SOCIAL PROBLEMS
Spring 2005

Instructor: D. Harper
Loyola University New Orleans

Course Description: This course is a survey and analysis of social problems including war, under- and over-development, the ecological crisis, population and its control, intergroup conflict, violence, disease, and despair. (I composed this catalogue description for this course about 25 years ago; in my mind nothing has changed that would alter the description.)

Course Objectives: Awareness of social problems may not lead to solutions, but, a solid understanding of social problems by enough people can push solutions onto the public policy agenda. When a significant number of people or a number of significant people get concerned, positives solutions can be tried and things can be made to change for the better.


Course Requirements:
1. Examinations. There will be four examinations beginning Jan. 19th focusing on text materials. These tests will include approximately 10 definitional or short answer items worth 1 point each.
2. The Term Assignments. With the Jan.19th class you will begin doing a weekly library research project (a total of six). This project called “Continuing the Research” requires that you go to the library (or use your own computer) and search for research studies either cited in your text or newer research on the same topics covered in your text. You are required to (1) find a citation on one of the databases (c.f. Psylit., Sociofile) print the citation, (2) find the journal article (often full-text can be found on the Internet) (3) read the article and write a report following the instructions provided in this document.

Term Assignment Instructions: The topic selection is up to you, but the topic must come from the subject content of the course. Some of the following topics would be appropriate subject matter areas: social and political inequality, violence, crime and justice, urban problems, interpersonal conflict, etc. Your selection must come from a topic in the chapter(s) just completed.
Your assignment is to abstract the article you have collected. To receive maximum credit for your research projects your abstract of the article should follow the following outline:

a. Citation: (this appears at the top of the page) author, title of article, title of publication, volume, number, pages, date of publication.

b. Thesis, theme or problem addressed in the article. In no more than three sentences, “what is the article about?”

c. How has the thesis, theme or problem been addressed in the past? In three sentences, “How has the problem, etc., been studied before?” In some instances, where appropriate, this section may deal with the nature and extent of the problem.

d. How does the present author propose to study the problem? In three sentences discuss the methodology and research techniques employed by the author. Where appropriate, this section may deal with proposals for solving the problem.

e. What are the results of the author’s study? In three sentences summarize the findings (results) of the article. Where appropriate, this might include recommendations for a course of action based on the results.

f. Summarize the conclusions drawn by the author. What implications does the author see from the results of the research reported in the article? In no more than three sentences summarize the article.

g. (Optional) What were the strengths (weaknesses) of the article from the point of view conceptualizing the problem, designing the approach, analyzing the results, drawing conclusions and discussing the implications.

Grading Scale: 93-100=A; 88-92=B+; 82-87=B; 75-81=C+; 70-74=C; 65-69=D+; 60-064=D; 59 or less =F

Other Course Policies: Attendance is expected for all classes. If you must be absent, it is your responsibility to keep up with the progress of the course. A late assignment (by one day or one year) will result in a 10% reduction in the grade for that assignment. No make-up examinations are given. You are allowed to exempt yourself or remove your lowest score on a test in computing your final grade.
Course Outline:

January 5th. This session will summarize and discuss course expectations and requirements. The lecture will be an introduction to the sociological study and the political economy of social problems.
Readings: Chap. 1 & 2.

January 12th. Problems of people, the environment and location. The lecture will focus issues involving global environmental and world population change that made be implicated in the very survival of the planet as we know it. Closer to home, we will look at the “browning and graying “of the U.S.
Reading: Chap. 3, 4, 5.

January 19th. (First test; Chaps. 1-5., First 45 minutes). This lecture looks at the problem of concentrated poverty in urban areas and the related issues of race and ethnic inequality.
Readings: Chaps. 6, 7, 8.

January 26th. This lecture continues the discussion of inequality by looking at gender, sexual orientation and disability.
Readings: Chaps. 9, 10, 11.

February 2nd (Second test, Chaps. 6-11., First 45 minutes). This lecture looks at the social structural correlates of crime and deviance.
Readings: Chaps. 12.

February 16th. Crime and Deviance cont’d. This lecture focuses on institutional responses to crime and deviance and the problem of drugs in U.S. society. We will look at how the police, courts and corrections work in our society.
Readings: Chap. 13.

February 23rd. (Third test, Chaps. 12-13., First 45 minutes). This lecture has a brief overview of some emerging issues in the institutional contexts of work, family, health and education. The balance of the discussion will focus on war and national security in the 21st century.

March 2nd. Can we solve social problems? Summing up. (Fourth test, Chaps. 14-18)