

Current Social Problems SOCL 2501
Fall 2017

Mark J. Schafer, Associate Professor

Office: 215 Martin Woodin Hall

mschaf1@lsu.edu

Classroom: 132 Prescott Hall

Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, **1:30 – 2:50**

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 3:00 – 4:00, or email to make an appointment

LSU General Catalog Course Description.

SOCL 2501 Current Social Problems (3) This is a General Education Course. Sociological analysis of major social problems in contemporary society; focus on both the institutional and personal causes and consequences.

General Education Course. This course is a General Education Course in the area of Social Science. The goal of such courses is to ensure LSU graduates demonstrate an understanding of factors associated with global interdependence, including economic, political, psychological, cultural and linguistic forces.

Course Overview

Welcome to Current Social Problems (SOCL 2501). In this course, we will explore current social problems from a global perspective. Throughout the course, we will describe and discuss the extent to which the world has become increasingly interdependent and interconnected. We will draw connections between global and local social problems, and also discuss both global and local efforts to address this issues.

We will use a text that organizes current social problems into 3 broad themes, “The Search For”: (1) Equity, (2) Peace, and (3) Sustainability. The “search for equity” section examines various elements of social inequality as it connects to poverty, class, work, gender, family, and education. The “search for peace” section covers issues related to social conflict including crime, war, democracy, human rights, ethnicity, and religion. The “search for sustainability” section covers issues related to contemporary human populations and lifestyles such as urbanization, population, health, technology, energy, and the environment.

Of course, all these contemporary social problems are interrelated.

Throughout this course I will challenge you to consider the extent to which the “problems” we discuss have been becoming more or less “problematic”.

Text and other material:

Sernau, Scott. 2012. *Global Problems: The Search for Equity, Peace, and Sustainability, Third Edition*. Pearson Press. ISBN 978-0-205-84177-6

Other reading assignments will be posted on Moodle. These will typically be short (less than 5 pages) papers.

In addition, I will show in class videos, such as TED talks, related to course material. Links to videos will be on Moodle.

Grading:

First Exam:	30%
Second Exam:	30%
Third Exam:	30%
Short Papers:	10%

Grading Scale:

98.0	-	100	A+
92.0	-	97.9	A
90.0	-	91.9	A-
88.0	-	89.9	B+
82.0	-	87.9	B
80.0	-	81.9	B-
78.0	-	79.9	C+
72.2	-	77.9	C
70.0	-	71.9	C-
68.0	-	69.9	D+
62.0	-	67.9	D
60.0	-	61.9	D-
<60			F

Exams

- Cover readings and in-class videos
- Not comprehensive, each exam covers a part of the course
- Multiple choice (May include some short answer and short essay)

Short Papers

- I will assign 4 short papers throughout the semester, each worth 2.5 points.
- They will generally involve student reflections on course material

Bonus

- I typically assign several bonus opportunities throughout the semester
 - Some bonus opportunities involve in-class exercises
 - Some bonus opportunities involve attending an outside talk or event

Service-Learning Option

Service-learning is an educational approach that combines learning objectives with community service in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience while meeting societal needs. Students may go to the following website to learn more about service-learning at LSU <http://www.lsu.edu/academicaffairs/ccell/>.

In this course, service-learning is **optional**, it is not required for any student. As such, it involves extra work. Students who choose the service-learning option will earn a service-learning grade that is equivalent to 30% of the final grade, or one exam grade. These students will be allowed to substitute their service-learning grade for **one exam grade**. Please read the included service-learning handout carefully before deciding whether or not to pursue the service-learning option. Students can also email me or schedule a visit to discuss the service-learning option in more detail. Importantly, however, all students interested in service-learning must have completed a service-learning contract with me by **Friday, September 1, 2017**.

Policies

Moodle: I use Moodle for grades, posting material, sending class emails. Please check to see that you have the course on PAWS, and also check your official LSU email at least once a week in case I send an announcement to the class (I plan to do that only for important messages).

Contacting Me: The best way to contact me is by email. I also welcome students to see me during office hours. You can try your luck outside of office hours.

Special Accommodations

I make appropriate accommodations for eligible students. Please see me early in the Semester with the official letter so I can make the arrangements.

Academic Honesty

Most LSU students adhere to the highest ethical standards that are detailed in the *LSU Code of Student Conduct*. Unfortunately, a small percentage of students do not adhere to expected standards of academic honesty. LSU faculty and instructors are required to uphold standards of honesty and behavior as detailed in the LSU. As explained in the *LSU Faculty Handbook*, I (and all instructors) am required to report suspected instances of academic misconduct to the **Dean of Students**, so that is what I do. If that occurs, the Dean of Students will then make sure that any accused students receive due process as explained in the *LSU Handbook of Rights and Responsibilities in the Student-University Relationship*

Attendance Policy:

Consistent with the LSU policy, I expect students to attend class regularly and to participate in classroom discussions.

Classroom Environment

I strive for a classroom environment that respects all students and perspectives and encourages learning. I ask that you arrive on time and stay to the end of the class. I invite all to engage in course material by listening, asking questions, participating in discussions and classroom activities. All views are valuable, we all benefit from sharing each others' perspectives. I insist that all of us minimize side conversations during class, and also minimize distractions caused by cell phones, tablets, and computers.

Technology in the Classroom.

Students may bring and use smartphones, tablets, or laptops in class. Please be considerate of your classmates and instructor. **Students may not use headphones in class. Also, students may not engage in extended, disruptive, or inconsiderate technology use during class.**

Classroom Activities and Discussions

We will engage in activities and discussions during class. My goal is to establish an environment that empowers students to participate. Student perspectives on social problems are valuable, and we will all benefit from hearing multiple perspectives whether or not we agree with them. I certainly do not expect all students to agree with all perspectives presented by me, in the text, or by other students. I do encourage all students to participate in discussions. Please help facilitate useful discussions as follows:

- Let us all consider sharing our views for the purpose of expanding learning
- Let us also respect each others' right to privacy. Let us not pressure classmates or instructor to share anything they would rather keep private.
- Let us focus on getting a better understanding of views with which we agree and also those with which we disagree.
- Let us critically evaluate our own perspectives and respect others' rights to have differing views.
- Let us agree that it is okay to disagree, but it is not okay to attack others' opinions.
- Let us strive to present alternate views in ways that spur continued discussion, not in ways that shut off further debate.

- Let us not express a view simply because it is “politically correct” or refrain from expressing a view that is not “politically correct”.

Schedule and Readings: (Note: Adjustments will be made if needed)

Week 1: August 22 & August 24
 Course Overview and Introduction
 A Global Approach to Current Social Problems

Part One: Seeking an Equitable World: Issues of Inequality

Week 2: August 29 and August 31
 Chapter 1: **Class—World of Rich and Poor**
 Sernau: Pages 1-41

Week 3: September 5 & 7
 Chapter 2: **Work and Trade: Global Assembly Line**
 Sernau: Pages 42-68

Week 4: September 12 & 14
 Chapter 3: **Gender and Family**
 Sernau: 69-93

Week 5: September 19 & 21
 Chapter 4: **Education**
 Sernau: Pages 94-120

Week 6: September 26 & 28
Review and Exam 1

Part Two: Seeking a Peaceful World: Issues of Conflict

Week 7: October 3 & October 5
 Chapter 5: **Crime**
 Sernau: Pages 121-145

Week 8: October 10 & 12
 Chapter 6: **War**
 Sernau: Pages 146-172

Week 9: October 17 (October 19 is Fall Holiday)
 Chapter 7: **Democracy and Human Rights**
 Sernau: 173-197

Week 10: October 24 & 26
 Chapter 8: **Ethnicity and Religion**

Sernau: 198-222

**Week 11: October 31 & November 2
Review and Exam 2**

Part Three: Seeking a Sustainable World: Environmental Issues

Week 12: November 7 & 9
Chapter 9: **Urbanization**
Sernau: 223-255

Week 13: November 14 & 16
Chapter 10: **Population and Health**
Sernau: 256-289

Week 14: November 21 (Nov 23 is Thanksgiving Holiday)
Chapter 11: **Technology and Energy**
Sernau: 290-322

Week 15: November 28 and 30
Chapter 12: **Ecology**
Sernau: 323-356
Review for Exam 3 on Thursday

Week 16: Monday December 4: 3:00pm. Exam 3

Current Social Problems
Service-learning Handout
Fall 2017

General

- I like service-learning and I encourage interested students to pursue this option, but, again, **service-learning is not required for this course.**
- Service-Learning involves both (1) doing a service to the community and (2) demonstrating learning through written reflections connecting service experiences to course concepts.
- The community service time commitment varies depending on the type of service. A typical commitment is about one hour per week for 10 weeks (including transportation).
- Students are not graded on their community service directly. More accurately, students are graded on their **ability to connect service experiences to course concepts through written reflections.**
- Service-learning is a semester-long commitment. Therefore, all students choosing the service-learning option must do so by the end of Week 2.
- All students choosing the service-learning must sign a service-learning contract with me to insure that we both understand and agree on the scope of both the service and the reflection (learning) requirements.

Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS)

- Weekly 1on1 tutoring with an early elementary grade (K-2) student at an East Baton Rouge Parish Public School
- Weekly blogs connecting your experiences to course concepts
- Weekly comments on others' blogs
- Getting Started
 - Complete VIPS application and give to me during first week of classes
 - Attend VIPS training as soon as you can
 - When you get your "packet", you can start tutoring
 - I will provide some ideas for reflection throughout the course
 - I require a minimum of 10 visits/11 blogs throughout semester

Other Service-Learning Options:

- I am open to other service-learning ideas
- All other service-learning ideas must originate with students
- If you have an idea, schedule a meeting with me to discuss specifics and we will develop a contract
- My expectations/requirements will be parallel to the requirements for tutors.
 - Equivalent of 1 hour per week for 10 weeks of service
 - Equivalent of 10 reflections on service

