

Lesson #5

Drugs & Society

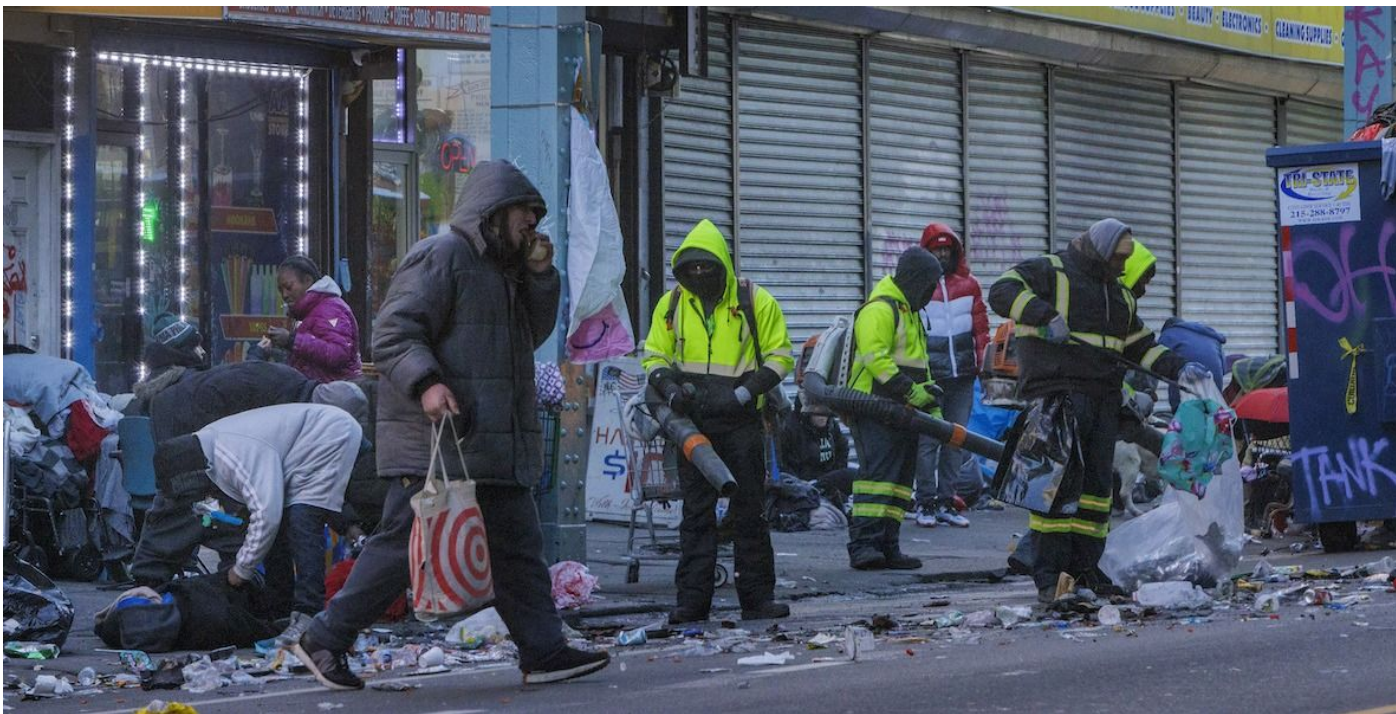
WISE Program led by Yerin Cho





Today's Agenda

- **How Drugs Affect Society**
- **Marijuana Legalization**
- **Legalization of other illicit drugs**
- **Discussion of Policy Changes**
- **Final Survey**



How Drugs Affect Society



- **Public health crisis**
 - Fentanyl crisis in the US, HIV, Hepatitis, chronic conditions
- **Increased crime rates**
 - Drug trafficking & gang violence, drunk driving
- **Higher economic burden**
 - US spends \$700B for healthcare costs, law enforcement, etc
- **Community breakdown**
 - Homeless population increases, children's early exposure, etc
- **Social inequality and stigma**
 - Stigma to drug addicts -> marginalised communities
- **Global impact**
 - Drug cartels, international trafficking, and drug cultivation



Legalization of Marijuana

- Increased medical use to treat headaches, pain, epilepsy, etc
- Job creation
- Tourism boost
- Reduced Stigma

HOWEVER,

- Increased adolescent usage of weed
- Mental health risks of increased prevalence of psychosis
- Decreased alertness of other illicit drugs
- Increased exposure to addiction



Legalization of Other Illicit Drugs



Discuss!

Of what might happen if other harder drugs are legalized...



US Drug Policy Changes



- **1906: Pure Food and Drug Act**

Required labeling of ingredients like morphine and cocaine in consumer products—first federal drug regulation.

- **1914: Harrison Narcotics Tax Act**

Effectively criminalized non-medical use of opioids and cocaine by taxing their sale. Marked the beginning of federal drug prohibition.

1930s–1950s: Criminalization Era

- **1937: Marijuana Tax Act**

Heavily restricted cannabis through taxes and criminal penalties—based on moral panic and racialized propaganda.

- **1951 & 1956: Boggs and Narcotic Control Acts**

Introduced **mandatory minimum sentences** for drug offenses.

- **1970: Controlled Substances Act (CSA)**
Created a **drug scheduling system** (Schedule I–V), classifying drugs by abuse potential and medical use.
Cannabis, LSD, and heroin were listed as **Schedule I** (high abuse potential, no accepted medical use).
- **1971: Nixon Declares "War on Drugs"**
President Nixon labeled drug abuse "public enemy number one" and dramatically increased federal drug enforcement funding.
- **1973: DEA Created**
The **Drug Enforcement Administration** was formed to consolidate federal anti-drug efforts.

1980s–1990s: Harsh Penalties & Mass Incarceration

- **1986: Anti-Drug Abuse Act**
Enacted **mandatory minimum sentences** and disproportionately penalized crack cocaine vs. powder cocaine (targeting Black communities).
- **1994: Crime Bill**
Increased funding for prisons and police, expanded sentencing laws—contributing to mass incarceration.

2000s–2010s: Shifting Toward Public Health

- **2000s: Rise of Prescription Opioid Crisis**
Aggressive pharmaceutical marketing (e.g., OxyContin) led to widespread addiction and overdose deaths.
- **2004–2010s: State-Level Medical Marijuana Legalization**
California led the way in 1996, and by the 2010s, many states had legalized medical marijuana.
- **2010: Fair Sentencing Act**
Reduced the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine (from 100:1 to 18:1).

2012–Present: Legalization and Harm Reduction

2012: Colorado & Washington Legalize Recreational Marijuana

First U.S. states to fully legalize and regulate adult-use cannabis.

2017–Now: Public Health Approach to Opioid Crisis

Expansion of **naloxone (Narcan)** availability, **Good Samaritan laws**, and **medication-assisted treatment (MAT)**.

2020–2024: Broader Decriminalization

Oregon decriminalized small amounts of all drugs (2020 ballot measure).

- Psychedelics (like psilocybin) gaining legal or medical use status in some states.

Interactive Activity – Think, Pair, & Share

- What information was **most interesting**?
- What information was **new** to you?





Short Anonymous Google Survey!! ~5 mins



**Thank you
for listening!**

