CHAPTER 3

Alcohol and Other Drugs

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Define the term drug from a pharmacological and sociological perspective.
2. Describe the extent of drug use around the world, the most common drugs used worldwide, and variations in drug use among countries and over time.
3. Explain the government treatment of drug use as health issues in countries such as The Netherlands and Britain in contrast to punitive policies in other countries.
4. Describe the prevalence of illicit drug use in the United States and historical changes in cultural definitions and legal availability of drugs in the U.S.
5. Explain the concepts of drug abuse, drug addiction or chemical dependency, and the difference between psychological and physical dependency.
6. Explain the structural-functionalist, conflict and symbolic interactionist view of drug use, including how the concept of anomie contributes to the understanding of drug use, the influence of power differentials and inequality on drug use and the criminalization of drugs, and how social interaction and symbolic meanings contribute to drug use and to public acceptance of ameliorative programs.
7. Explain biological and psychological theories of how personality types and behavioral reinforcement influences drug use.
8. Compare the legal status, extent of usage, demographic characteristics of users, and the negative effects of the following drugs: alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, cocaine and crack, methamphetamine, club drugs, heroin, psychotherapeutic drugs, and inhalants.
9. Describe how drug misuse contributes to family problems, crime, economic costs, and health problems.
10. Describe drug prevention and drug treatment alternatives, including inpatient versus outpatient treatment and the peer support 12-step programs versus therapeutic communities.
11. Present arguments for and against the deregulation, legalization, and decriminalization of various drugs.
12. Describe collective action initiatives in the United States to reduce the problems of drug misuse, including class-action law suits and state legislation and referendums.

KEY TERMS

- binge drinking 73
- chemical dependency 68
- club drugs 80
- crack 79
- date-rape drugs 81
- decriminalization 93
- demand reduction 93
- deregulation 93
- drug 66
- drug abuse 68
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- fetal alcohol syndrome 86
- gateway drug 78
- harm reduction 91
- heavy drinking 73
- legalization 93
- meta-analysis 74
- supply reduction 93
- therapeutic communities 89
LECTURE OUTLINE

I. THE GLOBAL CONTEXT: DRUG USE AND ABUSE
   A. Definitions
      1. Pharmacologically, a drug is any substance other than food that alters the structure or functioning of a living organism when it enters the bloodstream.
      2. Sociologically the term drug refers to any chemical substance that has a direct effect on the user’s physical, psychological, and/or intellectual functioning, has the potential to be abused, and has adverse consequences for the individual and/or society.
   B. Drug Use and Abuse around the World
      1. Globally, 5.0% of the world’s population between the ages of 15 and 64—200 million people—reported using at least one illicit drug in the previous year.
         a. Cannabis is the most widely used drug.
      2. The prevalence of drug use varies by country and region.
      3. Some differences in drug use may result from differences in drug policies.
         a. The Netherlands has officially treated use of such drugs as marijuana, hashish, and heroin, as a health issue rather than a crime issue since the 1970s.
            i. Drug use did not increase until the advent of “cannabis cafes” in the 1990s.
            ii. Some evidence suggests use among Dutch youth is decreasing, rebutting those who argue liberal drug policies increase abuse.
         b. Great Britain has adopted a “medical model,” particularly for heroin and cocaine, and Canada is moving toward a medical model of drug use.
            i. Medical models allow limited distribution by licensed specialists to addicts who might otherwise resort to crime to support their habits.
         c. Other countries execute drug users and/or dealers or use corporal punishment.
            i. Such policies exist in less developed nations, such as Bangladesh, China and India.
   C. Drug Use and Abuse in the United States
      1. America’s concern with drugs has varied with regards to both level of concern and which drugs are tolerated (e.g., alcohol).
         a. In 1970s, when drug use was at its highest, the concern over drugs was relatively low.
         b. In 2010, 2/3 said the drug problem in the U.S. is “significant.”
      2. Illicit drug use is fairly common.
         a. Of people 12 years and older, 14% reported using marijuana heavily.
         b. Marijuana and hashish are most common (40.6%) while heroin is least common (1.5%).
         c. Alcohol and tobacco use is much more common than illicit drug use.
            i. Half of Americans 12 and over report being current alcohol drinkers.
            ii. 70 million report current tobacco use.

II. SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF DRUG USE AND ABUSE
   A. Definitions
      1. Drug abuse occurs when acceptable social standards of drug use are violated, resulting in adverse physiological, psychological, and/or social consequences (e.g. hospitalization, arrest, or divorce).
      2. Drug addiction (chemical dependency) refers to a condition in which drug use is compulsive—users are unable to stop because of their dependency.
         a. The dependency may be psychological (the individual needs the drug to achieve a feeling of well-being) and/or physical (withdrawal symptoms occur when the individual stops taking the drug).
   B. Structural-Functionalist Perspective: argues drug abuse is a response to weakening societal
1. As society becomes more complex and as rapid social change occurs, norms and values become unclear and ambiguous, resulting in anomie—a state of normlessness.

2. Anomie may exist at the societal level, resulting in social strains and inconsistencies that lead to drug use (e.g., rapid social change or inconsistent cultural norms).

3. Anomie may also exist at the individual level, as when a person suffers feelings of estrangement, isolation, and turmoil over appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

4. Drug use is thus a response to the absence of a perceived bond between the individual and society and to the weakening of a consensus regarding what is considered acceptable.

C. **Conflict Perspective**: emphasizes the importance of power differentials in influencing drug use behavior and societal values concerning drug use.

1. Drug use occurs in response to inequalities perpetuated by capitalism: individuals turn to drugs as a means of escaping oppression and frustration.

2. The most powerful determine the legal definitions and penalties of drug use.
   a. Alcohol is legal because it is consumed by white males, who hold the most power.
      i. White males profit from alcohol sales and can afford lobbying groups to guard the industry’s interests.
   b. Crack cocaine and heroin are disproportionately used by blacks and Hispanics; stigma and criminal consequences associated with these drugs is severe.
   c. The use of opium by Chinese immigrants in the 1800s provides a historical example.
   d. The criminalization of other drugs follows similar patterns of control of the powerless.
      i. In the 1940s, marijuana was used by minorities and carried severe criminal penalties.
      ii. After white middle-class college students began to use marijuana in the 1970s, the government reduced penalties for its use.

D. **Symbolic Interactionist Perspective**: concentrates on the social meanings associated with drug use.

1. If initial drug experience is defined as pleasurable, it is likely to recur and over time the individual may earn the label of “drug user.”
   a. If the label “drug user” is internalized, the behavior will probably continue or escalate.

2. Drug users learn motivations and techniques of drug use through group interactions.
   a. First-time users learn what to experience and how to define the experiences (positive or negative).

3. Symbols may be manipulated and used for political and economic agendas.
   a. The DARE program carries a powerful symbolic value that politicians want the public to identify with, despite recent analyses that found the program does not significantly prevent drug use among children.

E. **Biological and Psychological Theories**: view drug use/addiction as a result of social, psychological, and biological forces.

1. Biological research focuses on genetics in predisposing individuals to drug use.
   a. Severe, early-onset alcoholism may be genetically predisposed; other problems (depression, chronic anxiety) are linked to addiction; and individuals may get more pleasure from drugs than others.

2. Psychological explanations focus on personality types and susceptibility to drug use.
   a. Individuals prone to anxiety may use drugs to relax, gain self-confidence, or ease tension; a history of sexual abuse or poor parental relationships can be related to drug use.

3. Positive and negative reinforcement maintain drug use.
   a. Reinforcements can come from the drugs themselves (e.g. cocaine “high” being a positive reinforcement, heroin withdrawal symptoms being a negative reinforcement) or
from outside sources such as media.

III. FREQUENTLY USED LEGAL DRUGS

A. Alcohol
   1. American attitudes towards alcohol have a long and varied history.
      a. Alcohol was common in early America, but in 1920 the Eighteenth Amendment
         prohibited its manufacture, sale, and distribution; this was repealed in 1933 due to lack
         of public support.
      b. Recently the “new temperance” movement has resulted in a federal 21-year-old drinking
         age, warning labels on alcohol bottles, increased concern over fetal alcohol syndrome,
         more strict enforcement of drinking and driving regulations, and zero-tolerance policies.
   2. Alcohol remains the most widely used and abused drug in U.S.
      a. 67% of U.S. adults drink alcohol.
         i. Of current drinkers, 6.8% are heavy drinkers (5 or more drinks per occasion on 5 or
            more days in past month).
         ii. 23.7% are binge drinkers (5 or more drinks per occasion at least 1 day in the past
            month).
   3. 20% of underage drinkers reported being heavy or binge drinkers.
   4. Additional results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health:
      a. Highest levels of heavy and binge drinking are among aged 21-25.
      b. Alcohol use is higher among the employed; heavy binge drinking is higher among the
         unemployed.
      c. College graduates are less likely to be binge drinkers than high school graduates, but
         more likely to report alcohol use in the past month.
      d. Binge drinking is least likely among Asians and most likely among American Indians
         and Alaska Natives.
      e. More males than females age 12-20 report binge drinking; rates of alcohol use are
         similar.

B. Tobacco
   1. Evidence first linked tobacco to lung cancer in 1859 but no federal claims until 1989.
   2. Income is inversely related to tobacco use.
      a. 80% of smokers are in low or middle income countries
   3. Tobacco is one of the most widely used drugs in the U.S.
      a. 69 million Americans—23% of those ages 12 and older—smoke.
      b. Use of all tobacco products (smokeless tobacco, cigars, pipe tobacco, cigarettes) is
         higher for high school than college graduates, males, and Native Americans and Alaska
         Natives.
      c. In 2009, 11.6% of youths age 12-17 reported past-month use of tobacco.
   2. Mass media influence
      a. Advertising of tobacco products target youth despite
      b. Cigarette advertisers target minorities, women, and women in developing nations.

IV. FREQUENTLY USED ILLEGAL DRUGS

A. Illegal Drug Usage
   1. More than 21.8 million people in the U.S. (8.7% of those age 12 and older) currently use
      illegal drugs.
   2. Users vary by type of drug used, but are more likely to be male, young, and minority.

B. Marijuana
   1. Marijuana is the most commonly used and trafficked illicit drug in the world.
a. 129-191 million people use marijuana worldwide, representing 2.9-4.3% of the adult population.

b. Marijuana is the most dominant illicit drug (in cultivation and consumption) in North America.

2. Marijuana’s active ingredient is THC (d-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), which in varying amounts can act as a sedative or a hallucinogen.

3. U.S. marijuana usage
   a. There are more than 16.7 million current marijuana users (6.6% of age 12 and older).
   b. Many express fears that marijuana is a gateway drug – the use of which leads to the use of other drugs.
   c. Most research suggests that people who experiment with one drug are more likely to experiment with another; the typical progression is cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine.

C. Cocaine
   1. Is classified as a stimulant: produces feelings of excitation, alertness and euphoria.
   2. History
      a. Is made from coca plant and has been used for thousands of years
      b. Coca leaves were in the original formula for Coca-Cola until it was outlawed in 1914 in response to heavy cocaine use by urban blacks, poor whites, and criminals.
      c. From 1978-1987 the U.S. experienced the largest cocaine epidemic in history.
   4. Usage
      a. Cocaine, after marijuana, is the second most widely used illegal drug in the Americas.
      b. 1.9 million Americans age 12 and older are current cocaine users.
         i. 0.9% of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders use cocaine.
   5. Crack
      a. Crystallized product made by boiling mixture of cocaine, baking soda and water.
      b. Crack is one of the most dangerous drugs because it is highly addictive.
      c. Usage
         i. There are an estimated 94,000 current crack users age 15-64 in the U.S.

D. Methamphetamine
   1. Methamphetamine (meth, speed, crank) is a central nervous system stimulant that is highly addictive.
   2. Although the drug has only recently become popular, it is not new.
   3. Recent laws (1996 and 2006) have been enacted to make it more difficult to obtain the chemicals needed to make the drug, which can be found in over-the-counter medications such as Sudafed.
   4. Usage
      a. Generally, the use of methamphetamines is low and declining.
      b. Current use by 8th, 10th, and 12th graders is 2.2%.

E. Other Illegal Drugs
   1. Club Drugs: a general term for illicit, often synthetic drugs commonly used at nightclubs or raves.
      a. Ecstasy: Over 10.5 million people age 15-64 worldwide use ecstasy; 5.5% of Americans age 12 and older report using it at least once.
      b. Ketamine and LSD produce visual effects when ingested: Ketamine and LSD use are decreasing in the U.S.
      c. Salvia is an herb grown in Mexico and Central and South America and is legal in the U.S. though regulated in many states.
      d. GHB and Rohypnol are often called “date-rape drugs” because of their use in rendering
victims incapable of resisting sexual assaults.

i. 1.4% of 12th graders, 0.6% of 10th graders, and .6% of 8th graders reported past-year use of GHB.

ii. 0.8% of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders respectively reported past year use of Rohypnol.

2. Heroin
   a. Heroin is a highly addictive analgesic (painkiller) and is the most commonly abused opiate drug.
   b. Most heroin comes from poppy fields of Afghanistan.
   c. Usage in the U.S. is rapidly increasing due to easy availability, marketing and low cost.

3. Bath Salts
   a. One of the newest designer drugs.
   b. Induces paranoia, rapid heart rate, hallucinations and suicidal thoughts
   c. Banned in 28 states

4. Psychotherapeutic drugs
   a. Non-medical use of any prescription pain reliever, stimulant, sedative, or tranquilizer.
   b. More than 7 million people (2.8% of Americans over age 12) report current use of a psychotherapeutic drug for nonmedical purposes.
   c. There has been a recent increase in use of pain-relieving synthetic opioids such as codeine and OxyContin especially among young people.
   d. Obama administration introduced initiative aimed at curbing prescription drug abuse in 2011.

5. Inhalants
   a. Inhalants act on the central nervous system with users reporting a psychoactive, mind-altering effect.
   b. Usage
      i. 9.2% 12 and older reported lifetime use.
      ii. 12.1% of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders reported lifetime use.

V. SOCIETAL CONSEQUENCES OF DRUG USE AND ABUSE

A. Family Costs
   2. Children raised in such homes are more likely to live in a conflict-ridden or violent environment, have physical illness including injuries or death from car accidents, and be victims of abuse or neglect.
   3. Alcohol abuse is the most common trait associated with wife abuse.

B. Crime and Violence
   1. 27% of victims report that offender was involved with drugs/alcohol.
   2. The drug behavior of individuals arrested, incarcerated, and in drug-treatment programs provides evidence of a link between drugs and crime: 27% of victims of violent crime report the offender had used drugs or alcohol; 32% of state and 26% of federal prisoners said they committed their offence while under the influence.
   3. Sociologists disagree whether drugs “cause” crime or criminal activity leads to drug use; further, some criminal offenses are defined by drug use (e.g. possession or driving while intoxicated).
   4. Driving while intoxicated is one of most common and dangerous drug-related crimes.

C. Economic Costs
   1. The total cost of substance abuse/addiction in the U.S. is estimated at $467.7 billion.
      a. An estimated 95.6% was spent on “shoveling up wreckage”—health care costs, crime, child and family assistance programs, education, public safety, mental health and
disabilities, and federal workforce.

b. Only 1.9% went to prevention.

D. Physical and Mental Health Costs
1. Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of disease and deaths in the world.
   a. Tobacco kills 5.4 million annually worldwide.
      i. WHO has six initiatives that reduce tobacco usage.
2. Alcohol abuse causes 2.5 million deaths worldwide annually and 80,000 in the U.S.
   a. Maternal prenatal alcohol use is associated with one of the leading preventable causes of birth defects and developmental disabilities in children—fetal alcohol syndrome—characterized by serious physical and mental handicaps, including low birth weight, facial deformities, mental retardation, and hearing and vision problems.
3. Heavy alcohol and drug use are associated with negative consequences for mental health, including increased depression.

E. The Cost of Drug Use on the Environment
1. Although not usually considered, the production of illegal drugs takes a considerable toll on the environment.
   a. deforestation
   b. contaminated water
   c. fish and wildlife concerns

VI. TREATMENT ALTERNATIVES
A. Inpatient and Outpatient Treatment
1. Inpatient treatment
   a. Treatment of drug dependence in a hospital and includes medical supervision of detoxification.
   b. Most last 30-90 days and target individuals whose withdrawal symptoms require close monitoring.
2. Outpatient treatment
   a. Allows patients to remain in their home/work environments and is often less expensive.
   b. A physician evaluates the patient’s progress, prescribes medication, and watches for signs of relapse.
3. Factors in treatment success
   a. The longer a patient stays in treatment, the greater the likelihood of successful recovery.
   b. Other variables include support of family and friends, employer intervention, positive relationship with therapeutic staff, and a program of recovery that addresses many of the needs of the patient.
   c. Internal motivation does not appear to be a prerequisite for change.

B. Peer Support Groups
1. 12-Step programs: AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and NA (Narcotics Anonymous)
   a. These are voluntary, self-help associations whose only membership requirement is desire to stop using alcohol or drugs.
   b. Over 50% of recovering addicts surveyed reported using a self-help program in their recovery.
2. Symbolic interactionists emphasize that AA and NA provide social contexts in which people develop new meanings, including positive labels, encouragement and support for sobriety.

C. Therapeutic Communities
1. House between 35 and 500 people for up to 15 months helping them abstain from drugs, develop marketable skills and receive counseling.
2. Predictors of overcoming dependency include length of stay, living with a partner before
entering the program and having a strong self-concept.
3. Symbolic interactionists argue that behavioral changes result from revised self-definition and positive expectations of others.

D. Drug Courts
1. 2 types: deferred prosecution and postadjudication programs
   a. deferred prosecution has defendants complete a program rather than plead guilty
   b. postadjudication requires a guilty plea but sentences are deferred while they complete the program
   c. Over 1,600 drug courts in all 50 states.

VII. STRATEGIES FOR ACTION: AMERICA RESPONDS
A. Alcohol and Tobacco
1. Strategies to deal with alcohol and tobacco abuse are often different from those for illegal drugs.
2. Economic incentives, such as increasing the cost of the product or excise taxes, reduce prevalence and consumption rates; other economic incentives include reimbursement for smoking/alcohol cessation programs, reduced health insurance premiums for non-smokers and reduced car insurance for non-drinkers.
3. Government regulations are somewhat successful, such as raising the legal drinking age and clean air laws that restrict smoking in public places.
4. Legal actions against tobacco companies have resulted in billions of dollars of reimbursements to states for health costs and restricted advertising; more recent suits have been filed against alcohol companies.
5. Prevention tactics, such as anti-smoking and drinking advertising is shown to reduce use.

B. Illegal Drugs
1. In the 1980s, the federal government declared a “War on Drugs.”
   a. The belief was that controlling drug availability would limit drug use and drug-related problems.
   b. Is a “zero-tolerance” approach that uses tough law enforcement policies that has resulted in dramatic increases in the jail/prison population.
      i. In 1980, there were about 40,000 drug offenders in jail; today there are about 500,000.
2. Some question whether the war on drugs is working.
   a. Some argue the war on drugs has increased other social problems (e.g., crime, unemployment, AIDS, etc.), and is incredibly expensive ($26.2 billion in 2012).
   b. U.S. policy is two-pronged: demand reduction entails reducing demand for drugs through treatment and prevention and comprises 40% of drug control spending; supply reduction is a punitive strategy that focuses on reducing the supply of drugs through international efforts, interdiction and domestic law enforcement.
   c. The vast majority of people think the War on Drugs has been a failure.

C. Deregulation or Legalization
1. Deregulation: the reduction of government control over certain drugs
   a. Examples include legal sale and purchase of alcohol and cigarettes, lawful use of marijuana for medicinal purposes in some states, and legal personal possession of any drug in Spain and Italy.
2. Legalization: make drug use legal based on idea of the right of adults to make informed choices.
   a. Proponents argue citizens would benefit from drug tax revenue, purity and safety controls could be implemented, and increased competition would reduce prices.
   a. Would encourage users to seek treatment and adopt preventive practices.
4. Opponents of legalization argue it would suggest government approval of drug use, increase drug experimentation and abuse, and require costly bureaucracy to regulate the manufacture, sale and distribution of drugs.
5. State initiatives have been implemented to address the cost-effectiveness of government policies.
   a. Examples include treatment instead of incarceration for first-time offenders, overdose prevention legislation and allowing the sale of sterile syringes without a prescription.

D. State Initiatives
1. State initiatives have focused on treatment especially for first time, nonviolent offenders in order to treat the problem and reduce prison overcrowding.

VII. UNDERSTANDING ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS
1. Substance abuse is socially defined.
2. Balanced policy approach is needed which focuses on enforcement as well as treatment, prevention and harm reduction.

ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

STUDENT PROJECTS

Marijuana Legalization Debate

Set aside part of a class period for students to debate the issue of marijuana legalization. Inform students one week in advance of the debate and ask students to submit an anonymous “vote” on the issue to the instructor. For example, students in favor of legalization of marijuana write “Yes: Legalize” and students who are not in favor write “No: Do Not Legalize” on a piece of paper which is collected by the instructor.

Request students to prepare for the debate by doing library or Internet research on the topic of marijuana legalization. Instruct students to have, on the day of the debate, a written or typed description of (1) the most compelling argument FOR the legalization of marijuana and (2) the most compelling argument AGAINST legalization of marijuana. Students should include the reference for their information along with their arguments. Ask students, one at a time, to share their arguments and information with the class. You may divide the board into “FOR” and “AGAINST” and, in an abbreviated fashion, write students’ arguments on the board.

After all arguments and information have been described, ask students to again submit a “vote” to the instructor indicating whether they favor or oppose the legalization of marijuana, and whether the debate influenced their vote. Depending on the size of the class, you may count the votes immediately or take them home to count and present the results during the next class meeting.

The Dark Side of Drug Courts

While there are many positive aspects of drug courts, they are often relatively unregulated leaving an extraordinary amount of power in the hands of judges and local officials. Have students listen to episode 430 of This American Life entitled “Very Tough Love” (http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-
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archives/episode/430/very-tough-love) and write an essay responding to what they feel needs to be changed, if anything, about drug court laws.

International Drug Laws

Request the students to each select one country and investigate its current drug laws. To encourage students to select different countries, groups of students may be assigned a different continent or region to focus on, or students could be assigned a country rather than selecting the country themselves. Instruct students to research their chosen or assigned country in terms of its laws regarding tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs. Student research should focus on existing laws, punishment for violation and any significant changes that have taken place in terms of laws or usage. Students should write a brief summary of the information they find and take turns reporting their information to the class.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Legal Drinking Age

Request students search for statistics and other information, such as legal variations among societies, that relate to the legal drinking age. During the next class, divide the class into small groups and have each group discuss and take a stand regarding whether the legal drinking age should be lower. Then have a representative from each group report the position and arguments of their group and open the discussion for class debate.

Intervening in College Alcohol Abuse

Have students check out the Amethyst Initiative (www.amethystinitiative.org) and come to class prepared to discuss how they feel about it. Conduct a “4-corners” debate where students group into different parts of the room based on whether they strong agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the argument put forth on the website about lowering the drinking age. Have groups prepare short statements to set up a debate/conversation.

Punishments for Drug Use

Request the students to search for information regarding the punishments for commonly used illegal drugs, such as cocaine, crack, marijuana, methamphetamines, heroin. In class, divide the students into small groups and instruct them to take a stand regarding the fairness and effectiveness of these punishments as a deterrent. In addition, have the groups brainstorm possible alternatives to prison or juvenile detention. Have a representative of each group present some of their group’s arguments to the class and allow counter arguments from the class.

Alcohol Advertising

Request each student to bring one alcohol advertisement to class. The advertisement can be from a magazine or newspaper or an internet source. In class, divide students into groups, and instruct them to analyze the advertisements. Analyses should focus on the race, class, age and gender of the individuals depicted, their roles, the target audiences, and the overall messages portrayed by the advertisements. A representative from each group can describe their analysis to the class.

Reducing Alcohol and Drug Use
Research presented in the chapter suggests that individuals who do not drink, smoke or take drugs while they are young are less likely to drink, smoke or take drugs as adults. The obvious conclusion from this information is that drug prevention programs should target children in particular. However, research also suggests that the popular program DARE is ineffective at preventing drug use. In groups, request the students to brainstorm effective ways to target children for alcohol, smoking and drug prevention. A representative can prevent each groups’ ideas to the class and the class as a whole can evaluate each proposal.

INTERNET ASSIGNMENTS

Internet Research on College Drinking

Request students do an Internet search for information regarding the extent of alcohol use among American college students. Instruct the students to find information about where college drinking is most likely to take place, what college students are most at risk for alcohol abuse, and reasons why college students abuse alcohol.

Internet Research on Prescription Drug Abuse

Request students do an Internet search for information on prescription drug abuse. Instruct the students to report on the extent of prescription drug abuse and the kinds of prescription drugs that are most likely to be abused. Have the students discuss the social factors that might contribute to prescription drug abuse and its effects.

Tobacco Lobby

Request the students to do an Internet search for information about the influence of the tobacco industry on political decisions. Instruct the students to examine how the tobacco industry influences decisions—for example, amount of political campaign contributions. In addition, the students should research the effects of the tobacco lobby on legislation. For example, how do the politicians who receive tobacco company contributions vote on issues of interest to the tobacco industry?

D.A.R.E. Effectiveness

D.A.R.E. has been the longest running anti-drug program in the U.S., yet the evidence suggests that it is not as effective as we would like. Check out a report on D.A.R.E.’s effectiveness at http://www.drugpolicy.org/library/factsheets/dare/index.cfm. What kind of drug prevention program do you think would work? Come to class ready to share your ideas.

Marijuana Legalization

Request the students to look up information regarding debates over marijuana legalization. In particular, they should seek to determine which groups and organizations support and oppose marijuana legalization, their rationale for their position, and actions they engage in to promote their position. Students can then analyze the groups and organizations that support each side and discuss whose interests
Drugs and Depression

Prescription drugs are among the most abused drugs today. Antidepressants are some of the most popularly prescribed. Watch the clip at http://college.cengage.com/sociology/shared/videos/template104.html. What do you think about antidepressants? How many of your friends, that you know of, have taken them at one point or another? Did you notice a change in their mood or demeanor?

VIDEO SUGGESTIONS

Addiction

An HBO documentary that contains various clips related to the topic of drug and alcohol addiction, including topics such as “Saturday Night in a Dallas ER,” “The Adolescent Addict,” and “Opiate Addiction: A New Medication,” among others. This documentary can be used in full or for single clips.

Discussion Questions:
1) What are the consequences to the individuals shown in the video?
2) What are the consequences to society of drug and alcohol addiction?
3) What can be done to reduce drug and alcohol addiction in U.S. society?

Club Drugs: Dancing with Danger

This documentary illustrates the dangers of “club drugs,” particularly the drug ecstasy that is commonly used by teenagers and young adults at raves.

Discussion Questions:
1) What are the dangers of different club drugs?
2) What can be done to reduce the use of club drugs among teenagers and young adults?

Grass

Documentary on the history of marijuana legislation in the U.S. Presents a biased view that is opposed to the U.S. government’s “war” on marijuana, that can provide a good starting point for a class discussion or can be used in conjunction with an anti-marijuana video.

Discussion Questions:
1) According to the video, why did marijuana become illegal in the U.S.? What images and associations contributed to it becoming illegal?
2) Which institutions played a role in making marijuana illegal? What roles did these institutions play?
3) This video’s producers are opposed to marijuana being illegal. What are some of the arguments for keeping marijuana illegal?

America’s War on Drugs: Searching for Solutions (ABC News)

Rather than advocating for one particular position, this news broadcast profiles a number of different approaches to the drug problem, many of which seem quite radical.
1) What is meant by “harm reduction?” What is an example of such a strategy?
2) Other countries handle their drug issue much differently than the U.S. What can we learn from their approaches that might work here?

**RELATED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

Research Based Approaches: Drug Free America ([www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)) houses a plethora of research based approaches to reducing drug use and drug harm.

Drug War: [www.StoptheDrugWar.com](http://www.StoptheDrugWar.com) focuses on ending the War on Drugs.

Alcohol: A very vocal group advocating for alcohol reform and enforcement policies is Mothers Against Drunk Driving ([www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)).

**SOLVING SOCIAL PROBLEMS**

One of the biggest protective factors against drug and alcohol abuse is a strong peer influence. Think about becoming a “Big Brother/Sister” at [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org). Additionally, MADD, mentioned above is always looking for volunteers. Of course, at a micro-level, you can model responsible drug and alcohol consumption/attitudes around your peers and be a role model within your own community.