

Western Kentucky University

SOCL 240: Global Social Problems

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Figure 1: Globe

Catalog Description: Survey of social disorganization and public descensus in contemporary societies. Emphasis on social change, conflicts in cultural values and the impact of technology.

Pre-requisites: SOCL 100 or consent of the instructor

Course Text:

Sernau, Scott R. Global Social Problems: the Search for Equity, Peace and Sustainability 3rd Edition. Pearson Publishing.

Other articles/videos as assigned on blackboard

Objectives:

1. Explain how sociologists approach the study of global social problems (i.e. Understand the difference between the objectivist and social constructionist perspective.

2. Identify how social problems in our society (and others) are connected to larger global issues.
3. Apply sociological theories that vary in how they define the source of the underlying problem, including the structural functionalist perspective and the conflict perspective.
4. Critically evaluate current interventions and proposed solutions to specific global social problems and assess the consequences for various actors at the local and global levels.

Overview of the Course:

What does it mean to call something a **social problem**? What makes a **social problem** different or unique from other problems experienced by people? What can sociology add to my understanding and potential action when it comes to **social problems**? These are all questions we will grapple with in this course.

In this course we will study global social problems. Thus, we will focus more on the problems as situated globally as opposed to only focusing on the United States. We will start the course by reviewing the sociological frameworks of structural functionalism, conflict theory and social constructionism which can be used to understand different aspects of global social problems. Further, this will allow us to discuss the difference between, maybe our **perception**, of global social problems and how **sociology** lets us view problems in different ways and also to understand these problems in an empirical manner.

We will spend time discussion the global economic divide and the roles of race and gender in global social problems. We will think about the structure of the global economy in the sense of the assembly line being global rather than simply local. Further, we will look at issues of education, health and population and inequality.

In a course on global social problems, we also have to consider the issues of conflict facing us around the globe. Thus, we will look at issues such as crime, violence, the drug trade and international cartels. Further, we will discuss terrorism and bring in the current discussions happening around the global concerning groups such as ISIS or Boko Haram. In terms of conflict, we will also focus on violations of human rights.

During the last part of the course we will look at sustainability. Thus, we will consider problems of urbanization, population, technology and ecology. Within these sections we will tackle the topics of global climate change, the exploration of fossil fuels. Within these problems, we will focus on the sustainable solutions that many around the globe are working toward.

Approach to Education

As an instructor I feel it is important for me to share with you my perspective on education. Sociology 240 uses a **participatory, learner-centered, adult education** approach. This approach recognizes that **YOU are responsible** for your own learning. The instructor can only provide **opportunities** to learn, but

cannot force you to learn. Course material is presented in **substantive readings** from the text; **structured activities and lecture**. You are expected to work hard in this course.

*You are expected to take **responsibility** for the success of the course*, that is, you should take an active interest not just in the course material, but in the course itself, making it a success for all participants. Factors such as **interest, motivation, creativity, and initiative** are important elements in evaluating your performance in the course and assigning a grade.

This class will be a place for sharing ideas and voicing opinions. Intelligent argument and polite disagreement is welcome. Your papers are a place for situating your own perspective about the problems we will discuss within the context of the field of sociology. ***In making an argument it is important to remember, that we are focusing on evidence. Thus, what theoretical, observational, experiential, or other evidence do you bring to the table when discussing global social problems?***

Descriptions of Assignments and Grading

Tests (3-- 100 points each): Tests are multiple choice. A study guide for each chapter is provided. Tests are proctored examinations. Therefore, you must contact the WKU Division of Extended Learning & Outreach. Their website is as follows: <http://www.wku.edu/testing/index.php>. These tests will cover a great deal of material, so you will need to prepare accordingly. However, ALL material on the exams WILL be on the study guide. I will not test you on anything I did not have on the guide. You may not use any outside material to complete your exams. You will have an exam after each unit.

News of the Unit (3—50 points each): In this activity you will find a current news article that relates to one of the topics we cover in the units. You will write a summary of the article and then connect that summary to the theory you learned about that problem. How does the theory inform your understanding of the article? In reading the article, do you feel there are important factors left out in explaining the global social problem? This activity will be no more than 3 paragraphs and you will complete 1 each unit.

Chapter Reflections (300 total points): For each chapter there will be an activity. Some will be short 1 paragraph reflections and others will require a little more work and research. Each activity has a points value that matches the amount of work required. There is a total of 300 points possible for all the chapter activities.

Global Social Problems Research Paper (150 points): This paper is a time to demonstrate your ability to apply the three sociological perspectives to a global social problem of your choice. In this 5-8 pages double spaced paper, you will provide a literature review of the social problem using high quality academic sources. Further, you will use constructionism, functionalism, and conflict theory to analyze the problem much like we will throughout the semester. A detailed list of potential topics, assignments, example literature reviews, etc. will be provided on the blackboard site.

Assessment of Student Learning:

Activity	Points Possible	Approx. Percent of Total Grade
Tests	300	30%
News of the Unit	150	15%
Chapter Reflections	300	30%
Final Research Paper	250	25%
Total Points	1000	100%

Calculation of Points Needed in Course

Points Needed	Percent	Letter Grade
900-1000	90%-100%	A
800-899	80%-89%	B
700-799	70%-79%	C
600-699	60%-69%	D
Under 599	59% and below	F

Expectations of Students:

Quality of Written Work: This is an academic course. Therefore, I expect you to write with the highest quality. I expect complete sentences in all written work. I expect well thought out responses. Further, I will deduct points if you use text message abbreviations or language in your formal papers or in the discussion boards. I still value proper grammar and expect you to do the same while in this course. This is not the place for “slang” terminology unless you are using it to make a theoretical point.

Further, write in a professional manner. I do not expect your papers to sound like you just sat down at your computer and typed a conversation to me. Avoid phrases such as, “Well, in my personal opinion”—even if I am asking for your thoughts and opinion, that is not a necessary phrase. Think “professional tone” while writing. Also, limit the use of “I.” Once again, even when asking you to respond from your own life you can minimize the first person. There is nothing worse than reading a paper that begins every sentence with “I think”, “I want to discuss”, “I believe”, “I feel”, etc. Please refrain from addressing the reader directly. For example, there is no need to thank me for reading your paper. Finally, proof read all your work. I really hate to read papers that are full of grammatical errors. It takes away from your thoughts and ideas and frustrates me. You do not want me to grade your paper frustrated!

Professional Communication

With the use of our personal mobile devices to write and respond to email I've noticed a disconcerting trend among students. I will receive emails like the following example (an actual email I've received):

To: Donielle.lovell@wku.edu

Subject: NONE

grades are not posted

And that will be it. No salutation, no proper sentences, no closing comments, and not even a name. This is highly unprofessional and sounds rude to the reader. In the work world you will be expected to compose proper messages and you are expected to do so in this course. Therefore, I expect all emails to include greeting, actual sentences that thoroughly explain the purpose of your email and a closing that includes your name. For example:

To: Donielle.lovell@wku.edu

Subject: Grades in SOCL 240

Greetings Dr. Lovell,

I was curious as to when grades for our first reflection paper will be posted.

Thank you for your time,

Jane Doe

I am taking a very strict perspective on this. I will no longer respond to emails that are unprofessional.

Professor Policies

I will no longer respond to unprofessional emails.

Academic Honesty: You are expected to **comply with all academic standards and ethics** as defined in the Western Kentucky University College Catalogue (page 42). You are expected to do your **own work** in this course. Plagiarism, fraud and other forms of cheating will **NOT** be tolerated. I have the authority to either fail you on the paper plagiarized and even for the course or depending on the seriousness of the offense, to take it to WKU administration which can have serious consequences. Do not test me on this. I have failed students in the past and will continue to do so for academic dishonesty. I take this VERY seriously. DO NOT TEST ME—THERE IS NO SECOND CHANCE. **Act with integrity.**

IT IS **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** TO UNDERSTAND THESE GUIDELINES. Make sure you know what constitutes plagiarism and cheating **BEFORE** turning in any assignments. Once you turn in an

assignment, you are representing it as your own work. If you are suspected of committing plagiarism, pleas of “I didn’t know what plagiarism was” will not be accepted. If you are concerned about your knowledge of plagiarism, please see me and I will give you a handout with examples of plagiarism.

Please note, copying and pasting directly from a website is plagiarism. Copying and pasting directly from a website and changing a few words is STILL plagiarism. Copying and pasting from Wikipedia is also plagiarism and very easy to identify so just don’t do it.

Instructor Policies:

Office Hours: Since this is a distance learning course, please email me directly and we will set up a times that works for you for a telephone conversation, skype call, etc. Email is always the best form of contact and I try to respond within 24 hours.

Americans with Disabilities Act: “In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in Downing University Center A-200. The phone number is 270-745-5004; TTY is 745-3030. Per university policy, please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the OFSDS.”

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act): Once a student reaches 18 years of age or attends a postsecondary institution, he or she becomes an "eligible student," and all rights formerly given to parents under FERPA transfer to the student. Therefore, I am unable to disclose information about grades, attendance, class schedule, etc. to parents, spouses and other interested parties. If you would like to give these rights to your parents or spouse you need to file a waiver with Western Kentucky University. Until I have received such waiver, please discourage other parties from contacting me regarding your status as my student.

Support for Students:

There are a number of resources that as an independent learning student in which you have access. If you need assistance with library sources for your papers, online tutoring, writing help, career services or help with any function in blackboard please check out the “Student Support” tab in blackboard. This is also where you can access the WKU Help Desk for technical issues. Further, if you find you have software needs such as creating capability with Microsoft office, Adobe PDF reader or the latest version of Java you can access those programs through the “software” tab which is located at the top of your blackboard screen.