Course Description:

Building upon theory about society, social institutions, and persistent constraints imposed upon individuals by stratification, social norms, culture, and the dimensions of power that you’ve learned about in previous sociology courses, we will examine U.S. society along the dimensions of capitalism, inequality, and democracy. The course will focus upon addressing 1) accurate descriptions of society using fact based evidence and rational arguments, 2) explaining the rules and social structures that create inequities in power and resources, and 3) analyzing the contribution of the five cultural values embedded in American society: freedom, prosperity, efficiency, fairness, and democracy.

Your participation will enable you to better understand your society in the United States and to critically analyze and clearly communicate through discourse and writing about current social issues. From a cognitive learning perspective, I think that engaging in discourse enables students to integrate complex and new concepts, enabling the process of transferring new knowledge from short-term to long-term memory. My approach is to structure your learning experience to facilitate the assimilation of sociological theory and concepts into your cognitive knowledge base for present and future utilization in your academic experience and most importantly, in understanding the society in which you live.

Prerequisite: Sociology 200 – Introduction to Sociology. Audit available.

Required Readings:


Select a book of your choice from a designated list for your final paper: You are required to write an in-depth analysis based upon the application of sociological theory and concepts, evaluating a book of your choice selected from a listing of books under the heading Final Term Paper.

My Outcome Objectives for the Student:
1. Develop the ability to apply sociological concepts to better understand the structural and cultural dimensions of political discourse that empower and constrain public policy outcomes and individual opportunities along social class, gender, race, ethnicity, and other social grouping dimensions.
2. Develop a more detailed, scientific and fact-based accurate understanding of the diverse social and economic conditions of the people in the United States.
3. To think critically about the role of citizens in creating and implementing solutions to the social problems we challenge. To better understand what it means to enact democracy in real life choices and opportunities for citizens.
4. To improve your understanding of scientific theory and methodology that sociologists use to investigate social problems, to strengthen your ability to think critically, and to develop skills for respectful discourse and collaboration.

My Expectations of Students:

1. The course schedule is flexible. Assignments and exam dates are subject to changes in response to institutional, weather, and other circumstances.
2. Participation in class is an important factor in learning the material. Please come to class having read the required chapters and be prepared to discuss your perspectives and to address any questions you may have.
3. Discourse based on mutual respect for each other is a building block of the democratic process. I would like your assistance in creating an environment in which disagreements can be discussed in a respectful manner. Individuals may be sensitive about many of the topics we cover in class so we need to keep an open mind and actively listen to others. Let’s consistently uphold a standard of courtesy to your fellow classmates and the instructor at all times whether we agree with the expressed viewpoint or not.
4. **You may not text or use your cell phone during class.** Please be respectful of others and turn your cell phone off during class.

Grades:

15% Attendance & Participation
10% Present & submit 5 news articles on the presidential election or pertinent topic covered in the course
15% Paper on Capitalism
15% Paper on Inequality
15% Paper on Democracy
30% Term Paper

Papers handed in late will be docked a full letter grade. All papers are required to comply with requirements spelled out under the section entitled Term Paper.

**Attendance and Participation (15% of your grade)**
For a more effective learning experience, I encourage students to attend class consistently and to participate in class discussions. From a cognitive learning perspective, I believe that engaging in discourse enables students to integrate
complex and new concepts, transferring new knowledge from short-term to long-term memory. My approach is to structure your learning experience to facilitate the assimilation of sociological theory and concepts into your cognitive knowledge base for future use rather than to memorize facts in the short run in order to get a good grade on a test. In the final analysis, whether you learn or not will be determined by your efforts in preparation for class by doing the assigned readings before class and being willing to engage the material and participate in class discussions.

In order to encourage your participation and class attendance, students are required to sign in at the beginning of class. Of course, if you are ill, it is better for you to miss class and take the necessary time to regain your health. If an absence is unavoidable, please get notes from your colleagues and check D2L for any postings on what was covered during the missed session.

**Five news articles to be presented to the class (10% of grade)**
Make a short presentation to the class on a news article or video clip on the presidential election that is relevant to the topics we are discussing in class. You may also bring in articles on topics covered in class and your readings that may not be directly related to the presidential election. You are required to submit a copy of the article you present for grading. Suggested sources are the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and www.commondreams.org/

**Paper on Capitalism (15% of your grade):**
Assignment is a two-page paper addressing how systemic changes in capitalistic America create disparate and unequal outcomes for people of different social classes. How do cultural values embedded in American society support capitalism based on “free market” ideology? How does the emphasis on efficiency undermine democratic values? What is the role of consumerism, corporations, unions, media, and lobbyists in supporting the current economic system? Who wins, who loses? How well do capitalist markets advance the values of human freedom and human life? What is meant by high-road capitalism compared to low-road capitalism? What are the obstacles to transforming the capitalist system in the United States?

**Paper on Inequality (15% of grade)**
Assignment is a two-page paper exploring the problems of fairness and inequality in America. What do we mean by social justice? What public policy changes would you recommend to lessen social injustice? How does inequality impact democracy? How does inequality affect participation in the presidential race? How do both political parties address inequality? Is reduction of poverty a substantive part of either party platform? Why or why not? Explain how inequality is organized along the dimensions of social class, race and ethnicity, and gender. Why is poverty
a continuing problem in the United States? How does the upper class gain from poverty as a condition of society? How do the cultural values of American society create an acceptance of poverty and inequality among the poor? How do American cultural values shape public support of subsidies to corporations but not for subsidies for poor people? What are the prospects and constraints for an improvement of opportunity for the poor and working class or the long-term decrease of inequality in America?

**Paper on Democracy (15% of grade)**
Assignment is a two-page paper examining the way American democracy works, and why it sometimes fails to redress problems created by the market and resulting inequality. What do we mean by a democratic political system? What observations have you made about the current presidential election in relationship to the quality of U.S. democracy? What is the relationship between the monopoly of the media and the ability of citizens to access high quality information in order to make informed political decisions? What are the problems of militarism and empire in American democracy? How is the labor movement affected in a social environment that is overtly hostile to unions? How does this hostile legal and economic environment curtail a citizen’s involvement in the democratic process? How are citizens taking actions to revitalize democracy and what are the long-term outcomes of these efforts?

**Final Term Paper (30% of grade)**
Please choose one book to read and analyze from the following list of books:

**Topic - Poverty:**


**Topic - Corporate Control of the Media:**


**Topic - Militarism and Empire:**


Guidelines:
I would like you to develop a convincing argument that supports your thesis and
critical analysis of the book you’ve chosen to write about. If you wish, you may
include outside readings and references. Draw upon theories we’ve discussed in
class or other relevant theories you think are applicable in support of your thesis.
Clarity and strength of reasonable arguments are more important than the
position you’ve taken or the conclusions you draw. Offer academic evidence that
support your arguments. **Be sure that you are not simply summarizing points from the reading.**

I encourage you to address some of the following questions in your analysis:
- What were the strongest points or arguments made? What made them persuasive? What evidence was used?
- What were the weakest points or arguments made? Why were they not persuasive? What was lacking from the evidence provided? What kind of evidence would have been more persuasive? What issues or perspectives related to the topic are not addressed? How would the reading be strengthened from the inclusion of these perspectives?
- What are the public policy implications of this book? What policies do you think may improve the outcomes addressed in the book? What might activists learn from reading this book and how might this information shape their political strategies?

Papers should be 4 to 6 pages in length and exhibit clear and concise writing and
appropriate proofreading. Grades will be docked if papers show significant
problems with grammar, spelling, awkward sentences, improper usage of words
or formatting. Papers handed in late will be docked one full letter grade.

Paper Formatting Guidelines:
- Size 12 font
- One-inch margins on top, bottom, left and right margins.
- Paragraphs indented ½ of an inch
- All text double-spaced with no extra blank lines. Exception: quotes that
  are more than four lines in length should be single space and indented by
  5 spaces on both the right and left margins
- Page number on bottom of page

Course Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/24, 9/26</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION What Kind of Society is the American Society?</td>
<td>Chapter 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10/1, 10/3</td>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>Chapters 3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Chapter(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10/8, 10/10</td>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>6-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10/15, 10/17</td>
<td>Inequality, Class</td>
<td>10-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/15</td>
<td><strong>Paper on Capitalism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10/22, 10/24</td>
<td>Racial Inequality</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10/29, 10/31</td>
<td>Gender Inequality</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>11/5, 11/7</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>16 - 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/5</td>
<td><strong>Paper on Inequality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>Veteran’s Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/14</td>
<td>Democracy - Media</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>11/19, 11/21</td>
<td>Democracy - Militarism</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/21</td>
<td><strong>Paper on Democracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11/26, 11/28</td>
<td>Labor Unions</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Democracy from below</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

December 3: Term Paper due no later than 2 p.m. in the classroom.

You may turn in your paper early or leave it in my box in the sociology department by the above deadline. I would like a hard copy so please do not send your term paper as an email attachment.