

SOCIAL PROBLEMS: 4W03- FALL 2020

Instructor: Michelle Goldenberg

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Lecture: Monday 8:30am to 11:20am

Room: Virtual Classroom

Office Hours: Monday, 12:00pm to 1:00pm

Course Description

This course investigates contemporary social problems through the lens of sociological literature. First, social problems theory as defined by Spector and Kituse in the 1970s will be introduced along with a variety of studies addressing how social problems are constructed. Then, empirical research focused on current social problems will be examined including precarious work, public health issues, inequality, race relations and policing, homelessness, and Indigenous relations in Canada. Finally, we will discuss the role of news media and social movements in shaping claims-making activities that define social problems.

Learning Objectives

- Read and synthesize peer-reviewed sociological articles
- Understand the various theories and methods employed in social problems research
- Apply sociological concepts to explain empirical findings
- Enhance critical thinking and writing skills

Course Evaluation

1. Response Memos (20%)
Students will submit summaries of the assigned readings on Avenue to Learn for 5 of the weekly topics. These summaries should discuss key findings, themes, and theoretical perspectives.
2. Participation (15%)
Students will earn participation grades for creating discussion posts on Avenue to Learn that comment/critique and pose questions about weekly readings for 5 of the weekly topics.
3. Take-home Exam (30%)
A take-home exam consisting of short answer questions on course and lecture content due on October 26th
4. Final Essay (35%)
Long answer question based on course content due at the end of term.

Week 1: September 14th Introduction to Social Problems

Best, Joel. 2002. Review Essay: Constructing the Sociology of Social Problems: Spector and Kitsuse Twenty-Five Years Later. *Sociological Forum* 17(4):699-706

Loseke, Donileen and Joel Best. Eds. 2015: Constructionist Futures: New Directions in Social Problems Theory. Special Issue, *Qualitative Sociology Review* 11(2): 7-14

Week 2: September 21st Precarious Work

Kalleberg, Arne. 2009. Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition. *American Sociological Review* 74(1):1-22

Cranford, Cynthia J., Vosko, Leah F. & Zukewich, Nancy. 2003. The Gender of Precarious Employment in Canada. *Industrial Relations* 58(3): 454-482

Week 3: Media Narratives & Public Health

Malone, R. E., E. Boyd, and L. A. Bero. 2000. "Science in the News: Journalists' Constructions of Passive Smoking as a Social Problem." *Social Studies of Science* 30(5): 713-35.

Saguy, Abigail C. and R. Almeling. 2008. Fat in the Fire? Science, the News Media, and the "Obesity Epidemic" *Sociological Forum* 23(1): 53-83

Week 4: Claims-Making on Tech Platforms

Maratea, R.J. 2015. Online Claims-Making: The NRA and Gun Advocacy in Cyberspace. *Qualitative Sociology Review* 11(2): 145-59

Adorjan, Michael and Ho Lun Yau. 2015. Resinicization and Digital Citizenship in Hong Kong: Youth, Cyberspace, and Claims-Making *Qualitative Sociology Review* 11(2):160-178

Week 5: September 28th Medicalization

Conrad, Peter and Deborah Potter. 2000. From Hyperactive Children to ADHD Adults: Observations on the Expansion of Medical Categories *Social Problems*, 47(4): 559–582

Scott, Wilbur J. 1990. PTSD in DSM-III A Case in the Politics of Diagnosis and Disease. *Social Problems* 37(3): 294-310

Week 6: Monday October 5th Education

Robson, Karen, Anisef, Paul, and Robert S. Brown. 2019. A comparison of factors determining the transition to postsecondary education in Toronto and Chicago. *Research in Comparative and International Education* 14(3): 338-356

McLaughlin, Neil. 2019. Rich private colleges in the U.S. are fuelling inequality – and right-wing populism. *The Conversation* [<http://theconversation.com/rich-private-colleges-in-the-u-s-are-fuelling-inequality-and-right-wing-populism-119145>]

~Week 7: Monday October 12th No class Midterm Recess~

Week 8: October 19th Homelessness

Herring, Chris. 2019. Complaint-Oriented Policing: Regulating Homelessness in Public Space. *American Sociological Review* 84(5): 769-800

Noy, Darren. 2009. When Framing Fails: Ideas, Influence, and Resources in San Francisco's Homeless Policy Field. *Social Problems*, 56(2): 223–242

Week 9: October 26th Health Disparities

Allen, Kate, Yang, Jennifer, Mendleson, and Andrew Bailey. 2020. Lockdown worked for the rich, but not for the poor. The untold story of how COVID-19 spread across Toronto, in 7 graphics [<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/08/02/lockdown-worked-for-the-rich-but-not-for-the-poor-the-untold-story-of-how-covid-19-spread-across-toronto-in-7-graphics.html>]

Glance, Laurent G., Osler, Turner M., Mukamel, Dana B., Meredith, Wayne J., Li, Yue, Qian, Feng, and Andrew W. Dick. 2013. Trends in racial disparities for injured patients admitted to trauma centers. *Health Services Research* 48(5): 1684-1703

Chen, Esther H., Shofer, Frances S, Dean, Anthony J., Hollander, Judd E., Baxt, William G., Robey, Jennifer L., Sease, Keara L. and Angela M Mills. 2008. Gender disparity in analgesic treatment of emergency department patients with acute abdominal pain. *Academic Emergency Medicine* 15(5): 414-418

Week 10: November 2nd Post-Truth

Ali, Harris S., and Fuyuki Kurasawa. 2020. #COVID19: Social media both a blessing and a curse during coronavirus pandemic. *The Conversation*. [<http://theconversation.com/covid19-social-media-both-a-blessing-and-a-curse-during-coronavirus-pandemic-133596>]

Nichols, Tom. 2017. How America Lost Faith in Expertise: And Why That's a Giant Problem. *Foreign Affairs* 60

Numerato, Dino; Vochocová, Lenka; Štětka, Václav; Macková, Alena. 2019. The vaccination debate in the "post-truth" era: social media as sites of multi-layered reflexivity. *Sociology of Health & Illness* 41(1): 82-97

Week 11: November 9th Indigenous Relations

Denis, Jeff. 2015. "Contact Theory in a Small-Town Settler-Colonial Context," *American Sociological Review*, 80: 218-242.

Liddle, Celeste. 2014. "Intersectionality and Indigenous Feminism: An Aboriginal Woman's Perspective." *The Postcolonialist*, June 25.
[<http://postcolonialist.com/civildiscourse/intersectionality-indigenous-feminism-aboriginal-womans-perspective/>]

McGuire, Mollie and Jeff Denis. 2019. Unsettling pathways: how some settlers come to seek reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. *Settler Colonial Studies* 9(4): 505-524

Week 12: November 16th Black Lives Matter

Boykoff, J., & Carrington, B. 2020. Sporting dissent: Colin Kaepernick, NFL activism, and media framing contests. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 55(7), 829–849.

Staples, Brent. 1986. *Black Men and Public Space*. Harper's.
[<http://harpers.org/archive/1986/12/black-men-and-public-space/>]

Frosch, Dan, and Scott Calvert. 2015. "A Year After Ferguson, 'Black Lives Matter' Still Wields Influence" *Wall Street Journal* [<http://www.wsj.com/articles/a-year-after-ferguson-black-lives-matter-still-wields-influence-1439143426>]

Week 13: November 23rd Gender

Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. 2000. "Migrant Filipina Workers and the International Division of Reproductive Labor." *Gender and Society* 14(4): 560-580

Correll, Shelley J., Benard, Stephen and In Paik. 2007. Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty? *American Journal of Sociology* 112(5): 1297-1339

Week 14: November 30th Environment

Trumbo, Craig. 1996. Constructing climate change: claims and frames in US news coverage of an environmental issue. *Public Understanding of Science*. 5(3): 269-283

Mccright, Aaron M., and Riley E. Dunlap. 2000. Challenging Global Warming as a Social Problem: An Analysis of the Conservative Movement's Counter-claims. *Social Problems*, 47(4): 499–522

Week 15: December 7th Public Sociology & Social Problems

Adorjan, Michael. 2013. Igniting Constructionist Imaginations: Social Constructionism's Absence and Potential Contribution to Public Sociology *American Sociologist* 44 (1): 1-22

Christensen, Tony. No Path to Paradise: Deconstructing the Promise of Public Sociology. *American Sociologist* 44 (1): 23-41

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Assignments should be double-spaced, typed in 12-point font and submitted on Avenue to Learn in Word or PDF format.

Late Assignments

Assignments will lose 2% per day for late submissions.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.

- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a [RISO](#) accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online. It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff,

must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F