

“SOCIAL SOLUTIONS” TERM RESEARCH PAPER INSTRUCTIONS

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS

SOCY 350 – FALL TERM 1, 2016

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ALAN SMITH

To complete the term project for this course you must conduct case-study research on a specific situation in which some set of social solutions have made remarkable gains in solving a serious social problem. The term “social” in this research will refer to solutions that rely on some new institution, a new social movement, some new form of organization, or some type of re-organization. Whatever the case, the solutions you identify and analyze must have arguably overcome one or more acute social problems in creative, innovative, functional, equitable, and sustainable ways.

For this project I want you to look for your social solutions outside of the United States because there are many great things happening in the world that we can *all* learn from, ideas which often go unnoticed and unappreciated. Moreover, I do not want your solutions to result from initiatives originating in U.S.-based governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, or private companies.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR: Please note that your focus should first and foremost center on solutions that are *socially* innovative, not technologically. While I realize the importance of technology in modernity, for this assignment I am not particularly interested in technological innovation, including digital social media. That said, in certain cases there may be an inescapable technological dimension to the predominantly social solutions you identify.

Secondly, as you analyze your case don’t speak in ambiguities about the solution. Statements like “women are treated fairly” or “clients are treated kindly” or “the organization is community-based” may sound good, but often lack substance. This is especially important if you draw from organizational websites whose primary goals are often impression management.

What *specific* social problems do you see the solution has overcome? How has the solution *specifically* addressed these problems? With what *actual* policies and practices? How much success is being experienced? What makes its approach uniquely successful? You need to dig out detailed, tangible policies, practices and actions to describe and analyze what the institution, organization, or social movement has actually *done*....not just the ideology and rhetoric.

FIRST A PROPOSAL: To complete this assignment you will first need to submit a proposal *via email* to alan.smith@faculty.umuc.edu, and then have it approved by me. The proposal should describe the case itself, explain why you are especially interested in the case, and how it significantly improves the quality of people’s lives. While you are welcome to make the proposal as lengthy as you feel necessary, make sure it contains adequate information to demonstrate that you have investigated the case sufficiently to insure that it meets the assignment criteria.

I’m not going to award points outright for approval of the proposal. That said, if you look at the scoring rubric at the end of these instructions you’ll see that the “appropriateness of the case” is worth ten percent of the total possible paper points. So you will be rewarded. Most importantly, you won’t be

able to conduct the research, nor submit the paper for evaluation, unless I have already approved your proposal. If you submit your paper without my approval you will receive a score of "zero" for the entire assignment – *without exception*.

The deadline to have your proposal approved by me is 11:59 PM (EST) of Sunday, October 9, 2016. Case studies will be limited to one student per case on a first-come-first-served basis. So start the process as early as possible and beat the rush.

POTENTIAL DATA SOURCES: You could begin your research by finding a book on the subject that has a very recent copyright date, not more than five years old. For me, brick-and-mortar libraries and bookstores are the best places to start the hunt. While you might choose to read the entire book, it may be expedient to mine-out useful literary sources that the book draws upon. A scan of titles in the "References" section at the back of the book is always a good place to begin. A second angle of attack is to conduct a basic search for articles in a social science data base using the UMUC Library's "OneSearch" system (<http://www.umuc.edu/library/index.cfm>). There are many academic journals that focus on issues pertaining to social problems. Thirdly, once you have identified the case you want to study, have had your proposal approved by me, and have done sufficient background reading, you might even want to contact representatives of the change-producing institution and ask them some questions. Why not conduct a few interviews? *Whatever you do, you must make sure that you draw from a significant number of sources, not just a few. Remember that this is a research project!*

PAPER FORMAT REQUIREMENTS: The typed papers must be a minimum of ten *full* pages in length (not including cover page or bibliography), double-spaced, 12 pt., and Times New Roman font. Each page must use one-inch margins on each side, top and bottom, with bottom-centered page numbers. If you don't double space *and* use 12 pt. it will cost you the full five formatting points and a portion of the description and analysis points!

You must also topically organize your paper with headings and subheadings and thoroughly spell/grammar-check for errors. Where appropriate, each source you draw from in constructing the paper must be cited using correct APA citation style (please see the Content area of the classroom for links to tutorials on APA style).

PAPER DEADLINE: Please submit your papers to me in the appropriate assignment folder by the end of week seven, as scheduled in the syllabus. The research paper is worth a maximum of 100 total possible points and its weight is twenty percent of the total course score.

RESEARCH PROJECT/PAPER EVALUATION RUBRIC

Selection and approval of appropriate case.	10
Detailed description of significant dimensions of research problem.	10
Description and analysis of case.	50

Adequate number of good quality literary sources drawn upon.	10
Cited where appropriate using correct APA style.	10
Editing, spell-checking, and grammar-checking.	5
Paper format exactly as described in assignment instructions.	5
Total	100 points