

SOCI 202

Constructing Social Problems—Tentative Outline (May 10 – June 25)



This course consists of pre-recorded weekly lectures, an online quiz written most Fridays at 12:30pm, and a take-home final exam. An optional tutorial might be offered.

Course Description

Soci 202 focuses on how social problems are socially constructed. The social construction of social problems is not about people making problems up. It's not even about subjective interpretations of otherwise objective problems. The social construction of social problems is about the ways in which human beings identify and come to think about certain issues as social problems at particular times, in specific places, and with different levels of intensity. It's also about how we avoid thinking about otherwise problematic issues as social problems by denying, rationalizing, justifying or downplaying their significance.

In the summer term, we will examine the social construction of the following social problems: popular hazards, terrorism and torture, the fight against breast cancer, asylum seekers, serial killing, Halloween sadism, poor single mothers, infectious diseases (Ebola and COVID-19), surveillance, and public shaming. We will also consider different kinds of media messaging and how perceived problems that at some points in time occupy a considerable amount of attention and debate habitually decline in importance (only to be replaced by new issues and concerns).

Instructor/Contact Details



Professor Sean Hier
shier@uvic.ca

Course Delivery

SOCI 202 will be taught online. Course instruction will consist of pre-recorded lectures, instructional video links, and assigned weekly readings. There might be an optional weekly tutorial offered via Zoom.

Readings

There is no textbook for this course. There are several academic papers assigned for weekly reading. All papers are available online (through Brightspace).

Evaluation

5 Online Quizzes 70%

Students will complete 5 online quizzes worth 14%. Quizzes will be completed most Fridays at 12:30pm. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions (approximately 30 questions per quiz in most weeks).

Take-Home Final Exam/Short Essay 30%

Students will complete a 6-8 page take-home final based on course material. The question will likely be presented at the start of term.

Evaluation Dates

Quiz 1	Friday May 21
Quiz 2	Friday May 28
Quiz 3	Friday June 11
Quiz 4	Friday June 18
Quiz 5	Friday June 25

Final Exam	Tentatively due Friday July 2
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Tentative Schedule

To make studying easier, the course schedule is organized just like an in-person summer course would be. Of course, you don't need to view lecture materials on the days listed below. Weekly lectures will be available as soon as weekly quizzes close. The summer course covers the same amount of material that fall and spring courses do.

Week 1

Monday	May 10	Introduction
Wednesday	May 12	Constructing Social Problems
Friday	May 14	Popular Hazards and Harm

Week 2

Monday	May 17	The Constructionist Perspective
Wednesday	May 19	Terrorism, Media Logic, and Denial
Friday	May 21	Quiz 1 (14%)

Week 3

Monday	May 24	Victoria Day
Wednesday	May 26	Breast Cancer, Survivors, and the Social Problems Industry
Friday	May 28	Breast Cancer, Survivors, and the Social Problems Industry

Week 4

Monday	May 31	Refugees, Irregular Arrivals, and Context Work
Wednesday	June 2	Urban Legends, Halloween Sadism, and Missing Children
Friday	June 4	Quiz 2 (14%)

Week 5

Monday	June 7	The Social Construction of Infectious Diseases: Ebola
Wednesday	June 9	The Social Construction of Infectious Diseases: COVID-19
Friday	June 11	Quiz 3 (14%)

Week 6

Monday	June 14	Framing Modern Serial Killers
Wednesday	June 16	Stigma, Stereotypes, and Single Mothers
Friday	June 18	Quiz 4 (14%)

Week 7

Monday	June 21	Surveillance, Social Problems, and CCTV
Wednesday	June 23	Surveillance, Shaming, and Social Media
Friday	June 25	Quiz 5 (14%)

Who Can Take This Course?

Students from outside Sociology and/or the Faculty of Social Science regularly ask if they can handle this course. The answer is yes! Some of my favourite students come from the engineering and the natural sciences.

What Student Said About This Online Course in Fall 2020

Comments

Very interesting lectures

He very clearly explained concepts and phenomena's

Quick to respond to emails, engaging

This is the 1 of 2 classes I had with professor Hier this semester and I thoroughly enjoyed them both! The content was very interesting and I feel like the lecture videos were thorough and at times very entertaining. To be honest I began looking forward to watching them each week.

I enjoy writing weekly quizzes I think it is a very effective way of measuring understanding, participation and knowledge of concepts, especially in an online learning format. Thank you!

Responded very fast to questions and emails

Sean Hier was very prepared and organized. The structure of the course was clearly laid out and there were no surprises or scares that come with many online classes. The term paper was structured in an excellent manner and provided the opportunity for some self-directed learning and a demonstration of level of understanding core concepts from the course.

Hier was super engaged in everything he has taught us and managed to make every lecture very interesting or funny in some way! I'll be lucky if I can have him as a prof again in the future!

He provided great support students in particular when I am not a sociology student. When I asked him for feedback, he replied promptly with guidance

He is clearly very passionate about the material and that motivated me to learn more.

Professor Hier's instructional videos were well thought out and engaging.

Professor Hier is very passionate about the material he is teaching. I was nervous at the beginning of the course because I was not quite grasping the material quite well and I do not think it helped that the class was remote. Although as the class carried on I found his video and papers to be very useful in understanding each week's topics. He provided perfect feedback for my assignment to help steer me in the right direction and reach my end goal. I in the end really did enjoy his class.

