



**GRADING CRITERIA:**

<b>GRADING CONVERSION CHART</b>			
<b>Alpha Grade</b>	<b>4-point Equivalent</b>	<b>Percentage Guidelines</b>	<b>Designation</b>
<b>A+</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>95 – 100</b>	<b>EXCELLENT</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>90 – 94</b>	
<b>A-</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>87 – 89</b>	<b>FIRST CLASS STANDING</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>83 – 86</b>	
<b>B</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>80 – 82</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>77 – 79</b>	
<b>C+</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>73 – 76</b>	<b>SATISFACTORY</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>65 – 72</b>	
<b>C-</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>60 – 64</b>	
<b>D+</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>55 – 59</b>	<b>MINIMAL PASS</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>50 – 54</b>	
<b>F</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0 – 49</b>	<b>FAIL</b>
<b>WF</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>FAIL, withdrawal after the deadline</b>

**NOTE:** On the College’s marking grid there is no D-. Therefore no such final mark will be recorded. However, for the course assignments, I will use D- as an additional non-failing mark.

**EVALUATION:**

Academic assignments for this course emphasize synthesis of ideas from a sociological standpoint, and the best questions you can think of to advance that synthesis. Analysis does not mean just reporting what others have said on a topic. Important as this is, other authors’ ideas or conclusions are valuable because they add insight or specific details that help you to ask questions about the topic you have selected. My assignments are a philosophical inquiry that is advanced through your and others’ investigations. Deciding what questions are worth raising is an important part of analysis. Conclusions can be valuable but aren’t obligatory for any of my assignments.

For a course in the area of Social Problems, ability to stand back from material is as important as being passionate about problems that already exist.

How your grade is calculated?

Assignment 1: Midterm Essay           Weight: 33.3%  
Assignment 2: Film analysis I       Weight: 33.3%  
Take home final exam               Weight: 33.4%

The two assignments and the take home final exam are equally weighted. Each assignment and the final take home exam will be given a letter grade (A to F) corresponding to a numerical score value (4 to 0) as per the grading criteria table shown above. The final grade for the course will be determined by the average of the scores on the two assignments and the final take home exam. The following example illustrates the determination of how the grade is calculated:

Task	Grade	Score	Final score & Grade	
Assignment 1	B	3.0	3.0	
Assignment 2	A-	3.7	3.7	
Final Exam	B+	3.3	3.3	
			$(3.0+3.7+3.3)/3=3.33=B+*$	

**\*Please note that your final grade will be based on the two assignments and the take home final exam. However, your grade may go up by at least one letter grade beyond the average of these three assignments as a result of participation as outlined later in this document.**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Midterm Essay:**       Due the First Class of November  
Minimum length for this assignment is 1200 words.

Select at least one article from the *Reading Sociology* book that is not assigned. Use ideas communicated in the Best book and any other pertinent source, to discuss to what degree and why, what is mentioned in the article should or should not be considered a social problem. This assignment is **NOT** an opinion piece. The paper must communicate the author(s) purpose of and logic in the article. After communicating purpose and logic, you may advocate for or against what is understood as a problem, or overlooked as one, but you must utilize critical analysis while doing so. **Don't just lapse into being an advocate.** Do not permit your opinions to overwhelm your analysis. A viewpoint based on analysis is not the same as an opinion. Both a viewpoint and analysis are possible, but not if you overlook either in favour of the other. **As this is a Sociology course, at least one sociological concept must be incorporated into the discussion/analysis.**

Research is expected (using MLA or Chicago Style). YouTube or anything similar to it is not an academic source. You may use it but not to exclude, or reduce the number of, more reliable sources. At least one source beyond the two main texts for the course, must be used, but in more than a perfunctory way. Do not quote one sentence and think you have fulfilled the research requirement.

**Film Analysis:** Due Dates: TBA  
Minimum length is 1000 words

For this essay you will discuss problem-creation or problem-debunking, as they might apply to the film. What do the makers of the movie want us to think after viewing it? How do they build their case? Is the film persuasive or not, and what makes it so? No research is necessary.

**Final Exam:** Date to be Determined

**This will be a take-home essay question that you will submit on the scheduled exam date.**

**\*Grammar is important to communicating precise meaning. Therefore, while it will not be valued as highly as content, it will be evaluated and therefore can affect your mark.**

**\*\*\*ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SENT BY EMAIL, TO MY COLLEGE ACCOUNT:  
[asegal@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:asegal@gprc.ab.ca) ALSO, YOU MUST INCLUDE THE WORD 'ASSIGNMENT' IN THE SUBJECT LINE,  
AND INDICATE ON THE SAME LINE, WHICH ASSIGNMENT IS BEING SENT.**

#### **Discussion Bonus mark:**

Every person in the course may (but not necessarily will), receive a bonus mark in increase his/her final grade by at least one letter grade based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation. Discussion postings to a Moodle discussion forum also will be considered class participation. You will be eligible for a bonus mark only if you display commitment to the course by reading the books and completing all written assignments. Although attendance is not relevant to the regular assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. Eligibility for the bonus is nullified if you are absent for more than 3 classes.

#### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

University courses provide the best intellectual and perhaps social experience, when students arrive prepared for the day's work. My classes are heavily discussion -oriented and therefore require commitment from students.

1. Read assignments.
2. Participate in class conversation about the material.

3. Complete all written work.
4. Indicate on submitted material your name; section and course number; and which assignment is being sent to me.
5. *All written work must be sent via email to [asegal@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:asegal@gprc.ab.ca) You MUST use the word 'assignment' in the subject line.*
6. *Electronic Devices: People who must have contact with others during class time may leave their cell phones on 'vibrate', and leave the room if a response is required. Otherwise, texting or use of phones will result in you having to miss that particular class. Please do not put me in a position of having to do this.*

#### **STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:**

In an academic setting, presenting others' work as your own is a serious violation. However, referencing articles and books and online academic products do not prevent you from building on their ideas and speculations. For a more precise definition of plagiarism and its consequences, refer to the Student Conduct section of the College Admission Guide at <http://www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/> or the College Policy on Student Misconduct: Plagiarism and Cheating at [www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/\\*\\*](http://www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/**)

\*\*Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

#### **DISCUSSION SEQUENCE:**

1. Introduction to SO1020
2. SP: A Note to the Reader; Chapter 1 - The Social Problems Process

Class Discussion:

What criteria for determining a social problem, does Best present?

Prepare to explain his understanding social problems process. Identify the elements of this process. Are social problems determined or defined? Does it matter?

3. SP: Chapter 2 - Claims

Class Discussion:

Frequently in daily conversation we allege claims of all kinds. Are these assertions different qualitatively from the claims Best refers to? Are all claims similar to each other?

How would you outline the logic of one of the claims that Best develops in the chapter?

Has he persuaded you that the power of a claim has merit only if it possesses the structure he recommends?

4. RS: Chapters 2, 3, 4 - Anticipating Burawoy...; Indigenous Spaces...; Reading Reflexively

Class Discussion:

These chapters make claims about the scope and purposes of sociology. We will discuss each of them, which means you will discuss if each author sees a social problem in the topics of their excerpts.

5. SP: Chapters 3 & 4 - Activists as Claimsmakers; Experts as Claimsmakers

Class Discussion:

Can anybody be a claimmaker?

Is any statement asserting truth or accuracy a type of claim, and therefore the person expressing the assertion also a claimmaker?

Political Science and Sociology come together when referring to the *polity*. What is the polity, and why does Best link it to establishing claims?

Chapter 3 indicates not all claimmakers are equal. In what various ways are claims, and their advocates, assessed? By who?

Prepare to discuss the full purpose and logic of both chapters, and whether it matters if one is an 'expert' or not.

6. RS: Chapters 7, 7, 10 - Maintaining Control?...; What a Girl Wants, What a Girl Needs...; Online Interactions Among Men...

Class Discussion:

Whether we consider the sociological effects of casual conversations, or the combat of social positions on sundry questions, all claims, expertise, strategies, etc., occur within culture. But culture contains local variants; not all regions of Canada respond similarly to challenge and options. Do the three assigned articles come from the same cultural frame?

Be prepared to present an in-depth analysis of each of these items.

7. RS: Chapters 14, 15, 16, 20 - Emotions Contests...; Dirty Harry...; Legislative Approaches...; Love and Arranged Marriage...

Class Discussion:

If Joel Best were sitting with us for today's class, what ideas from the first three chapters of his book would he remind us of?

After we discuss each of the articles, we will review them again from a 'Bestonian' perspective.

8. SP: Chapter 5 - Media and Claims

Class Discussion:

When making a claim persuasive, is media actually valuable?

Are certain aspects of the media more significant than others--according to Best--in giving claims some momentum?

What characteristics of a consuming audience render some types of media more effective than others?

Does it really matter if an event becomes news?

What is the relationship between issue ownership and dominant narratives, and media activation or activism toward particular goals?

9. RS: Chapters 23, 38, 39 - Education, Ethno-nationalism...; Red Zones...; Parents and Traffic  
Class Discussion:

As we do with most significant social institutions, we ascribe to media a great power of influence and direction. This is in part because we are taught to believe in, and to believe, some sources more than, or instead of, others. How do these articles fit with this outlook?

10. SP: Chapters 6 & 7 – Public Reaction; Policymaking

Class Discussion:

What is the/a public? Can a society have more than one at a time? Who or what comprise a public?

How do claimsmakers and policymakers assess the importance of a public?

Can a movement be successful without securing changes in policy or law?

11. RS: Chapters 41, 43, 45, 52 (Only 52 for 2013) – Gold Diggers...; Contested Imaginaries...; Fleshy Histories...; Policing Terrorism...

Class Discussion:

Do these chapters reveal to us different publics? What challenges and opportunities do they pose to claimsmakers?

What is understood by a contested imaginary?

12. SP: Chapters 8 & 9 - Social Problems Work; Policy Outcomes

Class Discussion:

How does Best evaluate policy outcomes?

When might he, or we, consider social problems work to have been a failure, or a success?

13. RS: Chapters 56 & 64 - Canada's Rights Revolution...; Fallen Women...

Class Discussion:

We will discuss these on their own terms, but also from the question of a failed, or insufficient, or successful, or irrelevant, or something else, policy outcome.

14. SP: Chapters 10 & 11 - Claims Across...; Uses of...

Class Discussion:

Case Study approach can be revealing, according to Best. Why? What does the approach indicate to people wanting to comprehend the solidification of a social problem interpretation? What are the components of Space-and-Time claims?  
In what sense is progress a problem?