San Diego State University

Sociology 150 Instructor: Tom Semm

Introduction to Social Problems Spring 2009

Class Meets: Office: NH204

M,W,F in NH100 11:00AM-11:50AM Phone:594-5906

Office Hours:

M 12PM-1:00PM and W 1-2PM

Or by appointment

TEXTS:

Eitzen, D. Stanely and Zinn. Social Problems (Tenth Edition).

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 the institutions and their policies and they do so to their advantage. These arrangements of inequality cause significant social problems for millions.

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, the bias of the political system, the downward mobility of the middle class, poverty, the war on terror, and the increasing cost of education. Global social problems will also be examined; among these will be the problems of increasing global inequality, the destruction of the environment, and human rights.

COURSE GOALS:

The student 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. The student 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 opposite page). The exams will consist of approximately sixty-five (65) questions, true/false, multiple choice, and matching. The questions will be from lectures, in-class videos, and the reading assignments (75%/25%). Students must have an authorized excuse for missing an exam. If an exam is missed, it must be made up at my convenience. All exams must be made up by the last regularly scheduled class (5/13). The total number of points for the course will be approximately two hundred (200).

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 to not talk while I am lecturing or read the Daily Aztec during class, or engage in any other non-course related technological activity. I will give a single polite warning, and then I will deduct enough “negative” class participation points that you will flunk the class.

**Class Schedule**

**Date Topic Reading Assignment**

**I. Inequality and Power**

Week 1(1/26-1/30) Intro: Vital Needs Eitzen Ch 1

Week 2(2/2-2/6) Inequality Eitzen Ch 2 (pp 23-37), 8 View: *The Corporation*

Week 3(2/9-2/13) Wealth and Power Eitzen Ch 2 (pp 38-56), 9 View: *Bulworth*

Week 4(2/16-2/20) Mass Media fair.org View: *Media Monopoly*  Semm, “Social Construction . . .”

**II. Inequality and American Institutions**

Week 5(2/23-2/27) Work and Poverty Eitzen Ch 14,7 View: *Foreign Service*

Week 6(3/2-3/6) Education Eitzen Ch 16

**EXAM #1 MON 3/2** View: *Supersize Me*

Week 7(3/9-3/13) Health and Health Care Eitzen Ch 17 View: *Supersize Me*

Week 8(3/16-3/20) Marriage and Family Eitzen, Ch 15

View: *The View from Mainstreet*

**III. Deviance and Social Problems**

Week 9(3/23-3/27) Crime and the Criminal Justice System Eitzen Ch 12

View: *Off the Clock, Death Penalty*

**SPRING BREAK 3/30 -4/3**

Week 10 (4/6-4/10) Sex and Drugs Eitzen Ch 10,13

View: Purity Ball

**IV. Global Social Problems**

Week 11(4/13-4/17) Global Inequality Eitzen Ch 3

**EXAM #2 MON 4/13** View: *Trading Democracy*

Week 12(4/20-4/24) Threats to the Environment Eitzen Ch 4

View: *Earth on Edge*

Week 13(4/27-5/1) War and Social Problems Eitzen Ch 18

Week 14 (5/4-5/8) Solving Social Problems Eitzen Ch 19

Week 15 (5/11-5/13) **EXAM #3 MON 5/11**