

SOC 230: Sociology of the Law

TTH 11:00-12.15:15

Admin 310

Dr. Alecea Ritter-Standlee

Office Hours: MWF 1-2, TTH 10-11

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Course Description

Welcome to Sociology of the Law. This course will explore the complex relationships between the legal system and the everyday social world while exploring the importance of authority, power and identity. This course will challenge us to rethink the definition, role and meaning of “the law” in the contemporary social world. We will also consider its’ relationship to societal institutions and structures such as race and class. The primary goal of the course is to provide students with tools and knowledge to critically analyze and better understand their social environment and everyday notions of legal authority and experience.

Textbooks (Available at the Campus Bookstore and Online)

Calavitta, Kitty (2010) *Invitation to Law and Society: An Introduction to the Study of Real Law*

Alexander, Michelle (2012) *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard (BB)

Course Goals

- Students will be able to explain the organization and structure of the US legal system.
- Students will be able to explain the trends and patterns in relationships between group identity, including social status and power and in-group perceptions of the law.
- Students will analyze the historical and ongoing institutional inequalities within the legal system.
- Students will use their sociological imagination to make connections between institutional inequality and contemporary issues of race in the US.

Course Assignments and Grading

- **Attendance and Participation (10%):** You may have three absences throughout the semester. No excuse is required. More than three absences will result in a loss of points for course participation. Students with extraordinary circumstances are required to meet with me.
- **Mapping the Legal System Research Activity and Presentations (15%):** During a group research day, students' will developed a concept map to demonstrate the organization and structure of the legal system.
- **Mid-term Essay Exam (30%):** Students will have one week to complete their mid-term essay exam.
- **Final Paper (30%):** Using a combination of their own research, individual analytic skills and material presented in the class, students will write a 8-10 page essay that considers the following topic: Select one discussion area that we have addressed so far and present a persuasive argument in response to the question. Demonstrate your understanding of the material discussed in class and provide support based on additional research you have conducted outside of class. All supporting material must come from academically rigorous sources.
- **Case Study Questions (15%):** Working in Small Groups, students will prepare 3-4 discussion questions and develop 3-5 minute responses to each question. Questions will be turned into the instructor at the end of class. Students will be prepared to present their questions in the larger group and lead discussion on their questions during the large group activities.

Classroom Policies

The professor reserves the right to change the syllabus and assignments. Changes may be made to accommodate the specific needs of the class.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, including the giving or receiving of improper help on examinations or assignments, falsifying records, and plagiarism (the act of stealing and using, as one's own, the ideas or the expression of ideas of another) is not tolerated at Concord University. These behaviors can result in failure of the course or expulsion from the university. Please refer to page 39 of the university academic catalog for the consequences of academic dishonesty.

Academic Resources

Free Drop-In Tutoring is available in the Library, Student Center Study Lounge (2nd floor), and the Rahall Atrium. For specific information, contact the Academic Success Center (asc@concord.edu; 304-384-6074). The schedule will be posted online: <http://www.concord.edu/ss/node/4>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Concord University is committed to responding to the needs of students with disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please inform me at the beginning of the semester if you have a disability and are requesting accommodations. Students should register with CU's Disability Services Office, located in the Athens campus Jerry L. Beasley Student Center, Bottom Floor, across from the Campus Post Office. The Disability Services Office phone number is 304-384-6036 or you can email the Director Nancy Ellison at nellison@concord.edu for assistance.

Course Readings

Readings listed for each day of class in the course schedule are to have been read **prior** to coming to that day's class. Additional reading maybe assigned and will be distributed in class or on the course Blackboard website.

Student Athletes

Student athletes are required to notify me in advance to be excused from class and are responsible for making up all missing assignments and readings.

Classroom Conduct

This course is heavily reliant on discussion, which includes difficult dialogue at times. **This is an inclusive and safe classroom.** All discussion points and questions are valued; as such students are expected to treat one another and the professor thoughtfully and with respect. Racist, sexist, homophobic or other pejorative or discriminatory language will not be tolerated and students who insist on such behavior will be asked to leave the classroom.

Cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off before coming to class.

DO NOT text message or use your phone during class!

Course Schedule

Module One: Defining and Mapping the Law

Aug 16 - Introductions and Syllabus

Aug 18 - Lecture: The Law is Everywhere!

Reading: Calavita Chapter 3, "Law in the Everyday, Everywhere"

Authority and the Law

Aug 23 - Lecture: Authority and the State

Reading: Calavita Chapter 5, "Many Laws, Many Orders"

Aug 25 - Discussion: What Counts as Law?

Reading: Calavita Chapter 6, "The Talk Verses the Walk of Law"

Theories of the Law

Aug 30 - Lecture: Theories of Law

Reading: *Millie Simpson* (BB)

Sept 1 - Discussion: What makes good law?

Reading: Calavita Chapter 2, "Types of Society, Types of Law"

Organization and the Law

Sept 6 - Mapping the Legal System - Work Day (Library)

Sept 8 - Mapping the Legal System

Group Presentations

Module Two - The Law And Society

Relationships with the Law

Sept 13 - Film: Erin Brockovich

Sept 15 - Film: Erin Brockovich (continued)

More Relationships with the Law

Sept 20 - Lecture: Legal Authority and Power

Reading: "*Rita Michaels*" Ewick and Silbey (BB)

Sept 22 - Does the Law Exist outside of social norms?

Reading: "*Dwayne Franklin*" Ewick and Silbey (BB)

Still More Relationships with the Law

Sept 27 - Lecture: Playing the System

Reading: "*Charles Reed*" Ewick and Silbey (BB)

Sept 29 - Discussion: Can the Law be manipulated? What are the implications?

Reading: "*Nikos Stravos*" Ewick and Silbey (BB)

Course Reviews

Oct 4 - Guest Speakers: "Japanese Americans in WWII: A Search for Justice" (JACA)

Oct 6 - No Class, Fall Break

Inequality Under the Law

Oct 11 - Lecture: Power and Inequality

Reading: “*Bess Sherman*” Ewick and Silbey (BB)

Oct 13 - Can we trust the law? Is it applied equally?

Reading: “*Jamie Leeson*” Ewick and Silbey (BB)

Module Exam Week

Oct 18 - Module Essay Exam

Oct 20 - Module Exam Work Day

Module Three - The Law, Race and Social Inequality

Case Study: Law and Race

Oct 25 - Film: Prisons USA

Oct 27 - Film Discussion

Mid-term Exam Due

Case Study: Law and Race

Nov 1 - Small Group Discussion

Reading: Alexander Chapter 2, “The Lockdown”

Nov 3 - Large Group Discussion

Case Study: Law and Race

Nov 8 - Small Group Discussion

Reading: Alexander Chapter 3, “The Color of Justice”

Nov 10 - Large Group Discussion

Case Study: Law and Race

Nov 15 - Small Group Discussion

Reading: Alexander Chapter 4, “The Cruel Hand”

Nov 17 - Larger Group Discussion

Nov 22-24 - No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Course Wrap-up

Nov 29 - Required Individual Meetings for Final Paper

Dec 15 - Required Individual Meetings for Final Paper

Finals Week: Papers Due on Blackboard Tuesday Dec 6th by 5pm.