

SOCI 202

Constructing Social Problems

(May 13 – June 28)



This course consists of pre-recorded weekly lectures, online quizzes, an online final exam, and a photovoice assignment

Course Description

SOCI 202 focuses on how social problems are socially constructed. The social construction of social problems is not about people making problems up. It's not even about subjective interpretations of otherwise objective problems. The social construction of social problems is about the ways in which human beings identify and come to think about certain issues as social problems at particular times, in specific places, and with different levels of intensity. It's also about how we avoid thinking about otherwise problematic social issues by denying, rationalizing, justifying, or downplaying their significance.

In the summer term, we will examine the social construction of the following social problems: popular hazards, terrorism and torture, the fight against breast cancer, asylum seekers, serial killing, Halloween sadism, poor single mothers, infectious diseases (Ebola and COVID-19), surveillance, and public shaming. We will also consider different kinds of media messaging and how perceived problems that at some points in time occupy a considerable amount of attention and debate habitually decline in importance (only to be replaced by new issues and concerns).

Instructor/Contact Details



Professor Sean Hier
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Course Delivery

SOCI 202 will be presented online in an asynchronous format. Course instruction will consist of pre-recorded lectures, instructional video links, and assigned weekly readings.

Readings

There is no textbook for this course. There are several academic papers assigned for weekly reading. There is no cost associated with the readings.

Evaluation

4 of 5 Online Quizzes 50%

Students will complete 5 online quizzes worth 12.5% each. Quizzes will be completed most Fridays between 8:00am and 4:00pm. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions (approximately 30 questions per quiz). Only the top 4 quiz scores will count towards final grades. In most cases, quizzes will take less than 30 minutes to complete.

Photovoice Assignment 15%

Students will complete a final course assignment using the photovoice methodology. The photovoice methodology is a visual methodology that provides participants/students/observers with a voice in the interpretation of everyday life through photography (i.e., photovoice). The photovoice assignment is due no later than July 2.

Online Final Examination 35%

Students will complete a cumulative final exam online consisting of multiple choice and true/false questions. The final will open at 8:00am and close at 4:00pm on Friday June 28.

Evaluation Dates

Quiz 1	Friday May 24
Quiz 2	Friday May 31
Quiz 3	Friday June 7
Quiz 4	Friday June 14
Quiz 5	Friday June 21
Final Exam	Friday June 28
Assignment	No later than July 2

Tentative Schedule

Week 1	May 13-17
	Introduction
	Constructing Social Problems
	Popular Hazards and Harm
Week 2	May 20-24
	Victoria Day
	The Constructionist Perspective
	Quiz 1 (12.5%)
Week 3	May 27-31
	Terrorism, Media Logic, and Denial
	Breast Cancer, Survivors, and the Social Problems Industry
	Quiz 2 (12.5%)
Week 4	June 3-7

Refugees, Irregular Arrivals, and Context Work

Urban Legends, Halloween Sadism, and Missing Children

Quiz 3 (12.5%)

Week 5 June 10-14

The Social Construction of Infectious Diseases: Ebola

The Social Construction of Infectious Diseases: COVID-19

Quiz 4 (12.5%)

Week 6 June 17-21

Framing Modern Serial Killers

Stigma, Stereotypes, and Single Mothers

Quiz 5 (12.5%)

Week 7 June 24-28

Surveillance, Social Problems, and CCTV

Surveillance, Shaming, and Social Media

Final Exam (35%)