Sociology 318 Sociology of Law  
Winter 2013

Instructor: Robert L. Nelson  
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Office hours: Thursday 10-11 and by appointment

Time: T Th 3:30-4:50  
Room: 555 Clark Street 00B03

Course Description: This course examines the relationship between law and the distribution of power in society, with a particular emphasis on law and social change in the United States. Readings will be drawn from the social sciences and history, as well as selected court cases that raise critical questions about the role of race, gender, and sexual orientation in American society.

Teaching Method: The only class meetings are two 90-minute class meetings a week. There are no discussion sections. Class sessions are meant to provide an opportunity for active engagement with assigned readings. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss assigned material. Groups of students will be assigned responsibility for leading class discussions on a rotating basis.

Evaluation Method: Pass/Fail is not allowed. All students must take the course for a grade. Performance will be evaluated based on class participation and attendance and four short writing assignments. These will be weighted as follows: 1) Attendance and class participation: 2 points for each class attended up to a total of 30 points; and up to 20 points for contributing to class discussion. 2) 25 points for each of 4 writing assignments. Assignments are due in class on the day indicated in the schedule, unless I receive advance notice of a good excuse. Late papers automatically will receive reduced points.

1/8  T Introduction: What is Law? What is Sociology of Law? **Discuss Assignment One-Due 1/15**

1/10 Th Law, Meaning, and Power
   Readings: Engel (pp.1-17), Nielsen (pp.18-36)

1/15 T Genocide and International Law
   Reading: Hagan book: Chs. 1,2
   **Assignment One Due in Class**

1/17 Th Criminology and Genocide
   Reading: Hagan book: Chs. 3, 4

1/22 T Proving Genocide
   Reading: Hagan book: Chs. 5, 6

1/24 Th Race and Genocide
   Reading: Hagan book: Chs. 7, 8 **Assignment Two Due in Class**

1/29 T “Litigation Crisis”: Social Construction of Legal Knowledge
   Reading: Haltom book: Chs. 1, 2

1/31 Th The Civil Litigation System and Lawyers
   Reading: Haltom book: Chs. 3, 4

2/5 T Media Misrepresentation of Litigation
   Reading: Haltom book: Chs. 5, 6

2/7 Th No Class

2/12 T Law and Mass Politics
   Reading: Haltom book: Chs. 7, 8
   **Assignment Three Due in Class**

2/14 Th Courts and Social Change – Race
2/19 T Courts and Social Change – Sexual Orientation  
Readings: Bowers v. Hardwick (pp.171-187), Lawrence v. Texas (pp.188-208); Varnum v. Brien (pp. 230-256)

2/21 Th Courts and Social Change – Sexual Orientation  
NO CLASS: MANDATORY ATTENDANCE AT LEGAL STUDIES LECTURE BY PAUL SMITH, PLAINTIFFS’ ATTORNEY IN LAWRENCE v. TEXAS

2/26 T Courts and Social Change – Anti-Gay Discrimination; Gender Discrimination  
Readings: Tilcsik (pp. 209-229); Nelson and Bridges (pp. 132-152);  
Optional Readings: Wal-mart v. Dukes (pp. 90-131), England (pp. 153-170)

2/28 Th Race and Mass Incarceration  
Readings: Alexander Introduction, Ch 1

3/5 T Race and Mass Incarceration  
Readings: Alexander Chs. 2, 3

3/7 Th Race and Mass Incarceration  
Readings: Alexander Ch. 5; Optional Readings: Chs. 4, 6

**Assignment 4 Due on Tuesday 3/12- Turn into Professor Nelson’s Mailbox in Sociology at 1810 Chicago Avenue before 4 pm**