

Examining Social Issues in Modern Society

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Course Description:

This course delves into the pressing social issues and how they shape contemporary society. Students will analyze various societal challenges, including economic inequality, racial and ethnic discrimination, gender, changing family dynamics, aging population and healthcare access among others in Europe and around. The course encourages students to analyze these issues critically looking from current contexts and to understand their complex causes and effects.

Through case studies, simulations, class debates, multimedia resources, and class discussions, the course encourages students to develop skills to examine social structures, power dynamics and cultural norms that contribute to these issues. Students will be encouraged to engage with diverse perspectives and critically examine the effects of these issues on communities, policy responses and explore potential solutions. By the end of the course, students should be equipped with a better understanding of modern social issues to think critically about possible solutions and their own roles in society.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

The main goal of this course is to introduce students to the key concepts around various social issues in contemporary society.

Upon successfully completing this course the student will be able to:

- define “social issues” and understand diversity of meanings and new challenges shaping Europe and beyond.
- engage in constructive dialogue and debate on current topics, considering diverse perspectives.
- Use sociological insights to develop an ability to think critically about public policies and cultural narratives related to modern social challenges.
- develop an ability to analyze a problem, synthesize an analytic discussion, present and justify an analysis orally and respond to queries raised by fellow students.

- reflect on personal and collective roles in addressing social issues, by encouraging empathy and ethical decision-making.
- demonstrate an appropriate level of competence in written expression and in library research as demanded by the discipline.

Course Requirements:

Assignments include an Individual Project (ATH), Quiz, Mid-term exam and a Group Project. Test format may be a combination of short answer exercise, essay questions covering all readings, lectures, hand-outs and class discussion content. More details regarding all assignments will be discussed in class.

Assignment	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes
Quiz	15%	A written test to check the extent to which key terms and basic concepts are comprehended.
Individual Project (ATH)	20%	Students will make a presentation on a topic of their choice to explain a selected social issue to the class and identify key solutions. This will be followed by a round table discussion.
Midterm Test	25%	A written examination to ascertain the extent to which key terms and basic concepts have been understood.
Group Project	25%	Students will work in small groups to demonstrate their ability to explain the studied topic to peers and identify key issues. Creativity and innovation are encouraged with regard to the facilitations! Handouts, visual aids, posters, slides, etc. are expected to enhance the presentations and benefit the class.
Class Participation	15%	Active and meaningful engagement in the class is expected. In-class activities will be assessed on either an individual basis or group basis and will be marked according to the students' ability to work together as a group and come up with a solution to the problem asked.
TOTAL	100%	

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

AEP Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

AEP Diversity Policy

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

Weekly Schedule

Please note: *This syllabus serves as a guide for the course and is subject to change, with student notification. The most current version of the syllabus will always be available on Moodle.

**Additional readings and related websites will be assigned throughout the semester*

Week 1

CEE Introductory Lecture Series

AEP Introductory Lecture Series

Week 2

Introduction, Studying Social Issues in the Twenty-First Century, Understanding Theoretical Frameworks

- General overview of the syllabus, Basic introduction to the discipline and the course
- content
- Sociological imagination and its relevance.
- Discuss and evaluate major social theories and concepts to critically assess the various
- social issues and their interconnectedness.

Reading: Lecture slides

Week 3

Understanding Research Methods

- Describe social research methods and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

Reading: Case study, Lecture slides

Week 4

Wealth and Poverty

- Inequality, stratification, and divisions in society and its consequences

Reading: Case study, Lecture slides

Week 5

Field Trip 1

Week 6

The Changing Family Structure

- Understanding family structures, family in the twenty-first century
- Revision for Midterm; Study guide will be provided
- Submit topic for Individual assignment.

Reading: Case study, Lecture slides

Week 7

Midterm Exam – topics covered in the class will be included in the exam.

More information will be provided and discussed in class. After the exam, students will work on their group project proposal.

Week 8

Individual Presentation (ATH)

Each student will make a presentation followed by a round table discussion. Students explain a selected social issue to the class and identify key solutions. More details will be provided in class.

Week 9

Race and Ethnic issues

- Understanding the social significance of race and ethnicity.

Reading: Case study, Lecture slides

Week 10

Field Trip 2

Week 11

Understanding Gender, and Sexual orientation as a social issue

- Gender inequality and socialization

Reading: Case study, Lecture slides

Week 12

Health Care and Ageism; Team Project Presentations 1/2

Aging and its associated challenges; Government support and Policies

Week 13

Team Project Presentation 2/2

Readings:

Recommended Materials

- British Sociological Association: <http://www.britisoc.co.uk/>
- American Sociological Association: <http://www.asanet.org/>
- American journal of Sociology: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/ajs/current>

Additional readings & lecture slides will be uploaded on the Moodle portal. Much of out of class communication will be done using Moodle, including sending articles, case studies, class notes etc.

Teaching methodology

The course will be taught by a series of lectures, class discussion, team activities, simulation exercise, field visit, tests and other in-class activities and exercises. Conceptual frameworks, case discussions, and skill-oriented activities are blended within each broad topic. Students will read, watch, analyze and discuss a variety of text specific visuals to enable them to deal with real-life predicaments. This format aims to develop students' ability to analyze a problem, synthesize an analytic discussion, present, and justify an analysis orally and respond to criticism and queries raised by fellow students and the course instructor.