Introduction to Social Problems

Sociology 102

Instructor: Tom Semm

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Class Meets:

M, W, F in Hardy Tower (HT) 140

12:00PM-12:50PM

Office Hours:

MWF 11AM-12:00PM

Or by appointment

TEXTS:

Nace, Ted. *Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate Power and the Disabling of Democracy.* (Required)

Ruane, Janet and Karen Cerulo. *Second Thoughts: Seeing Conventional Wisdom Through Sociological the Sociological Eye. Fourth Edition.* (Required)

Eitzen, D. Stanely and Zinn. Social Problems (Optional)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The perspective from which this course is going to examine social problems is called conflict theory. The basic assumption of this theory is that social arrangements of inequality in American society, and global society, give power to a few who determine the shape of social institutions and their policies and they do so to their advantage. These arrangements of inequality cause significant social problems for millions.

All of the social problems that will be examined in this course are having, or will have, an affect on your lives, your opportunities, and, literally, your life chances. Several of the problems that will be examined are the increasing disparity in wealth and income, the bias of the political system, the downward mobility of the middle class, increasing poverty, the increasing cost of education, and the increasing cost of health care. Global social problems will also be examined; among these will be the problems of global inequality, the destruction of the environment, and war.

COURSE GOALS:

The student should have learned how to analyze social problems from the conflict perspective and have gained a better understanding of American society, especially its institutions and social arrangements. The student should have also gained an understanding of the ways in which social forces and political policies affect individual lives.

EVALUATION PROCESS:

There will be three exams during the semester. The schedule, day and date, is on the Class Schedule (see opposite page). Each exam will consist of approximately sixty-five (65) questions, true/false, multiple choice, and matching. The questions will be from lectures, in-class videos, and the reading assignments (65%/35%). Students must have an authorized excuse for missing an exam. One exam may be missed with an excuse, but it must be made up at my convenience. All exams must be made up by the last regularly scheduled class (12/09/11). There will be opportunities for extra credit both in class and outside of class. The total number of points for the course will be approximately two hundred (200). The course is officially over on 12/09/11 and there will be no make-up exams, or extra credit after that date.

I am a lecturer and not a disciplinarian. I will treat you as adults and with respect and expect to be treated likewise. I consider disrespectful behavior activities such as, but not limited to, talking while I am lecturing or reading the Daily Aztec during class, or engaging in any other non-course related technological activity, e.g., facebook, texting. This is the only warning; from this point on, students who are engaged in these activities and identified will have ten points deducted from their grade and be denied the opportunity for any extra credit. Simply put, if you can not stay off your cell phone or face book for fifty minutes, take the other social problems class. I am allowing students to use computers for note taking, but I have the right to prohibit the use of computers in the classroom.

**Class Schedule**

**Date Topic Assignment**

**I. Inequality and Power**

Week 1 Vital Needs Gangs: Intro, Chapters 1, 5.

Aug 29-Sep 2 Second Thoughts: Intro

Week 2 Inequality Gangs: Chapters 7, 11

Sep 5-9 (No class Sep 5) View: *Corporation*

Week 3 Plutocracy Gangs: Chapters 12, 13

Sep 12-16 View: *Bulworth*

Week 4 Mass Media Gangs: Chapters 15

Sep 19-23 View: *Inside Job* Second Thoughts: Essay 15, 22

Week 5 Review and Exam Gangs: Chapter 14, 15

Sep 26-30 **EXAM #1 WED SEP 28**

**II. Inequality and American Institutions**

Week 6 Education Second Thoughts: Essay 23

Oct 3-7

Week 7 Work and Poverty Second Thoughts: Essay 11

Oct 10-14 View: *Foreign Service*

Week 8 Health and Health Care Second Thoughts: Essay 12

Oct 17-21 View: *Supersize Me*

Week 9 Marriage and Family Second Thoughts: Essay 3, 4

Oct 24 -28 View: *Supersize Me*

Week 10 Review and Exam

Oct 31-Nov 4 **EXAM #2 WED NOV 2**

**III. Global Social Problems**

Week 11 Global Inequality Gangs: Chapters 16, 17

Nov 7-11 (No class Nov 11) Second Thoughts: Essay 20

Week 12 Environment Second Thoughts: Essay 8

Nov 14-18 View: *Earth on Edge*

Week 13 Environment

Nov 21-25 **Thanksgiving Vacation Nov 23-25**

Week 14 War and Social Problems Gangs: Chapter 18, 19

Nov 28-Dec 2 View: *Why We Fight?*

Week 15 Review and Exam

Dec 5-9 **EXAM #3 WED DEC 7**