

## **SOAN 215 – SOCIAL PROBLEMS – Fall 2013**

**SOAN 215, Section 01**  
**crn 6459**

**T/Th 9:00 a.m. to 10:20 a.m.**  
**Barnett Hall Room # 2226**

**PROFESSOR:** Paul Shapiro

**MY OFFICE:** Barnett 2201

**PHONE:** 785-4055

**E-MAIL:** pshapiro@truman.edu

**OFFICE HOURS:** M,W, 9:30 am – 10:30 am; T, Th 10:30 am – 12noon; and by appointment.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to familiarize you with a sociological approach to the study of contemporary social problems. We will examine the social structures and processes that create and/or contribute to some of society's "problems." Broad substantive areas of study include: the economy, inequality, crime, age, race, sex, healthcare, and education. This semester there will also be an in-depth examination of poverty, homelessness, and families. During the course of the semester I would expect students to improve their critical thinking and analytical skills.

Additionally, I would also hope that you will come to see that the problems that many people face on a day-to-day basis may have less to do with individual blame and more to do with our social structure, culture, and society. As such, it is expected that upon the conclusion of this course, students will view the world in a different, more enlightened, and self-aware manner.

### **DEPARTMENT-SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES:**

1. Being a successful participant in an academic discipline requires that students are taught the expectations of the discipline.
2. It is necessary to have knowledge to think with.
3. It is necessary to learn skills to read, evaluate, and craft arguments.
4. It is necessary to learn skills to identify and collect appropriate data, perform analysis, and report results.
5. It is important to encourage students to participate in activities that require them to apply and engage the knowledge and skills they learn in classes.

### **COURSE-SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES:** The student will:

1. Be able to identify the major social problems occurring in contemporary American society
2. Understand the major sociological perspective as they pertain to social problems.
3. Be able to apply the major sociological theories to social condition and institutions as they pertain to socially constructed social issues.
4. Be able to critically discuss possible solutions to contemporary social problems.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Coleman and Kerbo. 2009. *Social Problems*. 10<sup>th</sup> edition. Pearson Education.

Kozol, Jonathon. 2006. *Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America*. Broadway Books.

### **ADDITIONAL READINGS:**

There may be additional articles which will either be put on reserve at the library or made available on-line or in class. Additionally, a few times during the semester students will be responsible for reading the front page of the *New York Times*.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Two Examinations. These exams will be in-class, with a combination of multiple choice and essay type questions. While the examinations are not “technically” cumulative there will be some repetition of questions from one exam to another.

Midterm exam:	October 8 <sup>th</sup>	~ 40 points
Final exam:	December 12 <sup>th</sup>	~ 50 points

(**Note:** Only documented medical emergencies, university-sponsored activities, or grievous situations justify the taking of a make-up exam and require professor pre-approval.)

2. Three Written Assignments. These papers will be take-home, essay-type questions. Assignments will be based on the readings and in-class discussion. Paper topics/questions will be assigned in class on specified days and will be collected in class on specified days. Late papers will NOT be accepted. Papers are worth 15 points each. Be advised: spelling, grammar, and punctuation count. **You need to proofread your work!** Duplicated sentences, pages that are out of order, misaligned, or upside-down will result in a mandatory 5 point deduction. So pay attention! (**Again:** Only documented medical emergencies, university-sponsored activities, or grievous situations justify the acceptance of a late paper and still require professor pre-approval.)

3. Current Events News Quizzes. A few times scattered throughout the semester there will be current events news quizzes taken from that week’s *New York Times*. (You must be in class to qualify for these points.)

4. Random Response Papers. At the professor’s whim occasional short response (or reaction) papers may also be assigned during the semester. Typically these are 1-page (or less) responses that will be assigned as either in-class or take-home tasks. (**Seriously:** You must be in class to qualify for these points. No exceptions!)

**GRADING SCALE:**

2 exams worth ~ 90 points	A range: 90% and above
3 homework papers worth ~ 45 points	B range: 80% - 89%
3 or 4 <i>NY Times</i> quizzes worth ~ 15 or 20 points	C range: 70% - 79%
2 to 4 response papers worth ~ 10 to 20 points	D range: 60% - 69%
(Flexible) Total = ~ 170 points	F range: 59% or less

**CLASS ATTENDANCE:**

Attendance is your responsibility. However, please remember that a substantial portion of the exam material will be derived from the lectures. You are responsible for material covered in the lectures that is not covered in the text. You are also responsible for material from the text that may not be covered in the lectures. Quizzes and reaction papers cannot be made up.

**CLASS BEHAVIOR:**

Tardiness and leaving class early are distracting to other students and is strongly discouraged. I recognize that Barnett Hall is a trek from some parts of campus; but that’s no excuse for not making every effort to be punctual. If you cannot make it on time please enter the classroom as quietly and as unobtrusively as possible. Students who are habitually late, or disturb the class upon their entry, after being warned may be administratively withdrawn.

If you must leave early, please let me know in advance, and sit close to the exits to depart as quietly as possibly.

**CELL PHONES:**

Turn off all cell-phones and electronic communication devices when in class. Under no circumstances should any student ever answer a cell phone in class or check a phone for messages or numbers. If your cellular device goes off during class you will be asked to leave. Repeat offenders may be given an 'F' for the semester and administratively dropped from the course.

There will be no "texting" in this class. Students caught texting or attempting to read or send text messages will be asked to leave. Repeat offenders may be given an 'F' for the semester and administratively dropped from the course.

Unless you have documentation from the Disability Services office, students are not permitted to wear headsets, iPods, earpieces, or other electronic equipment.

**ADA COMPLIANCE:**

The university is committed to making every possible effort to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Disability Services office (x4478) as soon as possible.

**WRITING CENTER:**

The Writing Center in McClain 303B (x4484) is open from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, and is a good resource for improving your writing. They can help you to brainstorm, adjust style(s), fix grammar, references, citations, and the like. Never be too embarrassed or ashamed to seek out help.

**ACADEMIC (DIS)HONESTY:**

The documented policies of Truman State University concerning cheating and plagiarism will be strictly enforced in this class. Anyone engaging in plagiarism, cheating, or any other forms of academic dishonesty should be prepared to fail this course, and possibly be expelled. So don't do it.

**TRUVIEW ACCOUNTS:**

Your Truview student e-mail account is the official communications mechanism for this class. Any official notifications that require e-mail contact will be made through your Truview account. So please check it regularly.

**DISCLOSURE OF GRADES:**

As a matter of policy I am NOT permitted to discuss or release grade information via e-mail or over the phone. You must come to my office to discuss your grades.

**SENSITIVE SUBJECT MATERIAL:**

This course will explore some controversial topics and sensitive material. It is our goal to examine complex issues from multiple perspectives. The cornerstone of higher education is the freedom to discuss competing theories and ideas in the classroom. **It is also important to remember that examination does not equal endorsement.** To fully understand our social world, unpopular or alternative viewpoints must be studied. While free expression, spirited interactions, and lively disagreements are encouraged, personal attacks and disrespect of your fellow students will not be tolerated.

**CONCERNS, PROBLEMS, QUESTIONS:**

If you have a concern about any issue, in or out of class, please come by my office, call, or e-mail me and we can discuss it. You don't need to make an appointment. If I'm around Barnett Hall my door will usually be open. Be assured that anything told to me in confidence will remain in confidence unless I am required by law to disclose it.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

This is a general guide. Unless changes are identified in class, or via Truview e-mail, please follow this schedule. I reserve the right to change, alter, adjust, or otherwise tinker with the schedule as I see fit.

(**Note:** I strongly encourage you to read the assigned materials prior to the start of the week.)

<b><u>Week of:</u></b>	<b><u>Coleman/Kerbo book Please read</u></b>
8/20 Intro to course, Syllabus.	Ch. #1
8/27 Society and Social Problems	Ch. #1
9/3 Problems of the Family	Ch. #2
9/10 Problems of Education	Ch. #3
9/17 Problems of the Economy. The Poor	Ch. #4, #7
9/24 The Poor. Physical/Mental Health Problems	Ch. #7, #6
10/1 Physical/Mental Health Problems, Catch Up, Review	Ch. #6
10/8 <b>MIDTERM</b>	
10/15 Racial/Ethnic Problems	Ch. #8
10/22 Problems Pertaining to Age	Ch. #9
10/29 Problems Pertaining to Gender	Ch. #10
11/5 Problems Pertaining to Sex and Drugs	Ch. #11, #12
11/12 Crime and Violence	Ch. #13
11/19 Population and Environment.	Ch. #15, #16
11/26 <b>No Classes</b> – Thanksgiving.	
12/3 <i>Rachel and Her Children</i>	Kozol's Book.
12/12 <b>FINAL EXAMINATION</b> [Thursday, December 12 <sup>th</sup> , <b>Note Time:</b> 7:30 am – 9:20 am.]	