

Soc 3: Social Problems, Fall 2020

Professor

Prof. Ryan Finnigan
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Office Hours

Virtually by appointment
(appointments listed on Canvas)

Teaching Assistants

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Course Description

People talk about social issues being “problems” all the time, but what gets labeled a problem? Who decides what “problems” are, and why? Soc 3 will introduce you to sociological approaches to understanding social problems, which emphasize the way problems that may seem like individual troubles often reflect larger social issues. The course surveys a variety of issues that are labeled social problems (e.g., poverty, the gender pay gap, crime/incarceration, etc.), and reviews research-based evidence about them. The course also focuses on where that research comes from, and how it may differ from media portrayals or “common sense” explanations.

Learning objectives include developing: writing skills; literacy with peer-reviewed social science research and other types of evidence; and familiarity with diversity in US society.

There is no required textbook for this class.

This course is conducted online only. Most course components are asynchronous (on your own time). There will be an optional live lecture/discussion session (via Zoom) on Wednesdays, 1–2pm (California time). Attendance in the live session is not required. Afterward, students can watch a recording of the live session on their own time.

Evaluation

Weekly Activities & Discussion	500 points total
Mixture of quizzes, activities, discussion boards	50 points each week * 25 points for Weeks 1 and 9
Cumulative Research Project	500 points total
Paper Topic	25 points
Annotated Bibliography	75 points
Paper (part 1) Outline	75 points
Research Paper, part 1	125 points
Final Research Paper, (parts 1+2)	200 points
Extra activities in Weekly Topics	50 bonus points total
Total	1,000 points (+50 bonus points)

Final Grades

A+	97-100%	B+	87-89.9	C+	77-79.9	D+	67-69.9	F	Below 60
A	93-96.9	B	83-86.9	C	73-76.9	D	63-66.9		
A-	90-92.9	B-	80-82.9	C-	70-72.9	D-	60-62.9		

Course Expectations

- **Course material:** All course material (lectures, readings, activities, discussion boards, assignments) is available on the course Canvas page. Please review the Canvas page thoroughly and often! There is no midterm or final exam.
- **Attendance:** There is no attendance requirement for this course. You are responsible for all course material, and you can review this material on your own time. The weekly live discussion session will be recorded for you to view on their own time if you are unable to attend.
- **Weekly Live Lecture/Discussion Sessions (Wednesdays, 1–2pm):** The weekly live lecture and discussion sessions will be on Zoom. The sessions will include break-out rooms for students to discuss questions on the given topic. TAs and Prof. F will help guide discussions in the break-out rooms. By definition, this course covers some controversial topics. Please be respectful of others even (or especially) when you disagree. Discussion participants must follow the [UC Davis Principles of Community](#), both in live discussion and on the course discussion board.
- **Discussion Boards:** Weekly discussion board activities ask students to share news articles relevant to the given topic. Students will also discuss the articles with posts about the articles, following the week's discussion prompts.

- **Weekly Topics Activities:** For each weekly topic, there will be a mixture of quizzes, activities, and discussion board assignments worth a total of 50 points. All quizzes, activities, and discussion board assignments must be submitted by 6pm Friday for the given week (except Week 1 and Thanksgiving week). The activities vary in their challenge level, as indicated on Canvas with:

* (appropriate completion), ** (comprehension), *** (mastery)

- **Extra Weekly Activities:** There will be a total of 50 “bonus” points for extra activities in some of the weekly topics. These “bonus” points let students make up for any missed points for any reason. For example, the bonus points could make up for an entire week of regular weekly activities or an entire letter grade on all parts of the research project. The extra activities must be completed by 6pm Friday 12/11 (the last day of classes).
- **Cumulative Research Project:** You will write a course paper that analyzes a problem you think is important. The goal is to combine your personal perspective and experiences with social science research on the topic. You will also propose a solution for the social problem, citing social science research to support your argument. The project is “cumulative” because the it is broken into several assignments teaching the process of producing a research paper—reducing the stakes for any one assignment and giving you multiple rounds of feedback before the final assignment.
 - Paper Topic: Select and describe the “social problem” in one or two pages.
 - Annotated Bibliography: Find and briefly summarize relevant news articles, research reports, and academic publications about the problem and/or any relevant attempts to resolve it.
 - Paper Outline: Submit an outline for part 1 of the paper, which describes the social problem and analyzes its causes/consequences.
 - Research Paper, part 1: Part 1 of the paper is four to five double-spaced pages describing the social problem and analyzing its causes/consequences. The paper should incorporate and properly cite a variety of social science evidence.
 - Final Research Paper, parts 1+2: Part 2 of the research paper proposes a solution to the social problem analyzed in part 1. The proposal should be supported with social science evidence. The final research paper will be eight to ten double-spaced pages, with part 2 added directly to part 1 to create a single paper.
- **Late Submissions:** Late submissions for research project assignments will lose 10% of the total points per 24 hours after the initial deadline. Weekly quizzes/activities/discussion board assignments cannot be submitted late. But sometimes life gets in the way—please let us know if an issue interferes with completing course work on time. We’ll develop an alternative plan with you!

- **Re-Grading:** You may request re-evaluation on written assignments within a week of receiving the grade. Please submit a written memo to your grader outlining the reasons you believe the assignment should be re-evaluated. Your grader and/or Prof. F may completely re-grade the assignment (re-evaluation can also lead to a lower score).
- **Academic Integrity:** You are responsible for your own work. Group discussion of course topics and material is encouraged, but your work for course assignments should be your own. Any instances of plagiarism (including the use of sources without appropriate citation) or other forms of cheating will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. More information is available [here](#). Please consult the [Code of Academic Conduct](#), your TA, or Prof. F with any uncertainties.
- **SDC Accommodations:** Students with letters of accommodation from the Student Disability Center should contact Prof. F at the beginning of the class for accommodations arrangements.
- **Communication:**
 - **Questions about course material or general assignment requirements:** Please use the discussion boards on Canvas for general questions. Other students might have the same question as you; answering the question on the discussion board lets everyone benefit.
 - **Questions about difficulty or feedback with course assignments:** Please schedule an appointment with your TA or Prof. F. Don't wait until it's too late! We're here to help you, and you'll benefit more earlier than later.
 - **Questions about issues outside of class:** As we'll spend the quarter discussing, life is complicated! Work/family/life challenges can and often do come up—please schedule an office hours appointment with your TA or Prof. F to let us know if something is going on that interferes with your work in this course. We'll make a plan to support your coursework and try to connect you with helpful resources.
 - **Email:** Please begin the subject line for all emails with "Soc 3:" to help us keep track. Email responses may take a couple days, especially on weekends. Feel free to follow up again if you haven't heard back by then. Please check the syllabus, relevant course documents, and discussion boards before emailing with questions that are already answered.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Consistent with the [UC Davis Principles of Community](#), we are committed to respecting and valuing the experiences and identities of our diverse community. All students have a place in this class and UC Davis, and we look forward to all course members learning from each other (the professor included). Particularly in a course on "social problems," you may have strong feelings and personal experiences with the course topics. Please reach out to your TA or the professor if

this material introduces significant personal/emotional challenges; we will find a way to support your learning and well-being.

The course also follows the [university's recommendations for inclusive teaching practices](#). Everyone in the course should refrain from assumptions or stereotypes about others. Students will be evaluated on the information and skills taught in this course, rather than knowledge that students may or may not have from before the course. Course material and evaluation also have multiple forms, maximizing students' opportunities to find what works for them.

[UC Davis Land Acknowledgement](#): We should also acknowledge the land on which UC Davis is located. For thousands of years, this land has been the home of Patwin people. Today, there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation, and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation. The Patwin people have remained committed to the stewardship of this land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.

Course Calendar

The course calendar may be revised throughout the quarter.

Week 1 Sept. 30–Oct. 2	Course Introduction
Week 2 Oct. 5–9	What is a Social Problem? <i>Research Project Topic due 6pm Fri., Oct. 9</i>
Week 3 Oct. 12–16	Poverty & Economic Inequality
Week 4 Oct. 19–23	The Gender Pay Gap <i>Annotated Bibliography due 6pm Fri., Oct. 23</i>
Week 5 Oct. 26–30	Racism & Racial/Ethnic Segregation
Week 6 Nov. 2–6	Crime, Policing, & Incarceration <i>Outline for Research Paper (part 1) due 6pm Fri., Nov. 6</i>
Week 7 Nov. 9–13	Health Disparities & Health Care
Week 8 Nov. 16–20	Climate Change & Environmental Justice <i>Research Paper (part 1) due 6pm Fri., Nov. 20</i>
Week 9 Nov. 23–25 <i>Thanksgiving</i>	Evaluating Solutions to Social Problems
Week 10 Nov. 30–Dec. 4	Globalization & Global Inequality
Week 11 Dec. 7–11	Social Movements
Finals Week	<i>Final Research Paper (parts 1+2) due 6pm Thurs., Dec. 17</i>