Introduction to Social Problems

Sociology 102 Fall 2012 Office: AH4217

Instructor: Tom Semm Phone: 594-5906

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Class Meets:

M, W, F HT 140 12:00PM-12:50PM

Office Hours:

M, W 1PM-2PM

Or by appointment

TEXTS:

Eitzen, D. Stanely and Maxine Baca Zinn. Social Problems. New York: Pearson: 2011. 12th Edition.

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 globally, give power to a few who determine the shape of society’s institutions and policies to their advantage. These arrangements of inequality cause significant social problems for the millions who are not the privileged few.

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 in the United States and globally, the undermining of the American political system by non-democratic forces, the downward mobility of the middle class, increasing poverty, the war on terror, the increasing cost of education, and consumer society’s destructive impact on the environment.

COURSE GOALS:

Students 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. Students 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 second page). The exams will consist of approximately seventy (70) questions, true/false, multiple choice, and matching. The questions will be from lectures, in-class videos, and the reading assignments (65%/35%). Students with an acceptable excuse may miss one exam at its scheduled time, but must make it up at my convenience. All make-up exams must be taken by the last regularly scheduled day of class. The total number of points for the course is approximately two hundred and ten (210).

I am a lecturer and not a disciplinarian. I will treat you as adults and with respect and expect to be treated likewise. This means do not carry on conversations while I am lecturing, read the Daily Aztec during class, or engage in any other non-course related technological activity. This includes talking on or checking your cell phone, texting, and/or social networking of any kind. Leaving class early is disrespectful and disruptive. If you need to leave class early, I need to be informed before class, and you need to sit in the back of the room.

Class Schedule

Date Topic Reading Assignment

I. U.S. and Social Problems

Week 1 Intro: Sociological Perspective and Vital Needs Eitzen Ch 1

Week 2 The Economy and Work Eitzen Ch 14

(Mon Sep 3 Holiday)

Week 3 Stratification: Wealth and Poverty Eitzen Ch 7

Week 4 American Political System: Plutocracy Eitzen Ch 2

Week 5 Mass Media and News democracynow.org

Week 6 Education Eitzen Ch 16

Exam #1 Wed Oct 3

Week 8 Health and Health Care Eitzen Ch 17

Week 9 Marriage and Family Eitzen, Ch 15

Week 10 Crime and the Criminal Justice System Eitzen Ch 12

Week 11 Racial and Gender Inequality Eitzen Ch 8 and 9

Exam #2 Wed Nov 7

II Global Social Problems

Week 12 Global Inequality Eitzen Ch 3

Week 13 Threats to the Environment Eitzen Ch 4

(Wed Nov 22-23 Thanksgiving Vacation)

Week 14 War on Terror Eitzen Ch 18

Week 15 Solving Social Problems Eitzen Ch 19

Exam #3 Wednesday Dec 5