C275: Contemporary Issues in Law and Society

Winter 2009

Class meets: Thursdays, 11:00 to 1:50
Room: SE I 200
Instructor: Susan Coutin, Ph.D.
Office hours: Thursdays, 10-11
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Course description:

This course addresses a range of contemporary issues in the field of law and society, focusing particularly on the way that law and society intersects with selected current trends in social theory. The goal of the course is to expose students to critical approaches to law and to ways that law and society scholarship is being influenced by theoretical developments more broadly. Through this exploration, students will consider the degree to which assumptions about law and society that informed the development of the field are being challenged, refined, and/or confirmed through current research. In particular, students will examine how and whether the “project” of law and society scholarship is being reformulated or made all the more necessary by new analytical approaches and current events.

Topics to be addressed will vary from year to year, but in winter 2008 will include the following: interpretive Marxism, postcolonial theory, law and language, governmentality, postmodernism, neoliberalism, globalization and transnationalism, science and technology studies, and risk and security.

Assignments: Course grade will be based on the following:
1. Participation and preparation of discussion questions for seminar meetings
2. Reading notes and/or contributions to a class “wiki”
3. End of the quarter paper – options:
   a. Select a presidential address published in Law & Society Review and situate it within trends in the field at the time
   b. Prepare a paper that uses course material to discuss an issue pertinent to your own research
   c. Develop a theoretical paper that considers an issue raised by course material

Week 1: Introduction: What is “law and society”?
Calavita, Kitty. (Excerpt from her new book ms??)


**Also recommended:**


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**Week 2: Critical approaches to law and power**


**Also recommended:**


Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*.

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**Week 3: Postcolonialism**


**Recommended Readings:**


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**Week 4: Law and language**


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**Recommended Readings:**


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**Week 5: Governmentality**


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Also recommended:


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**Week 6: Postmodernism**

Also recommended:

Week 7: Neoliberalism

Also recommended:

Week 8: Globalization, transnationalism and the nation-state

Also Recommended:

Week 9: Science and Technology Studies

Also recommended:

Week 10: Risk, security and securitization