SYG 2010 Syllabus

Course Information

- **Course Hours:** (Asynchronous)
- **Course Meeting Location:** (Online)
- **Credit Hours:** 3 hours
- **Prerequisites:** None

Course Description

In this course, you will sharpen your critical thinking skills and apply sociological concepts as we consider six broad social issues: (1) political polarization, (2) trustworthiness of news media and science, (3) income inequality, (4) racial segregation, (5) access to quality education, and (6) issues related to globalization. All of these issues have played out large in terms of recent social protests surrounding racial inequality in the U.S. You will explore the social processes that lead some phenomena to be designated as important social problems, and examine how social problems come and go over time in terms of public opinion. You’ll also assess explanations that have been offered to explain the presence and persistence of social problems. The point of this course is to hone your critical thinking skills and engage with sociological perspectives on social issues, such that whatever position you take is well grounded and defensible. To accomplish these objectives, you will read research reports, policy briefs, opinion polls, book chapters, and assorted news articles and videos. Course requirements include discussion board posts and replies, short quizzes on assigned reading, research assignments, and a cumulative final exam.

Course Instructor

John Reynolds, Professor of Sociology  
jreynolds@fsu.edu  
(850) 644-6416  
Department of Sociology / Bellamy 427  
Office Hours: Available upon request; contact instructor with Zoom invite or meet on Chat.  
Emails will be responded to within 24 to 48 hours.

Learning Objectives

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate criteria for determining what counts as a social problem vs a personal concern.
2. Apply critical thinking skills and basic sociological concepts to contemporary social problems.
3. Differentiate between sociological and other social scientific explanations of the causes of social problems.

4. Identify ways that organizations, institutions, and culture influence views of social problems and policy responses to them.

5. Discuss critically and respectfully the pros/cons of current policy solutions that have been proposed to deal with social problems.

**Course Materials**

All course materials are available online through our class Canvas site.

**Student Responsibilities**

- Students should log on to Canvas at least every other day to check for course updates.
- Students are expected to keep up with the class, engage with the course material, and submit assignments by the due dates.
- Assignments, quizzes, and exams are expected to be products of individual students per the [FSU Academic Honor Policy](https://www.fsu.edu/office-of-academic-integrity/). Students should not discuss any of the questions with each other before or during the actual assignments, activities, quizzes, or exams without instructor approval.
- To receive maximum points for questions, students need to follow the instructions carefully, follow word limits as instructed, and use spell and grammar checking.
- To be successful in this course, students need to complete all required assignments and tests.

**Grading Policy**

**Short Quizzes on Assigned Readings = 10 @ 5 pts each = 50 pts**

Throughout the semester there will be opportunities to take short quizzes on the assigned course materials; the quizzes are linked to specific modules. You may take the quiz any time while we are working on a particular module, and you may take it as many times as you like. Canvas will record your best score. Once we have completed a module you will no longer receive credit for taking the quiz, and missed quizzes cannot be made up. However, there will be more than 10 chances to take reading quizzes, and your grade will be based on your 10 best quiz scores, with each quiz worth up to 5 points. This should be your own work; DO NOT work together on the quizzes.

**Applied Research Assignments = 6 @ 10 pts each = 60 pts**

You will complete six research assignments throughout the semester, with each being worth 10 points. In the assignments you will apply concepts and figures from the assigned readings and videos to empirical on the module’s social problem. For example, this may involve selecting a Florida public school that you would send your (hypothetical) child to using administrative data on school performance, funding, and student composition, and then reflecting on how those choices impact the economic and racial segregation of Florida’s school districts. It is essential that you tie specific course content to the topics considered in the assignments, as this is one of the main ways to provide evidence that you engaged with that material and can apply it. Assignment write-ups will be 4-5 pages long, double-spaced, and should be written in a professional manner using appropriate grammar and punctuation -- not just bullet points.
Discussion Board Posts and Replies = 5 @ 10 pts each = 50 pts

At four points in the semester, a discussion topic will be posted on Sunday. You will participate in a discussion with other members of the class concerning a prompt question related to the current Module topic or immediately past topic. Each student will be expected to post a 150-200 word response to the discussion topic by Wednesday of that week and then to post two 75-100 word replies to other students’ responses by Wednesday of the following week. You can alternately post video posts, as long as they are professional and follow the guidelines provided in the discussion board instructions. Based on the quality of your posts, you can earn a possible 10 points for your contribution to each group discussion. No credit will be given for late postings on the discussion board or for “flaming” or other inappropriate responses.

Cumulative Final Exam = 40 pts

The final exam is an open-book (i.e., assigned course materials) open-note exam comprised of short answer and essay questions. The final will test your ability to write critically about social problems, to make informed arguments that are grounded in empirical evidence, and to apply appropriate sociological concepts and show knowledge of the current research. The final exam is timed for two hours and can be taken at any time during Finals Week, as long as it is completed by 5pm on Friday of that week. The final exam should be your own work; DO NOT work together or communicate about the final in person, over email/text, or in social media. Students who are found to have collaborated on or shared information about the final exam will receive a grade of 0 on the exam and will be reported to the university for an Academic Honor Code violation.

Late Policy (see also "Course Policies" below): In terms of quizzes on the readings, there are extras that you can take in case you miss one or two, and no make ups are offered. Late applied research assignments will be penalized two points for being late up to 24 hours, and an additional 2 points for each day late beyond the first 24 hours. Do not wait until the last minute to submit your assignments—you are risking being late due to technical problems or interrupted WiFi access. Discussion board posts need to be submitted on time so that classmates have a chance to read your post and write a thoughtful, constructive response. Late discussion board posts or replies will not receive points, unless in the case of a documented excuse. Late final exams will not be graded unless you provide a documented excuse within 24 hours of the due date, and you will likely receive an "Incomplete" for your grade until the following semester once the makeup final can be graded and included.

Grading Scheme

The following grading standards will be used in this class:

Grading Scheme Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100% to 93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>&lt; 93% to 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>&lt; 90% to 87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>&lt; 87% to 83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>&lt; 83% to 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>&lt; 80% to 77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C        < 77% to 73%
C-       < 73% to 70%
D+       < 70% to 67%
D         < 67% to 63%
D-       < 63% to 60%
F         < 60% to 0%

Technology Requirements

Course content is accessible through Canvas. Students will need to be able to view videos, write and upload assignments, post to discussion boards, and take assessments. Students should have access to high-speed internet and updated software. Mobile devices may be used to view course content, upload assignments, and take assessments as determined by the instructor. To view the most current technology requirements, visit the FSU Canvas support site.

Canvas Support

Need help with Canvas? Contact FSU Canvas Support:

Email: canvas@fsu.edu
Phone: (850) 644-8004
Website: support.canvas.fsu.edu
Hours: 8am to 5pm, Monday - Friday

Course Policies

Communications/Netiquette

For Discussions:

- Please use polite, respectful behavior when posting your responses to prompts in the Discussion Boards.
- Be mindful of how you express your emotions and humor, and be sensitive to cultural and ability differences of your online peers.
- Keep postings to the point, and make sure your comments are relevant to the topic of discussion.
- Avoid messages such as, "Wow," "Way to go," or "Ditto" and aim for comments that validate other members’ ideas through careful explanation of why.
- When replying, give a short description in the subject line of what you are replying to, and use correct punctuation and spelling throughout your post.

For Email Communication:

- For email, please respond to your instructor’s and peers’ messages within a 24-hour period.
- Use a brief description in the subject line that outlines the topic of discussion.
- Avoid using slang or profane words.
- Use your instructor’s correct title he or she prefers for communication.
- Avoid using emoticons, such as smiley faces, and maintain a professional demeanor.
- Sign your email messages using your full name.
• AVOID USING ALL CAPS. This makes the message visually difficult to read and is perceived by the reader as "shouting."
• Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation, just as you would for any communication.
• Ask yourself whether you would be comfortable if someone other than the intended receiver were to read your message. Remember, email is not a completely secure form of communication.
• Refrain from "flaming," which is expressing a strongly held opinion without tact or regard for others. Don’t assume that recipients will know the intent of the message (e.g., "just kidding"). It reads differently when it’s in print (electronic or not).
• Report any inappropriate communication considered to be of a serious nature to your instructor, as it may be a violation of University policy.
• Treat others with respect by making messages clear and succinct.

Participation & Lateness Policy

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

Policy for Missed EXAMS

If you do not complete the final exam by the deadline, you will receive an incomplete for the course IF you have a documented excused and you notify the instructor within 24 hours of the exam date. The instructor will coordinate with you on taking a makeup, and your course grade will be posted the following term. If you do not have a documented excuse or you do not contact the instructor within a reasonable time, you will not be allowed to make up a missed final exam.

Policy for late Research Assignments

Late applied research assignments will be penalized two points for being late up to 24 hours, and an additional 2 points for each day late beyond the first 24 hours. Do not wait until the last minute to submit your assignments--you are risking being late due to technical problems or interrupted WiFi access.

Policy for late reading quizzes

Reading quizzes are available to take for the duration of the module in which they occur, then can no longer be taken and there are no makeups. If you forget to take a reading quiz, there are extra opportunities for quizzes and your grade is based on your 10 best scores.

Policy for late discussion board posts

Discussion board posts need to be submitted on time so that classmates have a chance to read your post and write a thoughtful, constructive response. Late discussion board posts or replies will not receive points, except in the case of a documented excuse.

Policy on Responding to Students

• Email responses typically within 24 to 48 hours.
- Graded assignments typically returned within 2 weeks after due date.

**University Policies**

**University Attendance Policy**

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

**Academic Honor Policy**

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and... [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (For more details see the [FSU Academic Honor Policy and procedures for addressing alleged violations](https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas).)

**Americans With Disabilities Act**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:
(1) register with and provide documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services; and
(2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type.

Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from the Office of Accessibility Services has been provided.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the

**Office of Accessibility Services (Tallahassee Campus)**
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
Email: oas@fsu.edu
https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas

**Student Disability Services (Panama City Campus)**
Office of Student Affairs
4750 Collegiate Drive
2nd Floor Barron Building (Room 215)
Florida State University Panama City
Panama City, FL 32405
Free Tutoring from FSU (*Tallahassee Campus*)

On-campus tutoring and writing assistance are available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options - see the [Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' website](https://pc.fsu.edu/students/student-disability-services) or contact tutor@fsu.edu. High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

**Syllabus Change Policy**

"Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice."

**Course Calendar on Canvas**