

# SOCI 202

## Constructing Social Problems

### (Fall 2024)

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### 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

shier@uvic.ca

## 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

### **10 of 12 Weekly Online Quizzes      50%**

Students will have the opportunity to complete 12 online quizzes worth 5% each. The **top 10 quiz scores** will count towards final grades.

Quizzes will be completed on **Fridays between 5:00am and 8:00pm** (the final quiz will be completed on Wednesday December 4, the last day of class). Quizzes will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. There will be at least **FOUR** true/false questions on each quiz. You will have 10 minutes to complete 15 questions.

### **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).

### **Two-Week Take-Home Final Examination      35%**

Students will complete a final take-home exam. The final exam will consist of a written response to a specific question. The final exam will cover the entire course.

## Tentative Schedule

<b>Week 1</b>	Course Introduction (short week)
<b>Week 2</b>	Social Problems, Popular Hazards, and Harm
<b>Week 3</b>	The Constructionist Perspective
<b>Week 4</b>	Terrorism and Media Logic
<b>Week 5</b>	Breast Cancer, Survivorship, and the Social Problems Industry
<b>Week 6</b>	The Social Construction of Illegal Refugees
<b>Week 7</b>	Urban Legends and Halloween Sadism

- Week 8** The Social Construction of the Ebola Problem
- Week 9** The Social Construction of the COVID-19 Problem
- Week 10** The Social Construction of Modern Serial Killers
- Week 11** Reading Break
- Week 12** Stigma, Poverty, and Single Mothers
- Week 13** Streetscape Video Surveillance
- Week 14** Public Shaming (short week)