THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

Social Science 220 (Sociology 220) Winter Term 2014

POLITICAL ECONOMY
Frank Thompson

SYLLABUS

The course explores human society from an interdisciplinary social scientific perspective anchored in political economic analysis. The primary focus is on modern capitalism, especially as it has developed in the United States. A wide range of social analyses is explored with an emphasis on contemporary contributions. Historical and theoretical points are considered in close relation to current affairs and to potential feasible alternatives to prevailing policies and institutions. Students are encouraged to pursue their own interests and ideas as well as to develop their capacities for insightful social analysis. The course provides extensive opportunities for discussion.

The course meets on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 11-12 pm in 1405 East Quad and will sometimes divide into two smaller discussion groups on Fridays.

Reading:

Five books are required and are commercially available as well as in the University Reserves [UR].


All other required readings listed in the schedule below are available on our CTools coursesite.

Writing:

Written work consists of a midterm examination 21 February (20%), a 2,500+ word term paper on a mutually agreeable topic due in class on 21 April (40%), and a final examination on 30 April (40%). There will be no make-up exams and late papers will not be accepted.

Extra credit or discredit may be due via surprise quizzes in class.

Some aspects of the course can be modified to facilitate full participation and fair evaluation of students with SSD recognized disabilities. Students needing such an accommodation should make this known at the beginning of the course. (Such information will be treated as private and confidential.)

Discussion:

Discussion in class and beyond is strongly encouraged. In particular students are urged to participate via politicaleconomy220@ctools.umich.edu. Office hours after class (at Dominick’s after the winter break) and by appointment.

Outline Schedule of Assignments:
8 January: **Introduction.**

Reading:


http://stateofworkingamerica.org/economic-landscape/

9-22 January: **Political Economic Evolution.**

Reading:

CS, all.

*DE*, Preface and Chapters One, Two, and Three, pp. ix-xvi and 1-45.

9 January: Film: *Quest for Fire* (7:00 pm in 1405 East Quad).

23 January – 5 February: **Political Economic Basics.**

Reading:


6-22 February: **Political Economic Justice.**

Reading:

*J*, all.

*DE*, Chapters Four and Five, pp. 46-83.

17 February: Midterm Exam study questions distributed.

24 February: Midterm Exam.

10-19 March: **Microeconomics.**

Reading:


http://stateofworkingamerica.org/inequality/

http://stateofworkingamerica.org/inequality/mobility/

*DE*, Chapters Six and Seven, pp. 84-118.

10 March: Film: *The Corporation* (7:00 pm in 1405 East Quad).

17 March: Film: *The Battle of Ideas* (Parts 2-7)

20 March – 9 April: **Macroeconomics.**

Reading:


10-21 April: **Conclusion.**

Reading:

*UC*, Part 4, pp. 524-551.


16 April: Term Paper due; Final Exam study questions distributed.

20 April: Final Exam (4-6 pm)