Sociology 433

Wealth, Status and Power

Instructor: Tom Semm

Office: NH211

e-mail: psemm@mail.sdsu.edu

Course Meets: Tuesday 3:30-6:10PM

Office Hours: Tuesday 2:30PM-3:30PM

**Required Text**:

Bacevich, Anthony. The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War.

Johnson, Chalmers. The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic.

Klein, Naomi**.** Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism.

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

Reich, Robert. Aftershock: The Next Economy and America’s Future

**Course Description**:

This course examines three of the most important concepts in the discipline of sociology, wealth, status and power. The value of the course however is not just that it illuminates the discipline of sociology more fully, but that the subject matter of the course is relevant for understanding society and one’s life experience. The first part of the course will examine the growing inequality in wealth and income in the United States and the consequences of this for the middle class, working class and the poor. The second part of the course will examine the rise of the corporation and corporate power in the United States, and analyze two theories of power, class domination theory and a theory the instructor calls the constellation of power. The third part of the course will examine global inequality and global power arrangements and the consequences for the peoples of the world. The last part of the course will examine Chalmers Johnson’s American Empire theory. Johnson argues that the United States is an empire that uses military power to achieve its imperial goals.

**Course Goals**:

1. The students should understand how the concepts of wealth, status and power function within the discipline of sociology.

2. The students should understand the relationship between increasing inequality and the concentration of power in American society and globally.

3. The students should have a better understanding of how wealth and power shape their life experience.

**Evaluation Process**:

There will be a total of 400 points.

Exams. There will be three exams each worth one hundred (100) points for a total of three hundred (300) points. The exams will be based on the lectures, the readings, in-class videos and out of class assignments.. The exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and matching. See Course Schedule for day and date.

Papers. There will be a paper assigned after the second exam. It is worth one hundred (100) points and must be at least five pages in length.

Quizzes. I will give occasional quizzes to evaluate student progress and to encourage students to keep up with the reading assignments..

**Class Conduct**

I will treat you as adults and with respect, and I expect to be treated likewise. From my point of view, disrespect includes students engaging in private conversations, reading the Daily Aztec, and non class related e-activity during class. I will give one polite warning, but if the activity continues, I will deduct enough points that the student will fail the course.

Class Schedule:

Meeting Topics Reading Assignments

Week 1 Introduction

Week 2 Inequality in U.S. Reich: Part I

Week 3 Downward Mobility Reich: Part II and III and Poverty

Week 4 Power in the U.S. Nace: Chapters 1thru 9

Week 5 Power in the U.S. Nace: Chapters 10 thru 19

Week 6 **Exam #1 Tuesday 9/30**

Week 7 Global Inequality Klein: Intro and Part I

Week 8 Global Power Arrangements Klein: Part 2

Week 9 Global Theories of Power Klein:: Part 3

Week 10 Global Theories of Power Klein: Part 5

Week 11 **Exam #2 Tuesday Nov 4**

Week 12 **Holiday-Veterans Day** Johnson: Chapters Prologue and 1

Bacevich: Preface, Intro and Chp 1

Week 13 American Empire Johnson: Chapters 2 and 3

Bacevich, Chapters 2.3 and 4

Week 14 American Empire Johnson: Chapters 4, 5, and 6

**Thanksgiving Nov 27-28** Bacevich: Chapters 5, 6 and 7

Week 15 Resistance to Power Johnson: Chapters 7, 8, and 9

**Paper Due Tuesday Dec 2** Bacevich: Chapters 8 ,9

Week 16 **Exam #3 Tuesday Dec 9**

To: All SDSU Faculty

From: Pamela J. Starr, Student Disability Services Director

Subject: Syllabus Statement for Students with Disabilities

With the fall 2014 semester approaching, I would like to remind you to include the below statement in your syllabus. The University Senate now requires that all faculty include this statement as written. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

SYLLABUS STATEMENT

for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.