

GSSR, 1<sup>st</sup> term, October 27 – January 24

## **SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL POLICY**

Professor: Dr. Agnes Riedmann, Ph.D., Fulbright Faculty 2008-09

Office: Room 280

Classroom 200; Mondays 16:30 – 18:30

### **Course Description & Objectives**

The purposes of this course are (1) to inform students and (2) to encourage critical thinking about contemporary social problems and policy—globally, regionally, and in specific countries presented as examples. Throughout this course we will emphasize the ideo-political aspect of social problems and policies.

### Specific Academic Aims /Learning Outcomes

1. To define the concept, *social problem*, distinguishing such from personal, moral, or legal problems.
2. To explore social theory as related to social problems.
3. To recognize that social problems and policies proceed from socially constructed worldviews.
4. To understand the significance of various social problems, both locally/regionally and worldwide.
5. To understand that reasonable social policy need correspond with theorized and/or empirically supported causes for a social problem.
6. To explore various social policies as related to specific social problems.

### Grading

In accordance with the MA Course Handbook, grades may range from A to Fail. For further information, please see “Criteria for Assessment of Essays and Dissertations” in the Handbook.

*Attendance and participation* According to the MA Course Handbook, Section “Code of Practice,” “Students are expected to attend all course sessions. “In general, if a student is absent from more than four meetings of the course, she or he will be considered to have failed the course by default.” Poor attendance (but not sufficiently poor to warrant a failing mark) may also be penalized by a reduction in the final course mark by the same amount. For further details on attendance, please see the “Code of Practice” section in the Handbook.

As one component of participation, students are expected to give presentations. According to the Handbook, having given a presentation is not in itself sufficient grounds for award of an additional 10% for active participation, although failure to give a presentation could constitute grounds for a course mark reduction of 10%.

*Course essay* According to the MA Course Handbook, each student will submit an essay of about 3000 words. Essay titles are to be chosen from a list provided by the instructor. In accordance with the Handbook, only in exceptional cases may a student—with the agreement of the course instructor—write on a topic other than one that is on the provided list. Essays are due Tuesday, February 3, 2009. See “Essays and Assessment” in the Handbook for further details.

## Class Format

This is a lecture and discussion, seminar-style course. During class sessions, reading assignments and any supplemental materials will be discussed, integrated, and debated. It is expected that each student will have read and thoroughly digested the assigned material before we address it in class so that the student can (1) raise questions about unclear points or those with which s/he disagrees; and 2) influence class discussions. Students should expect to consult an English-language dictionary when reading course assignments.

*Reaction papers* In accordance with the MA Course Handbook, up to 10% of the overall mark for this course will be awarded as recognition of a student's active participation during class meetings. This recognition will be based upon the quality of presentations and reaction papers prepared by students during the course. As one component of class participation, each student will bring to classes four two-page, word-processed reaction papers that thematically integrate the content of the readings or some aspect of the readings, such as theoretical perspectives or methodologies employed. Students with surnames beginning with A – M will bring reaction papers to class on 11/10, 11/24, 12/8, 1/12. Students with surnames beginning with N – Z will bring reaction papers to class on 11/3, 11/17, 12/1, 12/15.

*Presentations* At five class meetings, 1-3 students—depending upon the size of the class—will give presentations and assist the instructor in leading class discussion. In order to do so, a student should (1) thoroughly digest all of the assigned reading materials assigned for that class meeting and be prepared to make connections between the readings; (2) be prepared to pose questions to the class regarding issues raised by the readings; (3) read the suggested additional readings for that topic, if any; and (4) find and present relevant additional information from 2-3 *reliable* Internet sites on the topic.

### **Tips for Successful Reading**

1. Note the author's credentials and the date of the article. Why are these important?
2. Read the abstract first.
3. Fully understand the purpose of the article.
4. What is the research or essay question and the reasoning behind this question?
5. Note the methodology used. Does the methodology correspond well with the author's purpose and research question?
6. What are the basic findings?
7. What conclusions are drawn by the author(s)?
8. What additional, different, or counter conclusions would you draw?
9. How does this particular article interrelate with other articles assigned for this topic?
10. What significant points would you like to make about (a) the article itself, and/or (b) the topic or content of the article?

## Topics & Reading Schedule

- I. Oct. 27 **Introduction** to the course: C. W. Mills, personal troubles and public issues. What are social problems? What is social policy?

### Reading

Nemat, *Prisoner of Tehran: One Woman's Story of Survival Inside an Iranian Prison*. NY& London: Free Press, 2007. Chapters 1 – 11.

- II. Nov. 3 **Application of principal social theory paradigms to social problems and policy**, with continued reference to Nemat.

### Readings

- Remainder of Nemat
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- Major Theoretical Paradigms/Perspectives in Sociology
- Richard K. Caputo, "Social Theory & Its Relation to Social Problems: An Essay on Theory and Research with Social Justice in Mind." *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*. March, 2007.
- Joseph W. Schneider, "Social Problems Theory: A Constructionist View." *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 11 (1985), pp. 209-229.

- III. Nov. 10 **Economic inequality and poverty**

### Readings

- Denise E. Bronson, Sheri Kunovich, and Krzysztof Frysztacki, "The Impact of the Economic Transition in Poland on Vulnerable Populations." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* Vol. 26 (2), Summer 2005, pp. 225-238.
- Kathleen Kern, "The Human Cost of Cheap Cell Phones." In *A Game as Old as Empire: The secret world of economic hit men and the web of global corruption*, © 2007 by Steven Hiatt, ed. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, CA. All rights reserved. [www.bkconnection.com](http://www.bkconnection.com)
- Mark Mazower, "Mandarins, Guns and Money." *The Nation*, October 6, 2008: 36-42.
- Timothy M. Smeeding, "Public Policy, Economic Inequality, and Poverty: The United States in Comparative Perspective." *Social Science Quarterly*, supplement to Vol. 86, 2005: 955-983.
- [www.caltransfer.com](http://www.caltransfer.com)

### Suggested additional reading

- Children's Defense Fund, *Annual Report 2007*.
- G8 Global Poverty Report, 2000.

- IV. Nov. 17 **Health issues and inequalities**

### Readings

- Google "patient dumping"
- Magdalena Szaflarski and Lisa A. Cubbins. 2004. "Self-Reported Health in Poland and the United States: A Comparative Analysis of Demographic, Family and Socioeconomic Influences." *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Health, Illness, and Medicine* 8 (1):5-31.
- Joy Wang, "AIDS Denialism and 'The Humanisation of the African.'" *Race & Class*, Vol. 49 (3), 2007:1-18.

- World Health Organization (WHO). Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Links to Health. FACTS AND FIGURES.
- World Health Organization (WHO). Ten Highlights in Health Statistics.

#### Suggested additional reading

- Global Alcohol Policy Alliance. "Alcohol Related Problems in Poland." Originally published @ 2000. Retrieved April 26, 2006, <http://www.ias.org.uk/>
- Evan S. Lieberman, "Ethnic Politics, Risk, and Policy Making: A Cross-National Statistical Analysis of Government Responses to HIV/AIDS." *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 40 (12), 2007:1407-1432.
- World Health Statistics, 2008:
  - Global Health Indicators, Mortality and Burden of Disease
  - Global Health Indicators, Inequities in Health Care and Health Outcome

### V. Nov. 24 **Exploitation of and violence against women**

#### Readings

- Marianne Hester, "Future Trends and Developments: Violence Against Women: in Europe and East Asia." *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 10 (12), 2004: 1431-1438.
- Vanessa E. Munro, "A Tale of Two Servitudes: Defining and Implementing a Domestic Response to Trafficking of Women for Prostitution in the UK and Australia." *Social & Legal Studies*, Vol. 14, 2005: 91-114.
- Kenneth Omeje, "Sexual Exploitation of Cult Women: The Challenges of Problematizing Harmful Traditional Practices in Africa from a Doctrinalist Approach." *Social and Legal Studies* 10 (1), 2001, pp. 45-60.
- Nicola Piper, "Feminization of Labor Migration as Violence against Women: International, Regional, and Local Nongovernmental Organization Responses in Asia." *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 9 (6), 2003, pp. 723-745.

#### Suggested additional reading

- Esohe Aghatise, "Trafficking for Prostitution in Italy." *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 10, 2004:1126-1154.
- Srila Roy, "The Everyday Life of the Revolution: Gender, Violence and Memory." *South Asia Research* 27 (2), 2007:187-204.

### VI. Dec. 1 **The institution of social work and its relation to social problems and policy**

Guest Professor: Dr. Margaret Tynan, Director of Social Work, California State University, Stanislaus.

#### Readings

- Elizabeth Ann Gammon and Jolenta Dziegielewska, "The Butterflies of ARKA: Grassroots Initiatives for Child Welfare in Poland." *International Social Work* Vol. 38 (April), 1995: 133-137.
- Salvatore Imbrogno, "Social Policy Planning and Social work Practices in Poland." *Social Work* 35 (4), 1990: 302-306.
- Catherine McDonald, John Harris, and Richard Wintersteen, "Contingent on Context? Social Work and the State in Australia, Britain, and the USA." *British Journal of Social Work* 33, 2003: 191-208.
- David Strug, "Community-Oriented Social Work in Cuba: Government Response to Emerging social Problems." *Social Work Education* 25 (7), 2006: 749-762.
- Possible further readings to be announced

Suggested additional reading

Price, Vicky, and Graeme Simpson. 2007. *Transforming Society?: Social Work and Sociology*. Bristol: Policy Press.

VII. Dec. 8 **Institutional discrimination**Readings

- Aaron Beim and Gary Allen Fine, "The Cultural Frameworks of Prejudice: Reputational Imagines and the Postwar Disjuncture of Jews and Communism." *The Sociological Quarterly* 48, 2007:373-397.
- Naima Bouteldja, "'Integration,' Discrimination and the Left in France: A Roundtable Discussion." *Race & Class*, Vol. 49 (3), 2003: 76-87.
- Robert B. Hill, "Institutional Racism in Child Welfare." *Race & Society* 7, 2004: 17-33.
- Gail Mason, "Body Maps: Envisaging Homophobia, Violence, and Safety." *Social & Legal Studies*, Vol. 10 (1), 2001: 23-44.
- Deenesh Sohoni, "The 'Immigrant Problem': Modern-Day Nativism on the Web." *Current Sociology*, Vol. 54 (6), 2006:827-850.

Suggested additional reading

- <http://ddickerson.igc.org/antisemitism.html>
- Barbara S. Okum and Dov Friedlander, "Educational Stratification among Arabs and Jews in Israel: Historical Disadvantage, Discrimination, and Opportunity." *Population Studies* 59 (2), 2005: 163-180.

VIII. Dec. 15 **Climate change**Readings

- Agence France Presse, "Historic Kyoto Treaty Inked without the World's Biggest Polluter, the U.S." February 16, 2005.  
<<http://www.commondreams.org/headlines05/0216-12.htm>>
- Sheridan Bartlett, "Climate Change and Urban Children: Implications for Adaptation in Low- and Middle-Income Countries." *Environment & Urbanization*, Vol. 20 (2), 2008: 501-519.
- Ian Douglas, et al., "Unjust Waters: Climate Change, Flooding and the Urban Poor in Africa." *Environment & Urbanization*, Vol. 20 (1), 2008: 187-205.
- Sari Kovats and Rais Akhtar, "Climate, Climate Change, and Human Health in Asian Cities." *Environment & Urbanization*, Vol. 20 (1), 2008: 165-175.
- Aromar Revi, "Climate Change Risk: An Adaptation and Mitigation Agenda for Indian Cities." *Environment & Urbanization*, Vol. 20 (1), 2008: 207-229.

Suggested additional reading

- Ans Kolk and Jonatan Pinkse, "Multinationals' Political Activities on Climate Change." *Business & Society*, Vol. 46 (2), 2007: 201-228.
- Alex de Sherbin et al., "The Vulnerability of Urban Cities to Climate Hazards." *Environment & Urbanization*, Vol. 19 (1), 2007: 39-64.

IX. Jan. 12 **Crime and punishment** Guest professor: Dr. Phyllis Gerstenfeld;  
Chair, Department of Criminal Justice, California State University, Stanislaus.

Readings

to be announced

X. Jan. 19 **Direct focus on policy: From social engineering to denial and apathy, to populist activism**

Readings

- Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow, "Transnational Processes and Social Activism: An Introduction." In Donatella, Della Porta, and Sidney Tarrow (Eds.) *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.
- Myra M. Ferree & Tetyana Pudrovska, "Transnational Feminist NGOs on the Web: Networks and Identities in the Global North and South." Pp. 237-272 in Ferree, Myra M., and Aili Mari Tripp. 2006. *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights*. London & NY: New York University Press.
- Boleslaw Janus, "Labor's Paradise: Family, Work, and Home in Nowa Huta, Poland, 1950-1960." *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 33 (4), 2000: 453-474.
- Michael Dartnell. *Insurgency Online: Web Activism and Global Conflict*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. Introduction & Chapter 1.
- Thomas Lowe et al., "Does Tomorrow Ever Come? Disaster Narrative and Public Perceptions of Climate Change." *Public Understanding of Science*, Vol. 15, 2006: 435-457.
- "Using the Internet for Effective Grassroot Advocacy: Strategies, Tools and Approaches...". < <http://www.convio.com>.>

Suggested additional reading

- Wendy Torrance and Andrew Torrance, "Spinning the Green Web: Environmental Transnationalism." In Donatella, Della Porta, and Sidney Tarrow (Eds). *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. 2005.

Google:

- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Watch
- Children's Defence Fund

**General Reading**

- Batliwala, Srilatha, and L. David Brown. 2006. *Transnational Civil Society: An Introduction*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Dartnell, Michael. 2006. *Insurgency Online: Web Activism and Global Conflict*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Introduction & Chapter 1.
- Donatella, Della Porta, and Sidney Tarrow (Eds). 2005. *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ferree, Myra M., and Aili Mari Tripp. 2006. *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights*. London & NY: New York University Press.
- Green, Judith, and Ronald Labonte. 2007. *Critical Perspectives in Public Health*. London & NY: New York University Press.
- Iatridis, Demetrius S. 2000. *Social Justice and the Welfare State in Central and Eastern Europe: The Impact of Privatization*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.
- Mazur, Allan. 2007. *Global social Problems*. New York and Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Policy and Society: An International Quarterly*. <[www.elsevier.com/locate/polsoc](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/polsoc)>
- White, Renee T, Cynthia Pope, and Robert Malow. 2008. *HIV/AIDS: Global Frontiers in Prevention/Intervention*. London & New York: Routledge.