

Sociology 3372: Contemporary Issues in the American Southwest
Southern Methodist University: JanTerm 2018
SMU-in-Taos

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does." -Margaret Mead

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REQUIRED READINGS

There are no required books for this class. All readings will be posted to Canvas [listed as "Canvas" in assigned readings],

COURSE DESCRIPTION

One of the primary goals of this SMU-in-Taos course is to give students a foundation in sociological ways of thinking about contemporary social issues in the American Southwest. All problems exist within the contexts of their particular societies and cultures. We will focus on issues such as the environment, poverty, inequality, and crime and domestic violence as well as exploring these issues within the Native American and Hispanic communities. We will also move beyond the classroom. Community engagement will allow us explore the major problems facing these Taos area communities as well as some possible solutions to the problems facing them.

SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION:

Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both. Yet men do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional contradiction. ... The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. ... The first fruit of this imagination--and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it--is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within this period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. ... We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence (Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 1959:3-10).

This course will fulfill the University Curriculum requirements of 1) Pillar: Individuals, Institutions, and Culture II, 2) Proficiencies and Experiences: Community Engagement, and 3) Proficiencies and Experiences: Human Diversity.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO'S)

University Curriculum:

Pillar: Individuals, Institutions & Cultures (Level 2)

1. Students will be able to analyze different theoretical or interpretive perspectives in the study of individual, social, cultural, political, or economic experiences.
2. Students will be able to evaluate critically the research outcomes and theoretical applications in the study of individual, social, cultural, political, or economic experiences.

Proficiencies & Experiences: Community Engagement

Students will take courses with an experiential educational component in the community of Taos, Such activities must include a reflective component.

1. Students will be able to demonstrate analytical and practical skills necessary for engaged, informed citizenship through addressing specific needs in a community.
2. Students will be able to apply academic learning to a community engagement activity

Proficiencies & Experiences: Human Diversity

Through personal experience with other cultures and communities, students will examine their own attitudes and beliefs arising from individual or group status, treatment, opportunities, or accomplishments.

Course specific SLOs:

At the conclusion of the semester, students should be proficient in the following areas:

1. Students will gain an in-depth understanding of social problems in the American Southwest from a sociological perspective.

- Students will be able to analyze different theoretical/interpretive perspectives and empirical evidence related to these social problems.
- Students will be able to recognize that social problems are shaped by the intersections of individuals, groups, communities, and institutions.
- Students will participate in experience-based learning relating to social problems in the Taos community.
- Students will be able to apply classroom learning to the identification of and solutions to social problems within the Taos community.

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance & Class Participation:

Attendance is required. Attendance is essential because class activities, including but not limited to lecture, videos, & group discussion, will often cover material that is not in the readings & that you will be expected to know for your paper & exam. You are also responsible for any announcements, including changes to the class schedule & content, made during class. In addition, you must complete at least 20 hours of community service required for this course. ***Unexcused absences will result in a deduction of points for the course.***



Disability Accommodations:

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) to verify the disability & to establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4; an attachment describes the DASS procedures & relocated office.)

Use of Electronic Equipment during Class:

If I find the use of laptop computers to be a distraction to you, other students, or myself, I reserve the right to ban laptops in my classroom at any time during the semester. As a discussion oriented class, it is important that students not be hidden behind a sea of computer screens. In addition, student abuse of instant messaging, emailing, & surfing requires this policy. The use of other electronic equipment, such as cell phones, PDA's, & other internet-accessing devices, is strictly prohibited all times during class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course requirements are designed with two goals in mind: (1) to offer an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and critical analysis of the readings and general themes of the course, as well as to apply those themes and readings to the community, and (2) to encourage contribution to course content, regular reflection on the readings, and active participation in class.

Reading Assignments:

Readings should be completed prior to the assigned date. Your discussion questions, reflection essay, and research paper will require the incorporation of class discussions, concepts, readings, theories, etc. Students should analyze the reading material critically and be prepared to raise and answer questions, critique viewpoints, debate, and raise alternative perspectives.

Community Engagement (CE):

You must complete at least 20 hours of community service for several non-profit organizations in the Taos area. This term, we will be working with Taos' Habitat for Humanity and Not Forgotten Outreach (a Veterans' outreach group <http://notforgottenoutreach.org>), St. James Episcopal Church Food Pantry, among others.

Grading:

Daily reading reflections/discussion questions (20% of final grade)
 Community engagement (CE) journal (15%)
 Reflection essay of community engagement (15% of final grade)
 Research paper (30% of final grade)
 Class participation—in classroom & during community service (20% of final grade)



CALCULATION OF FINAL GRADE:

	Points/Percent
Daily reading questions	20
CE journal	15
CE Reflection essay	15
Research paper	30
Class participation	20
Total	100

Grade	Total Points
A	= 94 +
A-	= 90-93
B+	= 87-89
B	= 84-86
B-	= 80-83
C+	= 77-79
C	= 74-76
C-	= 70-73
D	= 60-69
F	< 60

Note: No extra credit will be given.



Class participation (20% of grade)

A substantial amount of this course will consist of class discussions and community service. This is an active, discussion-oriented course, and therefore is largely dependent on students' preparation and motivation for discussion. Therefore, success in the course requires not only attendance, but also active participation, critical review of the readings, and lively class discussions. Your contribution to discussion, as well as what you learn from others' participation, is crucial to a successful class. I will gauge participation through your willingness to participate in class discussions and willingness to ask questions during any fieldtrips/guest speakers. In addition, I gauge participation through being present and actively engaged in our community service endeavors.

Writing assignments (80%)

Daily reading reflections/discussion questions (20%)

Each day you are expected to submit to me 2-3 questions or comments regarding the day's assigned readings. Bring hard copies and be ready to discuss them during class. These can be typed or handwritten.

CE journal (15%)

You will keep a daily journal of your activities, experiences, reflections, observations, and feelings about your **community engagement**. This journal should have an entry for each time we work in the community. This should be typed.

Reflection essay (15%)

You will write a 3-4 page reflection essay regarding your **community engagement** experiences and how the experience relates to the course material. Each of you will participate in and study, in-depth, a grass roots or community based organization or social movement aimed at combating a social problem, applying course themes and concepts to understanding the organization/group chosen. You **MUST** substantially incorporate class readings, theories, concepts, lectures, and discussions.

Research paper: Analyzing and Solving Social Problems Around Us: (30%)

You will write a 8 page research paper regarding a social problem facing the Taos community, New Mexico, or the American Southwest. You must incorporate outside sources as well as make connections to class theories, concepts, research, etc. You may choose to write about the issue(s) which are the focus of your community engagement, but you do not have to. You may write on any social problem. You **MUST** substantially incorporate class readings, theories, concepts, lectures, and discussions.



Source: Steve Kelley, San Diego Union-Tribune

For all writing assignments (except the daily discussion questions):

- 1) **Upload to Canvas by date/time due. I will not accept hard copies nor email copies.**
- 2) Write in essay format with an introduction paragraph, a body of the paper comprised of multiple paragraphs, and conclusion paragraph.
- 3) If you discuss published *non-class* material (either direct quotations or paraphrasing), you must cite it within the text and include a bibliography/reference page.
- 4) Spell check and proofread papers. Watch your grammar. **Use Times Roman font size 11, double line spacing, and 1" margins.** Please proofread your paper, because I count spelling and grammatical errors in my grading.
- 5) **Grading Criteria:**
 - a) Content: How much effort did you put into the paper? Did you think deeply, critically, and seriously about the issues in the paper? Did you substantially incorporate class readings, lecture, discussion, etc... where appropriate?
 - b) Organization: Did you follow the guidelines/instructions? How is your formatting (e.g., font, spacing, paragraph format)?
 - c) Clarity: Are your ideas expressed clearly and concisely? How is your grammar and spelling?

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND THE HONOR CODE

All SMU students are under the jurisdiction of the Honor Code. Students are required to issue a warning to, or to report to the Honor Council, any student suspected of violating the Honor Code, and to inform the course instructor of a violation. Suspected violations may be handled privately by an instructor, or they may be referred to the Honor Council. Suspected violations reported to the Council will be investigated and, if evidence warrants, a hearing will be held. Students convicted of academic dishonesty may appeal their cases to the University Judicial Council.

Academic dishonesty may be defined broadly as a student's misrepresentation of his/her academic work, or of the circumstances under which the work was done. This includes plagiarism in papers, projects, take-home exams, or other assignments in which the student represents the resulting work as being his or her own. It also includes cheating on exams, unauthorized access to test materials, and aiding another student to cheat or participate in an act of academic dishonesty. Failure to prevent cheating by another individual may be considered as participation in the dishonest act.

Possible sanctions given by the Honor Council for academic dishonesty include: a notation of "Honor Violation" for the course, which will remain on a student's official transcript for three years after graduation, deferred suspension for one calendar year, indefinite suspension, or even expulsion from the University.

FINAL NOTES

It is each student's responsibility to be thoroughly familiar with the course requirements and evaluation procedures outlined here, and to keep track of various assignments and activities that are required. This syllabus is an integral part of the course materials, and students should refer to it regularly to be sure that they are up-to-date with reading and other requirements.

I want this class to be enlightening, educational, and fun for you! In order to achieve these ends, each of you in the class must feel both engaged and secure enough to be able to question what you read, see, and hear (inside and outside class) and state your opinion on sometimes controversial matters. With that in mind, I want to make it clear that while I want to promote such open discussions, it must be conducted with utmost respect for your classmates and me.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Tentative!)

Dates and content are tentative and subject to change. It is unlikely that we will be able to rigidly adhere to it. Nevertheless, it will give you some idea about what topics we plan to cover and the order in which we will be covering them. Any changes will be announced in class. You are responsible for finding out about announcements made in class as well as obtaining copies of any class handouts and notes. Readings should be completed prior to the assigned date. In other words, readings are due (should be completed) by the date listed.



<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
M 1/8	The sociology of social problems	CANVAS readings: The Sociological Imagination by C. Wright Mills
	Ethnic identities: American Indian mascots & cultural appropriation	CANVAS readings: American Indian Mascots & Stereotypes First discussion questions due
	Ethnic identities: Hispanic, Hispano, Latina/o or Nuevomexicana/o	CANVAS readings: Hispanic ethnic identity and stereotypes
T 1/9	Inequality <i>Not Forgotten Outreach, Inc.</i>	CANVAS readings: Inequality day 1
	Inequality	CANVAS readings: Inequality day 2
W 1/10	Poverty <i>St. James food pantry</i>	CANVAS readings: Poverty day 1
	Poverty <i>Habitat for Humanity</i>	CANVAS readings: Poverty day 2
TH 1/11	Veteran issues	CANVAS readings: Veterans day 1
	Veteran issues <i>Not Forgotten Outreach, Inc.</i>	CANVAS readings: Veterans day 2
F 1/12	Food/shelter insecurity	CANVAS readings: Shelter insecurity
	Food/shelter insecurity <i>St. James food pantry</i>	CANVAS readings: Food insecurity
M 1/15	Economic development: Indian gaming <i>Habitat for Humanity</i>	CANVAS readings: Indian gaming
	Education	CANVAS readings: Education
T 1/16	Health outcomes <i>St. James food pantry</i>	CANVAS readings: Health
	Health outcomes: Alcohol/Drugs <i>Habitat for Humanity</i>	CANVAS readings: Alcohol/Drugs
W 1/17	Research day Research paper due by 11:59pm	

