Sociology 102

Introduction to Social Problems

Instructor: Tom Semm

Office: AH4217

Phone: 594-5906

psemm@mail.sdsu.edu

Class Meets:

NH 100

TTh 12:30PM-1:45PM

Office Hours:

T 3PM-4PM

Th 11:15AM-12:15PM

W 3PM-4PM

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 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

Thurs Jan 17 Introduction

I. American Society and Social Problems

Week 1 Sociological Perspective and Vital Needs Eitzen Ch 1

Week 2 Economy and Work Eitzen Ch 14

Week 3 Stratification: Wealth and Poverty Eitzen Ch 7

Week 4 American Political System: Plutocracy Eitzen Ch 2

Week 5 **Review Tuesday Feb 19 and** **Exam #1 Thursday February 21**

Week 6 Mass Media “Global Media”

Week 7 Education Eitzen Ch 16

Week 8 Health and Health Care Eitzen Ch 17

Week 9 Crime and the Criminal Justice System Eitzen Ch 12

Week 10 **Review Tuesday March 26 and** **Exam #2 Thursday March 28**

Week 11 (April 1-5) SPRING BREAK

II. Global Social Problems

Week 12 Global Inequality Eitzen Ch 3

Week 13 Environment Eitzen Ch 4

Week 14 War on Terror Eitzen Ch 18

Week 15 Solving Social Problems Eitzen Ch 19

Week 16 **Exam #3 Tuesday May 7**