SOCI 230-08
The Sociology of Law and Public Policy:
Defining Social Problems and Creating Change

Instructor: Michael Stambolis-Ruhstorfer
Email: stambolm@dickinson.edu (Please list your name and the title of the course in the subject your email. Note: I will respond to email within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend.)
Office Hours: Mondays 3pm-4pm; Wednesdays and Fridays 10:30am-11:30am; or by appointment.
Office: Denny 113

Course Statement

What is the law and what are public policy interventions? This course invites you to think about these questions by revealing the people and processes behind these institutions integral to contemporary democracies. We will cover the theoretical and methodological foundations of the sociology of law and public policy. You will also learn about the people and groups who produce, dispense, and interpret the law as well as the effects (intentional or not) their actions have on our lives. Finally, through examples of current issues, such as same-sex marriage, sexual harassment, and “fatherhood politics,” we will explore how people resist laws and policies as they fight for change in an increasingly globalized world.

Evaluation

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Two essays (6 pages each)</td>
<td>45% (20% for first, 25% for second)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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Attendance Policy

Class discussion and participation are important for this course. Attendance is therefore mandatory. You are allowed two unexcused absences for the term. For each additional class that you miss and are unable to participate in, your final grade will be reduced by 3.6%. Formal evidence of an illness or death in the family can be used to excuse an absence (e.g., emergency room notice).

Readings

Weekly readings will be posted to the course website. In addition, we will be reading from the following book, which can be purchased at the College Bookstore or online:


**Overview**

Week 1: Introduction
Week 2: Theoretical Foundations
Week 3: Culture, Structure, and the Law
Week 4: Lawyers, and Juries
Week 5: Law in Everyday Lives and Legal Consciousness
Week 6: Creating Legal Change
Week 7: Law and “Experts” / Essay 1 Due
Week 8: Spring Break
Week 9: A Sociological Reframing of Civil Rights. The Case of “Covering”
Week 10: From Law to Public Policy / Midterm
Week 11: Defining Problems – Problematizing issues and measuring them
Week 12: Defining Problems – The Importance of Causal Narratives
Week 13: Defining Problems – Disseminating information and trust / Youth, Homelessness, and Health Policy (Part I)
Week 14: Youth, Homelessness, and Health Policy (Part II) / Social Movements – The Case of Fatherhood Politics Part I
Week 15: Social Movements - The Case of Fatherhood Politics Part II / Essay 2 Due

**Detailed Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction**
- Monday, Jan. 25
- Wednesday, Jan. 27

**Week 2: Theoretical Foundations**
- Monday, Feb. 1
  - Calavita: Chapter 5 – “Many Laws, Many Orders”
- Wednesday, Feb. 3

**Week 3: Culture, Structure, and the Law**
- Monday, Feb. 8
• Wednesday, Feb. 10

Week 4: Lawyers and Juries
• Monday, Feb. 15
• Wednesday, Feb. 17

Week 5: Law in Everyday Lives and Legal Consciousness
• Monday, Feb. 22
  • Calavita: Chapter 3 “Law in the Everyday, Everywhere”
• Wednesday, Feb. 24

Week 6: Creating Legal Change
• Monday, Feb. 29
  o Calavita: Chapter 7 “Law and Social Justice”
• Wednesday, March 2

Week 7: Law and “Experts” / Essay 1 Due
• Monday, March 7 (Essay 1 Due)
  o Stone: Chapter 14 – Facts
• Wednesday, March 9
Week 8: Spring Break

Week 9: A Sociological Reframing of Civil Rights. The Case of “Covering”
- Monday, March 21
- Wednesday, March 23
  - Yoshino, “Sex-Based Covering”; Part Three

Week 10: From Law to Public Policy/ Midterm
- Monday, March 28
  - In-Class Midterm (covering weeks 1-9)
- Wednesday, March 30
  - Stone Chapter 7 – “Symbols”

Week 11: Defining Problems – Problematizing issues and measuring them
- Monday, April 4
- Wednesday, April 6
  - Stone Chapter 8 – “Numbers”

Week 12: Defining Problems – The Importance of Causal Narratives
- Monday, April 11
  - Stone Chapter 9 – “Causes”
- Tuesday, April 12: Mandatory Attendance at Clarke Forum Event – David Paternotte: *Gender Ideology*. NOTE: You will get 1 extra credit point on your final grade by attending.
- Wednesday, April 13

Week 13: Defining Problems – Disseminating information and trust / Youth, Homelessness, and Health Policy (Part I)
- Monday, April 18
  - Arbuckle, J. Gordon, Lois Wright Morton, and Jon Hobbs. 2015. “Understanding Farmer Perspectives on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation: The Roles of
Trust in Sources of Climate Information, Climate Change Beliefs, and Perceived Risk.” Environment and Behavior 47(2):205.

• Wednesday, April 20

**Week 14: Youth, Homelessness, and Health Policy (Part II) / Social Movements – The Case of Fatherhood Politics Part I**

• Monday, April 25
  o Class Guest speakers: Barabara DiPietro, PhD (Senior Director of Policy, National Healthcare for the Homeless Council). Elizabeth Stambolis, RN, CPNP (Director of Pediatrics Healthcare for the Homeless, Baltimore)
  o Reading TBD

• Wednesday, April 27

**Week 15: Social Movements - The Case of Fatherhood Politics Part II / Essay 2 Due**

• Monday, May 2 (Essay 2 Due)
  o Gavanas, Chapter 2 – “Pro-Marriage Fatherhood”

• Wednesday, May 4
  o Wrapping Up

**Assignments and responsibilities**

**Expectations for essays**

*Essays 1 and 2:* You will receive the essay prompts in class three weeks before the paper is due.

*Formatting:* Your essays should be no more than 6 double-spaced pages, including references (Times New Roman 12 point font, 1” margins).

*Academic honesty:* Take all precautions to ensure that your writing is your own. We will be discussing how to properly and clearly cite your sources. You will submit your essays at the beginning of class on the day they are due.

**Expectations for midterm**

The in-class midterm (40 minutes) will cover course materials from weeks 1 through 9. You will be expected to answer a series of multiple choice and short-answer questions.

**Expectations for final**

The Final Exam will be cumulative and cover material from the full semester but weighted more heavily toward weeks 10-15. The Final will be a take home exam.
following a similar format to the midterm and will be administered via the course Moodle. You will have 2 hours to complete the exam once you begin and you must complete the exam by 4 pm on May 17. We will have short review sessions during the class session before each exam as well as on the last day of the course.

Expectations for class participation and presentations
In addition to arriving to class having completed the readings, you are expected to actively participate in class discussions. It is perfectly normal to have difficulty understanding concepts. If we do not understand an author’s ideas, it is often because he or she is unclear or uses opaque writing. I therefore encourage you to come to class with your questions and ideas.

You will each also be responsible for presenting and critiquing one of the course readings and leading a discussion about it. You will sign for a specific presentation day at the beginning of the semester. You are expected to come to office hours to discuss your presentation beforehand in order to make sure that I can help you with any questions you might have with the reading.