

SOCI 2305 | Deviance | Spring 2026
Data Workshop Five: Assessing Drug Harm, Drug Facts, and Drug Deviance
Worksheet – due in-class Wednesday, April 22, 2026

Name _____ /40 Worksheet _____/10 Group work

Assignment instructions. Research the specific drug you've selected and complete the worksheet assessing drug harms and the aims in designating drugs deviant.

Your research. You will use – in fact, you are restricted to using – information available from the [Assessing Drug Harm](#) links at socbres.com. Why? Because part of the problem is that widely shared common information about drugs, drug effects, drug use, and drug harm are typically laced with bullshit, propaganda, unsubstantiated claims, fear-mongering, pro-drug hype, and moralizing. And that's been the case especially from official sources. Efforts to educate and inform become a serious problem when information is used to justify a designation of deviance and justification for social control. The formal bias begins simply with equating "drug use" with "drug abuse" and "drug addiction." They're not the same.

The biases in official sources on drugs are responsible for the destructive war on drugs, its militarization of policing, its enormous appetite for prisons and punishment, its corrosion on the criminal justice system, and the damaging consequences for racial and ethnic minorities in the US. Each of these could be fair game for a data workshop but consistent with the social constructionist bent of the course, I think one of the more fruitful paths is to examine the claims that have been made about illicit drugs.

I have assembled a selective sample of recent writing and research on the claims made about illegal drugs and information that has corrected the errors and biases coming from official and popular sources. The links in *Assessing Drug Harms*, bring together key summaries of from the Drug Policy Alliance and published pieces from researchers and writers crucially assessing the claims of government agencies and drug researchers that take opposition to drugs as their starting and end point. The commentary, in particular, reveals the government's aims and the media's role in fashioning popular misconceptions about drugs, addiction, and the need for social control. Read through the information provided in order to get a handle on a drug's use and effects. Pay particular attention to what we've gotten right and wrong about drug use – as distinct from abuse and addiction, drug dangers, who it affects, and what is need for drug control or regulation.

Assessing drug harm and deviance worksheet. Using material on the *Assessing Drug Harm* page at socbres.com, complete the worksheet. Your responses can be handwritten. Bullet points are fine. Be concise, not brief. The information you compile will permit us to assess the harmfulness of drugs and the usefulness of designating drug use as deviance. You will use your worksheet in class work on April 22.

What is the drug you are researching _____

Part One – Applying the criteria for a drug's placement on the government's Schedule of Controlled Substances. A drug's inclusion on the government's Schedule of Controlled Substances is based on three considerations – medical use, safety, and risk for addiction. A substance with no known medical usefulness, no know safe dosing, and a high risk for user addiction is regarded as the most dangerous drugs. Based on the links on the *Assessing Drug Harm*:

1. What do we know – now – about the potential for abuse of this drug? What is the likelihood that the use of the drug can or will lead to severe psychological or physical dependence (addiction)?

2. Are there medical uses for the drug? What accepted medical uses in treatment of illness is it possible that the drug may have?

3. Are there safe levels of use of the drug? What is currently known about the drug's safe levels of use?

Part Two - Assessing the harmfulness of the drug. (you may repeat what you report above).

4. Identify and briefly describe two of the most serious harmful effects believed to result from the use of the drug.

5. How credible are the claims about the drug's harmfulness - how much research and evidence are there to support the claims about a drug's harm?

6. Describe two of the most the harmful effects that result from the drug's prohibition - the efforts at punishing people for possession and use?

Part Three - The goals of deviance designations

7. Explain whether and how treating the possession and use of the drug as a crime reduces the harms to users produced by the drug?

8. Harm reduction approaches the matter of drugs as about saving lives. What are the aims of designating the drug and those using it as deviant?

Indicate the sources used from the Assessing Drug Harm webpage: