

## **COURSE INFORMATION**

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

SOCI 1520-900,950 SOCIAL PROBLEMS FALL 2015 Credit Hours 3

Internet Class mandatory online meeting times to be announced

### **Professor / Instructor Contact Information**

Milan Zafirovski, Professor

Chilton Hall 397D

Office phone & fax number (940) 565-2190

(940) 369-7035

Office hours face to face Tuesday 2:5PM

online every day 9AM-9PM

Email address [Zafirovski@unt.edu](mailto:Zafirovski@unt.edu)

Teaching Assistant information to be announced

### **About the Professor / Instructor**

Milan Zafirovski is professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of North Texas.

He received his doctoral degree in sociology from Florida International University, Miami in 1999. He teaches Social problems, Community Organization, Social Problems for undergraduate students and Sociological Theory and Social problems for graduate students.

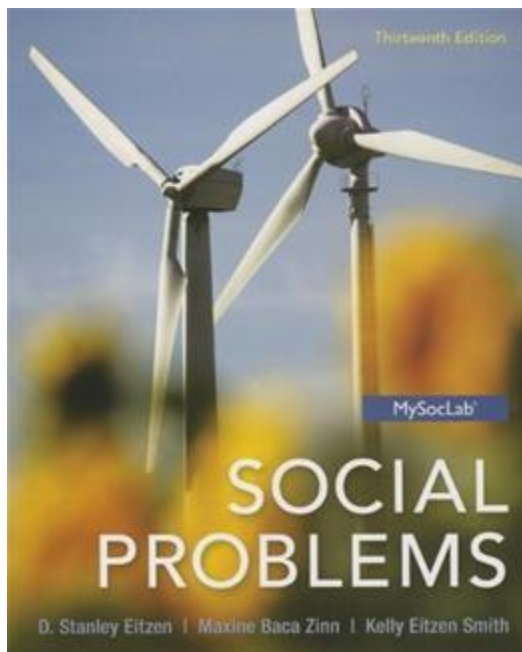
### **Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions**

Pre-requisites None

Instructor permissions Not required

### **Materials – Text, Readings, Supplementary Readings**

Required materials Stanley Eitzen, Maxine Zinn, and Kelly Smith. Social Problems. 13<sup>th</sup> edition. Pearson. ISBN 13 978-0-205-88188-8



## **Course Description**

Description of general content of the course. This course is designed to provide students with conceptual frameworks and tools necessary to analyze and understand social problems. The class will analyze the nature and interconnections between the functioning and mal-functioning social institutions, the problems of social problems, the problems of deviance and crime, the problems of social change, and so forth. The course strongly emphasizes the sociological perspective and imagination. There are no prerequisites for this course. The main purpose of this course is to make students familiar with a sociological, i.e., systematic and critical, perspective on modern post-industrial societies, with an emphasis on American society and culture. The hope is in doing so the course will help students in evolving and applying their original view of social problems and generally their own vision of life in society.

Instructional methods. In general, the course combines sociological methods and concepts with empirical observations and facts to objectively examine social problems, including wealth and power, world population, threats to the environment, problems of place, racial and ethnic inequality, poverty, crime and justice, economy and work, families, and healthcare. Sociological methods, concepts, and data are used for the sake of a better understanding and explaining social problems in contemporary communities and larger societies. Specific instructional methods include online lectures presenting main sociological concepts and empirical facts of social problems through course outlines, online discussions, and the like. The profile and perspective of this course is mostly sociological. Nonetheless, this sociological perspective on social problems will often be combined with those of other social sciences, especially anthropology, political science and history. In this regard, the course will have a thorough inter-disciplinary orientation, which is necessitated by the (multi-disciplinary) character—economic, political, historical, and cultural--of the subject of social problems. Given this orientation, the course can be interesting and challenging both for students with majors/minors in sociology and for those majoring in such social sciences as anthropology, history, political science, as well as psychology, economics, business, etc. However, the course is not limited to social-science students, but can also be of interest and use for those in the physical and other sciences, especially biology (e.g. the issue of the role of biological determinants in social problems and human behavior overall). Preferably, students should possess some elementary preparation in sociology and related social sciences at the introductory level, such as introduction to sociology, but this is not required. Given its introductory character, the course can serve as a stepping-stone for further studies of social problems on undergraduate as well as graduate levels.

Goals / Rationale of the course. The content of the course will benefit students by helping them better understand and make sense of social problems in America and other contemporary societies, including real-life, topical, and publicized issues of wealth and power, environment, racial and ethnic inequality, poverty, crime and justice, work, family healthcare, and others. The course closely relates to the content, primary concepts and principles of sociology which has a long-standing tradition of studying social problems and related issues. The course will emphasize acquiring and applying a basic scientific and inter-disciplinary type of knowledge by providing the main sociological and related concepts, objective facts (including statistical data), and explanations of social problems in America and comparable societies. It will also emphasize a specific type of abilities such as comprehending, learn, applying, and connecting (rather than merely memorizing) concepts and facts. The course is organized in a specific sequence through learning modules because these are seen as the most appropriate ways to reach the goals and

learning objectives of the course. Each particular course subject or lesson is presented by a learning module. A learning module includes learning objectives to be reached for that particular lesson, lesson content with sub-contents, summary, and assignments for students.

Learning objectives/outcomes. The learning objectives/outcomes for the overall course (also provided for each learning module) are the following.

- students will learn, comprehend, and connect principles, concepts, and empirical facts about social problems in contemporary society;
- students will be able to analyze, understand, and explain how and why social problems exist, persist, or change in society;
- students will be able to relate and compare social problems to society as a whole, including economy, politics, civil society, and culture;
- students will be able to place and analyze social problems within a larger comparative-historical and global context by comparing the United States with other contemporary societies;
- students will be able to apply sociological concepts, principles, and methods to better understanding and addressing current tendencies in social problems;
- students will be able to increase their capacities and motivations or interests in further studying social problems and related sociological subjects at undergraduate and graduate levels

### **Teaching Philosophy**

I emphasize that teaching and education overall is based on science and research such as sociological and other scientific studies, as complementary in relation to each other. Therefore I emphasize and reiterate that scientific knowledge represents the basis of teaching and education and really ‘power’ for students and society as a whole. I stress practical applications of concepts and principles to understanding, analyzing and helping resolve contemporary social issues. I use a variety of teaching methods, including both traditional and modern ones. I strive for maximum student-teacher communication, interaction and cooperation. I pursue justice in evaluating students through an equality between performance/merit and grades.

### **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS / ASSISTANCE**

The following information has been provided to assist you in preparation for the technological aspect of the course.

UIT Help Desk: <http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm>

Hardware and software necessary to use Bb Learn: <http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/bblearn/>

Browser requirements:

<http://kb.blackboard.com/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=84639794>

Computer and Internet Literacy: [http://clt.odu.edu/oso/index.php?src=pe\\_comp\\_lit](http://clt.odu.edu/oso/index.php?src=pe_comp_lit)

Headset/Microphone (if required for synchronous chats)

Word Processor

Other related hardware or software necessary for the course

### **Minimum Technical Skills Needed:**

Examples include:

Using the learning management system

Using email with attachments

Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats  
Copying and pasting  
Downloading and installing software  
Using spreadsheet programs

## **ACCESS & NAVIGATION**

### **Access and Log in Information**

This course was developed and will be facilitated utilizing the University of North Texas' Learning Management System, Blackboard Learn. To get started with the course, please go to: <https://learn.unt.edu>

You will need your EUID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your EUID or have forgotten your password, please go to: <http://ams.unt.edu>.

### **Student Resources**

As a student, you will have access to:

- Student Orientation via Blackboard Learn. It is recommended that you become familiar with the tools and tutorials within the Orientation to better equip you in navigating the course.
- Blackboard's On Demand Learning Center for Students. It is recommended that you become familiar with the tools and tutorials to better equip you to navigate the course.
- From within Blackboard, you will have access to the "UNT Helpdesk" tab which provides student resources and Help Desk Information.

### **How the Course is Organized**

The course information is organized by using learning modules consisting of learning objectives to be reached, content and sub-contents, summary, and assignments (see above). It is structured by week such that for each week a learning module is used.

### **What Should Students Do First?**

Students should first, once they have accessed the course, read carefully the syllabus. Also, they need to complete an introductory assignment, discussion post, and a Zip Code survey. In addition, they need to send contact information to the instructor via the email tool and introduce themselves to each other.

### **How Students Should Proceed Each Week for Class Activities**

Students will be able to access the materials each week in order to successfully complete the course activities, including quizzes, exams, participation in discussions, and other assignments. Necessary files such as lecture materials are located in Course Content, quizzes and exams in Assessments, and discussion topics in the Discussion Forum. A class activity schedule has been created to track student activities, including participation in discussions and other assignments.

### **Student Technical Support**

The University of North Texas provides student technical support in the use of Blackboard and supported resources. The student help desk may be reached at:

Email: [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

Phone: 940.565-2324

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130

Regular hours are maintained to provide support to students. Please refer to the website (<http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/hours.htm>) for updated hours.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will access and follow all course instructions found in the weekly content area of the Blackboard course. Students will follow and access all online lectures provided in Course Content. Students will complete the assigned 'online' exams and quizzes by accessing the 'assessment' tool in the Blackboard course. Quizzes and exams are located in Assessments. Students will respond to posted online course discussion questions using the Blackboard discussion tool. Online participation through discussions is required. Each student should post at least 1 discussion per week based on the readings and lectures. Students will complete and submit assignments electronically using the Blackboard assignment drop box tool/tab if such assignments are specifically required. Student will complete an on-going semester project in accordance with the instructions given in this syllabus and the online course if such assignments are specifically required.

This course has simple requirements, namely objective exams, simplifying and objectifying the grading process as much as possible. In this course there will be two exams, a midterm exam and a final examination (see course schedule). The format of midterm and final exams will have short, clear multiple-choice questions (usually 50). The exams will be objective such to evaluate students' reading, knowledge, and grasp of the readings. Exam scores will be computer-generated and so will be the final grade. Therefore there will be *no* subjective elements in how exam scores and the final grade are determined. The worth of each exam will be 100 points (maximum). Exams will be given and taken only online (UNT Blackboard) during the specified time period and with specific time limits (e.g., 1 hour).

Failure to take an online exam, without proper documented justification, during the specified time period (see below) will result in a *zero* (0) score for the missed exam. If an online exam is missed with documented justification during the specified period, make-up exams can be taken either online or in person (*closed* books and notes) in the department of sociology no later than 2 days after the specified exam period. This applies only to *midterm* exams, *no* final make-up exams will be given after the specified time period. Therefore, *no* incompletes will be given in case of a failure to take an exam during the specified time period without documented justification. Exams *cannot* be retaken or continued either online or in person because of 'bad' Internet connection and other computer 'problems'. It is student responsibility to have a proper Internet connection and computer. Online computer-generated exam scores are final and *cannot* be changed by professor under any circumstances (just as SAT or GRE scores cannot be changed). Each exam may be taken only ONCE (in one attempt), and any attempts to take the exam again will be an act of academic dishonesty and pursued accordingly. Exams must be taken by each student *individually* and independently of other students, and not in groups and collaboratively; if it is determined that an online exam is taken in groups and collaboratively, this will be treated as academic dishonesty and pursued accordingly. There is no 'curving' of exam scores.

Technical instructions (from UNT CLEAR). Avoid using a wireless connection for exams unless one is certain of its reliability. Take exams using a supported web browser on a computer or

laptop rather than using an iPad. If using an iPad, the Chrome browser is recommended. Contact the UIT Helpdesk at 940-565-2324 for assistance in the event of technical problems affecting the ability to access or complete a test.

It is the policy of this course that *no* extra-credits or ‘special treatments’ will be given to any students—No additional assignments, chances, requests, and exceptions. Discussions are optional (not required) but extra points are given, specifically 1 point per discussion post, if discussions are posted in the Discussion Forum. Discussions also can be very useful in preparing for the midterm and the final exam

The only basis for dispensing credits/grades is objective performance and merit rather than needs, desires and other subjective considerations. This ensures maximum fairness in grading. It is students’ own responsibility for class notes, outlines, announcements, etc. The professor will be always and maximally available to students online and in office to address their queries and concerns.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The communication tools in the course are:

- Announcements at least weekly and more frequently as needed
- GoToTraining
- Email / Messages
- Discussions by week on a particular topic

**Interaction with Instructor Statement.** The primary tool to communicate directly with students is Email / Messages. Students should send personal concerns or questions to the email tool. Students can expect to receive a response to course e-mail and discussion board postings the same day (if they sent and posted by 9PM), at the latest following day. The time frame in receiving feedback on assignments will be 2 days. Grades will be posted 1 day after the exam is over. For student behavior online see ‘netiquette.’

## ASSESSMENT & GRADING

Exams: 100 points each

Course Objective/Learning Outcomes: students will demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and explanation of basic concepts and facts of social problems. The exams are closed-book and taken individually. The exams will cover the required textbook reading and the content of the online lectures. Complete the exams online by accessing the Blackboard exam tool in Assessments. The exams will be timed and grades made available to students following the submission of the exam. If you lose Internet connectivity during the exam, log back in immediately and continue on with the exam. Save your answers often (every 5-10 minutes). If you experience any issues while taking the exam, you must contact the Blackboard Helpdesk immediately so that your issue is documented with a helpdesk ticket number. Considerations regarding exam issues will be made by the instructor on an individual basis based on the documentation.

Assessment Method: Multiple Choice and/or Essay Exam

**Quizzes: 5 points each (extra-points) (optional)**

Assessment Method: Multiple Choice and/or Essay Exam

**Discussion Forums: 10 total @ 1 point/discussion = 10 points (extra-points)** (optional)  
**Course Objectives/Learning Outcome.** Students will be active and engaged participants in discussion forums within their learning community by analyzing, creating, and evaluating information presented in the textbook, other readings and resources, student research or observations, and class and other activities.

The discussion forums are primarily related to the textbook readings, as well as other readings and resources and activities. Upon completion or near completion of the assigned readings and activities, you are expected to engage in an ongoing discussion/debate with your learning community peers. Your contributions to the discussion forums will be graded for quality, timeliness, and an analysis of linking together theory (readings) to application (activities).

*Assessment Method:* Each discussion post in the Discussion Forum will be given 1 point (1 weekly topic = 1 point).

### Grading

Grades will be determined as follows:

Total Points Possible for Semester = 200

200-180 = A
179-160 = B
159-140 = C
139-120 = D
119-0 = F

Grading Scale	
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
Below 60	F

### Tentative Assignments by Weeks

(Please note that course schedule is subject to change if necessary)

August 24-31, 2015

Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 1 The Sociological Approach to Social Problems, in Eitzen, pp. 2-25

August 31-September 07, 2015 Eitzen, pp. 26-53	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 2 Wealth and Power, in
September 07-14, 2015	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 3 World Population and Global Inequality, in Eitzen, pp. 54-74.
September 14-21, 2015	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 4 Threats to the Environment, in Eitzen, pp. 75-97
September 21-28, 2015	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 6 Problems of Place, in Eitzen, pp. 128-154
September 28-October 05, 2015	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 7 Poverty, in Eitzen, pp. 155-181
October 05-10, 2015	Review for Midterm Exam
October 10-11, 2015	<b>Midterm Exam</b> (above chapters)
October 12-19, 2015	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 8 Racial and Ethnic Inequality, in Eitzen, pp. 182-210.
October 19-26, 2015 Eitzen, pp. 285-310	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 12 Crime and Justice, in
October 26-November 02, 2015 Work, in Eitzen, pp. 339-368	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 14 The Economy and
November 02-09, 2015	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 15 Families, in Eitzen, pp. 369-40.
November 09-16, 2015	Reading Assignment: CHAPTER 17 The Healthcare System, in Eitzen, pp. 430-458.
November 16-23, 2015	Review for Final Exam
November 26-29, 2015	Thanksgiving Break
November 28- December 04	Pre-finals Week
December 05-06, 2015	<b>Final Exam</b> (chapters since the midterm exam)

Acceptable Student Behavior: Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of



Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [www.deanofstudents.unt.edu](http://www.deanofstudents.unt.edu)