

Contemporary Social Problems (K000279)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 6.0

Study time 180 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

B (Year)

Dutch

Gent

lecture

practical

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Demanet, Jannick

PS04

lecturer-in-charge

Hustinx, Lesley

PS04

co-lecturer

Roose, Henk

PS04

co-lecturer

Van Canegem, Timo

PS04

co-lecturer

Van de Putte, Bart

PS04

co-lecturer

Van Houtte, Mieke

PS04

co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

[Bachelor of Science in Sociology](#)

crdts

offering

6

B

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Social problems, inequality in education, inequality in cultural participation, volunteer work, mental health and stigma

Position of the course

In this course component, students gain insight into current social problems and their specific, historical, and societal contexts. They understand how social scientific knowledge assists in understanding these societal problems and contributes to formulating measures. Additionally, students learn academic writing skills through modularly structured writing assignments in a controlled, supportive setting. These assignments comprise a series that builds on each other in terms of skills. Each writing task addresses a topic discussed in the corresponding module. Students independently engage with scientific texts, select a clear sociological problem statement and research question, and incorporate theoretical insights and empirical research findings into a literature review. Furthermore, students partially engage in practical experience through an organized activity (workshop).

Contents

Social issues, such as inequality in education and cultural participation or stigma in mental healthcare, exhibit great variety. Yet, often, similar social mechanisms underlie their emergence and further development. This course demonstrates how social scientific knowledge helps in gaining insight into these societal problems and contributes to formulating measures. The course is organized around several modules. Various instructors, drawing from their specialized knowledge, sequentially address causes of inequality in education, inequality in cultural participation, volunteer work, and mental health and stigma. The social problems are approached from a global and multidisciplinary perspective. The emphasis is on problem-oriented thinking and active student participation. Through modularly structured writing assignments in a controlled, supportive setting, students become familiar with academic writing, formulating a problem statement and research question, scholarly referencing, and

argumentation. The course serves as the starting point for the Sociological Research I and II cycle, where students learn independently and in groups to design and conduct social scientific research. At the end of the course, the ethical and practical use of GAI is introduced as part of the GAI curriculum.

Initial competences

Secondary education

Final competences

- 1 Having insight into the contribution of social scientific knowledge to the description and explanation of societal problems.
- 2 Being able to distinguish between social problems and sociological problems, knowing and applying the general definition of social problems.
- 3 Understanding the addressed social issues and the social mechanisms underlying their emergence and further development.
- 4 Being able to explain the social consequences of the addressed social problems.
- 5 Being able to write academically correct texts.
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Excursion, Lecture, Practical, Independent work, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

- Ex cathedra lectures on general sociological perspectives on social problems and on specific social problems
- Practicum on learning to write academic texts
- Excursion: bridging theory with practice by following a workshop in a practical setting.
- Peer teaching: writing circles during the practicals on writing an academic text.
- Independent work: framing and analyzing a social problem independently from different sociological perspectives

Study material

Type: Reader

Name: Academische teksten aangereikt door docenten van de modules

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : Yes

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

References

Course content-related study coaching

Interactive support via UFORA (forums, FAQ, e-mail...). Practical exercises on writing an academic text.
By appointment.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Assignment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

In the first semester, a limited number of written questions are used to assess students' knowledge of the content of the distinct modules and their understanding of the relationship between social scientific knowledge and societal problems.

Additionally, students are evaluated based on their participation and substantive contributions to the discussion forum regarding current societal issues.

In the second semester, students are assessed for the four modular assignments they are required to write for this course.

For the second exam session, students only retake the components for which they received an insufficient grade. Specifically, students must retake the theoretical part if they scored insufficiently on both theoretical exams combined (a combined score of 6.5/13 or less), and they must retake the practical part if they scored insufficiently on all assignments (reading assignments, presentation, and writing assignments) combined (a combined score of 3.5/7 or less). The theoretical part for the second exam session consists of a written exam covering material from both the first and second semesters, and for the practical part, students complete a new writing assignment.

Calculation of the examination mark

Combining passing grades for the first and second semesters is necessary to pass the course as a whole. The first semester consists of a written exam (50% of the final grade, period-bound evaluation) and a substantive contribution to the discussion forum (10% of the final grade, non-period-bound evaluation). In the second semester, a series of modular writing assignments is organized (40% of the final grade, non-period-bound evaluation). Therefore, students pass if they achieve at least 6 out of 12 points in the first semester and at least 4 out of 8 points in the second semester.

Facilities for Working Students

The course requires attendance during the modular writing assignments and for the workshop. Where possible, working students can request facilities through the appropriate channels.