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**Sociology 4270: Sociology of Law
Spring 2015**

**Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 11:30 am – 12:20 pm
SS 113**

Course overview

Law is a fundamental part of the social world. It is constantly shaping our lives, just as we are constantly shaping it. This course considers the intersection of people and the law, especially in the realms of everyday experiences with the law. We also will consider two current issues in the realm of law – the incarceration of African American men and undocumented immigration. Additionally, we will closely consider the effects of the law through a community engagement component, where you will be connecting these issues with the local community.

By the end of this course, you should understand how we socially construct the law through interaction with others; how it affects us in our everyday lives; how it both perpetuates and addresses inequalities in our society; and how it is a force for changing our world. You will gain experience in work that directly considers legal issues in the community. You will also gain improved skills in public speaking, writing, and critical thinking and analysis.

Required readings

Michelle Alexander. 2012. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press. ISBN: 978-1595586438

David Bacon. 2009. *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants*. Boston, MA: Beacon. ISBN: 978-080704230-4

Patricia Ewick and Susan S. Silbey. 1998. *The Common Place of Law: Stories from Everyday Life*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 978-0226227443

Course handouts available online on the course website.

Course requirements and grade percentages

Community engagement project	35%
Reaction posts	50%
Weekly presentations	5%
Participation	10%

Community engagement project – In order to connect the course materials with real world examples, as well as connect this academic work with efforts that will benefit people in the area, I am asking you to be involved in a community engagement project. This will involve **community engagement hours**, a **twelve page reflection paper**, and a **group presentation of your reflections**. See **page 5** for details. **(35%)**

Reaction posts – To help you keep up with and process the class material, I am asking you to post **nine weekly reactions to the material on the course discussion board**. These must be **at least 500 words** (this paragraph has 136 words), and they must include **at least two direct quotes** from each reading, with proper citations. They also **must address each of the following numbered points**:

- 1) What you see as the main point(s) of the readings.
- 2) How the readings fit the course, readings from previous weeks, etc.
- 3) Your reactions – what did you find important, interesting, confusing, or controversial?

The posts are due online on **the Sunday before we discuss the material by 6 pm** (or Tuesday, when no class on Monday). I **will not** accept late posts. **(9 reaction posts X 5% each + one free post = 50%)**

Weekly presentations – In order to further discuss and digest the material, I am asking you to collectively present a week's readings to the class. Your task for the presentation will be to **facilitate a discussion**. This involves **three parts**: 1) asking the class questions regarding the main points of the readings, 2) discussing confusing and/or controversial sections, and 3) asking critical questions regarding how the articles fit with the course and your assessments of them. I will grade down presentations without each of these three parts. **(5%)**

Participation – I will also be observing your participation by taking roll at the beginning of each class period and monitoring your preparation and involvement while there. **(10%)**

Disclaimers

- My preferred method of contact is in person, then by email. Please do **NOT** contact me through Canvas.
- If you miss an assignment, be in touch with me as soon as possible. I am much more sympathetic to those who contact me before missing the assignment.
- Cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism – the use of others' words and/or ideas without clearly acknowledging their source – is also a form of cheating. I will take appropriate disciplinary action against offenders.
- If you are a student with a disability and require classroom accommodations, please meet with me to discuss arrangements (If you have not yet contacted Services for Students with Disabilities, please do so – Student Services Center, Room 181 or call (801) 626-6413).
- This syllabus, including all readings and assignments, is subject to change given the flow of the course and unforeseen circumstances. I may deliver such updates by email (including instructions on what to do if the university is closed for an extended period of time) so please regularly check your Weber email address or be sure that it forwards to your regular address.

Reading and lecture schedule

Part One: The social construction of law

WEEK ONE – Introduction
(January 12-16)

WEEK TWO – Everyday law
(January 21, 23)

No class – Monday, January 19th

- Ewick and Silby “Millie Simpson” (3-14)
- Ewick and Silby “The Common Place of Law” (15-32)

WEEK THREE – The development of law
(January 26-30)

- Alexander “Introduction” (1-19)
- Toobin “So You Think You Know the Second Amendment?” (ONLINE)

WEEK FOUR – The development of law, continued
(February 2-6)

- Alexander “The Rebirth of Caste” (20-57)
- Bacon “Illegal People or Illegal Work?” (199-214)

Part Two: The effects of law

WEEK FIVE – Law and power
(February 9-13)

- Ewick and Silby “Before the Law” (57-107)
- Caleb Mason – “Jay-Z’s 99 Problems, Verse 2: A Close Reading with Fourth Amendment Guidance for Cops and Perps” (skim, ONLINE)

WEEK SIX – Law and power, continued
(February 18, 20)

No class – Monday, February 16th

- Alexander “The Lockdown” (58-94)
- Alexander “The Color of Justice” (95-136)

WEEK SEVEN – The “game” of law
(February 23-27)

- Ewick and Silby “With the Law” (108-164)

WEEK EIGHT – The prison game
(*March 2-6*)

- Alexander “The Cruel Hand” (137-172)

WEEK NINE – Spring break
(*March 9-13*)

No class

WEEK TEN – The immigration game
(*March 16-20*)

- Bacon “Displacement and Migration” (70-81)
- Roberto G. Gonzales (2011) “Learning to Be Illegal: Undocumented Youth and Shifting Legal Contexts in the Transition to Adulthood” (ONLINE)

Part Three: Challenging the law
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WEEK ELEVEN – Everyday resistance
(*March 23-27*)

- Ewick and Silby “Against the Law” (165-220)

WEEK TWELVE – Collective resistance: Unionizing
(*March 30 – April 3*)

- Bacon “Which Side Are You On?” (119-166)

WEEK THIRTEEN – Collective resistance: Protest
(*April 6-10*)

- Vargas “Not Legal Not Leaving” (ONLINE)
- Jones “Coming Out Illegal” (ONLINE)
- El Nasser “Immigration protest movement gains new impetus” (ONLINE)

WEEK FOURTEEN – Collective resistance: Policy
(*April 13-17*)

- Braga, et al. “Problem-Oriented Policing, Deterrence, and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Boston’s Operation Ceasefire” (ONLINE)

Reflection paper due in class – Friday, April 17th

Part Four: Community engagement presentation

WEEK FIFTEEN – Reflection presentations
(*April 20-24*)

Community engagement project

The community engagement project will give you “real world” experience with legal issues by using the lens of the local community. This work will complement what you will be learning in the classroom. The assignment involves three parts:

Service hours (10%) – You are required to complete **ten hours of work on a community project**. Engaging in service hours involves three steps:

- 1) **Register.** Go to <http://weber.edu/CommunityInvolvement> and click on “Register” in the drop down menu labeled “Students.”
- 2) **Work.** Complete your service hours.
- 3) **Document.** Have your hours officially documented through CCEL. All hours for the semester should be turned in by Monday, April 13th.

Reflection paper (20%) – In order to reflect on your experience, as well as connect it to what we are learning in class, I am asking you to complete a **twelve page paper**. It should be well supported with evidence from the readings and your experiences with the project. The paper is **due in class on Friday, April 17th**. Assignments received after this will be marked down 4 points (from 20 to 16), then 4 points for each day late. The paper involves **three main parts**:

- 1) Briefly **explain what you did** for your service hours – who, what, where, how, and why. (*About one paragraph*)
- 2) How did this work **connect with what you learned in class**?
 - a) Ewick and Silby argue that people understand legality in three main ways – “before,” “with,” and “against” the law. Explain their argument, and then explain how you saw people understanding the law as before, with, and/or against. (*About three pages*)
 - b) In *The New Jim Crow*, Alexander argues that the law is used to target and oppress minorities, forming a largely hidden racial caste system. Explain her position, then analyze how your service experience may have supported and/or challenged her argument. (*About three pages*)
 - c) In *Illegal People*, Bacon argues that the legal category of “undocumented” developed from an assortment of external social forces – historical, legal, economic, political, and international. Explain his argument, then explain the external forces that influenced your project. (*About three pages*)
- 3) Explain **what you personally learned** about the intersection of the law and your community while you were completing the project. Why was this project important? Who benefited? Also, what are you going to do with the knowledge you have gained? (*About three pages*)

Group reflection presentation (5%) – In order to further reflect upon your community engagement assignment and share your experiences with the class, I am asking you to **collectively present your reflections** on the assignment. They should be clear and well organized, focusing on part three of your reaction paper by discussing similarities and differences between how you and your fellow classmates experienced the project. Presentations will happen during the final week of the course.

“I know what the world has done to my brother and how narrowly he has survived it. And I know, which is much worse, and this is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen, and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it. One can be, indeed one must strive to become, tough and philosophical concerning destruction and death, for this is what most of mankind has been best at since we have heard of man. (But remember: *most* of mankind is not *all* of mankind.) But it is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also be innocent. It is the innocence which constitutes the crime.”

— *James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time*