



**SOC 497.01W**  
**Clashing Views on Social Issues**  
**Summer II 2014**  
**(Online)**

**Professor:** William E. Thompson, Ph.D.  
**Office Location:** Ferguson Social Science 229  
**Office Hours:** by appointment  
**Office Phone:** 903-886-5136  
**Office Fax:** 903-886-5330  
**University Email Address:** William.Thompson@tamuc.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course will examine several major social issues in the United States. It will explore clashing views on these controversial topics from a wide variety of perspectives and viewpoints.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** This course has the following major objectives/learning outcomes:

1. Encourage students to stay informed of current social issues and become more informed, engaged, and responsible local, national, and global citizens.
2. Help students develop critical thinking skills and apply them to the understanding of contemporary social issues.
3. Help students express their views on controversial issues in logical and rational written and oral formats.

**REQUIRED BOOKS:** *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Social Issues* (17<sup>th</sup> ed.) edited by Finsterbush, 2013, ISBN: 978-0-077-82122-7.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments**

**CLASS FORMAT:** This is an online summer course that takes a full semester of coursework (15-16 weeks) and condenses it down to five 4-day weeks (essentially 20 days). Consequently, things happen very quickly and the course moves at a very fast pace. It is imperative to keep up with reading assignments and discussions, as once a student gets “behind,” it becomes almost impossible to get “caught up.” Missed discussions cannot be made up. **If you have schedule or time conflicts drop the class and take it some other time when you can complete all of the assignments on time.** Every effort will be made to provide the best possible learning experience for students by blending PowerPoint presentations, online discussions, and appropriate reading assignments. We will be studying and discussing many current, interesting, and often controversial subjects. Thus, a mature attitude is assumed of all students. Do NOTHING that will interfere with anyone else's opportunity to learn in this class and be sure to practice good “netiquette” (see below).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** There are only 5 weeks in Summer II, however in order to divide up assignments and discussions we are pretending there are 10 weeks. Thus, each week is divided into two with Monday and Tuesday constituting a “week” and Wednesday and Thursday constituting another “week.” So, the course schedule is broken down into 10 “weeks” in order to help you keep track of what you need to be doing on a day to day basis.

Students are expected to be polite and courteous and conform to online etiquette at all times. For detailed rules on “netiquette” go to the website: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html> A summary of netiquette rules are provided below.

- Rule 1: Remember the Human
- Rule 2: Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life
- Rule 3: Know where you are in cyberspace
- Rule 4: Respect other people's time and bandwidth
- Rule 5: Make yourself look good online
- Rule 6: Share expert knowledge
- Rule 7: Help keep flame wars under control

- Rule 8: Respect other people's privacy
- Rule 9: Don't abuse your power
- Rule 10: Be forgiving of other people's mistakes

**THIS CLASS IS A “SAFE SPACE”**

All persons enrolled in this class will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of age, race, sex, social class, religion, politics, sexual orientation , and/or lifestyle. There will be “Zero Tolerance” in this classroom for any form of ageism, racism, sexism, sexual harassment, or any other form of prejudice, discrimination, or bigotry.

**CRITICAL THINKING PAPERS:** There will be 5 critical thinking papers analyzing what we learned from each week’s reading assignments. (1-2 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font) They will be worth 40 pts. each for a total of 200 pts.

Grading Rubric for papers:

Does the paper focus on the topic(s) at hand?	0-10 pts.
Does the paper reflect information from reading assignment?	0-20 pts.
Does the paper reflect critical thinking?	<u>0-10 pts.</u>
Total	0-40 pts.

**ON-LINE DISCUSSIONS:** There will be two online discussions per week. On Monday at 12:01 a.m. of each week a discussion question will be posted that relates to the reading assignments for Monday and Tuesday. Students have until midnight (central time) Tuesday of each week to respond to that discussion question and to interact with classmates. A second discussion will be posted on Wednesday morning at 12:01 a.m. Students have until midnight (central time) Thursday of each week to respond to that discussion question and to interact with classmates. Students are minimally expected to type at least one response to each of the discussion questions and to receive 10 points. To receive 11-19 points on each discussion, students are expected to “engage” in the discussion by asking other students questions and/or responding to the posts of other students and/or the professor. To get 20 points will require **a minimum of 4** meaningful posts on each discussion.

To earn these points students must post some type of response to the question as well as a comment/question that is on topic and contributes to the overall discussion (see rubric below). Online discussions are not the same as texting or tweets. They should reflect critical thinking and contain complete sentences that are grammatically correct with as few spelling and punctuation mistakes as possible. Do not use slang or popular abbreviations such as btw, lol, etc. Discussions will be worth a total of 200 pts. Always be polite and courteous when responding to someone else’s comments or questions. **Once a discussion is closed it is over. You cannot post after the closing date/time because your classmates will not be able to respond to your posts. Post early and often.**

**NOTE:** Online discussions should not be viewed as similar to a discussion around the dinner table with friends or family where everybody expresses their views, opinions, and beliefs on some topic often which they know absolutely nothing about. This is an academic course and your discussion topics are directly linked to the Power Points and reading assignments in your textbook. Consequently, your posts should reflect a certain amount of knowledge on the topic based on research, facts, and data. It is fine to critique, interpret, and occasionally interject an opinion or two, but for the most part, this should be an academic and intellectual discussion of the topic at hand. Cite examples, data, and information from the readings where appropriate.

**Grading Rubric for Online Discussions:**

- Did student respond to question posed? (10 pts)
- Does the response reflect sociological and critical thinking, facts, and data as opposed to just personal opinion? (4 pts)
- Does the student’s response add to and/or stimulate other discussion? (4 pts)
- Is the response grammatically correct and free of abbreviations and spelling errors? (2 pts)

**PARTICIPATION:** It is essential to read and complete all assignments and participate in all online discussions to do well in this course. If you do not have time to complete all the assignments on time, please drop the course and take it some other time when you do have the time to successfully complete it.

**GRADES:** Grades will be based on the online discussions (200 pts), critical thinking papers (200 pts),

- A = 90-100% (360-400 total pts.)
- B = 80 - 89% (320-359 total pts.)

C = 70 - 79% (280-319 total pts.)

D = 60 - 69% (240-279 total pts.)

F = < 60 % (< 240 total pts.)

**POLICIES ON ENROLLMENT, "Xs", AND WITHDRAWAL:** All policies regarding last day for enrollment, dropping without a grade, withdrawal from class, and the use of "X" will be rigidly adhered to in this course. Students should check the student handbook, current semester schedule, and the appropriate bulletin boards for specific deadlines. Seeing that all university procedures are properly followed is the student's responsibility.

**CHEATING AND PAGIARISM:** Cheating or plagiarism of any kind will **not** be tolerated. Anyone who participates in either activity will fail the course and the professors will initiate steps for the university to take further disciplinary action.

### TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

- Students need to have ready access to a broadband connection to the internet such as Cable, DSL, or the TAMU-C campus network. (Dial-up, satellite, or other non-broadband internet connections will not function sufficiently with eCollege.)
- A computer with a 2.0Ghz or better processor and 1 GB of RAM. MAC computers with similar configurations will also work.
- Windows XP, Vista, or 7 operating system. MAC with the OS 9 or X operating system.
- Microsoft Office or similar package with a word processor, Power Point type presentation application, and a spreadsheet application. (OpenOffice is a free, open source application that is very similar to the Microsoft Office applications and is available for download at [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) )

### ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

This course is taught face-to-face. The publisher of the introductory textbook provides an online site to accompany the textbook. The web address is on the back cover of the textbook.

### COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

**CONTACTING THE PROFESSOR:** The best way to contact the professor will be through campus e-mail. Every effort will be made to reply to inquiries made Monday thru Thursday within a 24-hour period. E-mails received on Friday, or over the weekend will not receive a response until the following Monday. The professor will NOT be available on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays. **If you have technical problems with E-college or your computer, do not contact the professor.** Call the 24-hour help line.

Technical Support: This is the statement from the initial page in eCollege

eCollege Technical Concerns: Please contact the eCollege HelpDesk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. by sending an email directly to [helpdesk@online.tamuc.org](mailto:helpdesk@online.tamuc.org). You may also reach the HelpDesk by calling (toll-free) 1-866-656-5511 or 720-931-3847 (direct), or through the Online Chat by clicking on the "Live Support" tab within your eCollege course.

Course Concerns: If you have questions pertaining to the content of this course (e.g., questions about an exam, about course due dates, etc.), please contact your instructor via email, through the "Virtual Office," or during office hours.

Other Questions/Concerns: Contact the appropriate TAMU-C department relating to your questions/concern. If you are unable to reach the appropriate department with questions regarding your course enrollment, billing, advising, or financial aid, please call 903-886-5511 between the hours of 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Again., there are only 5 weeks in Summer II, however in order to divide up assignments and discussions we are pretending there are 10 weeks. Thus, each week is divided into two with Monday and Tuesday constituting a "week" and Wednesday and Thursday constituting another "week." So, the course schedule is broken down into 10 "weeks" in order to help you keep track of what you need to be doing on a day to day basis.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading Assignment</b>
<b>“Week 1”</b> M, July 7	Does the Media Have a Liberal Bias? Online discussion #1 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 21-41
T, July 8	Does Divorce Have Long-Term Damaging Effects on Children? Online discussion #1 ends at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 42-62
<b>“Week 2”</b> W, July 9	Are Professional Women “Opting Out” of Work by Choice? Online discussion #2 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 83-104
H, July 10	Should Same-Sex Marriages Be Legally Recognized? Online discussion #2 ends at 11:59 p.m. Critical thinking paper #1 due at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 105-124
<b>“Week 3”</b> M, July 14	Is Increasing Economic Inequality a Serious Problem? Online discussion #3 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 125-145
T, July 15	Is America Close to Being a Post-Racial Society? Online discussion #3 ends at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 146-164
<b>“Week 4”</b> W, July 16	Has Feminism Benefited American Society? Online discussion #4 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 165-187
H, July 17	Is the Gender Wage Gap Justified? Online discussion #4 ends at 11:59 p.m. Critical thinking paper #2 due at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 188-206
<b>“Week 5”</b> M, July 21	Is Government Dominated by Big Business? Online discussion #5 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 207-229
T, July 22	Does Capitalism Undermine Democracy? Online discussion #5 ends at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 230-244
<b>“Week 6”</b> W, July 23	Should Government Intervene in a Capitalist Economy? Online discussion #6 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 245-260
H, July 24	Is No Child Left Behind Irretrievably Flawed? Online discussion #6 ends at 11:59 p.m. Critical thinking paper #3 due at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 281-295
<b>“Week 7”</b> M, July 28	Should Biotechnology Be Used to Alter & Enhance Humans? Online discussion #7 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 296-322
T, July 29	Is Street Crime More Harmful than White-Collar Crime? Online discussion #7 ends at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 323-347
<b>“Week 8”</b> W, July 30	Should Laws Against Drug Use Remain Restrictive? Online discussion #8 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 348-381

H, July 31	Are We Headed Toward a Nuclear 9/11? Online discussion #8 ends at 11:59 p.m. Critical thinking paper #4 due at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 382-393
<b>“Week 9”</b>		
M, Aug 4	Is Torture Ever Justified? Online discussion #9 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 394-414
T, Aug 5	Does Immigration Benefit the Economy? Online discussion #9 ends at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 417-434
<b>“Week 10”</b>		
W, Aug 6	Is Humankind Dangerously Harming the Environment? Online discussion #10 begins at 12:01 a.m.	Pp. 435-454
H, Aug 7	Is Economic Globalization Good for Both Rich and Poor? Online discussion #10 ends at 11:59 p.m. Critical thinking paper #5 due at 11:59 p.m.	Pp. 455-471