SOC 314U Drugs and Society
(aka Alcohol & Other Drugs)

Class information: Tuesday & Thursday, 10 – 11:50am, Academic & Student Rec Center 215

Professor: Dr. Aaron Roussell, Cramer Hall 217Q, roussell@pdx.edu
Office hours: Wednesday, 10:30am – 12pm and by appointment

TA: Philip Tostado, Cramer Hall 217X, ptostado@pdx.edu
Office hours: Tuesday, 2:30 – 3:30pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Drugs are ubiquitous in contemporary American society. Everyone has opinions and personal experience with them (think: alcohol, Tylenol, azithromycin, anabolic steroids, OxyContin, marijuana) if only to refuse to use them. These experiences and opinions are strongly influenced by the national discourse surrounding the issue of illegal drugs. Yet the mythology that surrounds many drugs has largely prevented an informed and sober (ha) analysis of how (or if) they ought to be regulated, how they are treated with respect to different social institutions, and what norms should surround their use. There are few comparable issues in US politics where misunderstandings and outright falsehoods are more prone to achieve the status of fact.

In this course, we will explore the different categories of illegal drugs and review their basic psychopharmacology, look at sociological constructions of the dangers of drug use, the racialization of drug use and connections with “dangerous classes” of people, and the social consequences of our particular brand of social control. The goals of this course are not to convince students that drugs are “safe” or “good,” or, conversely, “bad” or “dangerous” or some other simplistic characterization, but to present these issues in all their complexity and explore some of the repercussions of addressing them in the ways that the US has chosen.

Students who complete this course will emerge with a multifaceted understanding of drugs and their place within American society, including basic statistics and psychopharmacology, constructions of the social danger of drugs, consequences and ramifications of regulation, and theories of addiction and alcoholism. Students should be able to analyze critically both historical and contemporary drug policies and practices to assess their interplay and connections to historical institutions, class and racial fear, labor markets, and other social arrangements.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Other readings will be provided electronically.

REQUIREMENTS:
First: Read the whole syllabus. Consult it before emailing me. No, seriously.
Completing weekly reading assignments prior to class is of the utmost importance. Many of these readings are challenging and I expect you to ask questions in class if you do not understand a given piece. Classroom participation is a crucial part of your grade and is predicated on having read the material. Please speak up in class—feel free to interrupt me if you have questions or comments. If this is not your style, please come see me during office hours to discuss the material if you are so inclined. I enjoy discussion with students; you needn’t be struggling to come and see me.

I encourage active and enthusiastic class participation, but students MUST remain respectful of diverse—particularly disadvantaged—viewpoints when engaging in classroom discussion. Critical analysis
and reflection on the readings is required, but **rants and conversational trolling will not be tolerated, particularly those of a racist, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic nature.** Personal anecdotes can sometimes be valuable, but consider carefully their relevance and appropriateness before speaking. Please present comments in a manner that respects other students and me.

Sometimes lateness and absence happen. I encourage you to talk to me about this if/when it occurs. Otherwise, papers submitted late will be subject to a 10% deduction per day beginning after class on the due date as determined by me and/or the TA. If you have a University-approved absence, let me know in advance or as soon as possible so that you can regain points that you may otherwise lose. Without an approved excuse, you may not get points for activities missed. If you and I and/or the TA reach a verbal understanding about these matters, **THIS MUST BE CONFIRMED WITH ME VIA EMAIL OR IT IS NOT VALID. I NEED A WRITTEN ELECTRONIC RECORD.** If your work is super-duper late, still talk to me about it and it’s possible we can reach some sort of arrangement. (Use your PDX address, not the D2L internal email system.)

**Weekly reading assignments:** 30% total. Each Friday (or equivalent) I will pose weekly assignment questions to answer about the forthcoming week’s readings. Please have that assignment completed and uploaded to the class dropbox before class the following Monday. Questions are designed to be answered in +/- 1 double spaced page(s)—obviously, I prefer that you think of it as just answering the question thoroughly. There will be potentially 9 of these and I will drop the lowest one at the end of the course. They will be judged on overall quality out of 4 points. You may find these to be useful exercises for germinating ideas and thinking through your papers.

**Participation:** 10%. This is based on in-class activities, discussions, and contributions. I may occasionally pose questions for written response or take attendance as well.

**Papers:** 2 x 30% each.

Each paper should be 5 pages, double spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman, properly sourced (APA or ASA style please); page count does not include citations.

We will follow a specific curriculum with regard to our readings, referencing Hart’s book throughout. He marries neuro-psychological lab science with his biography in a way that is distinctly relevant to a sociological perspective on drug use. Your papers will focus explicitly on these things. Beginning with Chapter 4, Hart uses portions of his life to illuminate a specific facet of the discourse on drugs and put it into contextualized explanations (e.g., causes of addiction, peer influence, poverty, neurotransmitters, media amplification, social support, antiBlack racism, sociology of science, psychopharmacology). Take several readings—including the recommended ones—and use them to expand, challenge, or build on Hart’s narrative. Is there a similar incident that you want to expand on? A piece that you think you can add to his analysis? Something that the external readings suggest might conflict with the account? This is your opportunity to explore these things. Please use at least 3 readings (or find your own!) in addition to Hart’s text.

I also encourage alternative assignments—if you choose this option, please come clear it with me first. These would take the place of one paper.

[10 pts. depth of argument; 10 pts. engagement with sources; 5 pts. grammar and style; 5pts. creativity]

For a quick style reference, see the APA guidelines from the OWL at Purdue: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

**Paper #1** is due Thursday, May 11 by the beginning of class.
**Paper #2** is due Tuesday, June 13 by noon.
**Disability Accommodations:** If you need a disability-related accommodation, contact me privately and/or visit or call the Disability Resource Center Access Center (116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu).

**Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) plagiarism and cheating. It is inappropriate and unacceptable behavior and will not be tolerated. For more information, please consult the PSU Student Code of Conduct. [http://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct](http://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct) and check out the handy plagiarism guide in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Handy Plagiarism Guide**

**READINGS AND SCHEDULE:**
If I make changes to this schedule, I will notify you in class and/or by email.

**Week 1 (April 4, 6): Introduction & Psychopharmacology**

**Readings:**
- Syllabus!
- Hart, Chapters 0 – 3
Recommended readings:

**Week 2 (April 11, no class April 13): Psychopharmacology**

**Readings:**
Hart, Chapters 4 – 6

**Recommended readings:**

**Week 3 (April 18, 20): History and Context: Legislation and Social Use of Drugs and Alcohol**

**Readings:**
Hart, Chapters 7 – 9

**Recommended readings:**

**Week 4 (April 25, 27): History and Context: Moral Panics and the War on Drugs**

**Readings:**
Hart, Chapters 10 – 12

*Recommended readings:*

**Week 5 (May 2, 4): History and Context: Race and the War on Drugs**
*Readings:*
Hart, Chapters 13 – 15

*Video:*

*Recommended readings:*

**Week 6 (May 9, 11; First paper due Thursday): Legal Shifts and Civil Liberties**
*Readings:*
Hart, Chapters 16 – 17

*Recommended readings:*

**Week 7 (May 16, 18): Theories of Addiction**
*Readings:*

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**Recommended readings:**


**Week 8 (May 23, 25): Theories of Addiction**

**Readings:**


**Week 9 (May 30, June 1): Theories of Addiction**

**Readings:**


**Recommended readings:**


**Week 10 (June 6, 8): The Changing Nature of Drug Policy**

**Readings:**


**Recommended readings**


**Week 11 (June 12): Final paper due by noon Tuesday June 13**