Florida State University  
SYP 3540-0001 Sociology of Law  
Asynchronous Distance Learning  
Fall 2020

Instructor: Gloria Lessan, Ph. D.  
Full Teaching Professor  
Zoom Office Hours: W 2-3:15 PM  
E-mail: glessan@fsu.edu  
Contact the instructor via OUTLOOK  
Do not use Canvas Inbox

Please e-mail me using the above address. My office hours will take place every Wednesday from 2:00-3:15PM EST. During that time, I will review the study guide questions. You can reach me as well via e-mail and additional personal Zoom conversations if needed. Zoom conversations will require a prior appointment. I will reply to your emails within 24 hours during weekdays and 48 hours during weekends.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a sociological analysis of the legal order. It is a three credit hours course, meaning that for every hour of “instruction” there are three extra hours of study per week. The basic premise is that law is both, the product of social interaction and the impetus for social change. It emphasizes main sociological theories and research techniques to study the origins, processes, functions, and actors of the social reality known as Law. Additionally, the course considers the role of law in reinforcing and changing class, gender, and race inequalities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Identify, define and illustrate basic concepts, theories, and research techniques used in Sociology of Law
2. Apply these sociological concepts and theoretical frameworks to personal experiences, popular media, and current events in order to recognize the difference between sociological reasoning and personal opinion about law.
3. Articulate the strengths and limitations of competing sociological theories and research methodologies used to explain the nature, causes, and consequences of law as a social phenomenon.
4. Critically examine, interpret, and explain how structures of legal inequality shape the past and present lives of gender, racial/ethnic, and class groups.
5. Critically examine, interpret, and explain how large-scale social institutions such as the family, economy, education, work, politics, and religion shape the legal world we live in.
6. Critically examine, interpret, and explain how our lives and the decisions individuals and groups make change the structures and culture of law.
7. Gather and analyze data from appropriate online databases for the social sciences to critically evaluate assertions on key sociological issues.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required text:
Lessan, Gloria T. Lessan (editor) 2019. Sociology of Law: A Reader
Contact Cognella Publisher for direct purchase at orders@cognella.com or call (800) 200-3908 x503.

Other required reading materials are posted on Canvas according to Module#/Topic under discussion in the Course Schedule below. These include:

   b) Power Point presentations and WORD documents on different topics

NOTE: All book’s royalties are donated to educational organizations

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

First-Day Non-Attendance
First-Day Non-Attendance will be recorded via your answer to the survey posted for this purpose on Canvas.

Basic Rules for Studying
It is imperative that you keep up with the week readings which are described on Canvas and on syllabus Course Schedule p. 4. Contact your mentors and instructor whenever you need assistance with course materials and work. Use the Zoom meetings to clarify or further discuss the readings and course topics. The goal is to develop and hone your sociological imagination i.e. your ability to connect particular patterns of socio-legal behavior with history of both: society and law. So, keep up with readings, answer the study-guide questions, work on the discussion boards, and be ready to take scheduled bogus tests and exams.

Study-Guide Questions
To facilitate the learning process, you will be given THREE Study-Guide Questions (SG#1, SG#2, SG#3), one for each exam. Answer these questions in your own words instead of cutting-and-pasting material from the sources; this way you can self-evaluate your learning of course materials and readiness for the exams.

The questions are in essay format, cover the materials from different angles, relate issues in a way that complement the readings, and enable your sociological imagination. I strongly suggest to:

- read the assigned materials before answering the questions.
- work daily and/or regularly on the questions so that you are done in time to submit the complete, correct, and original answers on or before the day of the exam, by 11:59 PM
copy the course calendar; post it on a visible place to remind you of dates to submit coursework.

Remember that the study guide is NOT a contract that literally defines the exam questions!

**All study guides are graded on a scale of 0-100.** Each will contribute with 8.3% or 25% total to the final grade.

The grading criteria is as follows:

1. Timely submittal, and complete, and correct* answers stated in your own words for each and all questions (100 points);
2. Correct*, complete, and original (in your own words) answer of each and all questions BUT one-day delay (90%); additional 10% penalty for each day-delay up to a week.
3. Submitted on time, BUT up to 10% of the work is missing, or is incorrect, and has minor spelling/grammar problems (80%).
4. Submitted on time, BUT up to 20% of the work is missing, or is incorrect, and has minor spelling/grammar problems (70%).
5. Submitted on time, BUT up to 30% of the work is missing, or is incorrect, and has minor spelling/grammar problems (60%).
6. Failure to submit (0%)

*For each study guide, one third of students will be randomly chosen to have their work checked for correct answers so that by the end of the semester, all students will have one complete study-guide checked for correctness.

**Discussion Boards**

There are THREE Discussion Boards (DB#1, DB#2, DB#3) in the semester. The forum for each discussion board is an application of sociology-of-law concepts and arguments to a current event. You are to post an original essay on the issue and a substantive/informed reply to the posting of one of your classmates. The original postings are due Saturday of the first, third, and fifth week and the replies due the following Mondays.

**All discussion boards are graded on a scale of 0-100.** Each complete discussion board contributes with 10% to the final grade or a total of 30 points for all three discussion boards. The grade for the discussion board is made up by 10% format criteria, 10% substantive reply, and 80% content.

**Format Criteria**

1. **Avoid personal opinions.** Write arguments using your own words; use quotes sparingly and reference them appropriately. Inform your arguments with course materials and at least one additional legitimate source such as research from JSTOR journals, newspapers such as *The New York Times*, and or reports from research centers such as the Pew Research Center. No blogs, social media based on personal opinion, one-sided organizations, and Wikipedia (3 points).
2. **Reference the sources of arguments presented** (2 points)
3. The length of your original entry is to be at least, three paragraphs of single-spaced 7-8 sentences each i.e. about ¾ of a screen. Mentors will not read entries longer than one page (1 point).
4. Use formal academic language; avoid colloquialisms such as contractions (1 point).
5. Check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors before submitting (1 point).
6. Proof read your statements to ensure that your arguments do not incur into contradictions left unexplained (2 points).

Late postings are excused IF AND ONLY IF there is documentation legitimating the delay. See FSU policy on this regard below. Otherwise, late submissions to the Discussion Board forum carry a penalty off 10 points off per day of delay from the due date.

Content Criteria
The quality of the arguments is to show the following college standards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent, creative and superb command of the subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Creative and outstanding command of the subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Above average level but not outstanding grasp of the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Above average but thin understanding of some readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Above average but misses some parts of the readings and thus is unable to apply subject matter at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Average level of achievement with some mastering yet narrow application of the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Average level of achievement; refers to the readings in a superficial way suggesting spotty understanding of the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-73</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>Close to average due to spotty understanding of the material and inability to apply readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Below average understanding, showing little knowledge of the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Below average level with multiple contradictory arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-63</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>Below average understanding thus failure to apply readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 and below</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fails to understand and address the readings on the subject matter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reply Criteria
The reply requires meaningful contribution that expand, offer an alternative argument, or evaluates substantively the original posting. In other words, replies that merely state “interesting approach,” “I agree with your views,” or a comment involving circular reasoning. Failure to post a substantive reply to one of your classmates incurs in 10 points off for content.

In a nutshell, participate with questions, answers, opinions, and comments to enrich the forum. Be attentive to what others say, and interact with your e-classmates. Do all these in a courteous, respectful and scholarly manner. Above all, avoid using the discussion board as a forum for your own agenda. Deliver your opinions in normal, non-aggressive manner, and always participate in ways that advance the discussion of the issues. Each and every one of you must cooperate in building a supportive learning environment that benefits us all. My role is to
generate and steer the discussion of the materials by tying them to real events involving law within a civil and respectful atmosphere.

Exams
About one week before each exam there is opportunity of an open-book bogus test to self-evaluate your readiness for the incoming exam. The bogus test consists of twenty questions with the same format as the exam questions, has 60 minutes to complete, and earns you 0-5 extra-credit points proportional to the number of correct answers that will be added to your upcoming exam. Proper documentation is required to legitimate a new date for the missed work e.g., representing FSU, serious illness, or religious obligations that impede taking the test during the week of its availability.

The course has THREE exams with 60 questions each. The dates for each exam are listed in the Course Schedule below. The formats of the questions are multiple-choice, true-false, and fill-in the blank questions. The exams are scheduled for the Friday of the second, fourth, and sixth week of the semester as shown in the Course Schedule below.

All exams are graded on a scale of 0-100. Each exam is worth 15% and all three comprise 45% of the final grade.

To recap the factors for calculating the final grade:
- 3 Exams 45%
- 3 Discussion Boards 30%
- 3 Study-Guide Questions 25%

Grades throughout the semester will be posted in the SYP3540-0001 Canvas Grades. Check this site on a regular basis and notify your mentor or me of any problems regarding your grades as soon as these are posted.

As a general rule talk to us when you need help. Do so immediately; do not wait until the end of the semester because it will be TOO LATE!

When the final grade score include decimals, the rule is to round up from .45 and above; and to round down from .44 and below.

The alphanumeric scale of the final grade is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GENERAL POLICIES

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY
Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.
MISSED COURSEWORK
Missed coursework will be accepted IF and ONLY IF there is a legitimate reason (appropriate documentation is required as indicated below) for missing to do the work on the due date. It is your responsibility to turn in the documentation prior to or on the scheduled date of the work. This may include an obituary, court order, doctor-signed prescription/bill, or a document from an agency signed by a legitimate authority that fully describes the emergency causing the student’s missing the test. The makeup exam may have a different format from the original i.e., essay questions. Failure to turn in appropriate documentation incurs in a grade of ZERO for missed work.

INCOMPLETE GRADES
Incomplete (“I”) grades will not be assigned, except in the case of exceptional unforeseen circumstances that occur within the last three weeks of the semester and your work has otherwise been satisfactory (C average).

ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY
The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “...be honest and truthful and... to strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy.)

Student Conduct: My many years of college experience, both as student and instructor, have shown me that for the most part students are bright, good-natured and amiable toward others. In general, you are expected to comply with the FSU Code of Conduct at all time while participating in FSU distance learning. Your online behavior should be courteous, respectful and professional. In a nutshell, anyone who ignores my authority to protect the integrity the online classroom will be asked to cease his/her disruptive behavior, may be reported to FSU security, and/or drop the course.

Failure to abide by these principles can result in academic penalties ranging from a lowered grade, to dismissal, to failing the course.
http://e-soc.net/

ADA STATEMENT
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the: Student Disability Resource Center 874 Traditions Way 108 Student Services Building
Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167 (850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD) sdr@admin.fsu.edu http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/

FREE TUTORING from FSU
On-campus tutoring and writing assistance is available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services’ comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options at [http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring](http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring) or contact [tutor@fsu.edu](mailto:tutor@fsu.edu). High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT POLICY
It is the policy of the University that its employees and students neither commit nor condone sexual harassment in any form. [http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/university_notices.htm](http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/university_notices.htm)

COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module/Week/Dates</th>
<th>Topics (with assigned readings)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
<td>Foundations of Sociology of Law: Basic Concepts and Theories Weeks 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 24</td>
<td>First Day Attendance Policy (Answer the Survey on Canvas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 24-</td>
<td>Introduction to Sociology of Law, Families and Types of Laws, Classic and Contemporary Theories about Law and Society Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 24</td>
<td>Begin work on Study Guide #1 (posted on Canvas Assignments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 11</td>
<td>Post an original contribution to the Discussion Board #1 forum on or before 9/11 “Law: The Elusive Concept”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 13</td>
<td>Post a reply to a classmate’s original DB#1 on or before 9/13, by 11:59PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2</td>
<td>Lawmaking Weeks 4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 22</td>
<td>Submit answers to Study Guide #1 on or before 5/22, by 11:59PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 19-23</td>
<td>Bogus Test #1 opens on 9/19, 12 AM and closes on 9/23 at 11:59PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 24-25</td>
<td>Exam#1 available on Canvas during 9/24, 12AM – 9/25, 11:59PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 3</td>
<td>Law → Social Conditions: Social Order Weeks 6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 28-</td>
<td>Law Enforcement by Type of Law, Civil Commitment, Law &amp; Order?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oct 16  Excerpt from Lessan (2013) Sociology of Law
Reader: Law Enforcement, pp: 61-62
   How Police Officers Learn Ethics, pp: 75-98
   Prosecutor Misconduct, pp 99-112
   The Ten Principles of Community Policing, pp 113-116
PowerPoint “Law as a Means for Social Control”

Sep 28  Begin work on Study-Guide #2 (posted on Canvas Assignments)
Oct 16  Post an original contribution to the Discussion Board #2 forum on or before 10/16
   “Is Capital Punishment (i.e. law) a Means to Restore Order (i.e. deter murder)?”
Oct 18  Post a reply to a classmate’s original DB#2 on or before 10/18, by 11:59PM

Module 4  Law ➔ Social Conditions: Conflict Resolution
Weeks 9-10
10/19-30  Law as a Means for Conflict Resolution v Alternative Methods
Excerpt, Lessan (2013) Sociology of Law
   Unnecessary Judicial Activism or a Necessary Part of the Policy Process? pp: 149-160
PowerPoint “Law as a Means for Processing Legal Disputes”

10/30  Submit answers to Study Guide #1 on or before 6/5, by 11:59PM
10/23-28  Bogus Test #2 opens on 10/23, 12 AM and closes on Friday 10/28, at 11:59PM
10/29-30  Exam#2 available on Canvas during 10/29, 12AM – to 10/30, 11:59PM

Module 5  Law ➔ Social Conditions: Social Change
Weeks 11-13
11/2-11/19  Legal Impact Studies
Excerpt, Lessan (2013) Sociology of Law
Reader: Learning from Nevada, pp 117-130
   Race and Gender as Explicit Sentencing Factors, pp:205-219
   Women and Medicare, pp: 174-180
   Engaging Social Change by Embracing Diversity, pp: 231-238
PowerPoint “Law as a Means for Social Change”

11/2  Begin work on Study Guide #3 (posted on Canvas Assignments)
11/13  Post an original contribution to the Discussion Board #3 forum on or before 11/13
   “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly Consequences of Law X”
11/15  Post a reply to a classmate’s original DB#3 on or before 11/15, by 11:59PM

Module 6  The Legal Profession
Weeks 13-15
11/20-12/4  The Training and Practice of Lawyers
           Excerpt from Lessan (2013) Sociology of Law
           Reader: Lawyer’s Criticisms of the Judiciary, pp: 265-273
                   Reflection of an Aging Female Judge, pp: 256-271
           PowerPoint “The Legal Profession”

12/4      Submit answers to Study Guide #3 on or before 6/18, by 11:59PM
11/30-12/4 Bogus Test#3 opens on 11/30, 12 AM and closes on 12/4, by 11:59PM
12/8-9     Exam#3 available on Canvas on 12/8, 12:00AM- to 12/9, 11:59PM