

Social Problems Research Project/Presentation

This assignment involves identifying a particular social issue that you believe constitutes a social problem. The purpose of this assignment is to give you some experience in analytically studying a social problem, making reasoned arguments to support the acknowledgment of the issue as a social problem by policy makers, and how to present this information to a larger audience.

The benefits of this assignment for students are two-fold. First, it will help prepare you for future assignments that involve critical analysis and presentations. However, a second benefit is of a more personal nature, that of empowering students to challenge what they see as a social problem and taking steps to rectify it.

What You Need to Do

1. Identify the Social Problem:

- a. Visit one of the following websites:
 - <https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/>
 - <https://www.procon.org/>
- b. You will select a social issue that to you constitutes a social problem. This problem can be a local, state, or national problem. Here you need to provide recent statistics on the problem itself, along with citing sociological research on its causes.
- c. If you are having a difficult time trying to identify a problem, it is best to think of something that you are passionate about, maybe something that appears to be affecting your own neighborhood/community.
- d. Keep in mind that this assignment transcends political ideology in the sense that the issue or problem you select does not have to be a “liberal” or a “conservative” issue, simply an issue you believe constitutes a problem. However, whatever issue you do select, part of your grade will be based on the quality of the empirical evidence you provide to support your argument.

2. How to Raise Public Awareness About the Social Problem:

- a. In this section of the assignment, you will discuss different publicizing/PSA activities that might help raise awareness of the issue to a broader audience. If it is a local issue, then focus on publicizing/PSA activities appropriate for that level. If it is a larger issue, then focus on activities appropriate for that level.
- b. In addition to several publicizing/PSA activities, you are required to typify the problem for others. In other words, how do you feel the problem should be characterized - is it a problem caused by individuals, the larger social structure, or both (or something else)?
- c. Keep in mind how important this part of social problems awareness is. You need to convince a broader audience that first of all the issue is a social problem, but you also want to influence how others see it.

III. Identifying Solutions:

- a. In this section you will be presenting some solutions to the problem to your audience. These solutions must be grounded in research and viable (possible to achieve and potentially effective).
- b. There is not a specific number of solutions that I am looking for, but I will assess your solutions in terms of their potential effectiveness, expense, and creativity. Keep in mind that you want to succeed in your mission to bring attention to the social problem, not turn people off because of exceedingly controversial or outrageous suggestions.

Putting It All Together

There will be two components to your paper:

1. The first will contain a written paper addressing the three sections above.

- a. This will be in essay form with one-inch margins, double-spacing, Times New Roman Font, Size 12, 3-4 pages in length and a reference page at the end of the paper.
- b. Be sure to write your paper in Microsoft Word.
2. The second component will be a PowerPoint presentation. Your presentation will consist of:
 - a. (1) one or two slides briefly identifying the social problem and its causes
 - b. (2) one or two slides on the typification of the issue (in what way is it a social problem, who is impacted by it, etc.)
 - c. (3) one or two slides presenting solutions to the problem.
 - d. The PowerPoint presentation should include at least six slides and no more than ten.
 - e. You should include citations in your slides, but you DO NOT need to include a references slide since these references should already be at the end of your paper.

A Brief Note on PowerPoint: While this task might strike some of you as daunting, it shouldn't be too difficult. If you are not very familiar with PowerPoint, please experiment a little with the program first and make up some quick slides with which to practice. You can also go to the Help pull-down menu and click on Microsoft Office Online and watch some demos, etc. on how to set up slides. I understand if you do not feel confident with using PowerPoint, however, the ability to communicate effectively in real life often requires knowledge of these kinds of software programs.

A Brief Note on Your Research/Sources: I wanted to give you some guidance on sources of information for the paper. There are acceptable sources, such as governmental agencies, scholarly journals, etc. However, there are some unacceptable sources that are not permitted in this paper, such as Wikipedia, magazines, blogs, etc. that are not peer-reviewed. If you are uncertain about a particular source you have found, simply ask and I will let you know. Keep in mind that your paper needs to be based on facts and not simply somebody's opinion or belief. The best approach is to use the C.R.A.A.P Test you learned in class:

C	CURRENCY When was source published or updated? Is information recent enough for your topic? For your specific research question?
R	RELEVANCY Does the source directly address your topic? Does it answer one or more of your research questions? Is it information you already have?
A	AUTHORITY What are author's qualifications? Do they have advanced degrees? Professional experience? What kind? How much? Who is the publisher?
A	ACCURACY Is the information supported by evidence? Is this evidence cited? Can it be verified? Has the source been reviewed? By whom?
P	POINT OF VIEW Is the information objective? Is the author trying to convince you of something? Do they have an agenda? How can you tell?