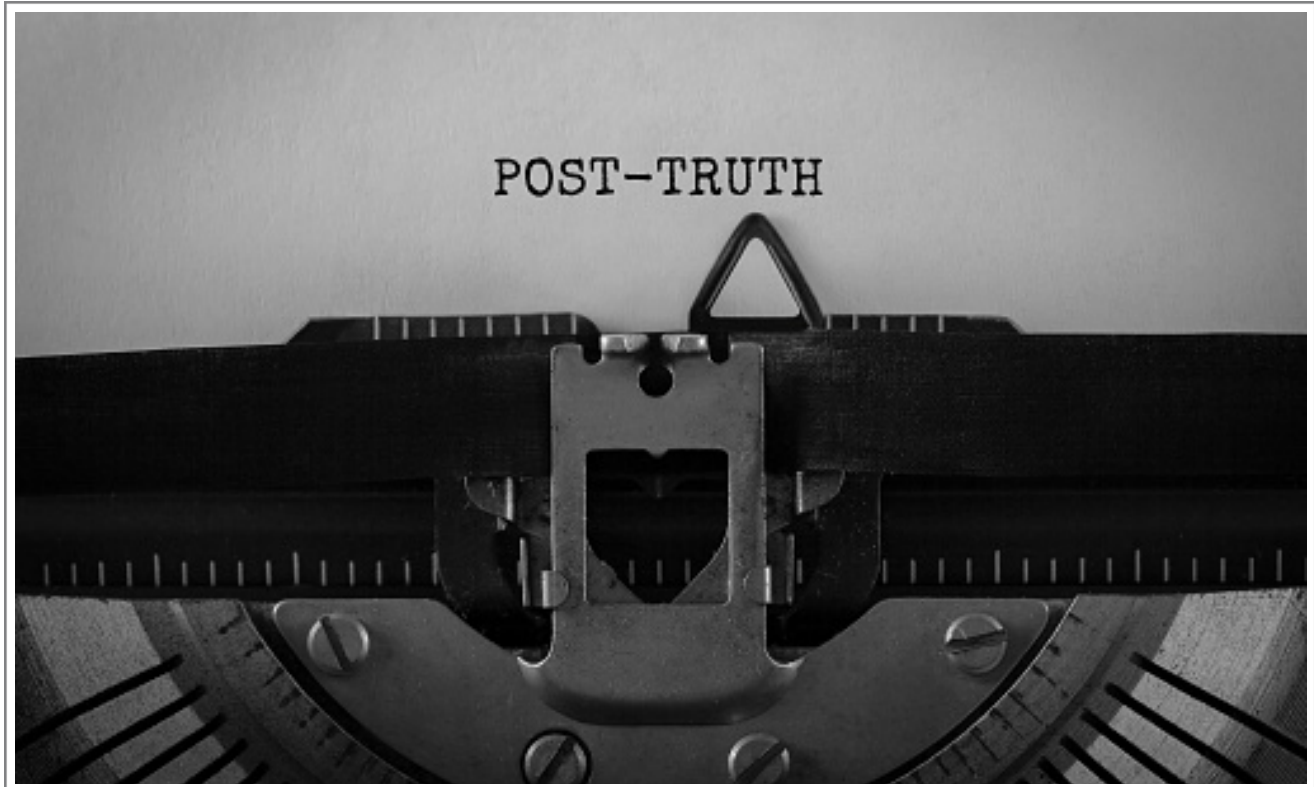

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Professor Todd Madigan



Course Description

At the start of this course, we'll work to develop an understanding of the factors that render a problem a *social* problem. Then, in light of this understanding, we'll interrogate some of the central ideals of the "American Way of Life," including *equal opportunity*, *impartial justice*, *democracy*, *the free press*, *the right to bear arms*, and *freedom of speech*. Through this process we'll examine the systemic troubles associated with each of these core American principles and give careful consideration to how these troubles are exacerbated when *truth* itself is eclipsed in the public sphere—when statements of fact are accepted or rejected based not on rational evidence, but on whether they are affirmed by one's social group.

Class Meetings

Tuesdays & Thursdays

3:30PM-4:45PM

Graham 302

Office Hours

By appointment

Office: Graham 324

tmmadiga@uncg.edu

Course Format

Our class will be conducted face-to-face and will begin promptly at 3:30PM each scheduled Tuesday and Thursday.

Each class meeting will include a combination of lectures and small group discussions. During both the lectures and the discussions, you should actively take notes *on paper*. Anything covered in our discussions (in addition to the readings and lectures) will be potential material for an exam. Daily small group discussions will involve questions to answer about that day's reading. You will want to make sure you have either a printed copy of the text or access to the electronic version in class.

All the readings for the course will be pdfs posted on Canvas (i.e., you will not need to purchase any books for this course).

Readings

This course is *reading intensive*; you should be prepared to complete approximately 50 pages of reading for each class. If you don't think you'll be able to keep up with this schedule, you should reconsider enrollment in the course.

Course Designation

This course fulfills UNCG's *Critical Thinking and Inquiry in the Social & Behavioral Sciences* general education requirement as described in Minerva's Academic Curriculum (MAC). As a result of the successful completion of this course, you will acquire a working knowledge of the foundational tools for reasoning, including constructing sound arguments, evaluating the quality of evidence, and forming judgments about the evidence, arguments, and conclusions of others in social and behavioral science disciplines.

Specifically, you will learn to:

1. *Critically analyze claims, arguments, artifacts or information*

Your competence in this learning objective will be assessed through the following:

- a) daily in-class analysis of the arguments presented in our readings (see the Course Format and Attendance sections of this syllabus)
- b) a series of short writing assignments in which you *analyze* and *critique* arguments presented in short articles and video clips (see the Discussion Post assignments section of this syllabus)

2. *Construct coherent, evidence-based arguments*

Your competence in this learning objective will be assessed through the following:

- a) a series of short writing assignments in which you *construct* arguments based on our course subject matter (I will provide more details in class as to the nature of these assignments)

COURSEWORK

Attendance

Much of the learning during this course will come through lectures and discussions with your classmates. For this reason, attendance and participation during all class meetings is critical. Graded attendance will be taken during each meeting (if you are present for the full class, you will receive full credit; if you are present for less than the full class—but for at least 45 minutes—you will receive half credit; otherwise, no credit). You may miss one class without losing any points (i.e., you will receive full attendance credit for the first class you miss).

GRADING

Attendance Points

25 classes @ 8 points each = 200

Examination Points

4 exams @ 100 points each = 400

Discussion Post Points

7 discussion posts @ 25 points = 175

Research Essay Points

1 essay @ 200 points = 200

Absences & Late Work

I will not post my slides or lectures online, so it's critical that you take thorough notes throughout each and every class meeting. In the case that you are absent from class, it's your responsibility to reach out to a classmate to request a copy of their class notes. I will accept discussion posts, exams, and projects up to 48 hours after their due date, but 10% will be deducted from the assignment's grade. I will not accept work more than 48 hours late.

Examinations

You will take four examinations throughout the semester, each falling on a regularly scheduled day of class. The subject of these exams will be the material that has been covered during their respective sections (i.e., the exams will not be cumulative). The material will be drawn from the course readings, lectures, and discussions. Each exam will be administered through Canvas and may be taken at anytime on its assigned day. However, once you begin, you will have a limited time to complete it. Because the exams are online, we will not meet as a class on those days, and no attendance will be taken.

Discussion Posts

Periodically, you'll watch a video clip from a recent news broadcast that I've posted on our discussion board. You'll then write a two page response and post it on the discussion board. Your post will be graded based on its intellectual engagement with the material. Strong responses will analyze and critique the argument made in the video and how it relates to something we've read or discussed in class (you must include citations in your post). In addition to your own post, I'll ask you to comment thoughtfully on at least two other classmates' posts.

Research Essay

For this assignment you will choose some phenomenon considered problematic by large numbers of people and demonstrate (using empirical data) how it can be viewed as both an *individual* problem and a *social* problem. You will then describe the solutions to the problem proposed by those who view it from an individualistic perspective and those who view it from a social perspective, respectively. Finally, you will present your evaluation of each of these perspectives and their associated solutions. The paper should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced.

University Public Health

As we return for fall 2022, all students, faculty, staff, and visitors to campus are required to uphold UNCG's culture of care by actively engaging in behaviors that limit the spread of COVID-19. While face-coverings are optional in most areas on campus, individuals are encouraged to wear masks. All individuals and visitors to campus are asked to follow the following guidelines:

COVID-19 GUIDELINES

- **Engage in proper hand-washing hygiene**
- **Self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19**
- **Stay home when ill**
- **Comply with directions from health care providers or public health officials to quarantine or isolate if ill or exposed to someone who is ill**
- **Complete a self-report when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, testing positive for COVID-19, or being identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive**
- **Stay informed about the university's policies and announcements through the COVID-19 website**

Students who are ill, quarantining, or isolating should not attend in-person class meetings, but should instead contact their instructor(s) so alternative arrangements for learning and the submission of assignments can be made where possible.

As we continue to manage COVID-19 on our campus, we are following the lead of the local health department, and we will adjust our plans to balance student success, instructional requirements, and the hallmarks of the collegiate experience with the safety and wellbeing of our campus community.

Electronics Policy

You may not have electronics out during class. Phones, tablets, laptops, earbuds, etc. must be stowed and silenced. (Exceptions: during our small group discussions you may access the reading electronically. However, at the start of class and in between these discussions, electronics must be stowed. And needless to say, if you have written permission from OARS, it is permissible to use assistive technology.)

OARS Accommodations

For instances where the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS) has granted accommodations regarding wearing face coverings, students should contact their instructors to develop appropriate alternatives to class participation and/or activities as needed. Instructors or the student may also contact OARS (336.334.5440) who, in consultation with Student Health services, will review requests for accommodations.

PLEASE NOTE: The readings for each class are to be completed *before* the start of the class for which they are listed.

WEEK 1	TUES. 8/16	<p>NO READING ASSIGNMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture: Individual Problems v. Social Problems Review Syllabus
	THURS. 8/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daniel Markovits, <i>The Meritocracy Trap: How America's Foundational Myth Feeds Inequality, Dismantles the Middle Class, and Devours the Elite</i> (2019) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The Meritocratic Revolution" "The Harms of Meritocracy"
WEEK 2	TUES. 8/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daniel Markovits, <i>The Meritocracy Trap: How America's Foundational Myth Feeds Inequality, Dismantles the Middle Class, and Devours the Elite</i> (2019) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The Coming Class War" "The Working Rich"
	THURS. 8/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daniel Markovits, <i>The Meritocracy Trap: How America's Foundational Myth Feeds Inequality, Dismantles the Middle Class, and Devours the Elite</i> (2019) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The Meritocratic Inheritance" "Snowball Inequality"
	FRI. 8/26	DUE: DISCUSSION POST 1 (by 11:59PM)
WEEK 3	TUES. 8/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael J. Sandel, <i>The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?</i> (2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Success Ethics" "The Sorting Machine"
	THURS. 9/1	EXAM 1 –NO READING ASSIGNMENT, NO CLASS MEETING
WEEK 4	TUES. 9/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michelle Alexander, <i>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</i> (2010) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The Rebirth of Caste" "The Lockdown"

	THURS. 9/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michelle Alexander, <i>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</i> (2010) "The Color of Justice"
	FRI. 9/9	DUE: DISCUSSION POST 2 (by 11:59PM)
WEEK 5	TUES. 9/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michelle Alexander, <i>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</i> (2010) "The Cruel Hand"
	THURS. 9/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michelle Alexander, <i>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</i> (2010) "The New Jim Crow"
WEEK 6	TUES. 9/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lee McIntyre, <i>Post-Truth</i> (2018) "What Is Post-Truth?"
	THURS. 9/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lee McIntyre, <i>Post-Truth</i> (2018) "Science Denial as a Roadmap" "The Roots of Cognitive Bias"
	FRI. 9/23	DUE: DISCUSSION POST 3 (by 11:59PM)
WEEK 7	TUES. 9/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lee McIntyre, <i>Post-Truth</i> (2018) "The Decline of Traditional Media" "The Rise of Social Media"
	THURS. 9/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quassim Cassam, <i>Conspiracy Theories</i> (2019) "The (Real) Point of Conspiracy Theories" "Why Are Conspiracy Theories So Popular?"
WEEK 8	TUES. 10/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matt Taibbi, <i>Hate Inc.: Why Today's Media Makes Us Despise One Another</i> (2019) "The Ten Rules of Hate" "Scare Tactics: All the Folk Devils Are Here"
	THURS. 10/6	EXAM 2—NO READING ASSIGNMENT, NO CLASS MEETING
	FRI. 10/7	DUE: DISCUSSION POST 4 (by 11:59PM)

WEEK 9	TUES. 10/11	FALL BREAK—NO CLASS
	THURS. 10/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim Wehle, <i>What You Need to Know About Voting and Why</i> (2020) “Key Ingredients to Electing a President (and What’s the Electoral College, Anyway?” • Heather McGhee, <i>The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together</i> (2021) “Never a Real Democracy”
WEEK 10	TUES. 10/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol Anderson, <i>One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy</i> (2018) “Voter ID”
	THURS. 10/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol Anderson, <i>One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy</i> (2018) “Voter Roll Purge”
	FRI. 10/21	DUE: DISCUSSION POST 5 (by 11:59PM)
WEEK 11	TUES. 10/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Man Who Rigged America’s Election Maps” (Vox—7:31) https://youtu.be/KpamjJtXqFI • Carol Anderson, <i>One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy</i> (2018) “Rigging the Rules”
	THURS. 10/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol Anderson, <i>One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy</i> (2018)
WEEK 12	TUES. 11/1	EXAM 3—NO READING ASSIGNMENT, NO CLASS MEETING
	THURS. 11/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jillian Peterson and James Densley, <i>The Violence Project: How to Stop the Mass Shooting Epidemic</i> (2021) “America” “Opportunity”
	FRI. 11/4	DUE: DISCUSSION POST 6 (by 11:59PM)

WEEK 13	TUES. 11/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark Ryan, "American Gun Culture Encounters Christian Ethics: A Clash of Narratives" (2021)
	THURS. 11/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ryan Busse, "The Gun Industry Created a New Consumer. Now It's Killing Us" in <i>The Atlantic</i> (7/25/2022)
WEEK 14	TUES. 11/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stanley Fish, <i>The First: How to Think About Hate Speech, Campus Speech, Religious Speech, Fake News, Post-Truth, and Donald Trump</i> (2019) <p>"Why Censorship Is a Precondition of Free Speech"</p>
	THURS. 11/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stanley Fish, <i>The First: How to Think About Hate Speech, Campus Speech, Religious Speech, Fake News, Post-Truth, and Donald Trump</i> (2019) <p>"Why Hate Speech Cannot Be Defined"</p>
	FRI. 11/18	DUE: DISCUSSION POST 7 (by 11:59PM)
WEEK 15	TUES. 11/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stanley Fish, <i>The First: How to Think About Hate Speech, Campus Speech, Religious Speech, Fake News, Post-Truth, and Donald Trump</i> (2019) <p>"Why Freedom of Speech Is Not an Academic Value"</p>
	THURS. 11/24	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS
WEEK 16	TUES. 11/29	EXAM 4 – NO READING ASSIGNMENT, NO CLASS MEETING

PLEASE NOTE: The readings for each class are to be completed *before* the start of the class for which they are listed.

WEEK 1	TUES. 8/16	<p>Thomas Hobbes <i>Leviathan</i> (1651)</p> <p>Chapter XI: "Of the Difference of Manners"</p> <p>Chapter XIII: "On the Natural Condition of Mankind"</p> <p>Chapter XIV: "Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and of Contracts"</p> <p>Chapter XV: "Of Other Laws of Nature" (paragraphs 1-3)</p> <p>Chapter XVII: "On the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Commonwealth"</p>
	THURS. 8/18	<p>John Locke <i>The Second Treatise of Government</i> (1690)</p> <p>Chapter I: "Introduction" (final paragraph)</p> <p>Chapter II: "The State of Nature"</p> <p>Chapter III: "Of the State of War"</p> <p>Chapter IV: "Of Slavery"</p> <p>Chapter V: "Of Property"</p> <p>Chapter VII: "Of Political or Civil Society"</p> <p>Chapter VIII: "Of the Beginning of Political Societies"</p> <p>Chapter IX: "Of the Ends of Political Society"</p>
WEEK 2	TUES. 8/23	<p>John Locke <i>The Second Treatise of Government</i> (1690) (cont.)</p> <p>Chapter I: "Introduction" (final paragraph)</p> <p>Chapter II: "The State of Nature"</p> <p>Chapter III: "Of the State of War"</p> <p>Chapter IV: "Of Slavery"</p> <p>Chapter V: "Of Property"</p> <p>Chapter VII: "Of Political or Civil Society"</p> <p>Chapter VIII: "Of the Beginning of Political Societies"</p> <p>Chapter IX: "Of the Ends of Political Society"</p>
	THURS. 8/25	<p>Jean-Jacques Rousseau <i>Discourse on the Origin of Inequality</i> (1754)</p>
WEEK 3	TUES. 8/30	<p>Jean-Jacques Rousseau <i>Discourse on the Origin of Inequality</i> (1754) (cont.)</p> <p>Auguste Comte <i>Introduction to Positive Philosophy</i> (1830)</p> <p>"The Nature and Importance of the Positive Philosophy"</p>

	THURS. 9/1	Herbert Spencer (Selections) "Evolution Defined" (1862) "The Factors of Social Evolution" (1876) "Population and Progress" (1852) "The Organic Analogy Reconsidered" (1876) "The Need for Sociology" (1873)
WEEK 4	TUES. 9/6	EXAM 1 – NO READING ASSIGNMENT, NO CLASS MEETING
	THURS. 9/8	Karl Marx <i>Capital</i> (1867) (Selections)
WEEK 5	TUES. 9/13	Karl Marx <i>Capital</i> (1867) (Selections)
	THURS. 9/15	Karl Marx <i>Capital</i> (1867) (Selections)
WEEK 6	TUES. 9/20	Karl Marx (1867) (Selections)
	THURS. 9/22	Karl Marx (1867) (Selections)
WEEK 7	TUES. 9/27	Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (1848) (Selections)
	THURS. 9/29	Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (1848) (Selections)
WEEK 8	TUES. 10/4	Excursus: A Look Forward to Capitalism After the Factory Arlie Russell Hochschild <i>The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling</i> (1983) Chapter 1: "Exploring the Managed Heart" Chapter 2: "Feeling as Clue"
	THURS. 10/6	Excursus: A Look Forward to After Capitalism Neal Meyer "What Is Socialism?" (2018) Aaron Bastani <i>Fully Automated Luxury Communism: A Manifesto</i> (2020) (Selections)

WEEK 9	TUES. 10/11	FALL BREAK—NO CLASS
	THURS. 10/13	EXAM 2—NO READING ASSIGNMENT, NO CLASS MEETING
WEEK 10	TUES. 10/18	Max Weber <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> (1904-1905) “Author’s Introduction” Chapter I: “Religious Affiliation and Social Stratification”
	THURS. 10/20	Max Weber <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> (1904-1905) Chapter II: “The Spirit of Capitalism” Chapter III: “Luther’s Conception of the Calling: Task of the Investigation”
WEEK 11	TUES. 10/25	Max Weber <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> (1904-1905) Chapter V: “Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism”
	THURS. 10/27	Max Weber “Science as a Vocation” (1919)
WEEK 12	TUES. 11/1	EXAM 3—NO READING ASSIGNMENT, NO CLASS MEETING
	TUES. 11/3	GROUP PRESENTATIONS—NO READING ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 13	TUES. 11/8	GROUP PRESENTATIONS—NO READING ASSIGNMENT
	THURS. 11/10	Emile Durkheim <i>The Division of Labor In Society</i> (1893) (Selections)
WEEK 14	TUES. 11/15	Emile Durkheim <i>The Rules of Sociological Method</i> (1895) (Selections)
	THURS. 11/17	Emile Durkheim <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> (1911) “Introduction”

WEEK 15	TUES. 11/22	Emile Durkheim <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> (1911) Book II: Chapter VI: “The Origins of These Beliefs (Continued)” Book II: Chapter VII: “The Origins of These Beliefs (Conclusion)”
	THURS. 11/24	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS
WEEK 16	TUES. 11/29	EXAM 4 – NO READING ASSIGNMENT, NO CLASS MEETING