

# SOCL 2501: Current Social Problems

**Day/Time/Place:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 12-1:20pm in North Hall 115

**Instructor:** Dr. Danielle Thomas

**Email:** [dthom68@lsu.edu](mailto:dthom68@lsu.edu)

**Office:** North Hall 109 or Stubbs Hall 143

**Zoom:** <https://lsu.zoom.us/my/thomassociology>

**Office Hours:** in-person or zoom, simply walk-in to North Hall 109 (M, T, Th 9am-11am, or T 1:30-3:30pm, or F 1:30-4pm) or request a meeting via email

## Communication Expectations

Supporting students is one of my key values as an instructor. I want to support you on your academic and life journey inside and outside of the classroom. Please feel free to reach out to me via email about your questions and concerns, and to meet with me in-person or on zoom. The best way to meet with me in person is to walk into my office in North Hall 109 – I have numerous office hours throughout the week – or to email me to schedule a particular time to come in-person or to get together on Zoom.

Please email me or post questions in the Q&A Forum on Moodle. Every effort will be made to respond in the forum within 24 hours. The Forum is a great place to post questions that you think other students also have so that the answers can benefit everyone. If it is a more personal concern, email is best.

**Students are expected to check their course Moodle and their LSU email at least once every 24 hours.** I will often use Moodle to email the class about things such as upcoming class activities, supplemental resources, and feedback on assignments. Checking email is important in my class as well as in your other classes at LSU; it is also an important habit to develop for your future professional career, as most workplaces maintain a similar expectation and a lot of communication is online.

## Pre-requisite Knowledge and Skills

This is an introductory sociology course. Students are not required or expected to begin the course with any prior experience in sociology or the social sciences. Students are expected to have a modicum of digital literacy, including the ability to read and write and use technology at a basic college level, as the course will involve some online research, discussion forums, and short essay assignments.

## Integrative Learning Core

Integrative learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students' practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BoR Area of Social Sciences and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of [Intercultural Knowledge and Competence](#).

## Communication-Intensive (C-I) Statement

This is a certified Communication-Intensive (C-I) course which meets the requirements set forth by LSU's Communication across the Curriculum (CxC) program, including:

- Instruction and assignments emphasizing informal and formal WRITING and SPEAKING
- Teaching of discipline and course-specific communication techniques, specifically written and oral claimsmaking related to social issues
- Use of feedback loops for learning: students will submit, receive feedback on, and revise two of their article analysis essays prior to submitting the final project, and students will do three oral presentations that include peer review and faculty feedback
- At least 40% of the course grade is rooted in communication-based work
- Practice of ethical and professional work standards

Students interested in pursuing the [LSU Communicator Certificate and/or the LSU Distinguished Communicator Medal](#) may use this C-I course for credit. Don't forget to check out the [CxC Studio 151 resources for additional support](#) with your communication work in this class and beyond!

Students are encouraged to make use of the [7 Step Toolkit for Novice Research Writing](#) as they complete written assignments and prepare for oral presentations.

## Course Objectives

This course covers the following specific measurable outcomes and learning objectives. All assessments are aligned to these outcomes and objectives.

When you complete this course, you will be able to:

1. Illustrate each stage of the social problems process using real-world social issues and/or current events.
2. Apply social constructionism to the study of social problems, especially to contested social issues in the United States.
3. Engage with social problems through various lenses and arenas such as the media, data, academia, activism, and politics.
4. Demonstrate digital literacy and an awareness that social problems (and the information that is produced and publicized about them) are influenced by social, economic, and political resources and ideologies.
5. Critically examine policy options aimed at addressing various social problems.

## Ready to Roar: Career Readiness at LSU

LSU wants you to know that – whether a course is an ILC general education course or a major course – “you’re already developing skills that are important elements to your career readiness. The combination of professional experiences, academic pursuits, and involvement opportunities on and off campus can help you to become [Ready to Roar](#) in your career.”

Through the City Project and the SLO certification (described below), **the primary career proficiency emphasized in SOCL 2501 is [Civic Engagement](#)**, which is “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference.

Other key career proficiencies students gain through SOCL 2501 are:

- **Intercultural Knowledge:** demonstrating the awareness, attitude, knowledge and behavior skills required to interact with and work alongside people from difference local and global cultures
- **Problem Solving:** designing, evaluating, and implementing strategies to answer open ended questions or achieve desired goals, requiring a combination of critical thinking, creativity, and analytical skills
- **Communication:** effectively conveying information, concepts, opinions, and thoughts in a professional or educational setting

[This worksheet](#) is an excellent resource for tracking your coursework and experiences that relate to career proficiency. Why track these things? Because you will definitely want to have a record as you build your resume and prepare for internship and job interviews!

# Course Materials and Resources

The following materials are required for this course:

Best, Joel, and Brian Monahan. 2025. *Social Problems* 5th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Students may purchase the print or ebook via the LSU Bookstore or other sites such as:

Publisher's Website: [Social Problems | Joel Best, Brian Monahan | W. W. Norton & Company](#)

Amazon: [Amazon.com: Social Problems: 9781324085874: Best, Joel, Monahan, Brian: Books](#)

Barnes and Noble: [Social Problems by Joel Best, Brian Monahan, Paperback | Barnes & Noble®](#)

It is available elsewhere online as well!

You may choose to use either the print or ebook version of the required textbook above.

Please note, you will need access to the textbook immediately upon starting the course. It is not advisable to complete coursework without access to the required textbook.

## Grading and Course Work

Your grade in this course will be determined by the specific activities and assessments described in this syllabus. Below, you will find details about each type of activity and assessment, as well as the grade breakdown and grading scale. Specific expectations for each graded item are included on the syllabus and/or on Moodle. Make sure you read all of the instructions and look at the assignment guidelines on Moodle! Please note that all due dates and times are in Central Standard Time (CST).

### Grade Breakdown:

- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Final Exam: 20%
- City Project Job Paper: 5%
- City Project Civic Group Paper: 10%
- City Project Oral Presentations: 10%
- Online Discussion Posts: 10%

- Article Analysis Project: 15%
- Attendance: 5%
- Engagement: 5%

The following grading scale applies:

- 97%–100% = A+
- 93%–96% = A
- 90%–92% = A-
- 87%–89% = B+
- 83%–86% = B
- 80%–82% = B-
- 77%–79% = C+
- 73%–76% = C
- 70%–72% = C-
- 67%–69% = D+
- 63%–66% = D
- 60%–62% = D-
- 0%–59% = F

## Late Work Policy

You will lose 25% credit for each day that work is submitted late. After the third day, you will receive a zero.

The reason for this policy is so that you are motivated to keep up in the class – there are a lot of moving parts in this class, and once behind it is difficult to catch up – *and* so that the professor and TA are able to grade and give timely feedback.

You may receive extensions for assignments and quizzes based on whether or not you are able to provide [PS22 documentation](#) and at the discretion of the instructor. Documentation would need to be submitted within 3 days of the assignment deadline to demonstrate the student is aware of the deadlines. In any case when work is allowed to be submitted late, it will likely be graded at the end of the semester depending on professor and TA workloads.

## Course Exams:

Exams assess students' knowledge and application of course concepts from the readings and from information provided during classes (activities, lectures, discussions, etc.).

There are two exams in SOCL 2501:

- **Mid-term Exam: March 3<sup>rd</sup> during our regular class time in North 115**
- **Final Exam: May 6<sup>th</sup> (which is a Wednesday) from 7:30-9:30am in North 115**

Exams in SOCL 2501 are a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. The multiple-choice questions will primarily focus on textbook material (e.g. key terms that are bold in the textbook). The short answer will focus on applying course concepts and will also incorporate questions concerning the City Project, class activities, and any other assigned course materials (e.g. newspaper articles or videos).

The mid-term and final exam each count as 20% in your final grade.

If you have an emergency or are sick, to qualify for a full-credit make-up exam, you need to:

- 1) Notify me via email ([dthom68@lsu.edu](mailto:dthom68@lsu.edu)) you will miss the exam **before** the end of the class period in which the exam is given
- 2) Provide [PS22 documentation](#) (e.g. a doctor's note if you are sick or a police report if you are in a car accident) within 3 days of the exam date in the syllabus (e.g. by March 6<sup>th</sup> for the Mid-term and by May 9<sup>th</sup> for the Final)

Failure to provide proper notice or documentation will result in a make-up exam (yes, you can still make it up even if your reason is "unexcused"! ) for 25% loss of credit.

If you qualify for a make-up exam, it must be taken on a particular day/time. If you miss the make-up, then you will receive a 0 for the exam. Here are the make-up exam sessions:

- Make-up Exam session for the mid-term exam: March 26<sup>th</sup> 12-1:20pm North 115 (this is during a regular class period)
- Make-up Exam session for the final exam: May 8<sup>th</sup> 12-4pm Stubbs Hall 143

## City Project:

As part of this class, we will be pretending to be residents and leaders of the city of St. George; this is a real city that was officially formed in 2024 in East Baton Rouge Parish. As a new city and because of its complicated origin story, St. Georges faces some unique challenges, making it a good real-world scenario for us to use for City Project activities.

The City Project includes each student being assigned a job and membership in a civic social movement organization. Students will provide preferences, and I will do my best to make job and civic group assignments based on these preferences, though some people will get an unexpected role. Each student will write a short job paper (an individual

assignment) and a short civic group paper (a group assignment) as part of their work in the class. Some students will also run for, and possibly be elected, as the Mayor and City Council Members of St. George. Others will be members of the Press. These roles will come with some extra leadership and engagement opportunities.

During some classes, we will have City Council meetings in which everyone will represent their job/civic organization as we grapple together with fictional scenarios facing St. George. Although the scenarios will be fictional, I will do my best to ground them in real-world events and data.

More information on the City Project will be provided during class and on Moodle.

### City Project Job Paper

All citizens of St. George will be required to have a job. As an individual, you will write a short paper that describes the educational background required for the job you have been assigned, its annual salary, what benefits are usually given to a person in that job, and in which U.S. social class that puts the person in.

The paper should be no longer than 1-2 pages in length, double-spaced, using size 12 font and regular 1” margins.

Any sources used for research about the job should be cited at the bottom of the paper (this is not part of the length requirements). For in-text citations and end-of-paper references, students may use ASA or APA formatting.

**The job paper is due Friday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> and will be graded using the following rubric:**

Criteria	Description	Points
Length, Formatting	1-2 pages double-spaced (not including references), using no larger than size 12 font or 1” margins	2 points
Education Background	Explains the educational background for the job	2 points
Salary and Benefits	Explains the salary and benefits that could be typical for this job in St. George, Louisiana; takes into account the geography of the job (e.g. Southern United States) and other factors that can influence these things such as gender, public vs. private entities, size of workplace, etc.	2 points

Criteria	Description	Points
Social Class	Identifies what social class a person with this job would fall under in the United States; takes into account how social class is generally understood in sociology and within the United States (some research may be needed!)	2 points
Citations and references	Includes a reference section with all sources cited using APA or ASA style formatting; these sources should also be cited in-text when appropriate using parenthetical citations	2 points
	Total	10 points
<p>*All essays must avoid significant issues with plagiarism (15% or higher flag in Turn it In) or AI use (20% or higher flag in Turn it In); flagging above these thresholds will result in a 0 for the essay and an academic misconduct report to LSU's SAA Office.</p>		

## City Project Civic Group Paper

Every student will be assigned to one civic group / social movement organization that they will represent in St. George. Each organization will have 3-5 students. While I will take preferences into account, some students will be assigned a group they do not expect in order to make the groups similar in numbers and ensure we have diverse perspectives and commitments in our City Council meetings.

Each civic group will be required to write one group paper (normally all members will receive the same grade) about the political ideology of the group, claims made, claimsmaking strategies used, how the group constructs victims and villains, and so on. The paper is to prepare the civic group for claimsmaking activities it will perform during St. George City Council meetings. In their research, students may rely on information they find when researching similar civic groups that actually exist (since some of the groups in our class are “made up” but they reflect real-world groups).

Any sources used for research about the civic group should be cited at the bottom of the paper (this is not part of the length requirements). For in-text citations and end-of-paper references, students may use ASA or APA formatting.

**These civic group papers are due on February 27<sup>th</sup>. They will be graded using the following rubric:**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Points</b>
Length, Formatting	Essay is 2-3 pages double-spaced (not including references), using no larger than size 12 font or 1” margins	2 points
Political Ideology	A discussion of the political ideology of the group that goes beyond identifying it as republican or democrat – what are some key beliefs and values of this group, and what kinds of experiences and social backgrounds are the foundation of these beliefs and values?	2 points
Claims and Claimsmaking Strategies	What are at least two key claims made by this group, and what strategies does the group use to make these claims? Key concepts from the textbook should be used in explaining claimsmaking strategies.	2 points
Victims and Villains	Based on the ideology and claims of this group, who do they identify as victims and villains? How do they frame this issue in terms of who is being hurt / who deserves or doesn’t deserve protection, who is doing the hurting, etc.	2 points
Citations and references	Includes a reference section with all sources cited using APA or ASA style formatting; these sources should also be cited in-text when appropriate using parenthetical citations	2 points
	Total	10 points
<p>*All essays must avoid significant issues with plagiarism (15% or higher flag in Turn it In) or AI use (20% or higher flag in Turn it In); flagging above these thresholds will result in a 0 for the essay and an academic misconduct report to LSU’s SAA Office.</p>		

City

### City Project Oral Presentations

Each student will be required to give at least three two-minute oral presentations during City Project City Council meetings. Students will represent their job and/or civic group when giving these presentations. They are persuasive in nature. We will have two in-class workshops regarding persuasive speaking and listening to help equip students for these

presentations. Engagement in these workshops and completion of the presentations is part of meeting the requirements to receive C-I credit in SOCL 2501.

Students will be assigned and/or sign up for presentation opportunities in advance of City Council Meetings so there is some time to prepare. When not presenting, they will use peer-review tools to provide feedback for one another so that their presentations improve throughout the course of the semester.

**City Project Events, and thus oral presentations, will occur on the following days:**

- 1/27 Campaign Speeches (all candidates for mayor and city council seats will speak this day, receiving one oral presentation credit)
- 2/10 City Council Meeting #1 for Semester Agenda-Setting
- 3/5 City Council Issue Meeting #2
- 3/31 City Council Issue Meeting #3
- 4/16 City Council Emergency Management Meeting (the mayor and city council members will speak this day, receiving one oral presentation credit)
- 4/23 City Council Issue Meeting #4

There will be some space for students to speak on an improvisational basis during our City Project events as well – this is encouraged but will be for extra credit (up to 3% points for three extra presentations) or not formally graded.

**Oral Presentations will be peer-reviewed and graded using the following rubric:**

Criteria	Description	Points
Time	Student stays within 15 seconds (under or over) of a two-minute time limit	2 points
Claims(s) / Conclusions	The purpose of the speech / key point(s) being made is/are obvious to the listeners; the student is representing their job and/or civic group in the claims they are making	2 points
Grounds	Some ground(s) for the claim(s) are presented as evidence supporting the student’s key point(s) – this could be in the form of a typifying example, statistics from some research, etc.	2 points
Warrants	The <i>why</i> of the students’ claim(s) is clear to the audience, and they are connected to the job and/or civic group the student is representing in the City Project	2 points

Criteria	Description	Points
Presentation Skills	Presentation demonstrates preparation, good management of nerves, confidence, clear articulation, respectful tone, connection to the audience, persuasion, etc.; while students may rely on a notecard, they should not read their presentations from the card	2 points
	Total	10 points

## Online Discussions:

There are 14 opportunities during the semester for students to participate in Online Discussions. Students must complete a minimum of 7 of these Online Discussions. The highest 7 grades will count. Each Online Discussion requires students to write an original post responding to a prompt/question and then respond to two other student posts. One original post plus two responses counts as a single “Online Discussion” post grade.

The prompts/questions for Online Discussions will often be related to the City Project or other class activities. The purpose of these assignments is to provide students with an opportunity to interact outside of class and in a different style, since not all students favor oral discussion or debate in class. These prompts will also encourage students to think critically and to apply what they are learning, which will help them with short answer questions on exams. Completing these writing assignments is also part of receiving C-I credit in this course.

In these posts, students are expected to reference specific course terms and materials – e.g. bold words from reading assignments – in their posts for full credit. Students should always be citing the course textbook, and should also cite additional materials (e.g. news articles or websites) that support their original posts and responses. Since these are online discussion posts, students may paste hyperlinks at the bottom of their posts instead of traditional citations.

Online discussions are due each week on Friday before midnight (see calendar below).

**The dates are outlined in the syllabus and the rubric for these Online Discussions is:**

Original Post

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Points</b>
Length & Readability	your post is 250-300 words long and is written in complete sentences; grammar and mechanical errors do not interfere with the integrity of the post	1 point
Completeness & Detail	your post addresses all parts of the prompt with sufficient detail and critical insight to support your claims	2 points
Key Terms & Concepts	you have appropriately used relevant key terms and concepts from the textbook / module resource book in your post	1 point
	Total	4 points

Peer Response Posts (3 points each, two responses for a total of 6 points):

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Points</b>
Length & Readability	your post is 100-150 words long and is written in complete sentences; grammar and mechanical errors do not interfere with the integrity of the post	1 point
Key Terms & Concepts	you have appropriately used relevant key terms and concepts from the textbook / module resource book in your post	1 point
Insightful & Critical	your response goes beyond agreeing or disagreeing with the original post and offers an insightful contribution that demonstrates critical thinking	1 point
	Total	3 points

## Article Analysis Project:

By the end of the semester, each student must find 10 news articles related to a social issue they care about and analyze each article using one course concept. Each article, and each course concept, can only be used 1x. Articles should be found using online

newspapers and magazines such as: *Time*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNN*, *Fox*, etc. All students have free access to [The New York Times](#) and [The Wall Street Journal](#) through LSU Libraries. Avoid using blogs or personal websites. The social issue should be something you care about and believe is problematic. It should fit the definition in our textbook of a “social issue” which is “a topic of social concern that is characterized by disagreement or debate.”

The purpose of this project is to give students an opportunity to follow an issue they care about in the news, to encourage digital literacy as students seek out and evaluate online news articles, and to hone students’ critical thinking and analytical writing skills. This project is an important part of the C-I credit in this course.

### **Submission and Formatting:**

These will be turned in using the links on Moodle under the Article Analysis Project section. Each analysis should be 1-1.5 pages in length, double-spaced, using no larger than size 12 font and normal page margins (one inch all around). At the top of the page, the student should put a link to the article.

### **Analysis Essay:**

In the analysis, you must be sure to explain/define the course concept you are using (this should be one of the bold terms from the textbook) and make at least two clear connections between the concept and the article. Quoting should be kept to a minimum. Your voice and ideas should take up most of the space, not direct quotations from the textbook or article.

### **Plagiarism and AI-Use**

Each submission will be screened for plagiarism (students can see a “similarity score” after submitting) and for AI-use (this score appears for the professor but not for the students).

**Students are not allowed to use AI to produce their essays or to polish their essays (e.g. rephrasing sentences to make them sound more professional/academic). AI should also not be used to find articles or sources, as it often manufactures fake sources, which is called “hallucinating”.** This analysis should be 100% the work of the student because the purpose is practice critical thinking, analytical writing, and real-world applications of course concepts.

### **Deadlines and Rubric:**

**Students will submit their first two article analysis essays by Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup>.**

Feedback will be provided on these articles, and students will be allowed one re-submission to make revisions based on the feedback. This includes if the article flags for

plagiarism or AI use, meaning that no academic misconduct reports will be filed for this first round of submitting two article analysis essays.

**All 10 article analysis essays (including the re-submission of the first 2) are due by April 23<sup>rd</sup>. They will be graded using the following rubric:**

Criteria	Description	Points
Link, Length, Formatting	Essay is 1-1.5 pages double-spaced, using no larger than size 12 font or 1" margins, a link to the article is at the top of the essay	2 points
Concept Explanation	Demonstrates good understanding of the concept in terms of our course materials (textbook, lectures, discussions, etc.)	3 points
Analysis	Includes at least two connections between the article and the concept	3 points
Voice	Avoids over-quoting the article or the textbook; the student's own voice and ideas are primary	2 points
	Total	10 points
<p>*All essays must avoid significant issues with plagiarism (15% or higher flag in Turn it In) or AI use (20% or higher flag in Turn it In); flagging above these thresholds will result in a 0 for the essay and, for the final submission, an academic misconduct report to LSU's SAA Office.</p>		

An example of an article analysis will be posted to Moodle.

## Attendance/Engagement:

Attendance will be taken 10x during the semester. While this is somewhat random, I will definitely take attendance on days when we have City Project activities going on, as it is important to have good attendance on those days so that we have maximum engagement.

In addition to attendance, students can earn engagement credit by signing up to take notes during class using a shared google document. Each student will be required to do this at least 2x. They may also volunteer for additional days (up to 3 for 3% extra credit). Notes

should reflect what was discussed and/or what happened (if it is a class activity day) *as well as* make appropriate connections to course concepts and ideas.

Attendance is worth 5% and Engagement is worth 5% of the final grade in the class.

Attendance credit days cannot be made up. Students may have them excluded from the grade (meaning a particular absence would not count against them) with [PS-22](#) documentation provided within 3 days of the absence.

## Extra Credit:

Students can earn extra credit – up to 3% in their final grade – in two ways. Only a maximum of 3% can be earned, so students should choose one option:

Option 1: extra participation in class note-taking (up to 3 days) OR oral presentations during City Project debates (up to 3 improv presentations) – students need to clearly let me know when they volunteer to take notes or give a presentation that it is for extra credit so that I am able to record it as such.

Option 2: service-learning (see below)

## Service-Learning Option (SLO)

This course is designated as service-learning optional via LSU's [Center for Community Engagement, Learning & Leadership](#). This means that if a student chooses to complete optional service hours along with a short service reflection essay, they can earn 3 credit-hours of service-learning credit. These credits can be counted towards a graduation distinction called [The Engaged Citizens Program \(ECP\)](#).

ECP students must earn 7 service-learning credits and complete 100 hours of additional service (outside of class) during their time at LSU.

To earn service-learning credit in SOCL 2501, students will spend 10 hours serving with one of the following service-learning partners:

- **The Gardere Initiative: 8435 Ned Ave.** This is an after-school program from 3-6pm on Mondays-Thursday. Students do not need to attend all 3 hours in one day or every day of the week. Tasks include helping elementary and middle school students with their homework and overseeing recreational activities. Students may have opportunities to earn additional hours by attending other events with the Gardere Initiative, such as a monthly community gardening evening or middle and high school youth evening program.

- **La Mesa ESL Program: 12663 Perkins Rd.** This is a program for Hispanic persons to learn English. The program includes classes in several levels and a free dinner each Sunday from 4:30-6pm for 15 weeks. Students can serve in a variety of roles from class assistants (beginner classes) to facilitators (intermediate classes) to conversation partners (advanced classes).

These opportunities require driving because they are off-campus. Students can drive themselves and/or carpool. Email Dr. Thomas if you need help finding a ride with fellow students. Students who go to these sites must complete the [Service-Learning Student Trip Travel Insurance Online Form](#) to cover their time service. LSU does not cover the actual drive/ride to the service-site but will cover the student in case of accidents that occur while they are serving.

### Why Serve?

Most students know that community service looks good on a resume. What they might not realize is that service-learning – which means putting class material into action through service – also leads to better academic outcomes. Most service-learning students earn higher GPAs in the courses where they complete service hours. Additionally, serving helps you form connections with your peers, neighbors, and the wider community in Baton Rouge. These connections become part of your support structure and part of making LSU “home” for you. LSU is deeply connected to our home city. When the people in our city thrive, our campus thrives, and vice versa. Doing service-learning is an opportunity to be a part of building the bridge between LSU and Baton Rouge. Completing the Engaged Citizens Program sets you apart from your peers and provides a good conversation topic in future job or graduate school interviews. It is also likely to lead to some recommendation letters from community leaders who can describe how important your service has been for their organization!

### The SLO Essay:

To receive credit, a student must serve for at least 10 hours and write a short essay that is due on the last day of classes. The essay should be 2-3 pages double-spaced and should:

Summarize the service experience: What did you do? Where did you do it? What were some of the highlights or challenges, and why?

Connect to three concepts from class: for each connection, write 1 paragraph that analyzes one aspect of / experience in your service using 1 concept from class. This is the same kind of analytical writing you are doing for the article analysis essays.

The following rubric will be used:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Points</b>
Length, Formatting	Essay is 2-3 pages double-spaced (not including references), using no larger than size 12 font or 1" margins	0.5 points
Summary	Student provides a paragraph summarizing the service experience	1 point
Connections	Student writes three paragraphs, each connecting part of their service experience to a course concept (bold term in the textbook); these connections demonstrate a clear understanding of the course concepts and critical thinking in making the connections (e.g. you cannot connect to the term "social issue" just by saying the organization focused on a particular issue – too obvious, not critical thinking)	1.5 points
	Total	3 points
<p>*All essays must avoid significant issues with plagiarism (15% or higher flag in Turn it In) or AI use (20% or higher flag in Turn it In); flagging above these thresholds will result in a 0 for the essay and the student will not receive extra credit or SLO credit</p>		

## AI Use, Plagiarism, and Student Conduct

### Plagiarism

According to section 10.1 of the LSU Code of Student Conduct, "A student may be charged with Academic Misconduct" for a variety of offenses, including the following: unauthorized copying, collusion, or collaboration; "falsifying" data or citations; "assisting someone in the commission or attempted commission of an offense"; and plagiarism, which is defined in section 10.1.H as a "lack of appropriate citation, or the unacknowledged inclusion of someone else's words, structure, ideas, or data; failure to identify a source, or the submission of essentially the same work for two assignments without permission of the instructor(s)."

## Improper Use of AI

While AI is a part of our everyday lives, and I do not believe it is possible or appropriate to ban it entirely from academic spaces, there are some ways it should not be used in SOCL 2501:

- Students should not submit text copied from AI-generators as if they wrote it themselves; all written work in SOCL 2501 (Job and Civic Group papers, Online Discussions, Article Analyses, etc.) should be your original work
- Students should not use AI-functions (“agents”) in Quillbot, Grammarly, or similar software to polish their writing. These AI-driven functions of these programs rephrase / re-write a student’s work.
- Students should not use AI to find sources for their writing – AI has an error in which it hallucinates (literally makes up) sources – instead of using AI to search for sources, students should rely on regular internet research and/or the LSU Library page and databases.
- Students should not use AI to provide summaries of reading *instead of* completing the assigned readings.

## Proper Use of AI

While students should not copy text from AI-generators or allow AI agents to alter their writing, AI can be used to enhance learning in SOCL 2501. Some ways AI can be used ethically in this course are:

- Brainstorming and refining ideas for writing assignments – AI can be a helpful thinking partner as you explore various trains of thought and ideas for analysis.
- To explain difficult terms and concepts or to help students understand course readings – while it should not be used to replace doing the readings, it can do things such as explain something in a different way, provide additional examples, or even lower the reading level of a particularly difficult passage.
- Students (and professors) should develop the habit of reflecting carefully as they engage with AI and being transparent in their use of AI. Does using AI in a particular way align with our values? For example, if we value hard work, does using AI to skip doing required reading make sense? How would you feel if I used AI to provide feedback on your assignments (I promise I will not!)? How do your feelings about receiving AI-feedback relate to your decision-making about using AI to complete those assignments?

## Professor AI Commitment

I will not use AI to provide feedback on your work because I believe the feedback process is an important part of the student-faculty relationship, which is something I deeply value. I will also not use AI to write recommendation letters or emails to students. At times, I may use AI to assist me with creating class materials. If I do, I will be transparent about my use by including a transparency statement along with those materials. If I discover more ways AI can be used to enhance the learning experience in SOCL 2002, I will share those with students.

## Consequences

If a student is found to have committed plagiarism, they will receive a 0 for that assignment and I will file a report with LSU's SAA office for academic misconduct.

When it comes to AI abuse, I will rely on a combination of AI detection software and my own expertise in sociology and in student work (10+ years in the classroom reading and providing feedback for student writing) to identify abuse. For the article analyses, students will have the opportunity to submit two essays early in the semester and to receive feedback, including whether or not they have issues with AI abuse. I will not file academic misconduct reports concerning these drafts.

For final drafts of assignments that are submitted – including the job and civic group papers, online discussions, and article analyses – students suspected of abusing AI will be asked to meet with me to discuss how they completed an assignment and whether or not it aligns with class and personal standards and values. They may receive partial credit on the work in question. If AI-abuse continues beyond our conversation on subsequent assignments, I will file a report with LSU's SAA and the student will receive a 0 on the assignment if they are found responsible for academic misconduct related to the AI abuse.

## Calendar

\*\*You should do the readings BEFORE the first class when they are assigned. Yes, that means I am expecting you to at times read more than 1 chapter. Please try to do the readings in advance so you can fully engage in class activities and conversations.\*\*

Some activity days will be devoted to our City Project – directions for these days will be posted to Moodle at least 1 week in advance so you have time to prepare. Other activity days will be other forms of in-class activities that will help deepen your understanding of class materials.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>Reading / Topics</b>	<b>During Class</b>	<b>DUE</b>
1/13 T		Syllabus, City Project Introduction	
1/15 Th	St. George, Louisiana  <a href="#">New York Times Article</a>  <a href="#">New York Times Article</a>	Watch & Discuss: PBS News Report about St. George	1/16: Discussion Post #1  1/16: job preferences, civic group preferences, intent to run for office due
1/20 T *the final day to drop a course without a W is 1/21	Ch. 1: Social Problems: A Definitional Debate	Lecture / Discussion	
1/22 Th	Ch. 2: What is a Claim?	Lecture / Discussion	1/23: Discussion Post #2 Job Paper Due
1/27 T		Activity: St. George Elections Candidates will give 2-minute speeches, everyone will vote	*if you have decided to run for office (Mayor or City Council), then you need to be prepared for a 2-min speech about why you should be elected and your platform; this counts as one of your oral presentations
1/29 Th	Ch. 3 & 4: Making Clams: Combining Passion and Knowledge	Lecture / Discussion	1/30: Discussion Post #3
2/3* T		Lecture / Discussion  *Discuss Article Analysis Assignment	
2/5 Th	Any readings connected to the workshop*	CxC In-Class Workshop 1: The Art of Listening	2/6: Discussion Post #4

2/10 T		Activity: First City Council Meeting: Agenda Setting  See Moodle for guidelines so you can be prepared to represent your job/civic group/interests, etc.	
2/12 Th	Ch. 5 & 6: How Audiences Learn About Social Problems	Lecture / Discussion	2/13: Discussion Post #5 Two Article Analysis Essays due (to receive feedback)
2/17 T	NO CLASS – MARDI GRAS		
2/19 Th		Lecture / Discussion	2/20: Discussion Post #5
2/24 T		Activity: Unsuccessful Claims	
2/26 Th	Mid-term Exam Review		2/27: Discussion Post #6 Civic Group Paper due
3/3 T	Mid-term Exam: Ch. 1-6, City Project so far		
3/5 Th		Activity: City Council Meeting #2 (see Moodle)	3/6: Discussion Post #7
3/10 T	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
3/12 Th	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
3/17 T	Ch. 7 & 9: Constructing Social Policy	Lecture / Discussion	
3/19* Th		CxC In-Class Workshop #2: Persuasive Speaking	3/20: Discussion Post #8

3/24* T	Any readings connected to the workshop*	Lecture/Discussion (continuing Ch 7, 9)	
3/26* Th		Mid-term makeup exams (full or partial credit depending on documentation) – if not making up an exam, you have the day off	3/27: Discussion Post #9
3/31 T		Activity: City Council Meeting #3	
4/2 Th	Ch. 8: Making Policy Come Alive: Social Problems Work	Lecture / Discussion	4/3: Discussion Post #10
4/7 T		Activity: TBA	
4/9* Th		Activity: TBA	4/10: Discussion Post #11
4/14 T	Ch. 10: Claims Across Time and Space	Lecture / Discussion	
4/16 Th		Activity: City Emergency (this cannot be prepped in advance)	4/17: Discussion Post #12
4/21 T	Ch. 11: Using Constructionism in Daily Life	Lecture	
4/23 Th		Activity: City Council Meeting #4	4/24: Discussion Post #13 Final Article Analysis Essays (all 10) due
4/28 T	City Project Wrap Up & Class Debrief		
4/30 Th	Final Exam Review		4/31: Discussion Post #14  Extra Credit essays due for SLO
5/6 WEDNESDAY	7:30am-9:30am	FINAL EXAM: Ch. 7-11 City Project	North Hall 115

