Sociology 433

Wealth, Status and Power

Instructor: Tom Semm Office: NH211

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Course Meets: Wednesday 4-6:40PM

Office Hours: Monday 1-2PM

Tuesday 10-11AM

Wednesday 3:15-4:00PM

**Required Text**:

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

Chomsky, Noam. Profit over People.

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 the society in which we live 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**:

Exams. There will be three exams, each exam will have approximately seventy (70) questions. 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. (Scantron 882).

Quizzes. I will give occasional quizzes to evaluate student progress and to encourage students to keep up with the reading assignments. Bring Scantron 815 (small green) to every class.

Extra Credit: There may be opportunities for extra credit.

**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:

Date 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 1,4,5,6

Week 5 Power in the U.S. Nace: Chapters 11,12,13

Week 6 **Exam #1 Wednesday 2/22**

Week 7 Global Inequality Klein: Intro, Chomsky Intro, I

Week 8 Global Power Arrangements Klein Part 1, Chomsky II

Nace 16

Week 9 Global Theories of Power Klein Part 2, Chomsky III, IV

Week 10 **Exam #2 Wednesday 3/22**

Week 11 **Spring Break 3/27-3/31**

Week 12 American Empire Johnson: Chapters Prologue and 1

Bacevich: Preface, Intro and Ch 1

Week 13 American Empire Johnson: Chapters 2 and 3

Bacevich, Chapters 2.3 and 4

Week 14 Fascism Johnson: Chapters 4, 5, and 6

Bacevich: Chapters 5, 6 and 7

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

Bacevich: Chapters 8, 9

Week 16 **Exam #3 Wednesday 5/3**

Final Grade: Total points and grade average will be posted on Blackboard.

A 92.5%-up B+ 87.5%-89.4% C+ 77.5%-79.4% F <60%

A- 89.5%-92.4% B 82.5-87.4 C 69.5%-77.4%

B- 79.5%-82.4% D <69.4%

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.

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.