“Sociology 102

Introduction to Social Problems

Instructor: Professor Tom Semm

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Class Meets:

Hardy Tower 140

MW12:00PM-12:50PM F Blackboard

Office Hours:

MW 10AM to 11AM.

TEXTS:

Eitzen, D. Stanely and Maxine Baca Zinn. Social Problems.

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 sixty (60) questions, true/false, multiple choice, and matching. The questions will be from lectures, in-class videos, and the reading assignments (65%/35%). Taking the exams at the scheduled times is mandatory. The only acceptable excuse is a medical or family emergency and such an excuse would require written documentation. The total number of points for the course is approximately one hundred and eighty (180). There also will be three extra credit opportunities which involve watching a documentary outside of class and then coming to talk to one of us.

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 or other newspapers 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. Arriving for class late and leaving class early is disrespectful and constitutes disruptive behavior. This is a violation of the student code of conduct and can be punished by decrease in grade, dismissal from class or the university. 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

Week Topic Reading Assignment/Chapter Title

I. American Society and Social Problems

Week 1 Sociological Perspective and Vital Needs “The Sociological Approach

to Social Problems”

Week 2 Stratification “Poverty”

Week 3 Economy/Work “Economy and Work”

Week 4 American Political System: Plutocracy “Wealth and Power: the Bias

of the System”

Week 5 **Review Mon Sep 23 and** **Exam #1 Wed Sep 25**

Week 6 Mass Media “Global Media”

Week 7 Education “Education”

Week 8 Health and Health Care “The Health Care System”

Week 9 Crime and the Criminal Justice System “Crime and Justice”

Week 10 **Review Mon Oct 28 and** **Exam #2 Wed Oct 30**

II. Global Social Problems

Week 11 Global Inequality “World Population and

Global Inequality”

Week 12 Environment “Threats to the Environment”

Week 13 “Global War on Terror “National Security in the

Twenty-first Century

Week 14 Global War on Terror

**(Thanksgiving Nov 28-29)**

Week 15 Solving Social Problems “Progressive Plan to Solve

Social Problems”

Week 16 **Review Mon Dec 9 and Exam #3 Dec 11**