DRUG USE AND ABUSE IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

DESCRIPTION: This course offers a sociological analysis of the drug problem in the United States and the consequences of drug addiction for individuals and society. It includes a factual exploration of selected drug types, reasons for use, drug laws and drug treatment programs.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE: This course is intended to give students a thorough understanding of current policy toward both alcohol and drug abuse in the US. It will expose students to information on the nature of drug abuse, its extent, the connections between drugs and crime, a comparison of US drug policy and that of other countries, the relative merits of both supply-side and demand-side efforts to control drug abuse and the issues of legalization, treatment and punishment as they relate to drug addicts and traffickers. The course is intended both for personal enrichment and education on the issue of drug abuse and as a source of information and understanding for those who intend to pursue careers in criminal justice, health-related fields and human services.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

– Explain the nature and extent of drug use in US society and define the terms “drugs,” “drug abuse” and drug addict;
– Discuss the various means of obtaining information on the extent of drug use and why it is impossible to get a fully accurate picture;
– Explain the conflicting social and legal definitions of drug abuse and how these relate to socioeconomic and racial factors more than to the harmful effects of drugs;
– Explain the dichotomy between the legal status of alcohol and that of other drugs, considering the harmful effects of each.
--Analyze the relationship between drugs and crime and explain how drug-related crime is often a function of the criminalization of certain drugs;
--Explain neurological theories of drug abuse and the limitations of those theories;
--Discuss the effects of alcohol on the body and the dangers of alcohol abuse;
--Explain the physiological effects of certain drugs on users;
--Discuss and evaluate various sociological theories of drug abuse and how these theories impact public policy in the US;
--Discuss and evaluate various treatment approaches to dealing with drug abuse and the difficulties in assessing the effectiveness of these approaches;
--Explain the various models of drug abuse prevention programs and discuss efforts to evaluate their effectiveness;
--Discuss “supply side” versus “demand side” approaches to curtailing drug use and explain the difficulties inherent in each.
--Explain and evaluate the impact of the “War on Drugs” on drug use in the US and its criminal justice system;
--Discuss the pros and cons of decriminalization of drug abuse and evaluate Massachusetts’ recent policy change which considers possession of small amounts of marijuana to be a civil rather than criminal offense;
--Discuss the pros and cons of legalizing the medical use of drugs such as marijuana;
--Compare US drug policy to that of European countries, discussing the positive and negative aspects of each;
--Explain the concept of “harm reduction” and evaluate its effectiveness as an approach to controlling drug abuse.

SEMESTER CREDITS: Three

PREREQUISITE: SOC 103 Introduction to Sociology

COURSE FORMAT: Since this is a WEB course, students must have access to the Internet and check their MWCC e-mail and the Blackboard course website on a regular basis (at least every other day). Students are responsible for all announcements posted on the course website and, once an e-mail has been sent to a student, it is assumed that the message has been received and read. All assignments must be submitted to the instructor as e-mail attachments, according to the schedule in this syllabus. Please send all assignments to both the instructor’s home and school e-mail addresses. Assignments must be received by noon on Monday of each week and must have the student’s last name and the title of the assignment in the subject line (e.g., “Jones--Chapter 1 questions”). Any assignments submitted late will have points deducted from the grade; the instructor reserves the right to refuse to accept any assignment handed in more than one week late.

The fact that there are no face-to-face meetings between the instructor and the students in this course means that a high level of motivation and self-discipline is required of students. At any given time, students will be working on several assignments at once,
which requires the ability to plan one’s time so that everything gets done by the time it is due. A student may be withdrawn from this course if, one month into the semester or any time thereafter, he/she has a substantial number of assignments outstanding. Failure to submit all required work by the end of the semester will result in a grade of zero for any assignments not handed in, unless the instructor has agreed to give a student an “Incomplete,” granted only in the case of a serious, justifiable reason why the student was not able to complete the coursework on time.

Although there are no regularly scheduled class meetings, students should feel free to contact the instructor with any questions or concerns they may have as the course progresses. The instructor’s e-mail addresses and MWCC phone extension are listed on this syllabus to facilitate communication with students. The instructor’s office hours are listed on this syllabus and she asks students who are on campus to come to her office to introduce themselves during the first week of classes and any time thereafter as needed to discuss issues related to the course.

REQUIRED READING: The textbook required for this course is:


Students will also be required to read articles or reports posted on the Blackboard website or put on reserve in the library. Students should also be on the lookout for current articles, documentaries, films, etc. which relate to course materials; please forward any information about these to the instructor for possible distribution to other students as time permits.

EVALUATION: The grade for this course will be based on the following criteria:

- Chapter questions 30%
- Film review 20%
- Three projects 35%
- Final paper 15%

100%

Any student who stops submitting assignments without officially notifying the instructor and the Enrollment Services office that he or she is withdrawing from the course will receive a final grade of “F.” Students may withdraw from a course up to the 8th week of the semester; after that point, it would be up to the instructor’s discretion to withdraw the student, which will be done only in case of illness or other major issue.

STUDENT SUCCESS: Hopefully, it is each student’s goal to do as well as possible in this course. If you have any difficulty understanding the material or completing an assignment, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor for help. The instructor will make every effort to respond to a student’s e-mail request for help within twenty-four
(24) hours and to correct assignments within five (5) business days (holidays and weekends not included).

Students with documented disabilities who believe that they need any special accommodations in this course must contact the Counselor for Students with Disabilities in Room 134 (Ext. 120) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Tutoring is available in the Academic Support Center for all students who need help with their coursework. Both math and writing tutoring are available on a drop-in basis. Tutoring in other academic subjects is by appointment. Tutoring is available from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Fridays. The Center also features an open computer lab and testing services (make-up and extended time). Limited tutoring is available during intersession and summer sessions I and II. Tutoring at the Leominster and Devens campuses is arranged by appointment. Students need to call the Center at the Gardner campus to schedule tutoring appointments.

All MWCC students have access to “eTutoring,” free on-line professional tutoring in writing (all subjects), math (all levels), statistics, accounting, biology, chemistry, anatomy & physiology, Spanish, and research methods. To log in, go to www.eTutoring.org, click on Northeast Consortium, and use your student user name and password. Students can enter a chat room and work directly with a tutor, submit an e-question, or submit up to 3 drafts of a paper for tutor feedback.

For more information, call 978-630-9333 or stop by Room 116.

**TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE**

**NOTE:** This course outline may need to be modified as the course progresses, due to time constraints or other factors. The instructor will notify students in a timely manner if any changes need to be made.

**WEEK OF:** **TOPIC AND ASSIGNMENTS DUE**

September 7

- Review syllabus and course requirements
- Submit student survey

**READ:** Chapter 1—An Introduction to Drug Abuse
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Submit tentative choice of projects</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Chapter 1 questions</td>
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<td><strong>READ:</strong> Chapter 3, pp. 74-79—Neurological Theories of Drug Abuse</td>
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<td>September 20</td>
<td>Submit Chapter 3 questions</td>
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<td>Work on Project #1</td>
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<td>September 27</td>
<td>Submit Project #1</td>
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<td><strong>READ:</strong> Chapter 4, pp. 112-123—Alcohol</td>
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<td>October 4</td>
<td>Submit Chapter 4 questions</td>
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<td><strong>READ:</strong> Chapter 7—The Sociology of Drug Abuse</td>
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<td>October 11</td>
<td>COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY—assignments due Tuesday</td>
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<td>Submit Chapter 7 questions</td>
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<td><strong>READ:</strong> Chapter 9—Drug Abuse Treatment</td>
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<td>October 18</td>
<td>Submit Chapter 9 questions</td>
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<td>Watch HBO special “Addiction”</td>
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<td>October 25</td>
<td>Submit film report on “Addiction”</td>
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<td><strong>READ:</strong> Chapter 10—Drug Use Prevention</td>
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<td>November 1</td>
<td>Submit Chapter 10 questions</td>
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<td>Work on Project #2</td>
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November 8  Submit Project #2

READ:  Chapter 13—Drug Abuse Policy

November 15  Submit Chapter 13 questions

Work on Project #3

November 22  THANKSGIVING—no assignments due this week

November 29  Submit Project #3

READ:  Chapter 14—Drug Decriminalization and Harm Reduction

December 6  Submit Chapter 14 questions

December 13  Submit Final Paper

NOTE:  All work must be submitted no later than Monday, Dec. 13.  Any assignments not handed in by that date will receive a grade of zero.