Sample Syllabus for Law and Society

Description
What is the relationship between laws, policies, and social life? In this course, students will be looking at this relationship by examining a selection of U.S. Supreme Court rulings and how they have affected the nature of social interaction in the United States. We will begin with a sociological introduction to mores, folkways and codified law, and discuss how the founding principles of the nation may be both liberating and restrictive. Students are expected to have knowledge of the U.S. constitution, especially the Bill of Rights and other amendments. Copies of the constitution and amendments are available for free on line, and in many dictionaries and almanacs.

We will begin our study of Supreme Court decisions by looking at two death penalty cases, followed by a class exercise where students will view a crime documentary and then engage in deliberation of the evidence in an attempt to reach a unanimous verdict. Other thematic areas we will address include: speech, education, family and sexuality. Within each area, sociological issues related to collective identity and power will be explored.

Since the concern of the course is law and social interaction, language is the arena of our engagement. Students will be writing regularly, with both in-class and outside assignments.

Students successfully completing the course will have expanded their knowledge of law and its relationship to social life, will have become familiar with current debates in the thematic areas of study and the Court's interpretation of rights, and will have developed critical thinking and writing skills. Course grades are ultimately measures of the degree to which the Professor will be able to honestly vouch for a given student's abilities in mastering the materials presented in this course.

Required Readings
Choper. (2007). High Court Cases on Constitutional Law (High Court Case Summaries).
Constitution of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma
Constitution of the People’s Republic of China
Constitution of the Republic of Haiti
Constitution of the United States of America
Kuwait Constitution and Resolutions

Required Viewing

Assessment
Participation..................30%
(Includes Attendance and In-Class assignments)
Reflection Papers..............70%
Policies

Absence: Absences will be excused under program guidelines only. The Professor retains the option of assigning penalties for unexcused absences.

Academic Code of Conduct: Students are expected to follow the Summer Discovery Academic Code of Conduct, as well as the academic policies of Northeastern University.

Academic Honesty: It is assumed that students will make a good-faith effort to properly cite the work of others when applicable. Failure to indicate sources will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possible official disciplinary action.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken during every class meeting.

Late Submissions: Reflection papers 1 – 6 may be submitted after their due dates, but with a penalty of 10% per day (M-Th) late.

Note Taking: Class notes are to be written by hand on paper, unless a University-recognized disability requires otherwise.

Participation: Participation involves taking part in class discussions & activities, submitting assignments on time, and otherwise demonstrating an active engagement with the course. Participation will be measured.

Rewrites: Rewrites of papers will be accepted until the final day of class.

Written Work: All outside written work is to be typed and double-spaced. When more than one page, papers should be fastened with a paper clip or a staple. Failure to meet any of these requirements will result in a 10% deduction from the paper grade, per unmet requirement.

Schedule

Introduction; Sociological Theories and Law; Comparative Constitutions

Paradise Lost; Jury Exercise; Speech & the Press
Class exercise
Reflection Paper #2
Reflection paper #3

Student Speech; Obscenity; Education
Class exercise
Reflection Paper #4
Reflection Paper #5

Family; Sexuality; Bush v. Gore & Synopsis
Class exercise
Reflection Paper #6
Reflection Paper #7