"Social Problems ": SOC 103

In this course we will consider the United States’ major social problems, how they come to be defined as such, and how sociologists think about and study them. We will examine different sociological theories and perspectives, using topics such as crime, drug use, mental illness, sexuality, and families. We will also discuss persistent inequalities based in race, social class, gender, etc. We will pay particular attention to power throughout this course, and how those with more or less societal power define and dispute what constitutes a social problem.

Using different contemporary and historical examples we will explore how different groups (e.g., doctors, police, patients, criminals) make claims and vie for control over what is and isn’t a social problem, as well as what types of solutions are called for.

Besides thinking sociologically about the world around you through engaging with foundational and cutting edge sociological research and theory, you will take part in interactive lectures, class discussions, and group work with your peers. This course is designed to be useful for your success in college by developing writing, researching, and speaking skills. Learning to think like a sociologist and make connections between “private troubles” and “public issues,” you will strengthen your critical thinking skills and learn a whole new set of questions to ask about the world around you.

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