Social Institutions
Soci 350

Social institutions are important features of any society. They are intended to provide structure and offer social goods to a society. Institutions such as government and economy pattern our social lives through their formal rules, restrictions, and opportunities. Meanwhile other social institutions such as marriage and media are cultural institutions at the same time, that is, they pattern our social lives through ideology, in addition to rules, prescriptions and proscriptions for behavior. This course will examine multiple social institutions in contemporary and historical US society and compare them to non-Western societies, continually asking the question: What social good does this institution provide?

Learning Goals:
1. To be able to identify the functions of a given social institution
2. To critique how well a given social institution serves the best interests of the wider society Learning Outcome: Civic Engagement
3. To leverage comparisons between the same social institution in two societies/cultures in a discussion of the benefits and hazards to the wider societies Learning Outcome: Global Engagement
4. To recognize the interrelated workings of multiple social institutions in a single society, and identify the social consequences of their interconnectedness

Readings:
The assigned readings are provided in our course packet, free online, or on WebCT: http://pope.sandiego.edu
Several assigned films are available free online. All other assigned films should be purchased, rented, or viewed on reserve at Copley Library.

Evaluation:
Students will be evaluated based on two 6-page essays (worth 30% each) and one final exam (worth 25%) and 10 short homework assignments used for in-class discussions (15% altogether). Essays are due in class on the due dates and will not be accepted late without prior arrangement with the professor. The 10 short homework assignments are designed to reward attendance and facilitate class discussion and therefore will not be accepted for credit if the student is absent.
**COURSE SCHEDULE**
Readings are due on the Tuesday under which they are listed.

Thursday, September 2, 2010
**What is a Social Institution?**

Tues/Thurs, September 7 and 9, 2010
**Social Institution: Economy**
**How Does Capitalism Shape Social Life?**
Readings:
1. Karl Marx: “Estranged Labour” from *Economic and Philosophic Mansucripts of 1844*  
   [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/preface.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/preface.htm)

Tues/Thurs, September 14 and 16, 2010
**Social Institution: Economy**
**How Does Capitalism Shape Social Life in a Post-Industrial Society?**
Readings:
4. Film: Frontline “Is Wal-Mart good for America?”  

Tues/Thurs, September 21 and 22, 2010
**Social Institution: Health Care**
**Who is Responsible for Protecting a Society’s Members from Illness?**
2. Film: “Frontline: Sick around America” PBS Home Video 2009  
Tues/Thurs, September 28 and 30, 2010

**Social Institution: Mass Media**

**What Function Do Mass Media Perform for the Good of Society?**

Readings:

Tues/Thurs, October 5 and 7, 2010

**Social Institution: News Media**

**How does News Affect Social Life? and Does Fair News Reporting Exist?**

Readings:

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, ESSAY #1 DUE**

Tues/Thurs, October 12 and 14, 2010

**Social Institutions Overlap: Health, Government, and Media**

**Who is Responsible for Society Members’ Health?**

Readings:
4. Linda Bacon. “We're Victims of Food Politics” 2008.

Tues/Thurs, October 19 and 21, 2010

**Social Institution: Food Industry**

**Are Government, Education, and Capitalism all in Cahoots for Social Ill?**

Tuesday, October 26 and 28, 2010

Social Institution: Government

How Do New Regimes Take Power?

2. Dee Brown. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: an Indian History of the American West.* Chapters 2 and 8)

Tuesday, November 2 and 4, 2010

Social Institution: Government

How to Handle Citizenship and Unwanted Populations?

Readings:

1. U.S. Supreme Court Cases: Ozawa v. United States (1922)
   and United States v. Thind (1923)

Tuesday, November 9 and 11, 2010

Social Institutions Overlap: Education and Government

Must Society Provide Education to Unwanted Populations?

Readings:

2. Film: *Rabbit-Proof Fence.* Phillip Noyce, director (Australia)
3. U.S. Supreme Court Case: Plyler v. Doe

Tuesday, November 16, 18, and 23 2010

How to Regulate Trans-national Love, Sex, and Human Trafficking?

Readings:


Tuesday, November 23, 2010 ESSAY #2 DUE
Tues/Thurs, November 30 and December 2, 2010

**Social Institution: Marriage (with Government and Economy)**

**Who Defines the Rights and Obligations of Marriage?**


Tues/Thurs, December 7 and 9, 2010

**Social Institution: Religion**

**How Does Religion Affect Social Life?**

2. Emile Durkheim: *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Book I, Ch. 1, Section III and IV and Book II, Ch. 7, Section IV.

**Final Exam:** Tuesday, December 21, 2010 5-7pm.