Law & Society
SOCIOLOGY and LEGAL STUDIES 206
Winter 2013
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 – 10:50 am
Fisk Hall 217

Professor    Laura Beth Nielsen
Sociology Department, 1810 Chicago Avenue
Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.
Email: l-nielsen@northwestern.edu

Graduate Teaching Assistants:
Carlo Felizardo: Felizardo@u.northwestern.edu
Yu-Han Jao: yuhanjao2011@u.northwestern.edu
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Course Description:

Law is everywhere. Law permits, prohibits, enables, legitimates, protects, and prosecutes citizens. Law shapes our day to day lives in countless ways. This course examines the connections and relationships of law and society using an interdisciplinary social science approach. As one of the founders of the Law and Society movement observed, “law is too important to leave to lawyers.” Accordingly, this course will borrow from several theoretical, disciplinary, and interdisciplinary perspectives (such as sociology, anthropology, political science, critical studies, psychology) in order to explore the sociology of law and law’s role primarily in the American context (but with some attention to international law and global human rights efforts). The thematic topics to be discussed include law and social control; law’s role in social change; as well as law’s capacity to reach into complex social relations and intervene in existing normative institutions, organizational structures, and the like.

In this course you will: Develop critical reading, thinking, and writing skills; learn about the structure of the American legal system; employ an interdisciplinary approach to sociolegal studies; compare and contrast social science theories of law; and develop insight into the relationships between law and society.

This is an interdisciplinary course: you are expected to draw on skills and experiences when reflecting on the material being discussed. Read the newspaper and bring questions and issues into the course discussions.

Readings ALL READINGS ARE REQUIRED:

A national newspaper every day during the quarter. This includes the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, or the Washington Post.
Our course reader available at Quartet Copy. Readings in the Course Reader are identified with [CR] in the list of assignments.

Kaaryn S. Gustafson, Cheating Welfare: Public Assistance and the Criminalization of Poverty (NYU Press, 2012)

**Grades:**

- First Midterm 25%  (in class on Jan 29)
- Assignment #1 25% (due Feb. 21 – no class that day, evening lecture)
- Discussion Section 10%  (for attendance AND participation)
- Second Midterm 40%  (in class March 5)

**Exams**

To be fair to all students, I will not give make-up exams without a documented illness. If you know now that you cannot make the midterms, then you should not take this course.

**Assignments**

Once during the quarter, you will submit a 3-5 page written assignment on a topic of my choosing. These will be submitted on paper (STAPLED together), printed on one side of the paper using Times New Roman 12 point font, double-spaced with 1 inch margins on all sides. READ this (seriously – read it). [http://blogs.nd.edu/erin-mcdonnell/insiders-guide-to-college-writing/](http://blogs.nd.edu/erin-mcdonnell/insiders-guide-to-college-writing/). AND, please email a copy to sociology206@gmail.com. It should be titled LASTNAME.doc

**Discussion Sections**

There are six discussion sections during the quarter. You attendance and participation are mandatory and constitute 10% of your grade. Why? Because part of the study of law is argumentation and rhetoric. Law is as oral as it is written. This is your chance to ask questions, play around with the arguments, and learn from each other.

**Other Stuff**

**Please be present when you are here.** This means come on time, do not multi-task, turn cell phones off or to vibrate, stay until the end, refrain from reading the newspaper, checking e-mail, texting your buddies, playing scrabble, etc. (but if you think you can beat me at Scrabble outside class time – bring it on!).

To make everyone in the class comfortable to try out new ideas, all participation will be professional and polite even (or especially) when we are discussing sensitive topics.

Feel free to give your notes to a student who missed a class. But **do not sell, give away, or otherwise make public the notes taken in my class** on any of the various websites that
facilitate this (or any other way that this is done). My lectures are my intellectual property and are not for sale unless I sell them.

Email Etiquette.

First, do you really need to email me? When I am NOT teaching, I get more email than I can effectively manage. So, my email is screened by my assistant, Katy Harris. This means I am never instantly accessible via email.

Second, your first source of information is the syllabus, the Blackboard site, a fellow student, your TA, and then me (in that order). You only need to email me about missing class if you have an extended illness or are travelling for sports (Go Cats!). If you are sick then drink lots of fluids and rest. But don’t email me. I also cannot answer long questions about substance to individual students via email. Ask the question in class! That way everyone benefits.

Finally, if you are going to email me, make it clear what you are asking of me. Propose a solution to your problem or issue. (e.g. Can I have an extra day because my printer broke? BTW, the answer to the printer question is no. Thumb drive. Library).

Any student with a verified disability requiring special accommodation should speak to me and to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (847-467-5330) as early as possible in the quarter, preferably within the first two weeks of the course. All discussions will remain confidential.

Class and Reading Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Unit I: Introduction to Law and Society (or, what are we doing here?)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TU</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Unit II: Theoretical Foundations of Law and Society</strong></th>
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<th><strong>DISCUSSION SECTIONS MEET THIS WEEK</strong></th>
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**Cultural Models**


**Structural Models**


**DISCUSSION SECTIONS MEET THIS WEEK**

**Conflict Models**


Theory 1: Sanction or Deterrence


Lawrence Friedman, “The Deterrence Curve,” excerpted in Law in Action: A Socio-Legal Reader (Foundation 2007). [CR]

NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK

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<tr>
<th>TU</th>
<th>1/29/13</th>
<th>In-Class Midterm #1 covers Units I and II.</th>
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<tr>
<td>TH</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>Theory 2: Conscience/Morality</td>
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DISCUSSION SECTIONS MEET THIS WEEK

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<tr>
<th>TU</th>
<th>2/5/13</th>
<th>Theory 3: Legitimacy and Respect for Authority</th>
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<th>TH</th>
<th>2/7/13</th>
<th>Legal Mobilization: Disputes as Social Constructs</th>
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DISCUSSION SECTIONS MEET THIS WEEK
Power and Courts


McCann, Haltom, and Bloom, “Java Jive: Genealogy of a Juridical Icon” excerpted in Law in Action: A Socio-Legal Reader (Foundation 2007). [CR]

Ordinary People


DISCUSSION SECTIONS MEET THIS WEEK


TH 2/21/13 Written Assignment #1 is due.
TODAY is the Legal Studies Program’s Law in Motion lecture at 4-5:15 pm Location TBA (reception to follow). No class in the morning, but this lecture is required unless you have checked in with us before.

Please also read: Cheating Welfare, chapters 1 and 2

Unit V: Putting It Together – A Sociolegal Study of Welfare and Crime

LAST WEEK OF DISCUSSION SECTIONS

TU 2/26/13 Cheating Welfare, chapters 3, 4, and 5

TH 2/28/13 Cheating Welfare, 6, 7, and 9

NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK

TU 3/5/13 MIDTERM #2 In Class

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