SOC 410 Law & Society: The Sociology of Law

Class information: 2 – 3:50pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays, Engineering Building 93

Professor: Dr. Aaron Roussell, Cramer Hall 217Q, roussell@pdx.edu
Office hours: Wednesdays 10am – 12pm

Course Description:
This course examines different sociological theories of and empirical research on the origins, processes, functions, and actors of the social reality known as law. We will approach law as a social institution—one of several major areas of life (like family, religion, the economy, and education) that shapes and is shaped by society, and consider the role of the law in shaping society, including reinforcing and/or ameliorating class, gender, and racial inequalities. We will look at basic facts regarding the legal system as well as read case law to better understand the role that the law plays in everyday life and the reasoning that is used to determine legal outcomes.

Texts:
Other readings will be provided electronically.

Requirements:
First: Read the whole syllabus. Consult it before emailing me. Seriously, though, read it.
Completing the week’s reading assignments prior to class is of the utmost importance. Many of these readings are challenging, and I expect you to struggle to understand them. Knowing that everyone is struggling, please ask questions in class. Classroom discussion is a crucial part of your grade and is predicated on having read the material. Please come see me to discuss the material if you feel so inclined. I enjoy discussing course material with students so you needn’t be struggling to see me in office hours or after class. Although I encourage active and enthusiastic class participation, you MUST remain respectful of one another and me when engaging in classroom discussion. Rants and conversational trolling will not be tolerated, particularly those of a racist, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic nature.

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create an environment where learning is not only possible but encouraged. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination to PSU administration. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not bear this particular responsibility, you can find a list of those individuals. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your D2L.

Sometimes lateness and absences happen to good students. I encourage you to talk to me about these if/when they occurs. Otherwise, assignments submitted late will be subject to a 10% deduction per day beginning after the due date as determined by me. If you have a University-approved absence, let me know in advance or as soon as possible so that you can regain points that you may otherwise lose. Without an approved excuse, you may not get points for activities missed. If you and I reach a VERBAL understanding about these matters, THIS MUST BE CONFIRMED VIA EMAIL OR IT IS NOT VALID. I NEED A WRITTEN ELECTRONIC RECORD. If your work is super-duper late, still talk to me about it and it’s possible we can reach some sort of arrangement. Please use your PDX address for all official communication, not the D2L internal email system.
GRADING

Class participation: 10%

I’m not kidding even a little bit. Attend and actively participate, even if you aren’t presenting.

Class facilitation: 40%

Each student must facilitate two 30-minute class discussions on days of their choosing. Use open-ended, thought-provoking questions to guide the class in an analytic discussion of the *starred* material assigned for that day. You may spend a short portion of their time summarizing the material, but you can expect the entire class to have completed the reading and come to class prepared to discuss them. Email to the class (at least) 5 discussion questions based on the materials for the week for students to consider while reading. Questions should: 1) integrate and synthesize the various materials for the week; 2) build on readings and course material from previous weeks; 3) be open ended (no “yes” or “no” questions); and 4) meaningfully engage with the content in a thoughtful, analytic way. Be prepared to offer your own responses to these questions, but this is not the focus of the discussion. Remember: this assignment is primarily about generating class discussion, not presenting your own thoughts on the readings. Your classmates should be talking far more than you!

Legal consciousness assignment: 25% of final grade

This assignment comprises a 5-page paper using Ewick and Silbey’s legal consciousness framework. Interview two friends about their legal experiences—“legal” as defined broadly a la Ewick and Silbey. Using the legal consciousness framework, interpret their experiences, either summarizing the important pieces of their accounts or reproducing excerpted quotes from the interviews. Due Week 7, Tuesday May 16, by beginning of class.

Disorientation Guide/Alternative Collective Assignment: 25%

TBD

Disability Accommodations: If you need a disability-related accommodation, contact me privately and/or visit or call the Disability Resource Center Access Center (116 SMSU, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu).

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) plagiarism and cheating. It is inappropriate and unacceptable behavior and will not be tolerated. For more information, please consult the PSU Student Code of Conduct. http://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct and check out the handy plagiarism guide in Figure 1.

Discrimination: PSU tells me that they are committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, intimate partner violence (IPV), and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that PSU tries to have help and support available. PSU has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and on-housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Information about PSU’s support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found here or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672.
**Figure 1: Handy Plagiarism Guide**

**READINGS AND SCHEDULE**

My schedules are sometimes aspirational. If (when!) I make consequential changes to this schedule, I will notify you in class and/or by email:

**Week 1: Introduction**

Tuesday, April 4
Intro discussion

Thursday, April 6
Calavita: 1. Introduction
Calavita: 2. Types of society, types of law
Calavita: 3. Law in the everyday, everywhere

**Week 2: Law in the everyday**

Tuesday, April 11
University of Chicago Press.
University of Chicago Press.

Thursday, April 13: NO CLASS

**Week 3: Law? Order? Justice?**

Tuesday, April 18
Calavita: 4. Color of law
Calavita: 5. Many laws, many orders

Thursday, April 20
Calavita: 6. The talk vs. the walk of law

**Week 4: Legal “eras”: Legal formalism and legal realism/Social justice**

Tuesday, April 25

Thursday, April 27
*Calavita: 7. Law and social justice: Plus ça change*

**Week 5: Marx and the law**

Tuesday, May 2

Thursday, May 4
*Reiman, Jeffrey. (1979). Chapter 4: To the vanquished belong the spoils: Who is winning the losing war against crime. In *The rich get richer and the poor get prison*, pp. 111-142.

**Week 6: Language and the law: Law, gender, and sexual assault**

Tuesday, May 9
Thursday, May 11


**Week 7: Race, discrimination, and the law**

Tuesday, May 16


Thursday, May 18
Film: *Eyes on the Prize: The Keys to the Kingdom 1974 – 1980*  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zn2-TT_Bk1M&t=343s

**LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS PAPER DUE TUESDAY MAY 16 BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**

**Week 8: Race, discrimination, and the law**

Tuesday, May 23

Thursday, May 25


**Week 9 (May 30, June 1): Notions of freedom**

Tuesday, May 30


Thursday, June 1


**Week 10 (June 6, 8): Privacy and the freedom of speech**

Tuesday, June 6

Thursday, June 12

**Week 11: Final paper due by noon June 12**