NOTE: I’ve rethought how I want you to do the **first written assignment** on research about Social Problems, which will not be **due** now until **Thursday, February 6th**. We will spend some time working on finding research sources and working in your groups to define and document problems. I will give you guidelines on this next week. On **Thursday, January 30th**, we will meet in LIB112, to work on accessing research resources via the Internet, using the wireless laptops. Bring a floppy disk so you can save information or articles you access. You will also be able to email yourself resources.

**Study Guide on *Bowling Alone*, by Robert D. Putnam**

The subtitle of *Bowling Alone* defines a major focus of this course: the collapse and revival of American community. We are exploring social problems—their sources or causes, their impact, their costs and consequences, and their solution or prevention. Discussions or portrayals of social problems in the US often cite a “lack of community” as their cause. By implication, finding ways to support or nurture “community” might help prevent or alleviate many social problems.

*Bowling Alone* provides a framework within which it is possible to understand how and why social problems emerge in our society, and what can be done about them. It is by no means the only framework, but we will grapple with it, argue with it, and try it out for this term, and see how we feel about it at the end. Read Putnam, not as a definitive authority, but as a gadfly or provocateur.

**Section I: Introduction**

**Chapter 1: Thinking about Social Change in America**

In this chapter, Putnam outlines the major thesis of the book. Make sure you can put it in your own words. Notice how he uses and defines the term **social capital** (bridging and bonding forms), and what social capital does. Notice also what he says about use “triangulation” to study social capital or the lack of it. [We will discuss his methods and sources in class, but you might want to look over the Appendices, if you wonder where all the tables and graphs come from and if they make any sense.]

**Section II: Trends in Civic Engagement and Social Capital**

For each of these chapters, be able to summarize the major trends that Putnam is documenting, using selected indicators. Make note of both positive and negative developments, and which groups of people are involved in them. I have also listed terms or concepts you should understand.

- Chapter 2: Political Participation
- Chapter 3: Civic Participation
- Chapter 4: Religious Participation (secularization, privatized religion)
- Chapter 5: Connections in the Workplace (economic restructuring, job satisfaction)
- Chapter 6: Informal Social Connections (schmoozers and machers)
- Chapter 7: Altruism, Volunteering, and Philanthropy (Any surprises here?)
Chapter 8: Reciprocity, Honesty, and Trust (generalized reciprocity, thick trust and thin trust)
Chapter 9: Against the Tide? Small Groups, Social Movements, and the Net (self-help groups, social movements, “tertiary” organizations, the “digital divide,” “cyberapartheid,” “cyberbalkanization”)

Section III: Why?
For each “suspect” trace the argument assessing its relative weight or importance in contributing to the decline of community, and how that “suspect” operates.
Chapter 10: Introduction
Chapter 11: Pressure of Time and Money
Chapter 12: Mobility and Sprawl
Chapter 13: Technology and Mass Media
Chapter 14: From Generation to Generation (Note especially in this chapter how each generation defines “community.”)
Chapter 15: What Killed Civic Engagement? Summing Up

Section IV: So What?
Chapter 16: Introduction: In this chapter, Putnam introduces the “social capital index.” Make sure you understand what that is and why it is important.

In each of the following chapter, Putnam examines research that documents the impact of social capital (or its lack) on particular social issues. We will organize the class into working groups around these themes, and each student will define a specific problem, find research on the problem, and consider social policy implications, with a focus on building “social capital” or community. You will need to give particular attention to the chapter that fits your group.
Chapter 17: Education and Children’s Welfare
Chapter 18: Safe and Productive Neighborhoods
Chapter 19: Economic Prosperity
Chapter 20: Health and Happiness
Chapter 21: Democracy
Chapter 22: The Dark Side of Social Capital

Section V: What Is to Be Done?
Chapter 23: Lessons of History: The Gilded Age and the Progressive Era: How was this period of history like the situation in the US now? What lessons might be learned from the Progressive Era on how to deal with social problems?
Chapter 24: Toward an Agenda for Social Capitalists: In this chapter, Putnam poses seven challenges of ways to build social capital and restore a sense of community. What do you think of each suggestion? Has he made a good case for each in the research presented in the book? Do you think it is possible to meet these challenges? Do you share Putnam’s optimism that they will make a difference? What difference do you think they will make?