

---

**Sociology 2031-002**  
**Social Problems**  
**Spring 2009**  
**Ramaley Biology (RAMY) N1B23**

---

**Instructor:** Brian Hawkins  
**Office:** Ketchum (KTCH) 35  
**E-mail:** [Brian.Hawkins@colorado.edu](mailto:Brian.Hawkins@colorado.edu) (this is the best way to contact me outside of class)  
**CULearn:** <https://culearn.colorado.edu/> (or via 'Courses' tab <https://cuconnect.colorado.edu>)  
**Office Hours:** MF 2:00 PM - 2:50 PM, W 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM and by appointment

---

**Classmate Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Overview**

A social problem is a condition in society generally believed harmful, where the cause is public, many are affected, and most agree something should be done. Emphasizing a critical theory approach, we will question basic values, belief systems, privileges and power structures that shape what we recognize as a social problem as well as how we respond as a society. Through the study of social problems, this course will also help provide: 1) a basic introduction to the science of sociology; 2) an introduction in particular to the critical perspective within sociology; 3) an understanding of how to evaluate personal and public circumstances from a sociological perspective, and; 4) an understanding of how sociology complements psychological and biological perspectives on individual and group behavior. This class should also improve critical thinking skills by providing the participant new tools with which to evaluate the world in which we live. Throughout the semester we will use various forms of media along with personal experiences to relate course material to the real world.

This course is designed with NO EXAMS. Rather, we will place considerable emphasis on reading, writing, discussion, group work, and in-class responses to questions. Importantly, this course design relies heavily on individual accountability and responsibility. The format of this course is interactive, not merely filling a seat and writing notes. If you prefer filling a seat and taking notes this course is not for you. Cramming WILL NOT WORK for this course. Likewise, frequently skipping class or coming to class unprepared WILL NOT WORK for this course. Missing classes or coming to class unprepared will directly reflect in your grade. Every class meeting this semester you will need to arrive prepared for an hour of meaningful discussion and be ready to answer pointed questions about the assigned readings. You are welcome to show up for class with food or drink, bring your lunch, bring a friend if you like, but to do well you must get involved and stay involved. As a student in this course you should expect to spend three hours per week outside of class for each hour of in-class time throughout the semester. If the above structure and requirements are not a good fit for you this course may not be your best choice.

**Textbooks**

Charon, Joel M. and Lee Garth Vigilant. 2009. *Social Problems: Readings with Four Questions*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. ISBN-10: 0-495-50431-9. ISBN-10: 978-0-495-50431-3.

Additional readings may be assigned and posted on CULearn or distributed in class.

An iClicker is also mandatory for this class and will be used daily for work worth a significant part of your grade

**Grading**

Short Papers	Four Papers	300 points	(75 points each)
Daily Questions	Forty Occasions	480 points	(12 points per occasion)
Discussion Lead	One Occasion	70 points	(group activity)
Final Paper		400 points	(including thesis construction and outline assignment)
Total		1250 points	(56% writing / 44% in-class work)

## **Course Assignments**

In addition to the reading assignments you will be required to: a) complete four one-plus page writing assignments; b) answer one to three questions at the beginning of each class related to the days assigned readings using iClicker; c) help lead discussion for one class meeting in collaboration with a small group of other students; d) participate in daily classroom and group discussions, and; e) submit a final course paper. Each student is granted one 'Get out of Jail Free' allowance - which they must request at least 24 hours in advance in writing via email - to turn in a short paper assignment up to one day late. There is otherwise no late work accepted and no excuses for missed classes and/or opportunities to make up missed points earned in class.

**Readings:** all reading assignments are due by the day and date they are listed in the class schedule. All reading assignments are all-inclusive, first page to last, including introductory comments and conclusions, unless otherwise stated. In addition to the readings listed in the initial version of the class schedule, there may be additional online readings posted. You will be expected to come to class familiar with the assigned material sufficient to answer the daily questions and actively engage in class discussion.

**Short Papers:** on the weeks they are due, papers are to be submitted on CULearn by noon the Sunday before our first class meeting for the week. Each paper will be a one-plus page short paper related to the current section of readings. Check the course schedule for weeks which a writing assignment is due. I will specify in advance which readings apply to the assignment. With the exception of the one 'Get out of Jail Free' allowance, late assignments are not accepted – anything turned in after the 12:00 p.m. Sunday deadline will receive a zero score. **Do not write your assignment in CULearn;** write it in a word processing program and paste it into CULearn. You are strongly encouraged to save a hardcopy for each assignment as a backup. It is your responsibility to be sure your assignment is properly posted; after you submit your assignment you need to check to be sure it was actually uploaded into CULearn. Each assignment must be at least 350 words and no more than 600 words (1 double-spaced page = 300-500 words). Each assignment should clearly indicate your name, the course, the chapter(s) they concern and the week due. These assignments will have an essay format similar to an essay exam question. In some cases I may ask you to print out your response for an assignment and bring it to class. For each assignment you will be expected to spend at least one active hour writing the paper and expectations in terms of grading will be based on that level of effort. I will post scores for the assignment in the student gradebook on CULearn. No hardcopies will be returned. The guaranteed level of feedback is your grade though I will try in every case to provide written comments on each assignment to help guide future writing for this class.

Grades for the short paper assignments will be awarded as follows: A+ = 75, A = 69, B = 64, C = 56, D = 49, F = 0. No credit will be awarded for non-response, for a response that fails to accurately respond to the question, or a response that is so poorly written that it fails to communicate its intended meaning. Grading will follow these guidelines: A+, the paper goes well beyond expectation, the writing extremely lucid, well organized and concise, demonstrates substantial intelligence and comprehension as well as additional insight and/or application of the reading material; A, the paper completes every requirement, shows substantial effort, is lucid and concise as well as demonstrating good comprehension and application of the reading material; B, the paper completes every requirement, shows a reasonable effort, is reasonably well written and organized and demonstrates good comprehension and application of the reading material; C, the paper completes every requirement or compensates in other ways for any weakness in meeting the requirements, shows a reasonable effort, is written and organized well enough to meet college-level work standards, manages to effectively communicate the authors ideas and demonstrate adequate comprehension and application of the reading material; D, the paper was completed and turned in on time but has major shortcomings in one or more areas such as the length requirement, effort, writing, organization, articulation, or comprehension, or is written for the wrong set of readings, or does not properly follow the correct assignment; F, the assignment was not turned in on time or the shortcomings of the assignment were so severe as to warrant no points. Please note in these requirements there is no assumption that completing the assignment entitles the student to full credit (i.e. 75 points). The expectation is that the average student will turn in average work – in other words, the expectation is a 'C' and a 'C' is a perfectly acceptable score for assignments in this class. It is up to the individual student to exceed expectations in order to earn a higher score.

**Daily Questions:** in lieu of exams for this course I will ask one or more questions at the beginning of each class meeting related to the material assigned for that specific day in the course schedule. You must be present in class when the question(s) is/are asked in order to have the opportunity to answer it/them. We will conduct 40 such daily question activities over the course of semester. I may or may not give advance notice of days I intend to skip a daily question. While I have every expectation that we will very closely follow the schedule as outlined in the syllabus, if we do get ahead of or behind the schedule I will communicate in class which material the next set of

questions will cover. If this happens it will be your responsibility to assure that you are prepared with the correct material. My intention is to use iClickers for most, if not all of the daily questions - implying most, if not all, of the daily questions will be multiple choice, fill in the blank, or true/false. However, I might on some occasions use a different format for daily questions such as completion of a diagram, short answer or short essay. If a short question format is used expect two questions each worth 4 points and if a longer question format is used expect one question worth 8 points. As this format of evaluation focuses entirely on new material that you should have just recently studied, the questions will generally be difficult and detailed. While the questions will vary in difficulty, they will all be written to a level sufficient that they will reward those that read thoroughly and carefully, will be difficult for those that merely skim and near to impossible for those that are unprepared. To ensure that students who make the effort to study and come to class are not disappointed with zero scores, everyone that attempts the daily question will earn 4 points for a total of 12 points possible at each class meeting. As with the questions, to have the opportunity to earn the 4 points student must be in their seat when the question is asked – latecomers will not have the opportunity to earn any points. I will do everything in my power to aid students with the use of iClickers but it will be entirely the responsibility of each student to bring their iClicker to each class meeting, bring it in good working order, remember to turn it on, set the frequency, and submit their responses during the allotted time period.

**Discussion Lead:** at the beginning of the second week we will form small groups for leading class discussion. Each group should consist of 3 people for a total of approximately 20 groups. The group is to bring a media example to include in the discussion lead. You may use segments/excerpts/clippings from movies, television shows, music, the Internet, newspapers, magazines or books (other than course texts). The purpose of the media example is to give you an opportunity to work in a group setting to interpret and apply a subset of the course material to a real-world example (considering media for this purpose as a tangible element of the world you live in). The format of this activity is informal, with emphasis on intangibles such as knowledge of the material, clear evidence of prior discussion, decision-making and conclusions about the material and about the material in conjunction with the media example, confidence talking in front of the class, and ability to encourage discussion with questions, statements, and your media example. Less emphasis will be placed on the quality of your media example or supporting materials such as PowerPoint slides so don't put all your effort in the wrong place. The most important goal is to succeed at generating a broad discussion within the class. The next most important goal is to focus and direct discussion to the most significant points in the readings for the day. You will be evaluated on how successful your group is at generating discussion and how meaningful that discussion is relative to the day's material. The expected length of your discussion is 15 - 20 minutes. Points will be assigned based on effort, professionalism, the relevance of the media example, the quality and relevance of the questions and statements you present to the class for discussion, and your groups success generating meaningful discussion relative to the day's material.

**Discussions:** we will spend a significant amount of our time this semester engaged in group discussion. Discussions will be based on the assigned readings for the day. It is a goal of this course to make the topic real and the subject interesting and the best way to accomplish this is through active participation. Understand that this will put more pressure on each student to read and learn on their own and to prepare for each class meeting. Everyone is expected to participate in every class meeting - though no points are directly awarded for doing so. Please feel free at any time to contact me with suggestions for in-class activities or media examples to use.

**Final Paper:** the final portfolio/paper is worth 32% of your grade and is due April 20th. The final paper should be as close as possible to five double-spaced typed pages using Times New Roman 12 pt or equivalent font with 1" margins. Papers shorter than four pages or longer than six pages will be graded down by as much as 20%. The final paper is in lieu of a final exam and therefore will be a challenging assignment that tests ability to understand and apply key concepts from the semester and the ability write in a formal academic style. Expect the requirements to be rigorous and the instructions explicit. Failure to complete the final paper will result in a failing grade for the class.

## Socy 2031-002 Social Problems – Class Schedule

Week	Mon	Topic / Readings	Wed	Topic / Readings	Fri	Topic / Readings
1	Jan 12	Introduction Syllabus and Introduction	Jan 14	Introduction Getting Started	Jan 16	Introduction Getting Started
2	Jan 19	Holiday – Martin Luther King	Jan 21	Part I – Introduction Ch 1	Jan 23	Part I – Introduction Ch 2
3	Jan 26	Part I – Introduction Ch 3	Jan 28	Part II – Inequality Ch 4	Jan 30	Part II – Inequality Ch 5-6
4	Feb 02	Part II – Inequality Ch 7	Feb 04	Part II – Inequality Ch 8-9	Feb 06	Part III – Employment Ch 10
5	Feb 09	Part III – Employment Ch 11	Feb 11	Part III – Employment Ch 12	Feb 13	Part III – Employment Ch 13
6	Feb 16	Part III – Employment Ch 14	Feb 18	Part IV – Race/Ethnicity Ch 15	Feb 20	Part IV – Race/Ethnicity Ch 16
7	Feb 23	Part IV – Race/Ethnicity Ch 17-18	Feb 25	Part IV – Race/Ethnicity Ch 19	Feb 27	Part IV – Race/Ethnicity Ch 20
8	Mar 02	Part V - Sex/Gender Ch 21-22	Mar 04	Part V - Sex/Gender Ch 23	Mar 06	Part V - Sex/Gender Ch 24
9	Mar 09	Part V - Sex/Gender Ch 25	Mar 11	Part V - Sex/Gender Ch 26-27	Mar 13	Part VI - Crime/Drugs Ch 28
10	Mar 16	Part VI - Crime/Drugs Ch 29	Mar 18	Part VI - Crime/Drugs Ch 30	Mar 20	Part VI - Crime/Drugs Ch 31-32
11	Mar 23	Holiday – Spring Break	Mar 25	Holiday – Spring Break	Mar 27	Holiday – Spring Break
12	Mar 30	Part VII – The Family Ch 33	Apr 01	Part VII – The Family Ch 34	Apr 03	Part VII – The Family Ch 35-36
13	Apr 06	Part VIII - Education Ch 37-38	Apr 08	Part VIII - Education Ch 39	Apr 10	Part VIII - Education Ch 40-41
14	Apr 13	Part VIII - Education Ch 42	Apr 15	Part IX - Healthcare Ch 43-44	Apr 17	Part IX - Healthcare Ch 45
15	Apr 20	Part X - Politics Ch 46	Apr 22	Part X - Politics Ch 47-48	Apr 24	Part X - Politics Ch 49-50
16	Apr 27	Part XI - Pop/Env Ch 51-52	Apr 29	Part XI - Pop/Env Ch 53-54	May 01	Wrap-up
17	May 2- May 7	Finals Week	May 2- May 7	Finals Week	May 2- May 7	Finals Week

### **Important Notes**

All work must be turned in on time. It is your responsibility to be sure I have your correct email address and that your email is working properly. I will be posting important information via the email addresses in the class list and it is your responsibility to make sure you receive copies of my messages. We will be using CULearn for this course and I will post the syllabus, course content and key grades online. A major portion of your grade is dependent on your ability to post assignments on CULearn and to check and make sure your submissions effectively post. It is your responsibility to read the syllabus, know its contents and to check CULearn regularly for updates. Absolutely no discussion of your grades will be done before, during or after class or via email. If you need to discuss grades then come to my office hours or make an appointment. You will be responsible for keeping copies of all assignments with regard to any questions or issues – if you cannot provide your own copy I will not discuss the assignment with you. Also, in the case of a dispute, my records prevail. You are responsible for knowing the announcements and material presented in class whether or not you attend class. Please arrange with another student to get missed announcements and notes. If you miss the first two classes you will be dropped.

### **Expectations and Behavior**

Class-time provides an opportunity to discuss and explore material from the readings. As a student it is your responsibility to read to learn (and to learn to read). Class is not a substitute for your own ability to read, to read critically, and to learn from what you read. The primary goal of class is to encourage the learning process through feedback and discussion – not for the instructor to do your thinking for you by outlining the text. Your preparation for and participation in each meeting are critical to your success as well as the success of everyone else in the classroom. In order to create a comfortable and open environment where all members of the class are willing to share their thoughts it is crucial that all students behave in a respectful manner towards one another. While enthusiastic discussion and debate is essential, insensitive or mean-spirited comments based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, ideas or beliefs will not be tolerated. Please do not disrupt other students' ability to participate (e.g., do not arrive late or leave early, do not side-talk, begin packing your belongings before class ends, leave cell phones on, etc.).

The University has a **classroom behavior policy**, which can be found at the following website: <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html>. Students are required to adhere to the behavior standards listed in this policy document and to refrain from disrupting class.

Both students and faculty are expected to abide by the University's honor code, which can be found at the following website: <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode>. All work submitted is expected to be the original work of the student and all use of reference materials to be properly cited using ASA style. **Cheating and plagiarism are taken very seriously and are grounds for failure in this course.**

### **Disability Statement**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services to me within the **first two weeks** of class. It is your responsibility to contact Disability Services and arrange for a letter to be provided to you. Disability Services: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, [www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices](http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices).

### **Other Obligations**

Every effort will be made to reasonably and fairly deal with students who, because of religious obligations, participation in athletics or other structured activities have just cause to request assistance coping with conflicts with attendance or assignments. All students to whom this applies must notify me in writing, listing specific obligations and dates, within the **first two weeks** of class. Any notifications after the first two weeks will be accepted only at my discretion.

### **Waitlisted Students**

I will review the waitlist on January 23rd – please wait until that date to request that I manually add you to the course. In the meantime, please come to each class session and please notify me by signing the attendance sheet each day that you are still interested in taking the course. On January 23rd I will (at my discretion) manually add no more than three students over the maximum enrollment of 65.

**This classroom is a Hate Free Zone and any intolerant or derisive comments or actions will not be tolerated. In this classroom we will critique ideas not people and everyone is expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. This applies equally to EVERYONE!!! Failure to respect the rights of others will be cause for disciplinary action which may include being asked to leave the classroom, receiving a failing grade for the course, or being reported to campus authorities for misconduct if need be.**