

SOCI 1306

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Fall 2026 • Asynchronous Online Course

Professor	Dr. Aleksandra V. Cregler
Course Dates	August 24 - December 16, 2026
Course Format	Asynchronous online through Canvas
Office	CAS 144
Office Hours	Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. - 3 p.m., and by appointment
Contact	Canvas Inbox preferred for course questions; acregler@uttyler.edu

The first step in solving any social problem is understanding it. — Jane Addams

Official Catalog Description

An analysis of current problems that influence the well-being of individuals, institutions, and societies. A goal is to provide students with a perspective to evaluate conflicts in values, individual deviance, family instability, aging, environment, terrorism, drug abuse, and other contemporary issues. Possible solutions based on sociological theory are explored.

Course Overview

Why do some conditions become widely recognized as social problems while others remain overlooked, accepted, or disputed? How do individuals, communities, institutions, researchers, policymakers, and the media define problems, explain their causes, and evaluate possible responses?

Contemporary Social Problems introduces students to the sociological study of complex and often contested issues. Using research, public data, case studies, media examples, and competing theoretical perspectives, we will examine how social conditions are experienced, interpreted, and addressed. Particular attention will be given to the relationship between individual experiences and broader institutional, cultural, economic, and historical patterns.

This course does not require students to adopt a particular political, moral, or policy position. Students are expected to examine evidence carefully, distinguish factual claims from value judgments, consider more than one plausible explanation, question assumptions, and communicate respectfully. Grades are based on the quality of analysis and use of course concepts, not agreement with the instructor or classmates.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, you should be able to:

- Explain how social conditions become defined and recognized as social problems.
- Analyze how institutions, communities, culture, inequality, and global forces shape contemporary social issues.
- Connect individual experiences with broader social structures and patterns.
- Compare and evaluate competing sociological explanations and proposed responses using evidence, logical reasoning, and clearly stated criteria.

- Apply sociological concepts to current events and everyday situations.
- Communicate thoughtfully and respectfully about complex and contested topics.
- Distinguish empirical claims, theoretical interpretations, and normative or policy judgments.
- Evaluate the credibility, limitations, and possible bias of information sources.

Required Materials and Technology

No textbook purchase is required. Lectures, readings, notes, videos, and activities will be provided in Canvas.

To participate successfully, you will need:

- Reliable internet access and regular access to Canvas.
- A computer or tablet capable of opening course materials and completing assignments.
- A current browser and the ability to create and upload documents or discussion posts.
- Dedicated time each week to read, reflect, participate, and complete assigned work.

Course Structure

This is an asynchronous online course. You do not attend a regularly scheduled class meeting, but the course still has a weekly rhythm, posted deadlines, and expectations for consistent participation. Flexibility is one of the strengths of asynchronous learning; responsibility and time management are what make that flexibility work.

Most weekly modules include:

- **Text Lecture:** the primary and most complete presentation of the week's course content.
- **Study Notes:** a structured guide to key terms, major ideas, examples, and points to review.
- **Audio Overview:** a brief summary highlighting central questions, concepts, and connections.
- **In Real Life Discussion:** an application activity connecting course concepts with a public issue, case, observation, or everyday situation.
- **Module Quiz:** a short assessment that reinforces understanding and identifies material requiring further review.

1	2	3	4
READ	REVIEW	APPLY	CHECK

Recommended approach: Read the text lecture first, use the study notes and audio overview to reinforce the major ideas, apply those ideas in the discussion, and complete the quiz after reviewing the module.

Course content is provided in multiple formats to improve accessibility, reinforce important ideas, and offer several ways to review the material. The text lecture remains the complete source of required course content; audio overviews and study notes support, but do not replace, careful reading.

Tips for Success

1. Log in regularly. Check Canvas several times each week for announcements, feedback, clarifications, and upcoming deadlines. Substantive assignment or grading expectations will not be changed retroactively.
2. Create a routine. Set aside specific blocks of time rather than relying on whatever time is left at the end of the week.
3. Read before responding. Discussion work should show that you understand and can apply the module content.
4. Do not fall behind. Course ideas build on one another, and catching up becomes increasingly difficult when several modules accumulate.
5. Use Canvas notifications. Turn on announcements, Inbox messages, due-date changes, grades, and submission comments.

6. Ask for help early. Questions are much easier to address before an assignment is due than during its final hour.

Graded Course Requirements

In Real Life Discussions

Each discussion asks you to apply sociological concepts to a current issue, public example, case, observation, or everyday situation. Strong responses directly address the prompt, use course concepts accurately, support claims with relevant evidence or examples, distinguish observation from interpretation, acknowledge complexity or reasonable alternative explanations, and communicate clearly and respectfully. Discussions are evaluated on analysis and use of course material, not on the political, moral, or policy position a student reaches.

Students are never required to disclose private experiences, political affiliations, religious beliefs, health information, trauma, or other sensitive personal information. When a prompt permits personal reflection, you may instead analyze a public example, hypothetical scenario, news report, or assigned case.

Module Quizzes

Each quiz contains 20 multiple-choice and true-or-false questions, is worth 10 points total, and has a 35-minute time limit. Quizzes are learning checkpoints: they reinforce important ideas, encourage careful reading, and help you identify material that may require further review. Unless otherwise noted in Canvas, quizzes permit one attempt and should be completed independently using assigned course materials.

Grading Structure

Course Work	Number	Points Each	Total
In Real Life Discussions	10	5	50
Module Quizzes	10	10	100
Total Possible Points			150

A	B	C	D	F
135-150	120-134	105-119	90-104	89 or below

Grades are based on the total number of points earned; the point ranges shown above control the final letter grade. The quality, accuracy, depth, and originality of your work matter. Submitting an assignment does not automatically guarantee full credit.

Artificial Intelligence Use

UT Tyler Artificial Intelligence Statement

The complete UT Tyler Artificial Intelligence Statement is provided in the University Policies and Information section of the Canvas Syllabus Module. It applies to all work completed in this course.

Course AI Category: AI is permitted for limited academic support, and disclosure is required.

AI tools may be used to support brainstorming, organization, clarification, and revision unless an assignment states otherwise. They may not replace your own analysis, interpretation, or engagement with course material. AI-generated information may be inaccurate, biased, incomplete, or inappropriate for the task. You remain responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and quality of everything you submit. Routine spelling and grammar correction, approved accessibility tools, and basic word-processing features do not require disclosure unless they substantially generate or rewrite content.

AI disclosure is required for every discussion and assignment.

When AI was used: AI Disclosure: I used [name of tool] to assist with [brainstorming, organization, clarification, or revision]. I reviewed and revised the resulting material and take responsibility for the accuracy and quality of this submission.

When AI was not used: AI Disclosure: I did not use AI in developing this submission.

Submissions without the required disclosure statement will be considered incomplete. Undisclosed AI-generated work may also constitute a violation of academic integrity. If questions arise about authorship, students may be asked to provide relevant notes, drafts, or portions of an AI interaction.

Course Policies

Deadlines and Late Work

Late work is not accepted as a general rule. Serious illness, family emergencies, or unexpected crises may be considered on an individual basis. Contact me as soon as reasonably possible, preferably before the deadline, so that we can discuss available options. Communication after a deadline does not automatically create an extension.

Submitting Work

Submit all work through the designated Canvas assignment, quiz, or discussion area. Work sent by email is not considered submitted unless I have specifically directed you to use email.

Make-up quizzes

This course does not include traditional exams. Requests to make up a missed module quiz are governed by the late-work policy above and will be considered only in documented or otherwise verifiable extenuating circumstances.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, copied discussion responses, falsified information, undisclosed AI-generated work, and other forms of academic dishonesty may result in a grade penalty and referral under UT Tyler procedures.

Respectful Participation

You are not required to agree with the instructor or with your classmates. You are expected to engage with evidence, maturity, and respect. Critique ideas and arguments rather than the worth or character of the person presenting them. Discriminatory, demeaning, or personally hostile language is not permitted.

Studying Contested Issues

Social problems frequently involve disagreements about evidence, causes, responsibility, values, and appropriate responses. Course materials may therefore include perspectives that students or the instructor may not personally endorse. The inclusion of a perspective is an invitation to examine it, not an indication that

students are expected to accept it. Students may disagree with any course position, provided their work remains responsive to the assignment and uses evidence and course concepts accurately.

Regrade Requests

Wait at least 24 hours after receiving a grade before requesting reconsideration. Submit a clear explanation within three days identifying the specific grading criterion you believe was applied incorrectly.

Final Grades

Final grades are determined by the points earned during the course. Grades are not rounded or “bumped,” and individual extra-credit opportunities are not created at the end of the semester.

Course Materials

Lectures, quizzes, assignment prompts, feedback, and other course materials are provided for students enrolled in this course. They may not be publicly posted, distributed, sold, or shared outside the course without permission.

Special technology or proctoring

No paid external platform, proctoring service, field trip, or regularly scheduled online meeting is required for this course.

Technology Responsibility

Reliable internet and regular access to Canvas are required. Plan ahead and avoid waiting until the final hours before a deadline. Documented university-wide Canvas outages will be handled separately from personal device or internet problems.

Communication and Office Hours

Use the Canvas Inbox for class-related questions whenever possible. When contacting me, include your course and section, explain your question clearly, and identify what you have already reviewed or attempted.

Please allow up to 48 business hours for a response. Messages received in the evenings, on weekends, or during university holidays may not be answered until the next business day. If you have not received a response after three business days, resend your message.

Office hours are for you. You may use them to ask questions, talk through an assignment, request feedback, or discuss your progress. Please contact me in advance when possible so I can reserve enough time for you.

Student Support and Accommodations

Students with approved accommodations through Student Accessibility and Resources should contact me early so that the accommodations can be implemented appropriately. You do not need to wait until you are in serious academic difficulty to ask for help.

Additional support is available through:

- Student Accessibility and Resources
- The Writing Center
- The Tutoring Center
- The Counseling Center
- The University Health Clinic
- The Military and Veterans Success Center

University Policies and Student Resources

The complete set of university policies and student resources is available through UT Tyler and on Canvas. The official public syllabus and course map should be consulted for the full policy language, planned weekly topics, and important dates.

[UT Tyler University Policies](#)
[Student Resources](#)

Course Calendar | Fall 2026

Weekly rhythm:

A new instructional module opens each Monday. Unless otherwise noted, students have two weeks to complete their discussion and quiz; work closes at 11:59 p.m. on the listed Sunday deadline.

Topics and activities may be adjusted when necessary. Any change will be announced in Canvas and will not be applied retroactively. Canvas contains the authoritative assignment instructions and submission links.

WEEK & DATES	TOPIC & FOCUS	COMPLETE BY
WEEK 1 Aug. 24–30	COURSE INTRODUCTION Explore the syllabus, course structure, expectations, and important dates. Set personal goals and prepare for the first content module.	Sept. 6
WEEK 2 Aug. 31–Sept. 6	UNDERSTANDING AND SOLVING SOCIAL PROBLEMS Examine how conditions become defined as social problems and how communities and institutions evaluate possible responses.	Sept. 13
WEEK 3 Sept. 7–13	ANALYZING ECONOMIC INEQUALITY Explore patterns of economic inequality, competing explanations for them, their consequences, and proposed responses.	Sept. 20
WEEK 4 Sept. 14–20	PREPARING FOR AGING SOCIETIES Consider the challenges and opportunities associated with an aging population and changing social institutions.	Sept. 27
WEEK 5 Sept. 21–27	MAKING SENSE OF MIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION Examine why people move across borders and how migration affects individuals, communities, institutions, and public policy.	Oct. 4
WEEK 6 Sept. 28–Oct. 4	RESEARCHING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS Investigate environmental conditions, their social consequences, and how research contributes to the evaluation of sustainable responses.	Oct. 11
WEEK 7 Oct. 5–11	CONTESTING CRIME Examine how crime is defined, how criminal labels are applied, and how social factors shape enforcement and justice-system experiences.	Oct. 18
WEEK 8 Oct. 12–18	CATCH-UP AND REVIEW WEEK No new lecture. Use this week to review earlier modules, strengthen your understanding, and complete eligible outstanding work.	No new work
WEEK 9 Oct. 19–25	DISCOVERING PROBLEMS IN THE FAMILY Explore how families and institutions identify, explain, and respond to challenges in relationships and everyday family life.	Nov. 1
WEEK 10 Oct. 26–Nov. 1	ACCESS AND SUCCESS IN EDUCATION Examine how resources, opportunity, institutional practices, and social background can influence educational access and achievement.	Nov. 8
WEEK 11 Nov. 2–8	APPLIED LEARNING WEEK Connect course concepts to real life through a documentary and reflection, brief fieldwork activity, or skill-building workshop.	Nov. 15

WEEK & DATES	TOPIC & FOCUS	COMPLETE BY
WEEK 12 <i>Nov. 9–15</i>	PRIORITIZING HEALTH Examine how individuals and communities address health needs, barriers to care, and the social conditions that influence well-being.	Nov. 22
WEEK 13 <i>Nov. 16–22</i>	HOW MEDIA DEFINE SOCIAL PROBLEMS Analyze how media shape public attention, frame social conditions, and influence which issues are treated as important.	Nov. 29
WEEK 14 <i>Nov. 23–29</i>	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY No new lecture or assignment will be posted. Have a safe and restful holiday week.	No new work
WEEK 15 <i>Nov. 30–Dec. 6</i>	COURSE REVIEW AND GRADE PREPARATION Review your progress and feedback, confirm that recorded grades are accurate, and contact the instructor promptly with final questions.	No new work
FINAL GRADES DUE		Tuesday, December 15, 2026