Sociology of Law – REVISED 9/2/11  
Legal Studies 184 (Fall 2011)  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30-5:00

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course explores sociological understandings of law and legal institutions. We will address questions such as Why do societies have law? What is the relationship between law and social norms or values? Is law a mechanism for coordinating human activity toward the common good, or a vehicle for conflict and oppression? Why do people obey the law, and why do people punish lawbreakers? When does law stabilize society, and when does law promote social change? Is everyone equal under the law or does the law provide more resources to some social groups than to others? Although sociological perspectives are emphasized, this course takes an interdisciplinary approach that also includes psychology, political science, and legal scholarship.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Section Participation</th>
<th>20%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Short Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Final</td>
<td>30%</td>
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COURSE MATERIALS
Gerald N. Stern, The Buffalo Creek Disaster (for discussion section)  
bspace = Course Readings (available through the course bspace page).

ASSIGNED READINGS
Readings are listed by date on the syllabus and can be found either in the Macaulay, Friedman, & Mertz text or the course readings on bspace. It is important that you keep up with the required reading and you may want to read a bit ahead. From time to time additional readings may be assigned, and/or assigned readings may be omitted. You should read Gerald Stern’s The Buffalo Creek Disaster for your discussion section (check with your GSI on timing).

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS
If you have a disability that may require accommodations please speak to your GSI early in the semester (i.e. in the first two weeks) to make arrangements.
TARDINESS
Please do not arrive late to class as it is disruptive both to me and to your classmates. Repeated tardiness will result in a lower grade.

CELL PHONES
Please turn off cell phones during lecture and section meetings; this includes text messaging. In addition, cell phones may not be used in any way during exams, including as a watch or time keeper – plan ahead. Failure to comply with this policy will result in a lower grade.

EXAMS
The midterm is Thursday, October 13 during the regular class period. The final exam is Friday, December 16 from 7:00-10:00 PM.

Out of a concern for fairness to all students, there will be no make-up exams except in the case of documented extreme illness. Please mark your calendar now with the exam times so that you are sure that you can be there. If you cannot, you should not take the course this semester.

Exams will consist of some combination of short answer, multiple choice, and essay questions. The midterm exam will cover Units I and II. The final exam will focus on Units III and IV, but may also include concepts from Units I and II. All exams will begin promptly at the beginning of the class or exam period, and will end at the end of the class or exam period. Students who arrive late must still turn their exams in at the end of the class or exam period. Exams will be closed book and closed notes. Although this should be obvious, it bears stating explicitly: cheating on exams will result in a failing grade for the course.

SHORT ESSAY
The short essay assignment will be posted on bspace on or by October 18, 2011 and will be due in class on November 22, 2011. With the exception of documented extreme illness, late essays will not be accepted! If you do not hand in an essay to your GSI by the beginning of the class period (3:40 PM) on November 22, 2011, you will receive zero points for this assignment.

ATTENDANCE
Attendance is required in the sense that exams will be based on both lecture and assigned reading materials. You are responsible for all lecture materials and for any announcements made in class, whether or not you are present. Also, there will be no additional screenings of the videos presented throughout the semester. If you miss class on one of these days you should ask a classmate to review their notes from that day. You are required to attend section meetings; 20% of your grade is based on section attendance and participation. If you must miss class for a prolonged period due to serious illness, you should speak to your GSI or to me as soon as possible.

OFFICE HOURS
My office hours will be Mondays from 10 AM-12 PM (sign up) and Wednesdays 11AM-12 PM (drop in). Sign-up sheets are posted outside my office; you are welcome to drop in during open time slots if there are any. You should contact your GSI first with questions about course logistics, but feel free to come by during my office hours to discuss course materials or questions, career questions, or anything else. I would prefer that you not drop by my office except during office hours; if you cannot come to my regular office hours please make an appointment. I may on occasion need to change or cancel office hours due to administrative commitments and will provide as much notice as possible of any changes.
August 25: Introduction to Course

UNIT I: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF LAW

QUESTIONS FOR THIS UNIT:

What is the relationship between custom and law?
What is the relationship between social structure and law?
What is the relationship between power and law?
Broadly speaking, what is the relationship between law and society?

August 30: Law and Custom (Cultural Model)


Rogers v. American Airlines, Inc. 527 F Supp. 229


September 1: Law and Social Structure (Structural Model)


September 6: Law and Social Class (Conflict Model)


September 8: Conflict Model continued, and Review


September 13: The Origins of the Law & Society Movement – Law in Action


MF&M, Chapter 1, pp. 1-18.

UNIT II: DISPUTING

QUESTIONS FOR THIS UNIT:
- What is the process through which disputes emerge?
- How and why do people mobilize (or not mobilize) the law?
- What are the various modes of dispute resolution?
- How do social advantages and disadvantages matter in dispute resolution?

September 15: Legal Mobilization -- Disputes as Social Constructs


September 20: Informal Civil Disputing – Bargaining


September 22: Informal Civil Disputing – Communities and Norms


September 27: Power in Disputing


September 29: Power and Culture in Dispute Resolution


Film: Hot Coffee (if available; if not, Justice for Sale)

October 4: Disputing and Dispute Mobilization in Schools


Guest Lecturers: Professors Calvin Morrill and Michael Musheno on Youth Conflict: Culture and Control in a Multiethnic Urban High School (book in progress)
October 6: Alternative Dispute Resolution and Informal Dispute Resolution


October 11: Review

October 13: Midterm Exam (in class)

UNIT III: LEGAL ACTORS AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

QUESTIONS FOR THIS UNIT:
- What roles do various actors play in the legal system?
- How do those roles diverge from what the formal model would predict? Okay
- How do juries make decisions?
- How do judges, lawyers, and juries help to perpetuate or constrain social inequality and social change?

October 18: How Impartial are Judges?

Introduction to section on judges, MF&M: 729-731.


SHORT ESSAY ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT IN CLASS
October 20: Lawyers and Social Stratification


October 25: Juries as Social Conscience


Video: Inside the Jury Room

October 27: The Limits of Regulation - Individuals


November 1: The Limits of Regulation - Organizations


UNIT IV: LAW, INEQUALITY, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

QUESTIONS FOR THIS UNIT:
What is the relationship between social change and legal change?
How do legal rights matter?
How valuable are legal rights?
How do class, race, gender matter in the legal system?

November 3: Film-The Road to Brown

November 8: Law and Social Change


November 10: Can Law Change Society?


November 15: The Rights Debate


November 17: Intersectionality


November 22: Rights Consciousness, Legal Consciousness, and Resistance


SHORT ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE

November 24: Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class

November 29: Law and Social Movements


December 1: Review

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 16  7:00-10:00 PM