

News and Noteworthy

- ***Soaking up the sun***...If you live in a cold-weather climate, you may be eagerly anticipating the day a few months from now when one of your students asks, “Can we have class outside?” That’s the title of Jared Del Rosso’s 2022 article in *Humanity & Society* (Volume 46, Issue 4). Jared explores the conditions of teaching and learning, as well as power relations within the classroom.
- ***Seduced by social media***...Many instructors like to draw on examples from Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok because they’re relatable to students. While the upside is these examples encourage critical thinking, let’s not overlook the need to be critical of this practice itself. Sandhya Celestin has gained useful perspective for her pedagogy from the 2019 article “Teaching ‘Against’ Social Media: Confronting Problems of Profit in the Curriculum.” (*Teachers College Record* 121(14): 1-42). This article highlights how social media companies compromise transparency, equity, health, safety, and democracy through the design of their platforms. The authors highlight how the interests of these companies pose challenges to educators who present their students with purportedly value-free examples from social media.
- ***The calling of Covid***...Although these past two years instructors have felt a strong desire to “return to normal,” we should focus on the tremendous opportunities in front of us rather than long for what was. Covid, indeed, has given educators a new *raison d’être*. We’re called upon to dial up the compassion we express toward our students and their many pandemic-related needs, particularly our students from socially marginalized groups. See Daniel Bartholomay’s 2021 *Teaching Sociology* article, “A Time to Adapt, Not ‘Return to Normal:’ Lessons in Compassion and Accessibility from Teaching During COVID-19.”
- ***Confronting the climate crisis***...Do you teach about climate change yet struggle to find resources that get to the heart of the matter? Does this topic simply feel too big to cover in a survey course? Andy Szasz has developed a terrific website with resources for instructors and students alike. If you only spend a day teaching about climate change, no problem. If you want to devote more time, there are additional modules for doing so. The site contains easily explainable discussion of the science of climate change as well as tips for how to address challenges in teaching about this topic – including making climate change feel real; how to confront difficult feelings that may arise in students; and ways to respond to climate deniers. <https://climate-as-a-social-problem.sites.ucsc.edu/for-professors-and-instructors/>
- ***Bringing the faraway within reach***...It’s hard to be bombarded with terrible news and even harder to know how to respond. Diane McMahon is addressing this challenge head on by pairing each of her students with someone in the Ukraine via enginprogram.org, which aims to rebuild the country via one-to-one

connections. At the end of the semester, Diane's class presents an online forum where each student and their Ukrainian partner speaks about their shared experiences during the semester.

- ***Understanding modern slavery***...Bob Spire's Human Trafficking: Myth or Scourge course enables students to unpack the discourse related to human trafficking and anti-trafficking experts. He invites speakers from law enforcement, health care, nonprofits, and academia to offer a variety of perspectives. Students are encouraged to use the guests as well as the readings and other resources to support their informed position on the realities of human trafficking and the most effective ways to address the issues.

The Power of Visual Sociology

Have you found that your students don't always want to read what you assign? Since good teachers tap into their students' strengths, visuals are often the way to reach the TikTok generation. Jerry Kruse puts visual material at the forefront of all his courses. He assigns popular films and asks students to write sociological movie reviews where their aim is to highlight how the film depicts race, class, gender, inequality, and other sociological concepts.

Below are excerpts from an interview with Jerry where he discusses how he uses visual sociology in his teaching.

Jerry Kruse: I've been doing visual sociology ever since I did sociology because I've always been interested in how what things look like, or what people think big things look like has an effect on interaction, whether it's interpersonal or institutional.

Ira Silver: So what does it look like as a form of pedagogy – how do you organize a course in this way?

Jerry Kruse: In one of my classes, we talk about the future of New York City – how we're all right now living in somebody else's future. So, we started out by looking at how people thought about the future of New York City in the 18th century, 19th century, early 20th century, etc. So, we looked at the early plans for the development of Manhattan. That stuff is visual – maps and stuff like that. The homestead plans were kind of interesting – they lend themselves very well to the Internet. Ohlmstead's plans for Prospect Park and the boulevard system – it's all visual.

Ira Silver: Does it depend on how provocative the visual is or would you say there's something about visuals in general that are effective because – I mean, you know we're dealing with a generation that grew up with YouTube.

Jerry Kruse: What has happened – what people now call visual sociology – is simply making the images more explicit and using the technology to display those images. The

assignment that I had, which wound up being particularly interesting, involved research on films about New York City that deal with the future. I came up with like 10 or 12 different films. And then, the students suggested films – recent stuff like The Hunger Games.

Ira Silver: Have you used this technique in teaching other courses?

Jerry Krase: I use it for whatever courses they give me. My main course is urban sociology.

See You in Philadelphia!

Please join us at the 2023 SSSP annual meeting from August 18-20, 2023 at the Sheraton Philadelphia. The meeting theme is “Same Problem, Different Day: Recognizing and Responding to Recurring Social Problems.”

These are the sessions sponsored by Teaching Social Problems:

1. CRITICAL DIALOGUE: A Context for Discussing Trauma: How the Modality of Instruction Influences What Students Feel Comfortable Sharing in Class; Organizer: Amani M Awwad, awwada@canton.edu
2. CRITICAL DIALOGUE: No Room for Doom and Gloom: How to Make Learning about Social Problems Motivating and Inspiring – THEMATIC; Organizer: Seth Bacon, mrsethbacon@gmail.com
3. CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Recognizing Our Own Privilege: How College Instructions Can Be Transparent about Their Power in the Classroom; Organizer: Laurie J. Linhart, lclinhart@dmacc.edu

These are sessions Teaching Social Problems is co-sponsoring:

1. CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Transforming and Making Classrooms More Accessible; Organizer: Sandhya Celestin, scelestin@widener.edu
2. Race and the Environment: Critical Relations on Environmental Justice – THEMATIC; Organizer: Angus A. Nurse, angus.nurse@ntu.ac.uk
3. CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Teaching and Legislating Sexualities in Schools; Organizer: Alithia Zamantakis, alithia.zamantakis@northwestern.edu
4. CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Using Media to Teach about Social Problems; Organizers: David C. Lane, dclane1@ilstu.edu and Morena Tartari, morena.tartari@unipd.it

5. CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Teaching Sociology of Social Problems, Sports, and the Body; Organizer: Kaitlin Pericak, kpericak@ncwc.edu

Please consider submitting a paper. All submissions must be received by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time) on January 15, 2023 in order to be considered.

Interested in Chairing the Teaching Social Problems Division?

Do you, or someone you know, want to take your interest in teaching social problems to the next level?

Consider nominating yourself or another Teaching Social Problems division member to be our next chair. Nominations will be accepted until March 1st.

Chair responsibilities include:

- Serving as a liaison to SSSP.
- Soliciting and confirming sessions for the annual meeting
- Preparing a newsletter once or twice a year.
- Being an enthusiastic leader for all matters related to pedagogy.

The election will take place during the spring. The new chair will serve a two-year term beginning summer 2023.

If you have questions, please email me.

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