not end in “@ysu.edu”), I cannot guarantee that I will receive your e-mail.

### Phone

I have a phone in my office; however, I cannot always be relied upon to answer it. The number is 330-941-2716. You may call or text my Google Voice number - 330-406-9490. If texting, please identify yourself.

## Grading and Grading Scale

### Evaluation

A breakdown of the points available in this course is shown below:

Syllabus Quiz	10
Quizzes (13 total, 2 dropped, 20 points each)	220
Course Project Assignments, Presentations 1 & 2	130
Discussion (Top 4, 10 points each)	40
Final Course Project & Presentation	<u>100</u>
	500 points total

### Final Grades

Final letter grades will be assigned as follows:

- A: 450 - 500
- B: 400 - 499
- C: 350 - 399
- D: 300 - 349
- F: 0 – 299

YSU’s Grading System can be found [here](#).

Final grades will be based on points, not percentage. **Final grades are non-negotiable.**

### Honors Contract Language

The honors contract option is not available for this course.



## University Policies

[University policies](#) can be found online and provide you guidance on your rights as a student in this course. The links below take you directly to a specific policy. Should you have any questions about a policy, please do not hesitate to contact me using the information at the top of the syllabus.

- [Statement of Non-Discrimination from the University](#)
- [Academic Integrity/Honesty](#)
- [Student Accessibility](#)
- [Incomplete Grade Policy](#)
- [Academic Grievances and Complaints](#)
- [Attendance Policy](#)

### Academic Integrity

As outlined in *The Student Code of Conduct*, all forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited at Youngstown State University. This includes plagiarism, the unauthorized use of tools or notes in taking tests or completing assignments, fabrication of data or information used for an assignment, working with others without permission from the instructor, and more. A student who is believed to have violated the [academic integrity policy](#) will meet with the instructor to discuss the allegations. The student may accept responsibility for the violation and any sanctions selected by the instructor, or they have the right to ask for a hearing before a hearing panel. The full Academic Integrity policy can be found in Article III. 1. of *The Student Code of Conduct*, while further information on University procedures for alleged academic integrity violations can be found in Article V.

Note: Not adequately citing your sources, such as only listing sources at the end and not citing them within the paper, is a violation of academic integrity. If you do this in a paper or homework, you will receive a zero on your assignment and will be reported for academic dishonesty.

All rules pertaining to plagiarism and academic integrity in general also pertain to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Artificial intelligence (AI) is a new tool - of both striking capacity and severe limitations. It is an excellent way to get started in your writing, but use it at your own risk. You may not use it in your final project; however, it may be used in lower-stakes assignments like discussion posts under the following circumstances:

- If you include AI-generated text directly into an assignment, treat it like a quote from any other source. Set it aside from the text with quotation marks or as a block-quote and cite the source parenthetically or in a footnote (see how here: [libguides.umn.edu/chatgpt](https://libguides.umn.edu/chatgpt)).
- You are responsible for fact checking statements composed by AI language models.
- If you include information or data into an assignment that you found through an AI tool, treat it like information from any other source and include a citation. The citation should also include the prompt to which you asked the AI to respond.
- If you include AI generated materials that the AI copied without attribution from another published source, you - and not AI - will have committed plagiarism.

- You will be held responsible for any errors that derive from AI-generated materials.
- AI will not count toward an assignment's source-minimum (i.e., the number of sources you are required to include in an assignment).
- If you are in doubt as to whether you are using AI language models appropriately in this course, I encourage you to discuss your situation with me.

If you are retaking this class to receive a higher/passing grade, you may not submit papers you previously submitted in the course.

### **Title IX**

Title IX makes it clear that violence, discrimination, and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: Title IX Coordinator ([titleix@ysu.edu](mailto:titleix@ysu.edu)), Counseling Services (330-941-3737), YSU Police (330-941-3527), and Rape Crisis & Counseling Center (24-hour crisis line: 330-782-3936). More information can be found at <https://ysu.edu/title-ix/>.

### **Voluntary/Involuntary Medical Leave or Withdrawal**

[Medical leave/withdrawal](#) is available for all students with a documented physical or psychological illness of a serious nature that requires them to leave the university after the last day to withdraw with a grade of “W” without completing their coursework.

In the event that you are hospitalized with Covid-19-related illness and incapacitated in some way (e.g., placed on a ventilator), you have this option.

### **University Schedule of Operations**

Last Day to Add or Change a Grade Option:	Tuesday, January 16, 2024
Last Day for 100% Refund:	Sunday, January 21, 2024
Last Day for Withdrawing with a Grade of “W”:	Monday, January 22, 2024
No Class (MLK Day):	Monday, January 16, 2024
Spring Break:	Monday, March 4 - Sunday, March 10, 2024

## Course Schedule

The course schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better learning. For maximum benefit in this course, complete the readings by the assigned date to prepare for class

SP = *Social Problems*

B = Reading posted to Blackboard

Assgn = Assignment

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
Week 1: January 8 - 14	Introduction to Course	Syllabus Quiz Assgn 0: Submit Social Problem Idea
Week 2: January 15 - 21	The Social Problems Process	SP: Ch. 1 View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 1 Assgn 1: Annotated Bibliography
Week 3: January 22 - 28	Claims	SP: Ch. 2 View Presentation Discussion Board and Replies Quiz 2 Assgn 2: Analyze Rhetoric
Week 4: January 29 – February 4	Power to Construct Social Problems	B: “Millions for Viagra, Pennies for Diseases of the Poor” B: “An Epidemic of Obesity Myths” View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 3 PROJECT PRESENTATION 1
Week 5: February 5 - 11	Activists as Claimsmakers	SP: Ch. 3 View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 4 Assgn 3: Separate Activist Sources Peer Reviews of Presentation 1 Due
Week 6: February 12 - 18	Experts as Claimsmakers	SP: Ch. 4 View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 5 Assgn 4: Identify Experts
Week 7: February 19 - 25	The Media and Claims	SP: Ch. 5 View Presentation

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
		Discussion Board Quiz 6 Assgn 5: Media Coverage
Week 8: February 26 – March 3 <sup>^</sup>	How Social Problems are Framed	B: “Horror Stories and the Construction of Child Abuse” B: “Stalking Strangers and Lovers” View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 7 PROJECT PRESENTATION 2
Week 9: March 4 - 10	NO CLASS	NO CLASS
Week 10: March 11 - 17	Public Reaction	SP: Ch. 6 View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 8 Assgn 6: Role of Popular Opinion Peer Reviews of Presentation 2 Due
Week 11: March 18 - 24	Policymaking	SP: Ch. 7 View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 9 Assgn 7: Role of Social Policies
Week 12: March 25 – March 31	Social Problems Work	SP: Ch. 8 View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 10 Assgn 8: Power Dynamics of Workers
Week 13: April 1 - 7	Policy Outcomes	SP: Ch. 9 View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 11 Assgn 9: Analyze Effectiveness of Social Policy
Week 14: April 8 - 14	Claims Across Time and Space	SP: Ch. 10 View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 12 Assgn 10: Comparing Constructions
Week 15: April 15 - 21	Uses of the Constructionist Stance	SP: Ch. 11 View Presentation Discussion Board

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
		Quiz 13 Assgn 11: You're the Expert
Week 16: April 22 – April 28	Conclusion to Course	B: "COVID-19 From a Constructionist Perspective" View Presentation Discussion Board Quiz 14 FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATION

^ = You must make two discussion posts by March 3. If you do not, you will receive two zeroes for discussion, regardless of how many discussion posts you complete after March 3.