Sociology 433

Wealth, Status and Power

Instructor: Tom Semm Spring 2009

Office: NH 204

Course Meets: TH 12:30-1:45PM

Office Hours: Mon 12PM-1PM, Wed 1:30PM-2:30PM e-mail: psemm@mail.sdsu.edu

T/Th 11:30AM-12:30PM 594-5906

**Required Text**:

Domhoff, G. William. *Who Rules American?* Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006. Fifth Edition.

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

Internet Assignments

Handouts

**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 each student’s life experience. The first part of the course will involve an analysis of the various theories of power. The second part of the course will look at power arrangements in America. Domhoff’s book *Who Rules America?* presents a power elite theory that challenges much of the conventional wisdom about power in American society. Along with Domhoff’s power elite theory, the course will focus on a structural theory of power which the instructor calls the constellation of power. The third part of the course will be an examination of global power arrangements. Again there will be a twofold focus, one on globalization theory which argues that multi-national corporations are the dominant institutions globally and are organizing the world economically, politically and culturally in their interests. The second focus will be on Chalmers Johnson’s theory that America is an empire that is using predominantly military means 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 implications of power arrangements in American and globally on their life opportunities.

3. The students should have a better understanding of American society.

**Evaluation Process**:

There will be a total of 300 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.

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 and Reading Assignments

Week 1 Who Rules America?

1/26-1/30 Domhoff, Chapter 1

Week 2 Wealth and Power: The Bias of the System

2/2-2/6 Domhoff, Chapter 2 and 3

Week 3 Political System and the Constellation of Power

2/9-2/13 Domhoff, Chapter 4 and 6

Week 4 Political System and the Constellation of Power

2/16-2/20 Domhoff, Chapter 7

Week 5 Review and Exam(Thursday 2/26)

2/24-2/27

Week 6 Media and Power

3/2-3/6 Domhoff, Chapter 5

Week 7 Media and Power

3/9-3/13 Handout (Blackboard)

Week 8 Law and Power

3/16-3/20 Domhoff, Chapter 8

Week 9

3/23-3/27 Review and Exam(Thursday 3/26)

SPRING BREAK

3/30-4/3

Week 10 Military-Industrial-Intelligence Complex

4/6-4/10 Handout (Blackboard)

Week 11 Global Power Arrangements

4/13-4/17 Johnson, Prologue and Chapter 1

Week 12 American Empire

4/20-4/24 Johnson, Chapters 2 and 3

Week 13 American Empire

4/27-5/1 Johnson, Chapters 4, 5, and 6

Week 14 Resistance to Power

5/4-5/8 Johnson, Chapters 7, 8, and 9

Week 15 Review and Exam(Tuesday 5/12)

5/11-5/13