



# McKENDREE UNIVERSITY

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## **COURSE NUMBER AND COURSE TITLE**

SOC 270: Social Problems

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION & PREREQUISITES**

A sociological analysis of the social problems confronting contemporary societies, particularly the United States, and the processes by which they become identified as social problems. *No pre-requisites.*

This course is a requirement for the major in sociology and may be used toward the Personal and Social Responsibility portion of the General Education Program requirements. Students should always discuss with their academic advisors how any particular course will satisfy program and/or graduation requirements for their own plans of study.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Be exposed to the major sociological perspectives in the study of social problems.
2. Utilize popular culture literature as data to critically analyze social problems.
3. Be required to analyze popular culture sources about social problems in a well-written sociological paper.
4. Be exposed to a range of social problems and people's views about them (the general public, policymakers, and sociologists).
5. Exhibit personal and social responsibility by participating actively in a community and a democracy\*

\*Objective 5 relates to McKendree University General Education Outcome: Students will exhibit personal and social responsibility.



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## HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

P F P E – Be Present. Be Focused. Be Prepared. Be Engaged. The policies in this syllabus exist to support your success in this course.

Research shows the variable that most strongly predicts student success, as measured by GPA, is class *attendance*. (Credé, Roch & Kieszcznka, 2010). Or, as Woody Allen once famously said, “Eighty percent of success is showing up.” Showing up in an online class means you should:

- Sign on to Blackboard and check for announcements/updates/new material at least once a day.
- Check your email for messages from your instructor and/or classmates at least once a day.
- Read the assigned material and watch the course videos well in advance of the date that discussion board assignments are due. Give yourself time to digest the material and get questions answered, if you have any. Do *not* try to cram everything into one day!
- Engage with your classmates on the discussion boards! Not only is this a significant part of your grade; it is also the best way to interact with, and learn from, each other.
- Stay in contact with your instructor. If you have questions about the material or an assignment – ASK!
- 2017-18 is the Year of Engagement at McKendree, so here is a reminder to stay engaged:



E N G A G E M E N T



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You should also know that students have access to a number of free services designed to help them succeed in college while maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The Academic Success Center offers tutoring and individualized academic guidance; the Writing Center offers assistance with all steps in the writing process; and Health Services provides confidential counseling for students who need assistance with personal stress, problematic behaviors, or mental health concerns.

## **EVALUATION METHODS**

### **Discussion Boards – Course Reflections (25%)**

Each module will have a corresponding discussion board question on Blackboard. You will be required to answer the question *and* make a substantive response to at least two other students' answers. In total, your discussion board posts will comprise 25% of your final grade in this course. The rubric used to grade your discussion board posts will be available on Blackboard under the Course Documents link.

### **Quizzes (30%)**

There will be eight quizzes in this course. They will correspond with the modules in Blackboard. Combined, they will be worth 30% of your final grade in this course.

### **Service Learning Project (35%)**

This class centers on service learning. Service learning is the concept of connecting community service to class content. Without completing the service learning elements of this course, you cannot complete reflections, papers, or special projects. The service learning element is incorporated in all of these aspects of the class.

### **Service Learning Hours**

Students will engage in minimally 10 service learning hours. Students in the Lebanon, IL area may choose to work with the Lyn Huxford Center for Community Service on campus. However, all students are ultimately responsible for securing their own service sites. There are many non-profit agencies and organizations seeking volunteers. Students will be expected to choose a service site and complete their 10 hours over the course of the session. Therefore, students should complete approximately 1.25 hours of service per week for 8 weeks. Students may not clump their hours into fewer days. It is the student's responsibility to select and communicate with service sites. Service Learning contract due dates will be on the course calendar.



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Signed documentation from a site supervisor verifying completion of at least 10 hours of service is worth 10% of your final course grade.

The project will result in two papers, a policy paper and a reflection paper. These papers will be worth 25% of your final course grade.

## **Policy Paper**

You will need to research policies affecting the type of population/organization you served with (for example, if you are working with a social worker who is assisting clients with welfare applications, you should research the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA)). You will then have to recommend a policy that will affect that population/social problem faced by people served by that organization. You will ultimately write a 1,500-2,500 word (5-9 page) paper around your service and policy. The assignment goal: we live in a world where our choices and preferences do not exist in a vacuum. Often our viewpoints on things have been predisposed by government policies. Policies have real life effects on how we perceive social problems and how we interact with them. This project has a focus on thinking about the intersections between government and social problems in the world. It requires critical analysis and thinking about how we can change things in realistic patterns.

## **PAPER REQUIREMENTS:**

- Cover page: name, title (come up with something creative; I don't want "Policy Paper" or something like that as your title), course information, word count; the remainder of your paper should not contain any of that information on any of the pages.
- The first page should explain the mission of your service site, information about the population they work with, and why you chose this site.
- Pages 2-3 should define the social problem that you are addressing that connects to your service. What is the issue at hand? Why should we care? What is being done to address it? This section needs at least 3 sources (academic/scholarly sources; you could include information about current policies affecting your organization at the local, state, or national level—including those affecting funding, resources, visibility in the community, bureaucratic procedures, etc.).
- Pages 3-5 will be a policy proposal. Ultimately, one way in which we can address social problems is through government policy. You are going to propose a government (local, state, or national) policy that can address your problem. This will require some research in advance.
  - The policy doesn't have to be a policy that the place you work at utilizes, but can be a policy related to what you did. For example, if you work at a community center, you shouldn't write a paper that focuses on the community centers sign-in policy, but *something bigger* that relates to the population served. The policy needs to be governmental at the local, state, or national level. Ask me if you have any questions about examples to address this.



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- DON'T suggest something simple and trivial such as: “we should include more women in society” or “we should raise the minimum wage”; instead, you should propose how to include more women in society, especially in the particular community you served or how to effectively raise the minimum wage, including the evidence that shows that these are proposals for the greater good of society
- The last paragraph pages should talk about what you learned from your service site, why you care about the policy you chose, how service connected to this class, and your overall reflection of service as a part of social problems.
- You may write more, with an upper limit of 2,500 words (8-9 pages)

FORMATTING (failure to follow these instructions will result in a 20% deduction):

- Times new roman, 12 point font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced
- ASA citation style should be used for your external sources cited in text
- Must have a reference page with full citations (still in ASA style) at the end of your paper
- Cover page and reference page do not count toward word count

## **Final Reflection**

Students will turn in a service learning reflection at the end of the semester. You should consider writing reflections about different times in your service learning (after the first week, after a couple of weeks, and towards the end) and providing an overall progression of reflection throughout the semester. The paper will be graded on the following—15% of the points will be given for completing at least 750 words; 70% for content/thought, and 15% for writing quality (capitalization, punctuation, verb tenses, sentence and paragraph structure, no contractions, non-descriptive words, proper grammar use, etc.).

Below are the list of reflection questions—you should try to answer all, if not most, of the questions posed below in an organized fashion that flows together and is not clunky (in other words, I don't want you to answer the questions in the order they are presented in, but rather, that you choose to organize responses in the same paragraph without redundancy).

### Formatting:

- 750-2,000 words (there are about 250-300 words per page)
- Times new roman, 12 point font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced
- Cover page: name, course information, title (something more creative than “Reflection” or “Service Learning Reflection”), word count
- Failure to follow formatting instructions will result in a 20% deduction



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## Reflection Questions (adapted from Christopher Koliba, Ph.D. Research Assistant Professor, John Dewey Project on Progressive Education, University of Vermont)

- Why do you do service? For self-interest or altruism? If you just did it for the class, that's fine; if your service learning experience has changed how you view service, explain.
- Describe the people you met at the service site.
- Name three things that stuck in your mind about the service experience.
- Describe the atmosphere of the service site.
- Describe some of your interactions with people you served, co-workers, supervisors, etc.
- Why do you think these interactions happened?
- How have you changed since entering your service location and exiting it?
- How did people respond to you at the organization? How did these responses make you feel?
- How did the service site make you feel (compared to other places)?
- What brings people to the service site (both people seeking service and those seeking to volunteer)?
- Are "strangers" welcomed at the service site? Why or why not?
- How are you similar/different to the others (others in your service group? Others seeking services? Etc.?)?
- In what ways did being different help/hinder the group?
- What have you learned about yourself?
- How did this experience compare to others you've had?
- What connections do you see between this experience and what you've learned in your college courses?
- How has your service contributed to your growth in any of these areas: Civic responsibility, political consciousness, professional development, spiritual fulfillment, social understanding, intellectual pursuit?
- What have you learned about a particular community or societal issue?
- How did this experience challenge your assumptions and stereotypes?
- Do you think these people (or situations) are unique? Why or why not?
- What public policies are involved in the organization you served for and how do they affect people being served? How can they be improved?
- Who determines what's best for the community?
- Describe what a typical day might be like for someone who uses the services of the organization you worked with.
- How would you do this differently if you were in charge?
- What was the best/worst/most challenging thing that happened?
- Did you feel like a part of the community you were working in?
- How do you define community?
- Describe an internal and external conflict that has surfaced for you during your service work. Explain the factors that contribute to it and how you might resolve or cope with the conflict.
- Discuss a social problem that you have come in contact with during your service work. What do you think are the root causes of the problem? Explain how your service may or may not contribute to its alleviation.



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- What could this group/organization do to address the problems at the service site?
- What could each participant in the organization (volunteers, managers, supervisors, etc.) do on their own to enact social change or help improve the social problem?
- How can society better deal with the problem?
- How can this experience apply to other situations in your life?
- How can your solutions apply to other situations in your life?
- How can your solutions apply to other problem(s) of other groups?
- How can society be more compassionate/informed/involved regarding this community?
- What is the difference between generosity, charity, justice, and social change?
- Where do we go from here? What’s the next step?

## **Discussion Boards – Service Learning Reflections (10%)**

Each week, beginning week 2, you are to briefly summarize what you experienced during your service learning hours and offer some reflective thoughts about the experience.

For example, a student is working in a food bank: Who are the clients (*i.e.*, what were the demographics)? Do they look like people you expected to be at a food bank? Do they have children? Were they dressed like you? Did they appear to be homeless? Did you engage in conversation? What are your observations about the experience?

Your grade for this is all or nothing: ten points if you provide a response, zero if you fail to post.

In total, these weekly posts are worth 10% of your final course grade.

## **GRADING INFORMATION**

<b>Assignment Title</b>	<b>Percentage of Final Grade</b>
Discussion Boards – Course Reflections	25%
Quizzes	30%
Service Learning Project	35%
Discussion Boards – Service Learning Reflections	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>



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## **GRADING SCALE**

93-100%	A	77-80%	C+
90-93%	A-	74-77%	C
87-89%	B+	70-73%	C-
84-87%	B	60-69%	D
80-83%	B-	0-59%	F

## **POLICY ON LATE WORK**

No late assignments will be accepted. No work will be accepted after the course ends unless an incomplete has been granted.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Any student detected of academic dishonesty will receive the appropriate sanctions, which can include a failing grade (“F”) for the course. In cases of serious violations, additional sanctions (such as academic probation or suspension) are possible.

## **ACCOMODATIONS AND ADA POLICY**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), McKendree University provides services, auxiliary aides, and accommodations to meet the unique learning needs of students with disabilities.

Students with officially documented disabilities, medical needs, legal problems, or who are the victims of crimes may qualify for educational accommodations. A student requiring assistance should contact the McKendree Student Success and Advising Center (SSAC). The SSAC provides coordination and implementation of special accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requiring accommodations for other issues should contact their instructor, Student Affairs, or Health Services.

For further information regarding university or course policies, please consult with your instructor and/or refer to the catalog.

## **EMAIL**

Every student is issued a McKendree email account, which is one of the major means of communication from offices such as the Office of Academic Records, Student Affairs and the Business Office. All students are responsible for checking their McKendree email accounts regularly and are accountable for information



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disseminated to their email accounts. Failure to read university communications sent to McKendree email accounts does not absolve students from knowing and complying with the content of these communications.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

Situated in the lower level of the Piper Academic Center, the Information Technology Department and HelpDesk office hours are Monday – Friday from 6:00 am to 5:00 pm. Support is also available via email at [helpdesk@mckendree.edu](mailto:helpdesk@mckendree.edu) or by phone (618)537-6445. Information Technology provides a variety of services to students. These services include login assistance, student ID cards, computer and mobile device support, e-mail assistance, on campus internet services, which includes on campus wireless access and more. Please visit [support.mckendree.edu](http://support.mckendree.edu) for a full list of IT services provided by the McKendree Information Technology Department.

## **HOLMAN LIBRARY**

Holman Library, completed in 1969, houses a collection of books, periodicals, government documents, and audiovisual equipment and materials that are available to all students for check-out or for in-library use. The library also provides ample space for students to study, including individual study carrels and group study rooms. The library also offers a Mac computer lab, scanners, and collaborative workstations. In addition to the materials available in the library, other resources can be accessed via interlibrary loan. The library belongs to the CARLI consortium, which allows you to request items through many academic libraries throughout the state of Illinois. We also offer interlibrary loan services for journal articles. The library staff is always available to assist you in locating materials, and staff members can also help you get started on research for papers and projects.



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## COURSE SCHEDULE

Module (Weeks)	Dates	Topic (Chapters)	Assignments	Due Dates
				Discussion Boards(CR) have two due dates, the first is for your answer, the second for your responses to at least two classmates.
1		Chapters 1&2	Discussion Board(CR) 1 Quiz 1 No Discussion Board(SLR) 1	
2		Chapters 3&4	Discussion Board(CR) 2 Quiz 2 Discussion Board(SLR) 2	
3		Chapter 5&6	Discussion Board(CR) 3 Quiz 3 Discussion Board(SLR) 3	
4		Chapter 7	Discussion Board(CR) 4 Quiz 4 Discussion Board(SLR) 4	
5		Chapter 8	Discussion Board(CR) 5 Quiz 5 Discussion Board(SLR) 5	
6		Chapter 9	Discussion Board(CR) 6 Quiz 6 Discussion Board(SLR) 6	
7		Chapter 10	Discussion Board(CR) 7 Quiz 7 Discussion Board(SLR) 7	
8		Chapter 11	Documentation of Service Hours Service Learning Policy Paper Service Learning Final Reflection Paper	

\*Note the final week is a short week.

If necessary, adjustments to the Grading Information and/or Course Schedule may occur.