Social Problems  
SO 202  
BC 126, MWF 2-2:50  
Spring 2015

Office: BC 121A  
Office Hours: MWF 3-5  
Also by appointment  
Email: dwestfal@emporia.edu  
David Westfall

Required Material:  

Additional readings are assigned. These will be made available electronically.

A pack of 3x5 note cards is also needed. Please bring to class every day.

Course Description:  
Sociology centers on the development, structure, and functioning of human groups; social and cultural patterns; and the principal social processes. This course critically examines major contemporary social problems from the perspectives of social institutions, culture, inequality, racial and ethnic groups, political and economic structures, and social policy. The course explores the impact social problems have on different groups and discusses possible solutions to social problems.

“Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.”

-- C. Wright Mills

Course Goal:  
What C. Wright Mills is referring to is the Sociological Imagination. The goal of this course is to examine our social world through the scientific lens called the sociological imagination – a unique perspective that includes the person, groups made up of persons, and the entire stage that accounts for social life. To use a common metaphor, we acknowledge the importance of trees but stress characteristics of the forest, which is, arguably, infinitely more complex and intriguing. Indeed, as we will see, society is much more than the sum of its individual parts.
Course Objectives:
- To discuss theoretical and conceptual explanations of certain social problems
- To describe symptoms and consequences of specific social problems
- To learn how social position influences life outcomes (social inequality)
- To question and critique (critical thinking)

COURSE EVALUATION: POINT SYSTEM

Reading Responses (10 @ 10 pts each)...........100 pts
Class Participation/Attendance..........................100 pts
Critical Book Review or
Outside the box project..................................200 pts
Exams (4 @ 100 pts each).................................400 pts

A = 720-800 pts
B = 640-719 pts
C = 560-639 pts
D = 480-559 pts
F =  < 480 pts

Borderline grades, curves, and other grade inflators. I am more than happy to help you succeed in this course. However, grades for this course will not be “curved.” I do not grade on the basis of need. If you need an A in this course, note the total number of points necessary to earn an A, and I will be glad to give you advice on how to achieve that goal. Do not come to me and ask me to change your final grade unless you suspect a mathematical error has been made. Results of individual assignments may be discussed via email or in my office.

Explanation of Graded Assignments:

Reading Response (100 pts):
These are short/very concise (not to be confused with easy) writing opportunities. Nearly every week we will have assigned readings. It is important for you to not only read, but also comprehend what you have read. I recognize that at this point in your academic career you may be used to reading/covering summaries or “what others have written about” a particular topic. In this class I will challenge you with “primary texts.” Instead of reading what Joe said about Jim’s work, we will actually read what Joe wrote. I recognize that this can be challenging. To help push you towards active reading and comprehension, you will be required to turn in at least 10 reading summaries throughout the semester (one almost every week). In each response choose one of the weekly readings and address the following questions:

1. What does the author want to know? (Or what’s the ‘central question’?)
   - Really delve into the reading and try to pull the central question/the question that is driving the author’s work. It should be one sentence, ending
in a question mark. More often than not, the central question is NOT actually written in the work...you will need to comprehend and pull out what question you think the author is addressing.

2. Why? Or, So what? (Or what’s the intellectual ‘rationale’?)
- Why would the author address this central question? Is there a gap in the literature? Our understanding? This will get easier as the semester progresses and you have a better footing in what has already been written.

3. What’s the author's answer? (Or what’s the ‘argument’ or ‘substantive theory’?)
- Self explanatory. This will make up the bulk of your paper.

4. How does the author go about finding out if it is wrong or not? (Or what's the ‘method of confirmation’?)
- What is the methodology?

5. What is your critique? (Be sure to substantiate your position).
- The first 4 questions are purely objective. Regardless of whether you agree or disagree with the author’s work, I want to push you to analyze the work objectively. This will help you in other classes as well. I’ve added the 5th question, due to previous students, as an outlet for your subjective analysis. This is the place for you to tell me what “you” think. (“The reading was boring” is NOT a critique).

These should be very succinct, no less than 1 page and no more than 2 pages. While I do not grade on “correctness” of your argument (if there is such a thing), I do grade on your writing, how well you wrestle with the piece, and how well you support your argument. I understand that this is a difficult assignment. Many graduate students do not like it. However, it is a powerful way to delve into pieces of work and will be of great benefit to you in your future studies. Your response to the first four questions should be objective. Question 5 is your chance to be subjective. **10 @ 10 points each. 100 points total. (If you complete more than 10, I will count your 10 highest scores towards the final grade).**

**Outside the Box.** You will choose between three options to complete this major course component.

Option 1 (Research): This major course component evaluates your ability to apply your sociological imagination through direct experience. As a group, you will identify a social problem that interests you and complete a semester ending project. Specific instructions will be discussed in class and posted online. **Worth 200 points total.**

OR

Option 2 (Experience): You will choose between Homelessness and $1 per day. On any given night in the U.S. it is estimated that over 600,000 people are homeless. If you choose homelessness, you will “become homeless” for a minimum of 24 hours (they don’t have to be consecutive). 1.2 billion people (1 in 7) live in “extreme
poverty" (less than $1.25 per day). If you choose $1 per day, you will "live" on $1 per day for a minimum of 1 week. We will discuss strategies to make each choice more realistic. In either case, you will “live” the chosen experience and write an 8-10 page paper detailing and analyzing the experience through a sociological lens. *Worth 200 points total.*

**OR**

Option 3 (Analyze): Individually you will complete an 8-10 page critical review of a book over a social problem. I will provide a list of approved books and a detailed set of instructions outlining the specifics of the paper. *Worth 200 points total.*

Option 1 provides you a wide range of options and opportunities. Option 2 is a bit more structured. Option 3 is highly structured.

**Exams (100 pts each):**

There will be 4 exams (counting the final), each worth 100 points. The exams will consist of multiple choice and/or short essay questions drawn from the main text, in-class lecture, supplemental readings, and videos.

**Attendance and participation (100 pts)**

Attendance and regular contributions towards discussion will factor into class participation. Open, objective discussion and debate is vital for a thorough understanding of the material. You are expected to be present and actively participate in this class. Weekly reading assignments are listed in the course outline and/or will be announced in class. You should be prepared every day to participate in a discussion of the reading. Thus, read each assigned reading before class.

**Emporia State University Policies**

*Disability Services:* Emporia State University will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students need to contact the Director of Disability Services and the professor as early in the semester as possible to ensure that classroom and academic accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. All communication between students, Disability Services, and the professor will be strictly confidential.

**3D.0701 ACADEMIC DISHONESTY POLICY** (FSB 95002 approved by President 1/31/96; FSB 03002 passed by Faculty Senate 1/20/04; approved by President 2/9/04; FSB 05002 passed by Faculty Senate 1/17/06; approved by President 2/7/06; title update approved by President of the Faculty 8/22/2010; FSB 10007 passed by Faculty Senate 3/15/2011; approved by President 3/21/2011).
Academic dishonesty, a basis for disciplinary action, includes but is not limited to activities such as cheating and plagiarism (presenting as one's own the intellectual or creative accomplishments of another without giving credit to the source or sources).

The faculty member in whose course or under whose tutelage an act of academic dishonesty occurs has the option of failing the student for the academic hours in question, or for any components or requirements for that course. Departments, schools, and colleges may have provisions for more severe penalties. Emporia State University may impose penalties for academic dishonesty up to and including expulsion from the student's major or from the University. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty shall be grounds to deny admission to a department or program. In addition to the penalties above, the faculty member shall notify in writing his/her department chair and the registrar of the infraction. The department chair shall forward a report of the infraction to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life. The registrar shall block the student from withdrawing from the course to avoid the penalties that result from the infraction. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life shall act as the record keeper for student academic infractions. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life will notify the student in writing that an infraction has been reported and inform the student of the right to appeal and of the appropriate appeal procedures. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life shall notify the student, the department chair, and the faculty member that initiated the proceedings, of any additional action taken beyond those already imposed by the faculty member. Should a single infraction be so egregious, or should a student have a record of multiple infractions, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life may impose additional penalties, including expulsion of the student from the University. The student has the right to appeal the charge of academic dishonesty (see Student Conduct section). If after an appeal it is found that the student did not commit an act of academic dishonesty, no penalties will be imposed on the student. 3-65 A chair of a department of director of a program may request from the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life a list of all currently enrolled ESU students within that major or program who have committed acts of academic dishonesty. This request may be a standing request to be filling automatically during each semester until the chair or director rescinds the request. In addition, a chair of a department or director of a program may submit to the office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life a list of applicants to a program or major and the chair or director may be informed if any of the applicants has committed any acts of academic dishonesty. Prior to the beginning of the next academic year, the office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life shall send to the Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate a list containing nonspecific student identifiers, such as Student 1, Student 2, etc., their specific academic infraction(s) reported to the Provost's office, the total number of infractions that have been reported for each student, and any actions taken by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life.
3D.07 STUDENT CONDUCT (FSB 01011 approved by President, 4/29/02)
Excessive absenteeism is defined as a number of absences beyond which the faculty member has determined on his/her syllabus that a student cannot complete the course without the academic integrity of the course being compromised. Emporia State University is committed toward development of sensitive and responsible individuals and believes this goal is best achieved through a sound educational program and reasonable policies concerning student conduct, both in and out of the classroom. Operating from this concept, recognition is given to the importance of an honest approach to learning which ideally is shared by the instructor and the student. Faculty members may make the disposition of any cases of disruptive behavior, excessive absenteeism, or academic dishonesty within their classes as they deem appropriate. Following such cases, the faculty member shall make available to the chair of the department and to the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs a record of such student absenteeism or disruptive behavior and the action taken by the faculty member. (This information will be helpful in dealing with those students who may have had similar problems in other classes or departments.) If the problem is not settled between the faculty member and the student, assistance will be given from the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. If the problem cannot be resolved at this point the student may request a hearing. This request must be in writing. If a case of dishonesty, excessive absenteeism, or disruptive behavior also involves a disagreement regarding a grade, the student may be referred to the committee which hears academic appeals. If the behavior is such that broader disciplinary action by the school/college is recommended, a hearing board shall be established by the President of the University to make disposition of the case. (In all cases of disciplinary action the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs is available for assistance.) At any point where student conduct directly interferes with the health, safety, or well being of individuals in the campus community, the University may apply sanctions or take other appropriate action. Since the University is responsible for the subsidiary duties of maintaining property, keeping records, providing living accommodations, and sponsoring a variety of nonclassroom activities, it is necessary that a climate supportive of such duties be maintained. Student status will not be a basis for any special consideration from the University when a community, state, or national law has been violated, although every effort will be made to assist with the rehabilitation of a student violating such laws. This is done by working with law enforcement or other agencies, and ordinarily further sanctions are not applied after such a case is closed. No disciplinary sanction as serious as suspension, probation, or adverse notation on permanent records (available to other than official personnel of the college) will be imposed without proper notification given to the student in writing. This notification will state the charges and will give the accused the opportunity to appear alone, or with appropriate representation before the proper committee, judicial council, court, or official. Included will be the nature and source of evidence and the encouragement for the student to present evidence in turn. Following this review final disciplinary action will be taken by the University. Students may also request that such 3-64 appearance before
committees, councils, courts, or officials be waived and the case be determined in conference with appropriate campus officials. The University conduct policy commits all individuals serving on any of the above named groups dealing with student problems to a code of confidence. Failure to comply may lead to sanctions from student, faculty, or administrative governing bodies, or officials. Students, faculty, and administration shall have the opportunity to participate fully in the formulation of policies and rules and their enforcement. Penalties for men and women shall be based equally; like penalties following like violations.

4E.13 FACULTY INITIATED STUDENT WITHDRAWAL (FSB 76006; FSB 95008 approved by President 5/9/96; FSB 09016 approved by President 5/3/2010)
If a student's absences from class, disruptive behavior, lack of prerequisites, or academic dishonesty become detrimental to the student's progress or that of other students in the class, the faculty member may advise the student to withdraw from the class. Withdrawal may also be advised if the student is inappropriately enrolled in the class. If the faculty member chooses to withdraw the student, he/she shall attempt to notify the student in writing that a faculty initiated withdrawal is in progress. This notification will be copied to the department chair and Academic Affairs office to serve as the request for withdrawal. If efforts to contact the student have been unsuccessful, or unacknowledged, the faculty member shall then seek the aid of the Academic Affairs office in contacting the student. The Academic Affairs office shall provide the student with information about the existing appeals procedures. Upon receiving a written request for withdrawal from the faculty member, the Academic Affairs office may initiate a student withdrawal from the class. None of the above implies or states that faculty members are required to initiate any student withdrawal.

Class Policies

Canvas. Please check Canvas for various kinds of information usually provided in handouts or other kinds of feedback. It is your responsibility to check these sources for any announcements or information pertinent to class and class assignments.

Class attendance. Class attendance is monitored. There is an old saying that 90% of life is just showing up. This statement holds true in education.

Class Etiquette. Be sure that your cell phones are turned off. Texting, talking, facebooking, surfing the net, arriving late, and packing up early are distracting to your colleagues AND the instructor. Please be respectful. If laptops become a nuisance, you will be asked to close them. Out of respect, I ask that all laptops remain closed each time we have a guest speaker. I also ask that all laptops remain closed during videos.

Late Assignments. Typically, late assignments will be penalized **10% for each day**
past due.

**Makeup work.** Typically, no makeup for exams or other assignments will be given. You are expected to notify me at least one week in advance if you must miss a scheduled assignment.

**Office hours.** I will be available for communication during the times listed above. This is a time when you can drop in to talk about your progress in the course or any other course related matters. I am also available by appointment. I encourage e-mail communication and will reply with timeliness. While my door is often physically closed (due to noise in the hallway), it is always metaphorically open. If the lights are on, I am there, feel free to come in.

**Incompletes.** A grade of incomplete will be considered only under extraordinary (emergency) circumstances; an expected incomplete must be arranged prior to the end of the semester. In no case will an incomplete be given to a student who simply fails to attend class and complete assignments.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Chapter/Topic</th>
<th>Readings (Read BEFORE Monday each week)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ch 1/Intro</td>
<td>The Promise - Mills</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Intro cont.</td>
<td>1. Whose side are we on – Becker</td>
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<td>2. Society as Human Product – Berger</td>
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<td>3. Moral Panics – Goode</td>
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<td>4. Razor Blade and the Apple - Best</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Ch 2: Inequality</td>
<td>1. Poverty and Inequality – Yates</td>
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<td>2. Making International Migrants – Sassen</td>
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<td>3. Fragmentation of Social Life – Eitzen</td>
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<td>4. New Economic Insecurity - Hacker</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Ch 3: Race</td>
<td>1. Racial Formations – Omi</td>
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<td>2. Doubly Divided – Lui</td>
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<td>3. Strange Enigma of Race – Bonilla-Silva</td>
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<td>4. Black Mobility/Deadly Symbiosis/or One</td>
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<td>Million Non-Violent offenders</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Ch 4: Gender</td>
<td>1. Mapping the Margins – Crenshaw</td>
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<td>2. The Second Shift – Hochschild</td>
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<td>3. The Globetrotting Sneaker – Enloe</td>
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<td>4. To Veil, or Not to Veil - Read</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Race, Class, and Gender (Intersectionality) are the “big three,” so to speak. After laying the groundwork, there are literally hundreds of “social problems” that we can discuss. A couple of weeks into the class, I am going to ask for your feedback so that we can gear the class towards your interests. Possible topics include but are not limited to: Aging, Media, Economy, Work, Politics, Education, Health care, Drugs, Sex, Crime, Criminal Justice, Marriage, Urbanization, Globalization, Population, Environment, War, Terrorism, Etc...</td>
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