COURSE DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE

In contemporary society, globalization is generally understood as the era marked by massive proliferation of information technology and expansion of the borderless economy. While globalization may bring about benefits to some people, it simultaneously heightens the spread of social problems from one place to another caused by extended structures of today’s networked society. This course introduces students to sociological concepts to understand how social problems are locally originated and produced and reproduced in social, economic, and political processes of globalization.

Social problems can broadly defined as sets of conditions, arrangements, and practices that social actors perceive as the sources of inconveniences, direness, and insecurity. In sociological analyses, a problem emerging in society is considered “social” because it is constituted through a myriad of interactions between social actors. In this light, social problems are socially defined in that the significance and meaning of a problem in society is determined by a set of social factors.
While social problems appear to be locally situated, many of their causes are engendered by the circulation and transmission of goods, capital, information, images, and human labors that constitute globalization. Thus understanding how social problems emerge cannot be completely achieved without using a lens that allows us to observe the impact of social activities in one specific locality to the life of those living in other localities. This subject will provide sociological tools to capture globalized networks that produce social problems in different places at different scales with different implications. In this course, students will learn a range of selected social problems from poverty and inequality, to war and violence, to environmental degradation and energy crisis. In each of the topics, students will be exposed to sociological theories suitable to examine the case discussed in the lectures.

READINGS

There are two readings assigned every week. These readings discuss the same topic but in different perspectives and in different ways of explaining how the social problem emerges. All reading materials are available on edventure. Please make sure you have access to the course website in edventure. You should read the assigned articles beforehand. In comprehending these materials, I suggest you to take four steps as follows: First, read through the article continuously. Second, read once more at a slower pace and highlight the points you think important. Third, identify the main argument presented in the article. And finally, raise some questions or make connection to your own everyday experience and what you learn from other sources, e.g. news, media, television, etc.

COURSE EVALUATION

Essays (30%)

As part of the exercise in this course, students are required to write two short essays each worth 15 points. The essays are 1500 to 2000-word long. One of these essays will be presented in the class (see below). The essays should reflect your thoughts regarding a specific topic in social problems. For the first essay, you may choose any topic discussed in the lectures from Week 1 to Week 7, for example poverty and inequality, women and the family, or war and terrorism. The first essay is due one week after recess. The second essay is written on any one topic discussed after the recess week, for example identity, urbanization, or energy and environment. It is due on the last tutorial of the semester (except those assigned for the topic of energy and environment). There are no rules of thumb on how to write your essays. It fully depends on your own writing style. But it is recommended that your essay comprises of three sections. First, your essay should illustrate a specific social problem in any part of the world, for example poverty in Uganda, woman workers in Mexico, or shooting spree in the United States. To describe this problem, you may rely on data and information from newspaper, the Internet, books, and journal papers. The second part is a conceptual explanation of how the problem has emerged. In this part you should bring in one or two social science concepts, either from lectures or other credible sources such as academic papers and books that would help to explain the root cause of the problem. The third section links and the presence of the discussed problem to globalization. In this part, you should demonstrate how globalization factors such as institutions, politics, economy, technology, information networks, and so forth have caused the social problem to occur and spread. Please submit your essays in hardcopy. Email submission is not accepted. In addition, a softcopy is submitted through turnitin on edventure.
Presentation (10%)

Every student has to give a 10 to 15-minute presentation on the topic assigned by the tutor. Presentation schedule will be arranged in the first tutorial week (second week of the term) and will follow the weekly schedule below. The presentation discusses your assigned topic to be written as one of your essays. For example, if you write a topic on poverty and inequality, you will present it in Week 2 (see weekly schedule below). This presentation aims to get feedbacks for your essay from the instructor/tutor. In this presentation, students should specifically discuss the topic of essay, explain a relevant empirical case, and draw an analysis by referring to the concepts elaborated in the lecture. You are encouraged to use relevant materials such as video, pictures, and music to make your presentation more engaging.

Participation (10%)

Participation in the class is compulsory. Your attendance to every tutorial session does not count if you fail to actively engage in discussion. The tutor will make a note on the participation of each student. Being a good listener is not advisable. You should respond to comments from your peers and respect their views.

Final Exam (50%)

A final exam will be administered at the end of the term. This will assess your general understanding of the whole material covered in the course. Please keep in mind that some of the exam questions are likely drawn from tutorial discussions.

Media and Email

Once in a while, we will use clickers in class for non-marked pop quizzes. Please make sure to bring your clicker to the class. If you have any question to discuss, you can email the instructor who will discuss your questions in the class to be shared with other students.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (MUST READ THROUGH)

Warning: Plagiarism
Plagiarism means presenting someone else’s work as if it were your own work. In academic life, this is a serious offence, because it compromises scholarly integrity. At NTU, it is considered a violation of the University’s Honour Code. (See:http://www.ntu.edu.sg/sao/documents/ntu honour code and pledge.doc.) All work presented in your classes must be the product of your own effort. None of your work should be copied without appropriate citation from any source, including the Internet. Any student caught presenting work that is not his or her own without identifying it as someone else’s will face disciplinary action. This could include the award of a failing grade or zero marks for the assignment (or the course), or expulsion from the University. This policy applies to all work submitted, including oral presentations and/or written work (essays, theses, reports, reviews, field notes, interview data, statistical tables, etc.) You should not submit the same paper for assessment in more than one course. Should there be any overlap in the use of materials for more than one course, seek the permission of the respective instructors. Consult course instructors if you have questions concerning the meaning of plagiarism or whether a particular use of sources constitutes plagiarism. For referencing guidelines refer, for example, to the ASA (American Sociological
Association) Style Guide – a link is provided in the Division’s website – or consult the Sociology Librarian at the HSS Library.

Plagiarism and the Internet
In recent years, plagiarism has become easy, through the simple device of cutting-and-pasting text from Internet websites. Moreover, since anyone can ‘publish’ anything they like on a website, such material (including entries in Wikipedia) has not usually undergone the rigorous peer-review that scholarly material is normally exposed to. From this point of view, printed materials are still the preferable source. (This proviso does not apply to refereed journal articles made available legitimately through NTU’s electronic library resources. However, any such articles must still be properly cited.) Even if you do include appropriate websites among your sources of information, it is still wrong to present that material as if it were your own. In other words, you are allowed to make only short quotations from websites, which must then be properly sourced. Longer passages and unsourced passages are not allowed. Except for short citations – properly marked as such – materials taken from websites (or any other source) must be re-cast into your own words.

Monitoring by the Sociology Division
It is very easy to discover plagiarism, either by using special software (including SafeAssignment, an NTU-wide web-based detection tool) or simply by feeding any suspicious sentences into an Internet search engine. The Sociology Division keeps a record of all plagiarism cases. Repeated offences will be subject to even more stringent disciplinary action, as noted above. For more information, see: https://edventure.ntu.edu.sg/webapps/login/index_frame.jsp (Home > eLearning@NTU > Plagiarism Deterrence and Detection in NTU)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1
Introduction: Social Problems and Globalization


Week 2 Poverty and Inequalities


Week 3
Labor and Trade


Week 4
Migration and Population


Week 5
Global Crime


Week 6
War and Terrorism


Week 7
Democracy and Freedom


Recess Week

Week 9
Identity and Violence

Manuel Castells “Globalization, Identity, and the State” Social Dynamics Volume 26, Issue 1, 2000, Pages 5 – 17

Week 10
Globalized Cities


Week 11

Week 12
Science and Technology


Week 13
Energy and Environment


Week 14
Course Review