Biology of Social Issues (NSC 598) Fall 2014

Instructor: Jaime Tanner
jtanner@marlboro.edu, x309

Location: Science 221

Days & Time: MWF 11:30-12:20pm

Readings: The immortal Life of Henrietta Lax, pdfs posted on Courses

Course Description:
The objective of this class is to learn about the biology behind many of today’s social issues regarding global, physical, and psychological topics. Using what we learn we are also going to discuss and compare the different perspectives of peoples involved in these issues. To do this, part of our time in class will be spent learning about the biology behind the topic of interest while the remainder of the time will be spent discussing recent research as well as the social controversies surrounding each topic. At the end of this course I hope that each of you will have gained a greater understanding of the biological principles that serve as the foundation for many social issues in our society and be better prepared to form critically informed decisions in the future.

Course Policies:

Attendance: Class participation is integral to the course and in-class activities cannot be made up, therefore your attendance is essential. Multiple absences will impact your grade.

Participation: Please arrive on time to each class. Remember to bring a writing utensil, notebook and to turn your cell phones off. Individual participation in class discussions, group work and peer review sessions is essential and will comprise 10% of your total grade.

Presentations: You will be responsible for presenting and leading a discussion at least once during the semester. You will give a 20 – 30 minute presentation about the social and political issues surrounding your topic. This will require you to do some reading outside of assigned reading. After your presentation is over, you will lead the class discussion in the readings I have assigned. This assignment will take some time to do background research, coordinate, and create the presentation so make sure you do not wait until the night before to begin working on this assignment.

Reading questions: Each student is required to hand in note and 2-3 questions about each reading to help facilitate class discussion.

Hot Topics: During the semester there will also be 4 periodic assignments due in which you will write a 3 page critique of a “hot topic” in biology that you find in the popular press. You will need to summarize the article, the related biology, and finally, critique the research presented.

Perspectives Paper: You will be writing a final paper presenting a social issue from two different (at least one biological) perspectives. You may write this paper on an issue we discussed in class or on another issue of your choosing. For this paper, you will utilize references from multiple sources, including primary literature, so don’t wait until the last minute. A proposed topic will be due to me by March 28th and an annotated outline and bibliography will be due April 14th. You will hand in a first draft of the paper and then a second draft (incorporating my suggestions) will be reviewed by your peers. A final draft of the paper will be due during finals.
**Grading:** Grades will be calculated based on the following criteria:

- Class Participation (15%)
- Questions & short assignments (15%)
- Presentations (25%)
- Hot Topic Papers (20%)
- Paper (25%)

**Expectations**
- Attendance to class and being punctual
- Coming Prepared for class
- Respecting others when they speak
- Giving the instructor and your peers your full attention (not spending time on gadgets)

Assignments are expected to be handed in **on time** for your sake and mine. Otherwise, assignments handed in 1-24 hours late will have 10% deducted from the grade, assignments handed in 24-48 hours late will have 20% deducted from the grade and NO assignments will be accepted after 48 hours past the deadline unless we discuss this beforehand. I do this not to place arbitrary restrictions on you but to help you to stay on top of your work.