CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SENSE AND NONSENSE IN SOCIAL RESEARCH AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Spring 2010 ~ SOC 08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Day/Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T/R  9 – 10:15AM</td>
<td>ARC 3009</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>T/R  10:30 – 11:45 AM</td>
<td>ARC 3009</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T/R  1:30 – 2:45PM</td>
<td>ARC 3009</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>R 6 – 8:50 PM</td>
<td>ARC 3009</td>
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</table>

FACULTY: Debra L. Welkley, M. A.  
EMAIL: Within SacCT  
HOMEPAGE: www.csus.edu/indiv/w/welkleyd

OFFICE HOURS:  
Tuesday/Thursday 12 – 1:15 PM (& by appointment) – AMD 452A

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course “Introduces basic steps in the research process and/or basic steps in critically evaluating discussions on social issues. Students are taught to recognize common errors through the analysis of non-technical applied research and/or through newspapers and sociological articles about social issues and problems. Emphasizes logical steps involved in thinking critically about social research and/or social problems such as, quality of operational definitions, weaknesses in research design, sampling errors, value assumptions, logical consistency between premises and conclusion, and the structure of arguments.”

PURPOSE OF THIS COURSE

Students will be provided the opportunity to learn how to think critically about printed statements on social problems and social issues written by journalists, sociologists, scholars and writers, members of vested interest groups, and the general public. Given the nature of our society, throughout one’s lifetime s/he will encounter both written and verbal statements and claims about social problems and social issues. This course will aid students in their responsibility to participate as an informed citizen as well as one who will consider and assess the positions taken on various social problems and issues. This course is designed to help the student think critically about some aspects of social issues and social problems – written claims and verbal presentations that are made by journalists, social scientists and other informed and concerned writers. Students will have the opportunity to learn and demonstrate their skills concerning how to think about social problems and social issues, not what to think about them.

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**COURSE OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES**

1. To expose students to a conceptual thinking frame for use when critically analyzing and understanding social problems and social issues.
2. To practice learning of the thinking frame concepts while understanding and considering various societal problems and issues.
3. To enable students to identify important steps concerning how to think and analyze information presented in everyday life regarding social problems and issues.
4. Students will be able to locate the argument in a passage (this is many times identified by identifying the conclusion and/or main premise).
5. Students will be able to detect errors of reasoning (fallacies) and explain how the reasoning is in error.
6. Students will be able to evaluate evidence provided and make appropriate inferences from that evidence.
7. Students will be able to defend an argument in support of or in opposition to a proposition.
8. To provide an opportunity for students to fine-tune their individual critical thinking skills.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


**Critical Thinking & Social Issues** reader from University Readers – You will have to order directly from them at [http://www.universityreaders.com/students/instructions/](http://www.universityreaders.com/students/instructions/)

**STYLE OF INSTRUCTION**

This course is designed to include a great deal of hands-on learning. This will occur both inside and outside of the classroom. There will be weekly assignments and readings to complete and bring to class and/or submit to the instructor via SacCT. There will also be many written & group assignments to be completed during class. There will be some lecturing, but very little when compared to other courses. Class time will be spent discussing readings, sharing assignments, and completing group didactic learning activities. There will also be time given to work on assignments required in SacCT and to work in debate groups to prepare for debate presentations at the end of the semester.

As already mentioned, this course requires your active participation. Take risks even if the environment does not feel completely "safe." Testing our ideas and thoughts helps us learn and stretch our critical thinking skills. In order to enhance feelings of safety and to create a positive learning environment the following must apply:

1. You attend class & are prompt.
2. You have read the assigned materials.
3. You work to your fullest capacity.
4. You do not negatively criticize or ridicule others.

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5. You take responsibility for understanding other’s positions even if you disagree with them.
6. You are committed to your own personal/professional growth and self-exploration.

### OVERVIEW OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirement</th>
<th>Number of Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SacCT Assessments (1 @ 50 pts ea.)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Post of 6 IRFs (10 pts. ea)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IRF Feedback</strong> Forms (4 @ 15 pts. ea.)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Critique/Analysis</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft ~ Debate Presentation Outline</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Meetings Log</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Debate Presentation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate Presentation Outline &amp; Bibliography</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Debate Individual Research Source Overview</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>625</strong></td>
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### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance [worth 50 points]:**
   - Attendance in class is very important due to this class being discussion oriented. In order to fully grasp concepts and ideas being presented in class it is imperative that you attend class, read the material prior to class for that week, and complete whatever assignments or papers have been assigned.
   - If you arrive late or leave early you will not be counted as present for the entire class session and this will affect your of absence accrual.
   - I understand there are times when we are ill or have a problem preventing us from attending a class session. You do not need to provide me with an explanation or reason for your absence, because in terms of learning from the class, an absence is an absence regardless of the circumstances.
• If you are absent, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to find out what you missed from a fellow classmate.
• Being absent does not excuse you from anything that was discussed or due in class.
• ALL assignments etc. must be turned in on time via SacCT regardless of an absence.

You will earn the following points accordingly for attendance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 or more</td>
<td>0</td>
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2. Participation [worth 50 points]:

• I value each student's participation and contribution to each class session.
• All students are expected to contribute to the discussion of class readings and materials.
• Your participation will be evaluated NOT on the quantity of what you say, but on the quality of your contribution to class discussion.
• If your contribution detracted from the course content or disrupted other’s learning, points can be deducted from your accumulation for that day.
• You will forfeit 3 points of participation for every class missed.

3. SacCT Assessment [worth a total of 50 points]:

• One SacCT assessments will be submitted for grading.
• This will be completed and submitted to the instructor via SacCT by the due date indicated on the class schedule.
• Submissions will NOT be accepted via email or in any other area of SacCT other than the corresponding assessment within SacCT.
• This assessment will be comprised of multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and/or short essay application questions.
• Late assessments will NOT be accepted. Those who fail the assessment can request a re-take later in the semester, but it must be prior to the 13th week of the course.

4. Posting of Interactive Reading Forms (IRF) of Assigned Readings [worth a total of 60 points]:

• It is expected that each student will complete an IRF form relative to the six (6) assigned readings on the course schedule during weeks 5 - 12.
• Students are to post this in the respective discussion area in SacCT on the due date.
• Students are also expected to bring their printed IRF to class on the date indicated on the course schedule.
• The form to be used for this is included in the CT Course Pack and is posted in SacCT for electronic use. This exact form must be used, not any rendition or modified version of it. The form can be found for downloaded on the homepage of SacCT as well as on my homepage on the Internet.
• Submissions will **NOT be accepted via email** or in any other area of SacCT other than the corresponding IRF article discussion area within SacCT.

• **ALL IRFs** must be **saved either with a “doc”, “pdf”, or “rtf” extension and submitted in that format**; IRFs will **NOT be accepted in any other format**.

• Late IRF postings will **NOT receive any points** (see general class policies).

5. **IRF Feedback Forms/Reviews** [four at 15 points each; worth a total of 60 points]:
   • Each student will provide feedback to a classmate on **four (4)** of the six (6) assigned articles.
   • You are to select a student that has not already received feedback on their IRF in the discussion area and then use the IRF Review Guidelines for your feedback.
   • This is done by clicking on the “review” button for that student’s post.
   • Students are to complete this feedback form/review in SacCT by the due date.
   • Submissions will **NOT be accepted via email** or in any other area of SacCT.
   • **Late IRF Feedback Forms/Reviews** will receive a **1 point deduction** for each day late.

6. **Book Critique** [worth a total of 100 points]:
   • Each student is required to write a **coherent narrative paper**, which critiques a book from the list provided in the syllabus.
   • Each paper **must** be double-spaced, at least 12 point font, and a **minimum** of 4-6 pages in length.
   • Each paper **must** cover the points below by using the Roman Numerals and their headings. A sample template for the paper is provided within SacCT to help ensure coverage of all areas.
   • The paragraphs in each section of the outline are guidelines.
   • Note that the Development of Reasoning and Assessment & Evaluation sections have the bulk of the length of the paper attributed there. Therefore you will want to focus quite a bit of your attention to development and application of your critical thinking skills to those areas.
   • Submissions will **NOT be accepted via email** or in any other area of SacCT other than the corresponding paper within the “assignments” section in SacCT.
   • **ALL papers** must be **saved either with a “doc”, “pdf”, or “rtf” extension and submitted in that format**; Papers will **NOT be accepted in any other format**.
   • Late papers will receive a 5-point deduction for every day late it is submitted up to one week beyond the original due date.

   I. **Bibliographic Reference**
      Cite the book in APA format.

   II. **Author’s Background** *(about 1 paragraph)*
       Provide a brief overview of the author’s background. What makes them an expert relative to the material they write about, what are their credentials, etc.?

   III. **Primary Issue Explored** *(about 1 – 2 paragraphs)*
       Identify the social issue primarily discussed by the author. Indicate what leads you to this understanding. Can you frame it in the form of a question and/or did the author do that for you? Be sure to reference to specific information and pages where applicable.

   *(critique outline continued on next page)*
IV. Author’s Conclusion/Premise (about 1 paragraph)
Indicate what the authors overall premise is in the book. This may be a bit challenging, as we will have been dealing with articles throughout the semester. Be sure to indicate what leads you to identifying this as the author’s premise. Be sure to include citations where appropriate.

V. Development of Reasoning (about 3 – 5 paragraphs)
Identify how the author develops his/her reasons. This will require that you indicate what reasons the author points to in order to support his/her premise. This section is where you will provide facts, examples, reasons, sub-reasons, research, experiments, personal opinion, etc. that are provided by the author. Remember try to keep this focused on what the author provides. Be sure to give specific examples and cite appropriately.

VI. Assessment & Evaluation (about 3 - 4 paragraphs)
How well do you think the reasons and information presented by the author support his/her conclusion? Be specific in your discussion. Be sure to apply critical thinking skills we have been working with throughout the semester regarding clarity, validity, quality, fallacy identification (if there are any) etc. Be sure to provide support for your analysis and cite where appropriate.

VII. Personal Reaction (about 2 paragraphs)
Identify and state your position relative to the issue discussed by the author. Do you agree or disagree with his/her premise? Why or why not? Be sure to support your position clearly and logically. Discuss what the opposing side says in response to this argument and evidence and then rebuttal it to further support your position. Also address whether there are any fallacies in the opposing arguments.

VIII. Personal Application (about 1 – 2 paragraphs)
How can you apply and/or use the information you gained from this book? How do you intend to use this information in your professional and/or personal life in the future? Be specific.

7. Social Issues Debate [worth a total of 255 points]:
• The class will work in groups throughout the semester to prepare for a social issues debate during the last two to three weeks of the course.
• There will be eight (8) to ten (10) teams for the debate of four to five topics/issues.
• Group assignments will be made by the end of the fifth week of the semester.
• Each group should demonstrate thorough research of their topic (this should NOT be demonstrated with primarily internet sites but also journal/periodical and book citations in order to demonstrate a semester’s worth of group work related to research endeavors).
• The bibliography should have at MINIMUM three (3) substantive sources per person in the group; therefore a group with three people would have a minimum of 9 sources.
• It is expected that groups will have questions throughout the semester at which points they should turn to their instructor for direction.
• Groups will need to provide a status report via SacCT as indicated on the class schedule to indicate the progress of the group. Not doing so could lower the group grade by one full letter grade.
Each group will be graded on six (6) components for this aspect of the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Manner of Submission</th>
<th>Points Allotted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission of Draft ~ Debate Presentation Outline</td>
<td>Submit a <strong>hard copy</strong> of an outline that follows the format provided in the syllabus to the instructor on the due date indicated.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of Final Debate Presentation Outline &amp; Bibliography</td>
<td>Submit one <strong>hard copy</strong> of the <em>Final Outline and Bibliography</em> as well as the <em>Draft Outline</em> with instructor mark-ups to the instructor on the date of the debate.</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Record of Group Meetings</td>
<td>A <strong>log</strong> that was kept throughout the semester will be included with the materials given to the instructor on the date of the debate.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate Presentation</td>
<td>All group members do not have to speak. This is a group decision. However all group members will receive the same grade for the presentation.</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Debate Individual Research Sources Overview</td>
<td><strong>Each group member is to submit</strong> this assignment in <strong>electronic format</strong> in the corresponding “assignments” area in SacCT on the due date indicated in the course schedule.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
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More detailed information is provided later in this syllabus and is posted in SacCT.
• **Grading Turn Around Time:** Papers, IRFs, assignments, and assessments will be returned either electronically or by paper depending on the form for which they were required to be submitted.
  - The turn around for papers, IRFs, and assessments will be done as quickly as possible and generally within **two weeks after the due date**.

• **Grading Criteria:** Where appropriate, the following criteria are used to evaluate assignments, IRFs, book critique, etc.:

  • **Effective use of knowledge:** the integration of concepts, theories, models, and information from readings, lectures, and class discussions is used in a way that demonstrates internalization.
  
  • Generalization of **ideas, observations, concepts, and experiences are carefully supported** with empirical data, conceptual work generated by authors, or researchers, and/or original thoughts.
  
  • **Organization:** thesis in introduction, smooth relationship between ideas and between paragraphs, and overall structure, integrative concluding section. Careful planning is evident in the organization.
  
  • **Clarity:** understandability, good style and form. Central ideas are concrete and clear.
  
  • **Grammar:** Correct syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Sentences and paragraphs are clear, unified, and coherent.
  
  • **Directions:** Demonstrates an understanding and adherence of the directions provided.
  
  • **References** in appropriate format (use of APA format). When references are needed.
  
• If a student performs by **demonstrating the minimum of what is requested** across class requirements and/or in a specific paper, assignment, quiz, and participation a **C grade** will be earned.

• When a student demonstrates s/he is able to incorporate a great deal of the course material, class discussion, and moves his/her own thinking beyond what is being asked of the student a **B grade results**.

• An **A grade** results when a student demonstrates exceptional mastery of the subject matter being presented and presents that understanding in a coherent and thoughtful fashion.

• The **grade of D or F** is earned when a student does not demonstrate an understanding of the **basic premises** that are being presented through readings and class discussions.

Letter grades will be determined using the scale below based on a total of 600 possible points:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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Below is a brief checklist to assist the student when preparing written work. It is expected that a well-written paper, assignment, and outline will demonstrate incorporation of these tips. **Students should review this checklist prior to submitting all written work.**

- Do not use contractions in your papers. It is not professional.
- Be sure to proof for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Be sure that your verb and noun tenses agree.
- Remember, one sentence does not constitute a paragraph. Paragraphs indicate a new idea and therefore should have at least two to three sentences to provide explanation and rationale for the idea set forth.
- Be sure you provided a conclusion to your discussion. Do not end abruptly.
- Be sure to follow the directions of the assignment versus making up your own because you do not understand (that is why the instructor is accessible in many venues in order to answer questions before a paper or assignment is due).
ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY: My interactions with students are based on the expectation of mutual trust and honor. You are required and expected to do your own work on all class assignments, assessments, papers, etc. Please do not give me any reason to be suspicious.

CSUS defines academic dishonesty, cheating and plagiarism, as indicated below:

A. CHEATING. At CSUS, cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means.

B. PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is a form of cheating. At CSUS plagiarism is the use of distinctive ideas or works belonging to another person without providing adequate acknowledgement of that person’s contribution. Regardless of the means of appropriation, incorporation of another’s work into one’s own requires adequate identification and acknowledgement. Plagiarism is doubly unethical because it deprives the author of rightful credit and gives credit to someone who has not earned it. Acknowledgement is not necessary when the material used is common knowledge.

Any act of cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for that assignment. Additionally, if you turn in an assignment that has been “lifted” from others, you will receive a failing grade for that assignment, without the opportunity to redo the assignment.

I will follow the policy outlined in University Policy regarding all occurrences and/or possible occurrences of cheating and/or plagiarism (refer to http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual/UMA00150.htm).

WRITTEN QUALITY: Written work must be mechanically and stylistically acceptable. Serious deficiencies in such areas as spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and coherent development and organization will result in lowered grades.

CELL PHONES & PAGERS: Students are expected to turn off ALL cell phones and/or pagers. If there is a reason to have a phone on (i.e., family emergency, on-call at work) please turn it to vibrate mode. Students should not be surfing the Internet, emailing, texting, playing games, or answering calls during class time. If a student is using their cell phone during class to surf the net, play games, text others he/she will lose attendance/participation points for that day.

LAPTOPS: The instructor understands that many students benefit from the use of their laptop during class to type notes etc. However, due to the interactive nature of this class all students are to NOT use their laptop during class time unless there has been explicit agreement with the instructor due to educational needs. When in use it becomes a distraction from class discussion and didactic activity. If a student decides to ignore this policy and use their laptop during class time without an expressed consultation from the instructor, he/she will be marked as absent for that day and lose attendance and participation points.

INCOMPLETES: Students are expected to complete all the work by the last meeting of the class. Incompletes are not given automatically. A grade of incomplete may be assigned only in cases of illness, accident, or other catastrophic occurrences beyond the student’s control. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain and fulfill the college's policies and procedures for incompletes. Students who do not follow this policy will fail.
SUPPORT SERVICES: Should you have any physical, psychological, or cultural considerations that may affect your ability to learn in this course or complete course assignments, please see me immediately during the first week of classes. There are counseling and support services at CSUS that can help you succeed.

SAACLINK ACCOUNTS & SACCT: All students are required to secure a saclink account by the end of the first week of the semester so that they can access SacCT. Additionally, all students will be required to attend a SacCT orientation workshop to ensure familiarity with SacCT and the course information that has been put together for this course specifically on SacCT. During the first week of the course the instructor conducts an orientation to SacCT. However if a student misses this session and/or does not feel as acquainted with SacCT as s/he needs in order to accurately submit IRFs/papers and assessments in SacCT, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the on-line orientation materials (http://www.csus.edu/SacCT/student), seek assistance from the Help Desk, and/or inquire with the Help Desk regarding further assistance that students can receive. All students are responsible for ensuring they understand how to correctly submit assessments, papers, and IRFs via SacCT so that their submissions are received and are submitted by the correct due dates.

EXTRA CREDIT: The following are extra credit opportunities that any student can take advantage of by the end of the semester. There will also be campus events and other opportunities that will be announced as extra credit opportunities throughout the semester. Each student can earn a maximum of 50 extra credit points. All extra credit must be turned in by the May 14, 2010 at midnight and is submitted through email within SacCT with “extra credit” in the subject line.

1. Identify a minimum of three (3) advertisements (they can be written or from television) that you believe present a fallacy. In a short paper (about 2 pages), describe the ad and where one could find it. The bulk of your discussion should focus on indicating what is the fallacy presented as well as what makes it a fallacy. [5 points]

2. Watch a news program on television (i.e., Dateline, 20/20, 60 Minutes, This Week). Identify a main topic of an issue discussed, the primary arguments presented, and what evidence was presented to persuade viewers relative to one side or another. [5 points]

3. You can watch Fahrenheit 911 and/or Fahrenhype 911 and write a brief paper identifying the values as well as the main points presented. How do you feel the producer presented his case? What were the strengths, what were the weaknesses in the arguments/positions presented? [7 points]

   An extra 5 points will be given if both presentations are watched. If you watch both, please compare and contrast along the same lines.

4. You can watch What the Bleep Do We Know? Provide an overview regarding the main focus of this film and then what did you find most “enlightening” from the information presented? Did the information presented change your view of the world around you in any way? [8 points]

Book Critique Readings List

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Students can choose one of the books below for the book critique assignment required in the course. If you find a book in this type of genre that you would like to read instead you must get prior approval from the instructor. Please refer to the syllabus for additional information when writing your book critique.


**NOTE** This outline is not a contract. It may be changed as the semester progresses. Assignments may be changed or dropped. You will be given ample notice of any changes that occur.