



EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

**SOCI 2020- Social Problems**

**Contact information**

Dr. Martha Copp  
email: [coppm@etsu.edu](mailto:coppm@etsu.edu)  
office: 223H Rogers-Stout  
work: 423-439-7056

**Office Hours**

TR 9:45 – 10:45 am; TR 3:45 – 4:30 pm; W 10:00 – 11:30 am; also available by appointment

**Teaching Assistants**

Welcome, students! In this course, we'll examine social problems from a sociological and social psychological perspective. We'll discuss how people define and construct social problems and how different categories of people may experience and react to social problems in contradictory ways. You will learn to analyze how people (primarily in the U.S.) deal with social problems and examine the intentional and unintentional consequences of their actions. And we'll learn how social problems (and sometimes our attempts to solve them) can reinforce social inequalities.

**Required books and readings**

*The Sociologically Examined Life: Pieces of the Conversation*, 5th edition, by Michael Schwalbe. Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-19-062066-0. Noted as "TSEL" in course schedule.

*Focus on Social Problems: A Contemporary Reader*, 1st edition, edited by Mindy Stombler and Amanda M. Jungels. Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-19-932135-3. Noted as "Focus" in course schedule.

*Online readings:* You are responsible for accessing and reading additional required readings posted on D2L.

**Class Format**

Our classes will consist of discussions among the whole class and in small groups, short lectures, class exercises, and occasional videos. We'll discuss social problems, how they are portrayed, how we as citizens define and address them, and how different social problems are connected. When we talk about the readings in class, we'll have many opportunities to discuss and analyze people's assumptions about the social problems we're covering. We'll practice analyzing social problems with "sociological mindfulness." That is, I expect you to learn how to think (and talk) sociologically with an open mind about social problems in our society, think about how our beliefs and actions affect others, and consider the long-term social consequences of what we do and say.

**Reading and Participating**

Give yourself adequate time to read without distractions. Skimming shortchanges your education. Because our class depends on discussion and your active participation, you'll need to do all of the assigned readings and come to class prepared to talk about them. Discussion promotes active learning for all of us, because we learn from explaining our ideas to others and getting feedback. Bring your books and your notes on the readings as a discussion aid for class. You'll talk and jot down notes and ideas whenever you hear (or think of) useful insights.

### Freewrites

As an incentive for you to keep up with your readings and participate in class, 20% of your final grade is based on “freewrites” that start each class.

### Journal

#### Exams

We’ll have three exams (15% each) with a short-answer/short-essay format. You must take exams when scheduled. If you have a conflict or emergency, contact me *beforehand* (by phone or email or in person).

#### Technology Policy

As a general rule, using phones, tablets, laptops, or other smart devices in class is prohibited. Using them in class—even keeping them in sight—impairs your ability to learn (yup, there’s research on that!). It also hurts discussions, and distances you from the learning environment we create together. Personal technology will sometimes be incorporated into class and will be announced (to help us accomplish something collectively in class). So please make a habit to silence and put away those devices. Speak to me before class about special permission (emergencies). Students who continue to use devices will be told to leave class (you will also be marked absent and lose credit for any in-class writing).

#### Academic Integrity

ETSU policy prohibits plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Your written work must be expressed in your own words, except where you clearly and properly cite the published or unpublished work of others. ETSU’s policy on plagiarism requires instructors to file formal complaints. Repeated academic misconduct may result in expulsion from ETSU.

#### Disability services

Please inform me at the start of the semester if you have a documented disability and need accommodation. Contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible to make the most of their resources for students with disabilities. [Disability Services](#) is located in Nell Dossett Residence Hall, Third Floor, 423-439-8346.

#### Summary of Requirements

Freewrites: 20%

Journal Part 1: 15%

Journal Part 2: 20% (includes an analytical summary covering Parts 1 & 2)

Exams (3 @ 15% each): 45%

#### Grade Scale

	A 94-100%	A- 90-93%
B+ 87-89%	B 84-86%	B- 80-83%
C+ 77-79%	C 74-76%	C- 70-73%
D+ 67-69%	D 60-66%	F below 60%

Note: Sociology majors and minors must earn at least a C or above in this required course.