Sociology 414: SOCIOLOGY OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS (4 Credits)

Winter 2015 Web Course

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Course Description

Students in this course will use a sociological perspective to explore drugs, drug use, and drug policy in the United States. We will explore the social, cultural, political, and economic influences that shape our understanding and response to the role of drugs in our society. We will consider the history of drug use and drug control in the US, the factors that account for how drugs are categorized, and the extent to which our beliefs about drugs and drug use are social constructions. This course will encourage rigorous thought about the various forms of drugs use and the various theoretical approaches to understanding these forms.

Objectives:

While this course is a 400 level course, I recognize that for many of you this will be the first exposure to the sociology of drugs, and may be your first sociology course. Accordingly, part of the purpose of this course is to provide you with opportunities to critically analyze your personal understanding of drugs and drug use. Additionally, this course is designed to provide you with the opportunity to develop your analytic and written skills.

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITH THIS ONLINE COURSE!

1) READ the entire syllabus - ESPECIALLY the near the end where it talks about grading rubric - I follow it!!!

2) NOTE the dates when things are due and abide by them - Main Discussion Questions on Wednesdays, other weekly items on Sundays!

3) USE the 'TO DO LIST' to link to the assignments and extra materials.

4) CITE where you got your information from. I'm easy on this - simple citations like (Lilly pg. 50), or ("Crips and Bloods..."), OR a web link which you used for your answer. ***IF your citation is something not part of the course I expect a more comprehensive format which will allow me to look up your reference.

5) SHOW me in your discussions and reflections that you can apply the information you learned to the questions asked.

6) DO the extra credit!!! Quite simply - They're easy, should be fun, and if you're getting anything other than an 'A' in the class doing all the extra credit will raise your grade!
Course format and expectations

As this is a fully online course, the style and expectations may be different from other courses that you have taken. There will be a significant amount of both reading and writing in this course and thoughtful participation will be required every week.

This is a four credit class, which would be approximately 3.5 classroom hours per week for a 10 week term. Studying and homework is on top of these hours (the general expectation is usually 2-4 hours per credit per week). Additionally, online classes require more work than in-person classes since all communication is done through the written word. This means that if the class was the usual in-person 10 week term you would devote approximately 11.5 - 19.5 hours per week. Since this is an online class, you should be devoting at least this many hours to the readings, online discussions, journals, studying, and papers. It could take you more (or less) time. Students are expected to complete all requirements for the course in order to receive a grade. Specific details for assignments can be found in each assignment description.

A 400 level course requires a high level of independent thinking, organization, and self-discipline. While these skills are essential for success in all upper division courses, they are even more critical in an online course. You are expected to interact with your community of students in this course - in other words, be an active participant not a passive learner. You will not do well in this course if you fall behind on your readings, or do not actively, thoughtfully, and respectfully participate in discussions and coursework.

Also, I’d like you all to think of this course as a game. The objective of the game is to learn to think about and discuss topics related to alcohol and drug use in an educated and articulate way while not just regurgitating that which you’ve been assigned to read/watch/listen to. Everyone in the class can finish the game (Passing grade) by basic adherence to the assignments, but ‘winning’ the game (great grade) will probably require spending some time in real thought on the matters presented and a willingness to engage in lively discussion with your peers (and sometimes me) about opinions. This being said – I look forward to exploring these topics with you in a challenging yet entertaining fashion.

Course requirements and evaluation

Prior computer/word processing experience is highly recommended. If this is the first class that you have taken using D2L please take advantage of the trainings offered at PSU to familiarize yourself with the online system and requirements. Regular and reliable access to the internet is mandatory. Problems accessing the course due to computer or internet issues will not be taken into consideration when grading.

Students are expected to complete all requirements for the course in order to receive a passing grade. Grades are assigned based on points earned for each assignment. Only 3 of the 4 reflection papers are required for your grade. That said, you are still responsible for knowing the information of all weeks. Details about expectations and evaluation of specific assignments will be included in the assignment descriptions.

THE BASIC FORMAT OF THE COURSE (see ‘Grading Rubric’ for specific instructions):

Note: Assignments are due ON-TIME, submit early so if you have internet problems you can try later or somewhere else!

- 30% of Final Grade - Every other week ‘forum’ discussion assignments:
  - Every other week on Friday morning questions relating to the required material for that
week will become available for comment in the discussion forum.
- You will be expected to answer it (see rubric at end for details) by no later than Midnight on Wednesday of the assigned week.
- You will then respond to someone else by no later than Sunday, Midnight on the week of the assignment.

- **20% of Final Grade – Weekly Tryp Report Analysis** (including Midterm week)
  - Each week there will be links to two selections of ‘Tryp’ reports (AKA Experience reports) for different substances posted on Erowid.org. You will be expected to choose 3 reports for each substance, read them, and very briefly answer the assigned questions in the discussion section.

- **20% of Final Grade – Midterm!**
  - On the first Sunday of WEEK 6 at Midnight, the Midterm exam will be released online with 40 questions based on the reading materials. **You will have only ONE chance to take it but the timer will be set for three hours so you have plenty of time.**

- **20% of Final Grade – Final!**
  - During the week before finals the Final exam will be released online with 80 questions based on the reading materials. **You will have only ONE chance to take it but the timer will be set for three hours so you have plenty of time.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY OF Course Requirements AND GRADES</th>
<th>Associated Points</th>
<th>Associated Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Midterm exam:</strong> on all material covered in the first ½ of the course. Includes material from readings.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td><strong>Final exam:</strong> The final essay exam is cumulative, but focuses on material covered after the first essay exam.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td><strong>Tryp Report Analysis:</strong> Answering basic questions in the ‘Quiz’ section about the phenomenology of specific drug use.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td><strong>Weekly Discussion Forums:</strong> discussion of required readings and response to a peer.</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td><strong>Reflection Papers:</strong> Personal responses to the material presented every other week (33.33 points each with a 4th possible for extra credit)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL POSSIBLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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***Extra Credit #1 (up to 33.33 points):*** 5th Reflection paper

*** Extra Credit #2 (up to 25 points): ** Read and respond to Jonathan Ott’s Proemium from Pharmacotheon as you would do for a reflection paper: [http://www.erowid.org/library/books_online/pharmacotheon/pharmacotheon.shtml](http://www.erowid.org/library/books_online/pharmacotheon/pharmacotheon.shtml) (Yes, all sections thereof)

*** Extra Credit #3 (up to 25 points): ** Available ONLY after #1 and #2 are complete, e-mail the instructor and ask for another assignment.
### Grading Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Point Ranges for Associated Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92% and above</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>921+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-91%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>900-920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>880-899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-87%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>821-879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-81%</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>800-820</td>
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<tr>
<td>78-79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>780-799</td>
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<tr>
<td>72-77%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>721-779</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-71%</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>700-720</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>600-699</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>599 and under</td>
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### Required Texts Required Readings (414):


Additional required readings will be made available on the D2L site.

**REQUIRED VS. RECOMMENDED READINGS/LISTENINGS/VIEWINGS** – On D2L I will have sections labeled for both the “Required” (can be tested on) and “Recommended” (will add to your comfort with the material and provide good references for arguments) materials. While you are welcome to use the recommended readings in the assignments, please make sure to at least address the ‘required’ readings in the discussions/reflection papers.

***NOTE:*** Much of this course deals with subject matter which our nation has been ‘at war with’ for roughly 50 years, and, thus, the course material may often broach the limits of ‘comfort’ and ‘decent etiquette’ quite substantially. The expectation is that students will be willing to view/listen to presented additional material in places where an ‘R’ rating would be acceptable (e.g. Profanity may be presented within the course as a linguistic affectation of certain ‘drug’ subcultures.)

### Course Policies and Reminders

- **Late Assignments/Missed Exams.** Assignments, and readings should be completed by the due date listed. Late online postings and quizzes will not be accepted *without prior approval from the instructor (not given the day of or after the deadline).* Late exams or the paper may be accepted with a legitimate excuse, but will be penalized 10% per day late. Please document any family or medical emergency and notify the instructor as soon as possible (text or e-mail preferred).

- **Course announcements.** Please check D2L frequently (a minimum of 2-3 times per week) for any announcement related to the course.

- **Contact for technical support: Helpdesk.** Computing and D2L questions should be directed to the Helpdesk. They may be contacted in the following ways.
  - Phone: 503-725-4357 (5-HELP)
  - Email requesting assistance to: help@pdx.edu
  - Visit the helpdeskin the basement of Smith Memorial Student Union, room 18. Users experiencing wireless connectivity issues are especially encouraged to visit in person for hands-on
troubleshooting.

• Send an inter-campus mail to mail code COMP.

Class questions and contacting the instructor. The best way to contact me is via text or email. Please allow approximately 24 hours for a response during the week and up to 48 hours over the weekend. Questions that do not involve confidential/private information should be posted for all to see on the “Class Questions” discussion. Any questions regarding course requirements, deadlines, assignments, the syllabus, or other class material should be posted here. If a question has not been answered yet, anyone who knows the answer to the question is encouraged to answer.

Tests. Each online test will include multiple choice questions and true/false questions. The quizzes will cover material from the assigned readings. Once you begin a test, you will be allowed only a window of time (3 hours) to complete the exam. Therefore, you must complete all required readings prior to beginning the quiz since the window of time will not allow for you to read and digest new material.

Offensive Material. You may find some of the descriptions of drug use presented in this class to be shocking or disgusting. By definition, the subject matter of this course includes things that many people find objectionable on moral or aesthetic grounds. This course will require you to have a certain amount of tolerance for the unusual and disreputable side of life. This does not mean that you have to approve of them, but you will have to keep your personal feelings in check in order to study these topics. I will be available to discuss any concerns you have with course materials.

Documented Disability. If you are a student with a documented disability and registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), please contact me immediately to facilitate arranging academic accommodations. DRC contact information includes: Web: www.pdx.edu/uasc/drc.html; phone: 503-725-4150; Fax: 503-725-4103; TTY or Relay: 503-725-6504; email: drc@pdx.edu.

Online discussions and netiquette. This class will take place entirely in the online environment. I expect students to be thoughtful contributors to the online discussions. I expect these discussions to primarily be student-focused, but I will read, grade, and occasionally comment on these discussions. Some basic rules for ‘Internet etiquette’ can help to facilitate constructive online discussions. (Adapted from http://www.brighthub.com/education/online-learning/articles/26946.aspx):

• Be friendly, positive, and self-reflective. It is important to be careful how you express yourself to people who don’t know you and can’t see you. It is easy to offend others or to take comments the wrong way when they are not accompanied by friendly nonverbal tones and gestures. So think carefully before you write. Reread what you have written before you post it. Say critiques in a positive, constructive tone. And avoid posting when you are angry.
• Use proper language and titles. Avoid using slang or profane words online, even if they are words you consider “not so bad.” They can be offensive to others. Avoid using all caps, which suggests you are yelling. Avoid using nicknames you’re not sure about.
• Use effective communication. Speak and write clearly at all times. Reread what you have written before you post it. Be mindful about the words you chose and be cautious when making jokes. Avoid sarcasm because it tends not to read well in an online forum.
• Professionalism. Leave characters like smiley faces and instant message abbreviations out. Be polite and write with complete thoughts. If you don’t understand someone else’s comment or expressions, ask for clarification politely by saying “I did not understand,” rather than “Your comment did not make sense.”

Academic Misconduct. According to the PSU Student Code of Conduct, a student is subject to disciplinary action for academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is the act of knowingly or intentionally seeking to claim credit for the work or effort of another person or participation in such acts. This includes, but is not limited to: (a) cheating, (b) fraud, (c) plagiarism, such as word for word copying,
using borrowed words or phrases from original text into new patterns without attribution, or paraphrasing another writer’s ideas; (d) The buying or selling of all or any portion of course assignments and research papers; (e) Performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) for other persons; (f) Unauthorized disclosure or receipt of academic information.

GRADING RUBRIC

Weekly discussion questions:

1) Open ended discussion questions will be posted every other Friday (except week 1) at approximately 12:01 AM.

- Answers to one of the discussion questions are due by Wednesday midnight of the same week and your response to someone else’s response will be due by midnight of the Sunday following.

2) Grading:

- Initial Answer to question = 45 points
  - Answering question in a thoughtful and informed fashion which makes it clear to the instructor that you have read and thought about the material and doing so in 400-500 words (2-3 paragraphs) = 35 pts.
  - Citation of sources = 5 pts. (Can be as simple as (Faupel, et al. 211) or (Ott, 15))
  - Grammar/punctuation/style = 5 pts.

- Responses to others = 15 points total.
  - Adding thoughtfully to the discussion (e.g. not simple ‘I agree/I disagree’ but providing additional material to support or refute the original answer) in 100-250 words (2 paragraphs or less) = 10 points
  - Being respectful = 2 points
  - Grammar/punctuation/style = 3 points

Reflection Paper Responses:

- 1) Grading (33.33 points per week for 4 alternating weeks [4th available for Extra Credit])
  - Answering question in a thoughtful and informed fashion which makes it clear to the instructor that you have read and thought about the material and doing so in 400-500 words (2-3 paragraphs) = 28 pts.
  - Citation of sources = 3.33 pts. (Can be as simple as (Faupel, et al. 211) or (Ott, 15))
  - Grammar/punctuation/style = 2 pts.

‘Tryp Report Responses’:

- A link to ‘Tryp’ Reports on Erowid.org will be posted every Sunday at approximately 12:01 AM responses are worth 20 points each.
- Responses will be completed in the ‘Discussion’ section.
- Responses are due by the following Sunday at midnight.

Tests:

1) Tests will be posted 1 week prior to their due date and are worth 200 points each.

2) TESTS CAN ONLY BE TAKEN ONE TIME!!! (However, 3 hours will be given to take the exam)
Weekly Discussion Question asked: Discuss the notion of 'stigma' in relation to sexual minorities, people with disabilities, and the obese. Is it ever justified with any of these groups? Does 'power' play a role in the development of stigmas? What might be some strategies for these groups to reduce or eliminate the stigmas?

EXCELLENT DISCUSSION QUESTION RESPONSE (41-45 Points)

First, I think Thio (2006) oversimplifies when he refers to a stigma as “something a person has or does that others see as bad in some way” (249). That’s not the whole story, not by a long shot. There’s an element of disgrace involved, of the Puritan ethical element of “shunning,” of exclusion, and of a social turning away. When I think stigma, I think about Hester Prynne’s scarlet letter, not about one of my kids acting up.

I don’t think that stigmatization is justified, especially in the case of those who don’t harm others through the stigmatized action. The concept of stereotyping is also associated with stigmatization, and I think that stereotyping on an individual basis is a harmful (albeit natural) act. It eliminates a full understanding of the individual and that individual’s circumstances.

I’m absolutely certain that power plays a role in the maintenance of stigmas, though I’m not entirely sure about the role of power in the development of stigmas. I’m reminded of our article from earlier in the term on moral panics, in which Goode (2008) found that the difference between the actual threat to society and the fervor with which this threat was reported was occasionally significantly different. Goode emphasized the role of the media in fanning moral panic; I think that stigma (which relays a similarly disproportionate concern on the part of society) can likewise be distributed through powerful social systems and figures.

Because I think that stigma is an assigned role, I think that the best thing that stigmatized people can do is be prominent in society. Because I think that stereotyping plays a huge role in stigmatization, I think that interpersonal and intergroup relationships are essential in lowering the rate of stigmatization in society. It is obviously extremely uncomfortable for gays and lesbians to “come out” (Thio (2006) explains the social consequences of “shock, rejection, or worse (255)), but it’s also extremely important for uninformed people to know that their stigmatization is based on false information.

GOOD DISCUSSION QUESTION RESPONSE (36-41 Points)

First, I think Thio (2006) oversimplifies when he refers to a stigma as “something a person has or does that others see as bad in some way” (249).

I don’t think that stigmatization is justified, especially in the case of those who don’t harm others through the stigmatized action. The concept of stereotyping is also associated with stigmatization, and I think that stereotyping on an individual basis is a harmful (albeit natural) act. It eliminates a full understanding of the individual and that individual’s circumstances.

I’m absolutely certain that power plays a role in the maintenance of stigmas. I’m reminded of our article from earlier in the term on moral panics, in which Goode (2008) found that the difference between the actual threat to society and the fervor with which this threat was reported was occasionally significantly different. Goode emphasized the role of the media in fanning moral panic; I think that stigma can likewise be distributed through powerful social systems and figures.

Because I think that stigma is an assigned role, I think that the best thing that stigmatized people can do is be prominent in society. Because I think that stereotyping plays a huge role in stigmatization, I think
that interpersonal and intergroup relationships are essential in lowering the rate of stigmatization in society.

**FAIR DISCUSSION QUESTION RESPONSE (32-36 Points)**

I don’t think that stigmatization is justified, especially in the case of those who don’t harm others through the stigmatized action.

I’m also absolutely certain that power plays a role in the maintenance and distribution of stigmas. I’m reminded of our article from earlier in the term on moral panics, in which Goode (2008) found that the difference between the actual threat to society and the fervor with which this threat was reported was occasionally significantly different.

Because I think that stigma is an assigned role, I think that the best thing that stigmatized people can do is be prominent in society. Because I think that stereotyping plays a huge role in stigmatization, I think that interpersonal and intergroup relationships are essential in lowering the rate of stigmatization in society.

**EXEMPLARY RESPONSE TO PEER (13.5-15 pts):**

I think your answer is very insightful. Agnew emphasized the fact that strains don't usually come all by themselves, and that it's not usually in reaction to just one strain that deviance--especially something as deviant as criminal behavior--emerges.

The way that we tend to begin to study social behavior (through the isolation of single trends in their influence on one another) also influences how we think about it. We start to identify one influence, and then add another, and then add another; all too often, we get caught up in R-values and other statistical indications of cumulative influence and forget that life doesn't happen in a statistically controlled environment.

Anyway, I liked very much the way you're thinking about this. There's a lot more in determining the likelihood of criminal behavior than adding up this strain and that strain; we have to remember the entirety of the organic environment in which social relationships take place.

**GOOD RESPONSE TO PEER (12-13.5 pts):**

I think your answer is very insightful. Agnew emphasized the fact that strains don't usually come all by themselves, and that it's not usually in reaction to just one strain that deviance--especially something as deviant as criminal behavior--emerges.

Instead, we start to identify one influence, and then keep adding them until we get statistical results, which can be dehumanizing, but seems to be the way things are done.

Anyway, I liked very much the way you're thinking about this. Yet I still think there's a lot more in determining the likelihood of criminal behavior than just adding up this strain and that strain.

**FAIR RESPONSE TO PEER (10.5-12 pts):**

I think your answer is very insightful. Agnew emphasized the fact that strains don't usually come all by themselves, and that it's not usually in reaction to just one strain that deviance--especially something as deviant as criminal behavior--emerges. Yet I still think there's a lot more in determining the likelihood of criminal behavior than just adding up this strain and that strain.