Course description:
Daily news reports direct much of our attention to social problems such as crime, inequality, and poverty. Yet rarely are these reports accompanied by a discussion of the systematic causes of these problems. More often we become witness to an endless stream of media coverage reporting seemingly isolated incidents and events, in a sensationalized manner. Seldom are we informed of the process by which some events or behaviors come to be defined as social problems, or the decision-making process by which some social problems are selected for coverage, while others are ignored. The purpose of this course is to subject a selection of social problems, as well as the coverage of those problems, to a sociological analysis. We will attempt to answer questions such as, “How does a social problem become defined as such?” “What are the causes of various social problems?” Throughout the course we will explore solutions to these social problems and ask, “What can be done?” directing some of our attention to those organizations, individuals, programs and policies that have implemented constructive responses to issues of public concern.

Course goals and objectives:
By the end of the course, students will be able to:
1. Identify, define and illustrate basic concepts, theories, and research techniques related to the sociological study of social problems.
2. Apply these concepts, theories and techniques to different aspects of society.
3. Critically examine the social environment in terms of the connections between social problems and inequalities, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, and class.
4. Explain why some social issues become defined as social problems and others do not.
5. Analyze popular culture sources about social problems and present findings with your group as a written and oral assignment.
6. Write and think critically via class discussions, research projects, written assignments, and exams about the concepts, theories, and techniques in the field.
Course requirements and evaluation

Textbooks:
The following books are required, and can be purchased from the Dartmouth Bookstore or Wheelock Books. They are also on reserve in Baker/Berry library.


Additional readings are available on our Canvas course site, under “Additional Readings.”

Exams:
Two exams are required, a mid-term and final. All assigned reading and everything during class (lectures, films, video clips, discussions, activities, presentations, etc.) will potentially be covered in the exams. Exams are independent work ONLY. You are encouraged to study for the in-class mid-term with other students from class, but the exam is completely independent. Both exams will be open notes. Although you may consult your notes, handouts, and readings to answer exam questions, you should craft answers in your own words.

Individual sociological projects and papers:
Students will complete one individual sociological project and paper throughout the term. Papers should be 3-4 pages (typed, double spaced). In order to write the paper, you will need to engage in a small sociological project. More details about the projects and papers, including the grading rubric, will be provided in a separate handout. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the selected date.
Reflection papers:
Students will complete two reflection papers. Papers should be one or two pages (typed, single spaced). The professor will provide the reflection question. More details about the reflection papers will be provided in a separate handout.

Group Project:
In groups of 4-5, students will analyze a recent social problem using the basic concepts, theories, and research techniques discussed in class and in the readings. Each group will choose a specific social problem and locate and read popular culture sources (newspapers, magazines, web, etc.) about the event or issue. The project will culminate with a written and oral assignment discussing the ways that the event/issue fits with and contradicts sociological arguments and the Best article on claims-making. The presentations will be scheduled for the last week of class. More details on the assignment will be distributed during class.

Discussion questions and news coverage of social problems:
Students are required to post 2 discussion questions and 1 newspaper article throughout the term. Discussion questions and news articles must be posted by 8PM the night prior to class to receive points. These posts count toward the participation portion of your final grade. Details regarding posts will be explained in class.

Class participation:
The active participation of all members of the class is essential to the course’s success. It is essential that students read all the assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss and debate the issues raised in them. Students are expected to not only read, but also reflect upon the assigned readings before coming to class. All students will be expected to understand key concepts from all reading materials. As part of student engagement in the class, it is expected that all outside distractions are turned off prior to coming to class (this includes cell phones and other electronic devices).

Class attendance, special events attendance, contributions to in-class discussions, and participation in group activities all contribute to your class participation grade. Because it is necessary to be in class to participate, missing more than three class periods without a valid excuse, approved by me, means you cannot receive any better than a C for your class participation part of the grade.

The final grade will be determined based on the following weighting scheme:
- Class participation: 5%
- Individual paper: 15%
- Reflection papers: 10%
- Group project: 20%
- Mid-term exam: 25%
- Final exam: 25%
Course guidelines and policies

Honor principle:
Examinations and assignments will be conducted in accord with the principles of academic honor detailed in the Dartmouth Organization, Regulations and Courses. Students are encouraged to read Dartmouth’s statement on Sources and Citations: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources

Religious holidays:
Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during the academic year. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Students with disabilities:
Students with learning, physical, or psychiatric disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible, by the end of the second week of classes. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Disability Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested. Also, stop by the Academic Skills Center in 301 Collis Center to register for support services.

For individual peer tutorial assistance with papers, research, and new media projects, students may use RWIT, the Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology. Make appointments online at www.dartmouth.edu/~rwit, or drop by the Center at Baker-Berry Library, Level One, from 4 to 6PM and 7 to 10PM, S-Th.

Missed classes:
Students should notify the instructor of any anticipated absences. In the event that you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for getting class notes from another student. As a general policy, I do not make my notes available. After you review your classmate’s notes, I would be happy to meet with you to talk about the material or answer questions about anything that is unclear. If you miss more than three days of class, you will lose an entire letter grade, and your grade will decrease by one step (e.g., B to B-) for each additional absence, regardless of your performance on other activities and assignments. Class attendance counts toward your participation grade.

Classroom discussion: Focused class discussion is possible only if people are willing to abide by the conventions of civilized discourse. All points of view must be expressed politely and with due respect for the differing opinions of others.

Late submissions and make-up exams:
The submission of assignments, exams and papers is expected on the indicated “due date” during that day’s class meeting (unless otherwise stated). Requests for extensions beyond the submission date should be made prior to the due date. Please note that grades
on non-approved late submissions will be penalized. Any work turned in more than 10 minutes after the start of class is considered late and the grade will be reduced by one step (i.e., from a B to B-). The grade will be reduced by an additional step for each day it is late. Papers turned in after class begins are considered one day late. Papers turned in the day after class are considered two days late. A make-up exam will only be offered due to emergencies. If the make-up exam is missed for any reason the student will receive a zero for the exam.

Classroom etiquette:
Disruptions to class negatively affect everyone’s ability to learn. Everyone should arrive to class on time and not leave early. If you must arrive late or leave early, please notify the instructor in advance and sit by the door to minimize disruptions. It is inappropriate to use cell phones or use laptops for activities outside of taking notes (such as email, facebook, shopping, etc.). Sidebar discussions with fellow students are disruptive to the professor. Students will be offered a short break (5 minutes) during the course. Students should respect the time frame and return to class within the time allotted.
## Course Schedule

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC &amp; READINGS</th>
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| 1/5  | *Introduction to course*  
|      | *What is a Social Problem? How do Sociologists Study Social Problems?*  
| 1/12 | *Income, Inequality, and Poverty*  
| 1/14 | Ruane, p. 227-254. Essay 19: Welfare is Ruining this Country  
|      | Collins and Mayer, p. 1-54. Chapters 1-2  
| 1/19 | Ruane, p. 107-119. Essay 9: The More We Pay, the More It’s Worth and Essay 10: Money is the Root of All Evil  
|      | Collins and Mayer, p. 55-113. Chapters 3-4  
|      | Collins and Mayer, p. 114-164. Chapters 5-7  
|      | **1st Reflection Paper due**  
| 1/26 | *Inequalities in Gender, Class and Work and Family*  
|      | Clawson and Gerstel, p. 108-207. Chapters 6-9  
|      | Ruane p. 213-223. Essay 18: Marriage is a Failing Institution  
|      | Clawson and Gerstel, p. 209-258. Chapters 10-11  
|      | Optional: Chapter 12  
|      | **Individual project paper due**  
| 2/2  | *Mid-term Review*  
|      | No readings
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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>TH</td>
<td><strong>Mid-term exam</strong></td>
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<td>2/9</td>
<td>T</td>
<td><em>Studying Social Problems Through the Study of School Shootings</em></td>
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<td>2/18</td>
<td>TH</td>
<td><em>Racial Inequalities and Racism</em></td>
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<td>2/23</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Ruane, p. 241-254. Essay 20: Immigrants are Ruining This Nation Alexander, p. 97-177. Chapters 3-4</td>
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<td>3/1</td>
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<td><strong>Group Presentations and Conclusions</strong></td>
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<td>3/3</td>
<td>TH</td>
<td>GROUP PROJECTS DUE GROUP PRESENTATIONS DURING CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/12</td>
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<td>FINAL EXAM, Saturday, March 12, 3:00PM</td>
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