

COURSE OUTLINE - Fall 2025

SO1020(A2): Social Problems - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Michael Holland **PHONE:** 780-539-2973
OFFICE: C404 **E-MAIL:** mholland@nwpolytech.ca
OFFICE HOURS: Fridays 10:30 to 11:30 am, or by appointment

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: Analysis of the social construction of social problems, focusing on selected structural and behavioural problems such as inequality, substance abuse, family violence, and mental and physical disabilities. Personal and societal responses and intervention attempts will be explored.

PREREQUISITE(S):

Complete 1 of the following
Completed the following:
SO1000 - Introductory Sociology (3)
Equivalent course

COREQUISITE(S):

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Free online textbook:

Leon-Guerrero, A., & Paulsen, R. (n.d.). *Social problems: Continuity and change*.
University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing.

Additional readings and resources will be provided through myClass (D2L).

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain the wider introductory social problems literature.
2. Explain the causes and consequences of social problems.
3. Apply sociological knowledge to understand and suggest solutions to social problems.
4. Identify, use, and explain basic research tools used in the study of social problems.

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.alberta.ca>

**** For courses with alpha (letter) grading, a grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

EVALUATIONS:

Item	Weight	Description
Attendance & Participation	10%	Engagement in class activities, group work, and discussions.
Quizzes (4 × 5% each, in class, multiple-choice)	20%	Four short in-class multiple-choice quizzes, one per unit, to check understanding of readings and lectures.
Learning Activities (2 × 10% each)	20%	In-class applied activities (e.g., case studies, group analysis,

		debates) that connect sociological concepts to real-world issues.
SSO Project	20%	Multi-stage project including a proposal brainstorm, progress check, and final in-class presentation (gallery walk).
Final Exam (scheduled by registrar)	30%	Comprehensive final exam (student choice of in-person OR take-home). Covers readings, lectures, videos, and discussions.
Total	100%	

Assignment rubrics and instructions will be made available on myClass.

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most institutions will not accept your course for transfer credit **IF** your grade is **less than C-**.

Grading Chart

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100	C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94	C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84	C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79	D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76	D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72	F	0.0	00-49

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Week / Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments
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Week 1 (Sep 4)	Course Introduction; Understanding Social Problems (Ch. 1)	Syllabus Quiz (ungraded) during class time
Week 2 (Sep 9, 11)	Researching Social Problems (Ch. 1 continued)	
Week 3 (Sep 16, 18)	Poverty & Inequality (Ch 2)	
Week 4 (Sep 23, 25)	Racial & Gender Inequality (Ch. 3–4)	Quiz 1 (Sep 25, in class, multiple-choice)
Sep 30	NO CLASS – National Day for Truth & Reconciliation	
Week 5 (Oct 2, 7, 9)	Sexual Orientation (Ch. 5); Aging & Ageism (Ch. 6)	
Week 6 (Oct 14, 16)	Alcohol & Drugs (Ch. 7)	Quiz 2 (Oct 16, in class, multiple-choice)
Week 7 (Oct 21, 23)	Crime & Criminal Justice (Ch. 8)	SSO Project Proposal Brainstorm (in class workshop)
Week 8 (Oct 28, 30)	Sexual Behavior & Family (Ch. 9-10)	
Week 9 (Nov 4, 6)	Education (Ch. 11)	Quiz 3 (Nov 6, in class, multiple-choice)
Week 10 (Nov 11, 13)	NO CLASS – Remembrance Day (Nov 11) & Fall Break (Nov 13)	
Week 11 (Nov 18, 20)	Work, Economy, & Health (Ch. 12 and 13)	
Week 12 (Nov 25, 27)	Urban, Rural problems(Ch. 14)	SSO Project Progress Check (in class workshop)
Week 13 (Dec 2, 4)	War & Terrorism (Ch. 16)	SSO Presentations (in class)
Week 14 (Dec 9, 11)	Review & Wrap-Up	Quiz 4 (Dec 9, in class, multiple-choice); SSO Final Presentations (Dec 11, in class); Last Day of Classes
(Dec 11–20)	Final Exam Period	Final Exam (in-person or take-home option). Date scheduled by the Registrar.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Ultimately, you are responsible for your learning and performance in this course.



If at any point in the semester, you feel you are struggling with the course material or with your coursework, please do not hesitate to ask me for assistance. Please contact me by e-mail for an appointment. **Furthermore, it is your responsibility to track your grades**: Please do not contact the professor for such information.

Submission & Late Policies:

- Missed tests and assignments will receive a grade of 0 unless you have a valid reason supported with appropriate documentation (i.e., a medical note from an M.D.) and you discuss it with me **well in advance of any due date**.
- Note: extensions will be given only when students notify the instructor before the deadline and present valid evidence excusing lateness.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/polytechnic-leadership/policies-directory>.

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

Additional Information:

This course will make extensive use of our course website (myClass) to support your learning. You are expected to keep current with the content of the site, and I advise you to log on often.

Professional Conduct:

- Please be aware that I respect that everyone's time is valuable, please afford me the same courtesy.
- Instead of preoccupying your mind with questions such as, "How do I get an 'A'?", ask yourself "How can I work to expand my knowledge, perspective, and outlook on the real world?"
 - Please only use your NWP e-mail account to contact me to avoid having your message blocked by SPAM filters.
 - Always include "SO1020" in the subject line (or I may never even receive your message).
 - Finally, in our academic environment, please practice writing e-mails formally, as you will need to do so regularly. For example, use a simple greeting, do not use slang or abbreviations, and always sign off with your name!



- **Use of AI-Generated Content:**

You are expected to complete all course work using your own knowledge and effort. Submitting content generated by AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, or similar) without explicit permission is considered a form of academic misconduct. All submitted work should reflect your understanding and engagement with the course material. If you're unsure whether a tool is appropriate to use, please check with me first. AI tools may be used for brainstorming or grammar checking only if the final submission reflects your original thought and analysis. You must clearly note any use of AI assistance in your assignment.