Sociology 433

Wealth, Status and Power

Instructor: Tom Semm Office: NH 211

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Course Meets: Tuesday and Thursday 3:30-4:45PM

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

**Required Text**:

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

Chomsky, Noam. Profit Over People.

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

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, and in-class videos. The exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, fill-in, and short essay questions. 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.

**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

1/22-1/24

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

1/27-1/31

Week 3 Downward Mobility Reich: Part II and III

2/3-2/7 and Poverty

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

2/10-2/14

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

2/17-21

Week 6 **Exam #1 Tuesday 2/25**

2/24-2/28

Week 7 Global Inequality Chomsky: Intro. 1 and II

3/3-3/7

Week 8 Global Power Arrangements Chomsky: III, IV and V

3/10-3/14

Week 9 Global Theories of Power Chomsky: VI and VII

3/17-3/21

Week 10 **Exam #2 Tuesday 3/25**

3/24-3/28

Week 11 **Spring Break**

3/31-4/4

Week 12 American Empire Johnson: Chapters Prologue and 1

4/7-4/11 Bacevich: Preface, Intro and Chp 1

Week 13 American Empire Johnson: Chapters 2 and 3

4/14-18 Bacevich, Chapters 2.3 and 4

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

4/21-4/25 Bacevich: Chapters 5, 6 and 7

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

4/28-5/2 Bacevich: Chapters 8 ,9

Week 16 **Exam #3 Tuesday 5/6**

5/5-5/8