

Sociology 438
Seminar in Crime and Deviance (3 credits)
Fall 2009
Tu Th 12:40-2:00
Dan Doyle

Office: Social Science 307
Office Hours: Tu Th 11:10-12:30
W 1:30-3:00 or by appointment
Office Phone/Voice Mail: 243-5912
E-mail: dan.doyle@umontana.edu

The Construction of Social Problems

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this seminar is to critically examine the constructionist approach to social problems and to use that approach to analyze a number of recognized and nascent social problems. The constructionist approach focuses attention on how it is that certain social conditions come to be defined as social problems.

Specific objectives:

1. Students will develop a thorough understanding of the construction of social problems by reading the text and associated articles, and participating in class discussions.
2. Students will enhance their oral communication skills by active engagement in class discussions.
3. Students will develop their writing skills by writing two essay exams, and writing and revising 16 article summaries.

READINGS

The required readings for this class are found in two books:

Loseke, Donileen R. 2003. *Thinking About Social Problems: An Introduction to Constructionist Perspectives*. 2nd ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine de Gruyter.

Loseke, Donileen R. and Joel Best. 2003. *Social Problems: Constructionist Readings*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine de Gruyter.

In order to fully participate in class discussions, students are required to read the assigned chapter(s) **prior** to the class during which that particular material will be discussed.

CLASS DISCUSSIONS

Since much of the learning in this course will take place through guided class discussion, active and informed participation in such discussions is required. I will score each student's level of participation for each day of the class. A student not present will receive 0 points for that day. Those present who participate in a minimal fashion will earn 1 point. Those with average participation will earn 2 points. Those with above average participation will earn 3 points. Those with excellent participation will earn 4 points. I will drop the lowest three participation scores. The maximum number of participation points available is 100.

ARTICLE SUMMARIES

In order to encourage in-depth understanding and informed class participation, you will be required to write a one to two-page summary and critique of each of 16 readings. Each summary should be typed single spaced, using 12 point font with 1 inch margins. Put the full reference at the top of the first page using the ASA referencing format.

Late summaries will not be accepted. Each summary will be scored on a ten point scale. Summaries will be scored on both content and writing skill. You will be given the opportunity to rewrite and resubmit each summary once (if you so desire) in an effort to improve your score by up to 2 points. You are allowed to drop the lowest scoring article summary.

EXAMS

There will also be a midterm and a final exam, both of which will be in-class essay exams. These exams require students to apply knowledge gained in class to real-world situations. Each exam is worth up to 75 points. Exams will be graded on both content and writing.

QUIZZES

To encourage students to come to class well prepared, ten quizzes will be administered without warning throughout the semester. Quizzes are worth 5 points each and will cover the current reading assignment.

GRADING

There are a total of 450 points available:

	Possible points
Participation in class discussions	100
Article summaries	150
Exam #1	75
Exam #2	75
Quizzes	50

A student's grade will be based on the total number of points achieved. Plus/minus grading will not be used in this class. Final grades will be assigned as follows:

405 points or above	A	270 to 314.5 points	D
360 to 404.5 points	B	265.5 points or below	F
315 to 359.5 points	C		

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

All students must be aware of and carefully adhere to the provisions defining and prohibiting academic misconduct in the UM Student Conduct Code. To download the code go to:

<http://life.umt.edu/SA/documents/fromWeb/StudentConductCode1.pdf>

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Teaching and learning are most likely to take place where the classroom environment is one characterized by mutual respect and freedom from unnecessary distractions. Below are some comments regarding the responsibilities of instructors and students in maintaining a good classroom environment. I will adhere to these guidelines to the best of my ability and I expect you to do likewise.

Vital to the whole notion of a university is the free exchange of ideas. Such an exchange is more likely in an atmosphere free from ridicule, insults, or personal attacks.

Late arrivals and early departures decrease the learning time available, interrupt the flow of class, and are distracting to all. The instructor should be careful to avoid keeping the students in class past the scheduled ending time. In turn, students should refrain from packing up their belongings and/or leaving prior to being dismissed by the instructor.

It is also distracting when students engage in private conversations, talk or text on a cell phone, use handheld computing or communication devices, listen to headphones, or read the non-class materials during class. Cell phones, pagers, and similar devices must be adjusted so that they do not ring, beep, or buzz audibly during class.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

September 1	Introduction
September 3	Examining Social Problems Reading: Loseke, Ch. 1
September 8	Examining Social Problems (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Introduction & Ch. 1 & 2
September 10	Examining Social Problems (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 3 & 4
September 15	Claims-Makers and Audiences Reading: Loseke, Ch. 2
September 17	Claims-Makers and Audiences (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 5 & 6
September 22	Claims-Makers and Audiences (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 7 & 8
September 24	Constructing Conditions Reading: Loseke, Ch. 3
September 29	Constructing Conditions (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 9 & 10
October 1	Constructing Conditions (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 11 & 12
October 6	Constructing People Reading: Loseke, Ch. 4
October 8	Constructing People (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 13 & 14
October 13	Constructing People (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 15 & 16
October 15	Constructing Solutions Reading: Loseke, Ch. 5

October 20	Summary and review for the midterm
October 22	Midterm exam (in-class essay) Covers: Loseke Ch.1-4 and Loseke & Best, Ch. 1-16
October 27	Constructing Solutions (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 17 & 18
October 29	Constructing Solutions (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 19 & 20
November 3	Social Problems and Everyday Life Reading: Loseke, Ch 6
November 5	Social Problems and Everyday Life (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 21 & 22
November 10	Social Problems and Everyday Life (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 23 & 24
November 12	Social Problems and Troubled People Reading: Loseke, Ch 7
November 17	Social Problems and Troubled People (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 25 & 26
November 19	Social Problems and Troubled People (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 27 & 28
November 24	Evaluating Constructionist Perspectives on Social Problems Reading: Loseke, Ch 8
November 26	Thanksgiving Day Holiday
December 1	Evaluating Constructionist Perspectives on Social Problems (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 29 & 30
December 3	Evaluating Constructionist Perspectives on Social Problems (continued) Reading: Loseke & Best, Ch. 31 & 32
December 8	Social Construction Theory and Issues Reading: Loseke, Appendix (pp. 183-202)
December 10	Grad student presentations, summary, and review
December 15	Final Exam at 3:20 P.M. (In-class essay) Covers: Loseke Ch.5-8 & Appendix and Loseke & Best, Ch. 17-32