I. Introduction to Social Problems

A Sociology

1. def: study of society

2. social structure

a. institutions: function and structure

b. examples: economy, education, media, family, political system

c. systems of stratification: Titanic

3. culture (or world view)

a. non-material: ideas, beliefs, norms, rituals

b. material: technology, artifacts

c. conventional wisdom

i. definition

ii. examples: “America is the Land of Equal Opportunity” “Education is the Great Equalizer”

4. social change

a. causes

b. technology: television

c. social movements: labor

d. immigration

5. society and the individual

a. socialization

b. impact of structure, culture, stratification, and social change on lives

c. examples

i. economy

ii. education

iii. media Annenberg study

B. Social Problems

1. When institutional arrangements and a system of inequality benefit the few and disadvantage large segments of society.

2. Vital Needs: What we need to enjoy a decent life

a. Good job

i. decent wages

ii. reasonable hours

iii. security in job

iv. retirement/social security

v. vacation/leisure time

vi. benefits

b. housing

i. affordable

ii. quality

c. food security and safety

i. affordable

ii. safe

d. education

i. accessible

ii. affordable

iii. quality

e. environment

i. clean air

ii. clean water

f. health and health care

g. safety and security of person and family

h. infrastructure

i. voice in decision making

i. freedom of speech and thought

ii. access to ideas and information

iii. freedom to organize

j. Constitution

II. Vital Needs as a Social Problem

A. First step: Why are these vital needs in decline?

B. Who Rules America? How do they rule? What are their goals? And what

are our vital needs to them?

C. Who Rules America?

1. upper class + large multinational corporations

2. plutocracy or corporatism

Citigroup’s Equity Strategy

“Revisiting Plutocracy: The Rich Get Richer”

“These economies (U.S, UK, Canada and Australia) have seen the rich take an increasing share of income and wealth over the last 20 years, to the extent that the rich now dominate income, wealth and spending in these countries . . . favorable treatment by market friendly governments have allowed the rich to prosper and become a greater share of the economy in the plutonomy countries . . .[much of this increase] at the expense of labor.”

Warren Buffet, multibillionaire:

“There is a class war in America and it is being waged by my class and my class is winning.”

D. What are their goals:

1. rich (increase wealth) + corporations (increase profit and return in investment for shareholders)

2. maintain and further power

E. How do they rule?

1. control economic system

2. control political system

a. campaign financing

b. lobbying

c. legislation

i. health care

ii. financial reform

iii. budget

iv. subsidies

3. shape institutions

a. education

b. health care

c. criminal justice

d. work, jobs

4. control over mass media

1. control information
2. shape public opinion
3. cave

F. Their “wish list”?

1. deregulation

2. lower taxes

3. privatization

4. tort reform

5. subsidies; “bailouts”

6. expand corporate rights

“free” speech”

expand political voice

G. Our “vital needs” vs their “wish list”