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Social Problems - SOCI 1306 (601)
CRN 202510
Fall 2024 Syllabus
Texas A&M San Antonio

Instructor: Dr. Sean Elias

Course: Online - Asynchronous

Communication and Office Hours: Email any questions or we can set up a Zoom meeting for office hours.

Email: selias@tamusa.edu

Class Overview

What are social problems? Why should I take this course?

Social problems are problems that negatively affect society and human relations, such as white racism against people of color, exploitation of workers by capitalists, patriarchy and sexism, crime, and environmental destruction. Social problems are often created by the (mis) organization of society (class, race, and gender hierarchies and discrimination) and in the dysfunctionality and mismanagement social institutions of society (education, media, corporations and the workplace, and families). Social problems here in the US often are often related to social problems across the globe (war and terrorism); social problems in Texas, such as patriarchal control of women's reproductive rights, are connected to social problems surrounding women's rights at the national level and international level. In short, social problems operate at different levels and are spread throughout society. Social problems go beyond the individual (a person getting laid off), affecting large groups and the social world (e.g., economic depression of a country).

This course will help you better identify and explain social problems in society. By studying how sociologists approach social problems, you will gain knowledge and empirical evidence of social problems that will assist your understanding of society and human relations, allow you to share your knowledge of social problems with others, and, most importantly, work to solve the social problems that you find to be the most pressing.

Please take a look at the Sections of the American Sociological Association to note some of the sociological concerns and research of sociologists that address social problems:

<https://www.asanet.org/communities-sections/sections/current-sections>

Catalogue Course Description:

Application of sociological principles and theoretical perspectives to major social problems in contemporary society such as inequality, crime and violence, substance abuse, environmental

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issues, deviance, globalization, or family problems. This course meets the standards for the "Social and Behavioral Sciences" category of courses under the core curriculum. Required for all sociology majors, minors and for BAAS degrees with a concentration in sociology.

Prerequisites:

TSI Reading/Writing

Course Objectives:

With some effort and time, students will learn:

- to identify the key social problems in society
- to utilize the concepts, theories, and methods of sociology to research and explain social problems
- to learn how to attempt to solve social problems
- to improve knowledge of one social problem in greater detail
- to develop verbal and writing skills that assist explanations of social problems
- to improve group problem-solving skills to tackle real-world social problems

Technical Issues with Blackboard and other Matters

Any questions about Blackboard, for example, questions about how to access Zoom meetings, should be directed to the Help Desk:

sahelp@tamusa.tamus.edu

210-784-4357

Required Learning Materials:

Primary Textbook: A. Javier Trevino's *Investigating Social Problems*, Fourth Edition (Sage 2024). Third edition will also do.

In addition to assigned readings from the primary textbook, occasionally there will be additional assigned readings and videos posted on Blackboard.

Communication:

Contacting the Instructor: Please email me any time with any questions or concerns you may have with the class. We can also set up a Zoom meeting. I am not always around my computer, so know that I will get back to you usually within 24 hours, but it may be 48 hours in some cases. If you do not hear back after 48 hours, please email me again.

Email Communication: Communication is the key to success in any field you will enter. Thus, developing professional, effective communication skills and etiquette is very important. Formality as well as identifying someone by their name and title in any professional communication is one such form of etiquette. I ask that you address me as Dr. Elias, Professor Elias, or Mr. Elias in emails. If you have a title (military or other), please let me know. I also have

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no problem addressing you as Mr., Mrs., or Ms., or another title ----just let me know; otherwise I will address you by your first name in communications.

Class Structure of the Course and Scheduling Your Time:

Class Structure: This course is an asynchronous online course. All work will be completed in Blackboard. There will be ten class discussions, two exams (essays), and a two-part term research project (see Assignments below).

To do your best in this class it is essential that you have read through the assigned readings for each week (the whole chapter) before adding to the class discussion. In short, class discussions are less productive and engaged if you have not thoroughly read the materials and are thus not prepared to add to the discussion. Unpreparedness will negatively affect your class discussion grade.

It is also important that you **carefully review the Course Assignments and dates in the Course Schedule and always refer to the Syllabus when you have a question** before contacting the instructor.

Course Time Management and Late Assignments: As an online course, time management is a critical component of this course, meaning that it is essential to have your reading completed before class, assignments completed on time, and avoid last-minute cramming, which experts say amounts to little knowledge retention. Late assignments are not accepted without documentation that demonstrated reason for a late assignment submission.

Assignments

Student Introductions: It's important that students get to know their classmates and begin to exchange ideas with each other in the class, generating greater dialogue and ideas about the subject matter we will address in this course. So, the initial assignment is to add some description of yourself and respond to two of your classmates' posts. 30 points for the post and 10 points for each response (50 points). Instructions for the assignment in Blackboard will provide more details.

Class Discussions: You will complete 10 class discussions throughout the semester. There will be a prompt for each discussion and on several occasions, you will choose a prompt (weeks 6, 8, and 10). After adding your post (30 points) you will then reply to two classmates' posts (10 points each). Because this is the most important assignment in this course, it is essential that you write thorough, well-developed posts and thoughtfully respond to at least two classmates' posts. **Class Discussion Guidelines:** Choose TWO "Ask Yourself" questions at the end of the chapter and answer them as thoroughly and fully as possible---use at least three to four KEY WORDS listed at the end of the chapter. Also, type the question (or set of questions) in **Bold** and then respond. 400 word minimum for post (this word count begins with your response).

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Late Posts and Responses will result in 10-point deduction for late posts and 5-point deduction for each late response. Zeroes will be issued after a week.

Midterm Exam: There will be a midterm exam on Blackboard that will cover Chapters 1-6. There will be four essay questions, it is an open textbook exam, and you will have a week to complete. Unless you have a serious documented excuse, no makeup midterm exam will be issued, and late exams will receive zeroes (150 points).

Final Exam: There will be a final exam during exam week, which covers chapters 7-14. Like the midterm, there will be four essay questions on the final exam, it is an open textbook exam, and you will have a week to complete. Unless you have a serious documented excuse, no makeup final exam will be issued, and late exams will receive zeroes (150 points).

Term Research Paper: There will be a two-part research project that allows students to choose a social problem that interests you and to learn more about the topic by reading what others have observed (literature review), and then explaining the significant issues you discover about the social problem (150 points).

-In the first stage, you will identify a social problem from the textbook that interests you and explain why it is an important topic to study. You will also provide a literature review -- summary and discussion-- of several interesting sources (at least 6) that address the social problem and explain why those sources are useful for better understanding the social problem (75 points).

-The second stage/discussion will address a specific significant issue or set of issues about the social problem. So, for example, if you are looking at the broader topic of environmental social problems, you would narrow down your focus and address a specific environmental problem such as air pollution, environmental disasters (fires, floods, etc.), or water pollution (75 points).

See Course Schedule for dates of the Term Research Project. Late submissions of this project will result in letter grade penalty each week the discussion is not submitted. More detailed instructions will be provided on Blackboard.

Grade Breakdown

Student Introductions: 50 points

Class Discussions: 10 at 50 points each =500 points

Midterm Exam = 150 points

Final Exam = 150 points

Term Paper: 75 points for stage 1 and 75 points for stage 2 = 150 points

1000 points total

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There is always the possibility of miscalculating or mis-entering an assignment grade, so always check for possible mistakes.

Grade Scale

940 and above = A; 900-930 = A-
870-899 =B+; 840-869 = B; 800-839 = B-
770-799 =C+; 740-769 = C; 700-739 = C-
670-699 =D+; 640-669 = D; 600-639 = D-
590 and below = F

Course Schedule (Subject to Minor Changes)

Each week check for Announcements in Blackboard and any additional Information posted in the Weekly Modules.

Week 1 (8/26-9/1): Sociology and Social Problems

Assignments

Read Chapter 1 in Trevino
Complete the Student Introduction
Complete Week 1 Class Discussion (posts by Thursday, 11:59 PM and responses by Sunday, 11:59 PM)

Week 2 (9/2-9/8): Poverty and Class Inequality

Assignments

Read Chapter 2 in Trevino
Complete Week 2 Class Discussion (posts by Thursday, 11:59 PM and responses by Sunday, 11:59 PM)

Week 3 (9/9-9/15): Race and Ethnicity

Assignments

Read Chapter 3 in Trevino
Complete Week 3 Class Discussion (posts by Thursday, 11:59 PM and responses by Sunday, 11:59 PM)

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Week 4 (9/16-9/22): Gender

Assignments

Read Chapter 4 in Trevino

Complete Week 4 Class Discussion (posts by Thursday, 11:59 PM and responses by Sunday, 11:59 PM)

Week 5 (9/23-9/29): Sexualities (Term Research Project Stage 1)

Assignments

Read Chapter 5 in Trevino

Submit Term Paper Part A (due Sunday 11:59 PM)

Week 6 (9/30-10/6): Aging

Assignments

Read Chapter 6 in Trevino

Complete week 6 discussion, which may address the Sexualities chapter prompt *or* the Aging chapter prompt.

Week 7(10/7-10/13): Education (Midterm Exam)

Assignments

Read Chapter 7 in Trevino

Complete Midterm Exam

Week 8 (10/14-10/20): Media

Assignments

Read Chapter 8 in Trevino

Complete Week 8 discussion, which may address the Education chapter prompt or the Media chapter prompt.

Week 9 (10/21-10/27): Families

Assignments

Read Chapter 9 in Trevino

No Discussion--mid-semester catch-up day

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Week 10 (10/28-11/3): Work and the Economy

Assignments

Read Chapter 10 in Trevino

Complete Week 10 Class Discussion, which may address the Families chapter or the Work and the Economy chapter (posts by Thursday, 11:59 PM and responses by Sunday, 11:59 PM)

Week 11 (11/4-11/10): Crime

Assignments

Read Chapter 11 in Trevino

Complete Week 11 Class Discussion (posts by Thursday, 11:59 PM and responses by Sunday, 11:59 PM)

Week 12 (11/11-11/17): Drugs

Assignments

Read Chapter 12 in Trevino

Complete Week 12 Class Discussion (posts by Thursday, 11:59 PM and responses by Sunday, 11:59 PM)

Week 13 Choose a Chapter 13-17 (11/18-11/24)

Assignments

Read one of the following chapters: Chapter 13, Chapter 14, Chapter, 15, Chapter 16, Chapter 17, in Trevino

Complete Week 13 Class Discussion (posts by Thursday, 11:59 PM and responses by Sunday, 11:59 PM)

Week 14 (11/25-12/1): Thanksgiving Break (No Readings or Assignments)

Week 15 (12/2-12/8): Catch Up Week

Assignments

Submit Part B of Term Paper (due Sunday, 11:59 PM)

Week 16 (12/9-12/15): Finals Week

Assignments

Final Exam:



Course Policies and Other Information

Controversial Subject Matter

Student participation and class discussion are highly valued and encouraged. We will be exploring several potentially sensitive topics such as prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, violence, and so forth. Mutual respect is key in this class. I will not tolerate disrespect under any circumstance. I ask that everyone is respectful of other people's comments and questions even if you disagree. All of us must work together to create an environment in which we can discuss social issues in a non-judgmental way. If you find a comment another student makes to be insensitive or disrespectful, please speak up and civilly explain your thoughts or feelings or discuss the issue with me in private.

I expect everyone to come to class with an open mind. You are encouraged to raise alternative viewpoints. However, you will be asked to think critically about your (and your classmates') worldview, beliefs, and biases in an academic manner. You will be graded on your ability to explain and analyze various perspectives regardless of whether or not you think they are accurate. Keep in mind that the goal of a college education is to learn about different perspectives, how to analyze them academically according to a particular discipline's approach, and how to make arguments supported by scholarly evidence. Rather than dictating what you should think, this course is aimed to enhance your ability to think critically.

Active engagement is highly encouraged and rewarded. I will exercise my responsibility to manage the discussions so that ideas and arguments can proceed in an orderly fashion. If you are having difficulty participating or feel intimidated in any way, please come and see me early in the semester and we can work together to find a solution.

Withdrawal

The University policy on withdrawal allows students only a limited number of opportunities available to withdraw from courses. You need to understand the financial and academic consequences that may result from course withdrawal.

Religious Accommodation

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

If you will be observing any religious holidays this semester that will prevent you from attending a regularly scheduled class or interfere with fulfilling any course requirement, please contact me to make appropriate arrangements within two weeks of the beginning of the semester (or three days before any holidays which fall within the first two weeks of class).

Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Title II of the ADAAA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that students with disabilities be guaranteed equal access to the learning environment through the provision

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of reasonable and appropriate accommodation of their disability. If you have a diagnosed disability that may require accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and the email is dss@tamusa.edu.

If you have a disability and need academic accommodations, please provide a letter of accommodation from Disability Support Services early in the semester. I am not able to provide accommodations without verification from DSS.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty for which a student is subject to penalty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submissions, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, violating known safety requirements, and ethical misconduct. This includes holding other students to the same standards and reporting any incidents of an alleged violation of the honesty policy to the instructor involved or, if necessary, to the appropriate academic department head. All students are responsible for being familiar with the Academic Dishonesty Policy, which may be found in the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook.

University policy prescribes serious consequences for acts of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, a grade of 'F' on a particular paper or assignment, a failing grade in the course, or possible expulsion from the University. Considering the potential consequences of academic misconduct, it is obviously in students' best interests to avoid even the appearance of such behavior. If you are ever unclear whether a specific act might constitute academic misconduct, please contact your instructor for an assessment of the situation.

All student written assignments are subject to analysis by anti-plagiarism software.

Academic Learning Center

All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center is an appointment-based center where appointments are made through the Navigate platform. Students access Navigate through Jagwire in the Student Services tab. The Center is active on campus outreaching to students to highlight services offered. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu or calling (210)-7841332. Appointments can also be made through JagWire under the services tab.

Counseling Resources

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and/or negatively impact your daily functioning. If you or someone you know is experiencing life stressors, emotional difficulties, or mental health concerns at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, please contact the Student Counseling Center located in Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance) or call 210-7841331 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. All mental health services provided by the Student Counseling Center are free, confidential (as the law allows), and are not part of a student's academic or university record. The Student Counseling Center SCC provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information, please visit www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling

Student Counseling Center

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In a crisis, please walk into the Student Counseling Center (SCC) any time between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday – Friday, to be seen by a clinician. For after-hours support, please call 210784-1331. Please contact UPD at 911 if harm to self or harm to others is imminent.

Emergency Preparedness

JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff, and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email, and/or phone call with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>

More information about Emergency Preparedness and the Emergency Response Guide can be found here:

<https://www.tamusa.edu/upd/index.html>

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Jaguar Writing Center

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. The Writing Center is currently holding all appointments digitally. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the student services tab. Students wanting to work in real-time with a tutor can schedule an "Online Appointment." Students wishing to receive asynchronously, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an "eTutoring" appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at www.tamusa.edu/WritingCenter. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

Meeting Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students (DOS@tamusa.edu) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources they may possess.

Military Affairs

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, and special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the Patriots' Casa in-person room 202 or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

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Respect for Diversity

We understand that our students represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives. When we are equity-minded, we are aware of differences and inequalities and are willing to discuss them so we can act to resolve them. The University is committed to building cultural competencies, or the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that enable individuals and organizations to acknowledge cultural differences and incorporate these differences in working with people from diverse cultures. Respecting and accepting people different than you is vital to your success in the class, on campus, and as a future professional in the global community. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

Share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs.

Be open to the views of others.

Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.

Value each other's opinions and communicate respectfully.

Keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature.

Use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the A&M-San Antonio community.

Statement about Harassment and Discrimination

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality, diversity, pluralism and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, by applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experienced any of these incidents, know that you are not alone. TAMUSA has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that many A&M-San Antonio employees, including all faculty members, are required, to be reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must report the information to the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331, Modular C. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. Additional information about your options is also available at <http://www.tamusa.edu/businessaffairs/titleix/index.html>

If you wish to receive information from a center that is not affiliated with the university, you may want to call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673 (<https://www.rainn.org/>).

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

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All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System. This includes the A&M-San Antonio Student Code of Conduct. For more information, please see the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook.

The Six-Drop Rule

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA.

However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

University Email Policy and Course Communications

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at sahelp@tamusa.tamus.edu or 210-784-4357. If you don't hear back from them within 48 hours, contact them again. They have a lot of requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to check up on them. I will distribute course materials, including announcements and updates, via Blackboard, so I encourage you to log in to that system at least twice per week.