# SOC& 201 Instructor Course Guide

## Explanatory notes

This course was designed to provide educators with a framework and structure for teaching a two-hundred level Social Problems course at the Community College. We planned the course around four unit modules;

1. An overview of sociological theory and the creation of social problems
2. Patterns of inequality
3. Issues in institutions
4. The examination of social problems in the social and natural world

We have provided course content in the form of reading materials, films and media clips, activities, and assessments. We did not provide lecture notes for each module; but we have included websites that could assist instructors in building out lecture materials.

Additionally, although we have not included it in this course design, this course lends itself to the inclusion of a service-learning component which can complement the in-class learning of the course materials.

## How this course is intended to be used

This course has been piloted as a “web-enhanced” (using Canvas) face-to-face course; however, we have developed assignments and assessments that could easily transition into a hybrid or online setting.

## Any prerequisites?

There are no prerequisites for this course. Of course it is always advantageous for students to have taken some Sociology course beforehand. We typically ask students during the first week about their previous sociological experience.

## Explanation of the course goals (college and course level)

In this course we will use a sociological perspective to critically examine the bases of social inequality and the resultant problems in society. We will explore concerns related to families, education, the workplace, the media, poverty, crime, drug abuse, health issues, war and terrorism, the environment and global concerns. We will also look at social action and possible solutions to these problems through both individual and community efforts.

## Course objectives

1. Apply some of the major sociological theories and their critiques to the understanding of social problems and the social change/action emerging from them.
2. Assess patterns and causes of social problems in social institutions in light of research findings.
3. Identify how social issues are impacted by local and global conditions.
4. Analyze the intersections of race, class , gender and other social dynamics to social problems.
5. Identify social policies and social changes/actions arising from social problems.

## How activities (assignments, projects, readings, etc.) support the goals - especially those activities that get repeated or are a cornerstone of your course

* **Readings, Films and other course content:** We have chosen readings and media content from a variety of sources so as to provide instructors with multiple options when adopting the course. In each module, we have included chapters from a textbook, film or video clips pertaining to the topic, as well as website material that could be used for lecture or class discussion/activity.
* **Class Discussions/Small Group Work:** Students are given the opportunity to earn class participation credit through regular in-class activities and assignments. These activities provide students with the opportunity to discuss and receive clarification on their understanding of the course materials.
* **Connected Knower:** This assignment (done 3 times throughout the quarter) integrates reading comprehension, application of sociological theory, and analysis of the social dynamics of social problems.

## Links (full URL) to textbooks or other required resources (including media)

Barkan, Steven. "[Social Problems: Change and Continuity](http://www.saylor.org/site/textbooks/Social%20Problems,%20Continuity%20and%20Change%20-%20Attributed.pdf)". Flat World Knowledge. Saylor.org. 2012. Web. 30 January 2012.

Additional reading and course materials provided for each module within the Activities pages.

## Notes about paid textbooks, homework tools, etc. used in your course. Be clear on what content is OER and what is not.

A note on the Barkan textbook: The link above has been provided to us at no cost through Saylor.org. However, Flatworld publishing does allow instructors to customize the textbook and offer access to this customized version to students for a cost. In addition, Flatworld Knowledge publishing offers add-on tools and resources that would support teaching this course.

## Rationale

The Barkan textbook was chosen because it is a comprehensive textbook that includes many of the foundational chapters for a Social Problems course. It was also one of the few resources available in print form and online. We have used another textbook from this same author for another Sociology course and found that students liked the format, organization and readability of this text. In addition, Flat World Publishing is a very responsive publisher with great customer service.

Other course materials were chosen with an interest in variety of authorship as well as type of material. This was done not only for student interest, but also to illustrate the breadth of the course content in many aspects of our social world. Thus, you will not only see sociologists’ work, but journalists, activists, lawyers and researchers. You will also not only see research articles, but news articles, policy reports, videos, and online assessments.

## Context of the Course

SOC& 201 is a 200 level community college course that typically meets requirements towards an Associates of Arts degree. Within Washington State, SOC&201 is a directly transferrable course to universities in Washington. Class enrollment in Washington is about 35 students per course (less for online instruction).

### Rationale for activities that are repeatedly practiced versus ones that may occur only one time.

The Connected Knower assignment is the only assignment that students complete more than once over the course of the course. The reason for this is that this assignment asks students to make connections among different course materials, lectures, videos and each other throughout the course so three (or four depending on the length of your term) separate Connected Knower deadlines are recommended to encompass most of the course material. It is also our experience that in the first Connected Knower students are just getting used to synthesizing and citing main arguments from the course material, so practice in this is needed. Their last Connected Knower is typically the strongest example of student’s writing and synthesis of material.

Other learning activities lend themselves to a one time implementation in their design and desired learning goals, but should be freely adapted to meet an instructor’s needs.

### Rationale for Approach

The approach toward the design of this course is somewhat non-traditional in the sense that traditional exams/quizzes are not administered and a lot of group work is required. Some of the learning activities (i.e. the Connected Knower, the Concept Map) are non-traditional assignments in their approach and in the ways that students are asked to demonstrate their knowledge.

The course could easily be adapted to a more “traditional” approach by utilizing the resources from Flat World Knowledge (i.e. test banks, lecture notes) and adding quizzes or exams.

### Experience finding/developing and integrating open educational resources and/or low-cost course materials into this course

We found it quite difficult to find quality course materials that satisfied our course learning goals for this course and in fact, the Flat World textbook was the only OER Social Problems textbook that we found.

## “Future directions” for additional course development

We feel that the in the future a larger variety of OER materials will be more readily available. In addition, given the subject matter and the fact that “social problems” in society are constantly changing in their social significance and presence, it is imperative that up-to-date resources be continually researched.

## Contact Info

Please feel free to contact us for more information about this course.

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