Introduction to Social Problems

Sociology 102

Instructor: Tom Semm

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Class Meets: Office Hours:

NH 100 Tuesday and Thursday Prof Semm TTH 11:30AM-12:30PM and Wed 3PM to 4PM

12:30PM-1:45PM Jane TTh 11:00AM-2:00PM

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. Fifth 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, the decreasing quality of public 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 environment, and war and its consequences..

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 (5/08/12). 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 5/08/12 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, 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 for the first offense have ten points deducted from their grade and be denied the opportunity to do any extra credit. If there is a second offense, the student will fail the course. Simply put, if you can not stay off your cell phone or off Facebook for the class period, do not come to class or 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 Introduction to Social Problems Second Thoughts: Introduction

Week 2 Vital Needs Gangs: Intro, Chapters 1-3

Week 3 Inequality Gangs: Chapters 4-7

View: *Corporation* Second Thoughts: Essay 9

Week 4 Plutocracy Gangs: Chapters 11-13

View: *Bulworth*

Week 5 Mass Media Gangs: Chapters 14

Second Thoughts: Essay 13

Week 6 Mass Media Gangs: Chapter 14, 15

**EXAM #1 THURSDAY FEB 23**

**II. Inequality and American Institutions**

Week 7 Education Second Thoughts: Essay 22

Week 8 Work and Poverty Second Thoughts: Essays 12,19

View: *Foreign Service*

Week 9 Health and Health Care Second Thoughts: Essay 3

View: *Supersize Me*

Week 10 Marriage and Family Second Thoughts: Essays 4, 17,18

**EXAM #2 THURSDAY MARCH 22**

Week 11 **SPRING BREAK MARCH 26-30**

Week 12 Crime and the Criminal Second Thoughts: Essay 15

Justice System

**III. Global Social Problems**

Week 13 Global Inequality Gangs: Chapters 16, 17 Second Thoughts: Essay 20

Week 14 Environment Second Thoughts: Essay 14 View: *Earth on Edge*

Week 15 War and Social Problems Gangs: Chapters 18, 19

View: *Why We Fight?*

Week 16 American Empire

Week 17 **EXAM #3 TUESDAY MAY 8**