

## **Examining Social Issues in Modern Society**

**Lecturer: Vidhu Maggu, PhD, MBA**

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Time and day of class: Monday 14:30-17:30 Hrs

Office Hours: upon request

### **Course Description: Examining Social Issues in Modern Society**

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 Exam	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.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**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	93-100	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

#### **UPCES 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

#### **UPCES Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy**

The UPCES 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 characteristic, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

#### **UPCES Diversity Policy**

UPCES fully embraces diversity and strives to create a safe and welcoming environment for students from all backgrounds. Prague is a wonderfully diverse community and UPCES is no different. All students should feel at home while studying abroad and UPCES will do its utmost to make sure that becomes a reality. Although unique challenges may arise, we believe that students from all walks of life will encounter wonderful opportunities for enrichment as they explore a new culture while studying abroad.

## **Weekly Schedule:**

### **Week 1**

*CEE Introductory Lecture Series*

UPCES CEE Introductory Lecture Series

**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 2 (February 17<sup>th</sup>)**

#### **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 (February 24<sup>th</sup>)**

#### **Understanding Research Methods**

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

Reading: Case study, Lecture slides

### **Week 4 (March 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

#### **Wealth and Poverty**

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

Reading: Case study, Lecture slides

### **Week 5 (March 10<sup>th</sup>)**

Field trip 1

### **Week 6 (March 17<sup>th</sup>)**

#### **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 (March 24<sup>th</sup>)**

**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.

**March 31<sup>st</sup>**

**SEMESTER BREAK- Enjoy your break**

**Week 8 (April 7<sup>th</sup>)**

**Individual Presentation (ATH)**

Each student will make a presentation followed by 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 (April 14<sup>th</sup>)**

**Race and Ethnic issues**

-Understanding the social significance of race and ethnicity.  
Reading: Case study, Lecture slides

**Week 10 (April 21<sup>st</sup>)**

Field trip 2

**Week 11 (April 28<sup>th</sup>)**

**Understanding Gender, Sexual orientation as a social issue**

-Gender inequality and socialization  
Reading: Case study, Lecture slides

**Week 12 (May 5<sup>th</sup>)**

**Health Care and Ageism; Team Project Presentations 1/2**

-Aging and its associated challenges; Government support and policies

**Week 13 (May 12<sup>th</sup>)**

**Team Project Presentation 2/2**

### **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.

### **Readings:**

#### ***Recommended Materials***

- British Sociological Association: <http://www.britsoc.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.