

SOCI 3055A

Studies in Addictions

Instructor	Ariel Fuenzalida
Term	Fall 2024
Course Delivery	In person
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is addiction? Why do people get high? Why are certain drugs outlawed? Is illicit drug use a form of deviance or defiant consumption? Is addiction a form of criminality or a disease or something else? This course will explore these and other questions concerning the patterns and practices of licit and illicit drug use in North America and abroad, with particular attention to how socio-cultural forces influence drug effects by using a wide array of sociological tools, concepts, and theories. Although research concerning drugs is widespread in the academic literature, it tends to focus either on the psychopharmacological properties and effects of psychoactive substances, or on the associated problems with the use of drugs, such as addiction, crime, risk and social disruption. Therefore, drugs are framed only in terms of a social problem. The aim of this course is to approach the topic of drugs, addiction, and the experience of intoxication from a critical evidence-based perspective in three ways. Firstly, we will consider drugs as symbolic objects. Secondly, we will consider the content and social factors involved in the construction of drug effects and drug users, across cultures and throughout time. Thirdly, we will approach intoxication as a normal social practice that is governed by norms and rules, just like any other human activity. In so doing, we will situate these topics within a larger sociological framework that cannot be reduced to the pharmacological properties of intoxicants alone but one that is instead equally shaped by culture, environment, and the individual characteristics and expectations of users. The first part of the course will develop these issues by focusing on the concept of addiction. We will explore various theories of addiction, such as neurological theories of addiction, learning theories of addiction, and sociological theories of addiction. The second part of the course will focus on the relationship between addiction, psychoactive drugs, and larger cultural, social, political, and historical forces. We will discuss the uses and merits of different forms of drug control by examining the history of prohibition, the social construction of the addict, and the socio-political implications of the War on Drugs. The overall intent of the course is to provide the student with a broad critical introduction to the main issues and current debates in the areas of addiction research and critical drug studies.

EVALUATION

1. Online Discussion Forum (10%)
2. Reading Reflections (20%)
3. Two Quizzes (30%)
4. Group Presentation (10%)
5. Essay (30%)

TEXT

There is no required textbook for this class. All required readings will be made available through Brightspace.