**Unit Four  
Institutions**

**Topic 1: Economic, Political, and Family Institutions**

**Readings:**

1. Chapter 10 - Politics and the Economy in *Sociology* by Barkan (CO1, CO3, CO4, CO6, MO11, MO12, MO13, MO14, MO15)
2. Chapter 11 – Family in *Sociology* by Barkan (CO1, CO3, CO4, CO6, MO11, MO12, MO13, MO14, MO15)
3. Start reading *There Are No Children Here* by Alex Kotlowitz
4. Article – Family Comes First in Sweden at: <http://mothering.com/parenting/more-than-welcome-families-come-first-in-sweden> (CO1, CO6, MO11, MO15)
5. Article – U.S. Lags Behind in Family-Friendly Work Policies at: <http://womensenews.org/story/commentary/020123/us-lags-behind-family-friendly-work-policies>(CO1, CO6, MO11, MO15)
6. Article -- Court Decision Opens Floodgates for Corporate Cash at: <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0110/31786.html> (CO1, CO4, MO11, CO13, CO14)

**Video:**

Watch *Frontline: Big Sky, Big Money (*campaign financing) at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/big-sky-big-money> (CO1, CO4, MO11, MO13, MO14)

**Discussion:**

Respond to at least two of the following discussion topics, and reply to at least two other students, following the assessment guidelines posted in the Course Orientation module.

**Topic 1:** Discuss the situation of voter apathy. Do you believe that most U.S. citizens take the idea of citizenship for granted? Do you think that it matters whether you vote or not? Whichever way you feel, what might the consequences for our society if *everyone* felt the same way as *you* do about voting?  Refer to textbook material. (CO1, CO4, MO11, MO13)

**Topic 2:** Investigate the Citizens United Supreme Court decision, and discuss what you learn about it. Do you think it was a beneficial or destructive ruling in its impact on our political institution? Explain. Refer to textbook material and what you learned from the video (*Big Sky, Big Money*) and posted website <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0110/31786.html> (or if you prefer, other websites you located on this topic). (CO1, CO4, MO11, MO13, MO14)

**Topic 3:** Discuss the idea from lecture that our society claims to value the family, but doesn’t institute many family-friendly policies. Do you agree that this is true? If so, what would you suggest in terms of sociological policies that could improve the situation. Why aren’t these policies being implemented?  Refer to material from the assigned "family friendly" articles.  (CO1, CO4, CO6, MO11, MO13, MO14, MO15)

**Topic 2: Education, Religion and Health Institutions**

**Readings:**

1. Chapter 12 - Education and Religion in *Sociology* by Barkan (CO1, CO3, CO4, CO6, MO11, MO12, MO13, MO14, MO15)
2. Chapter 13 - Health and Medicine in *Sociology* by Barkan (CO1, CO3, CO4, CO6, MO11, MO12, MO13, MO14, MO15)
3. Get about 200 pages into *There Are No Children Here* (CO1, CO4, MO11, MO13, MO14)

**Discussion:**

Respond to at least two of the following discussion topics (Topic 1 is required), and reply to at least two other students, following the assessment guidelines posted in the Course Orientation module.

**Topic 1:** Choose **one** of the institutions we have studied (either the family, the economy, the political institution, education, health care, or religion) and focusing only on that oneinstitution, do the following: First, based on the course material we are studying in this unit, identify a serious problem connected with the institution in the U.S. Then, conduct an internet search to locate a web site that proposes a solution (policy or program) to address the problem you’ve identified. (Some places you might want to look would include government sites or educational sites, as well as the web sites of political figures and/or candidates). In writing your response to the topic:

1. Indicate the problem you chose
2. Point out where in the text and/or lecture this problem is discussed
3. Present the solution proposed at the web site you located
4. Discuss how this solution relates to the sociological perspective
5. Discuss whether you believe that the information at the site is valid. To complete this part, revisit the tutorial on evaluating internet sources at: <http://www.wou.edu/provost/library/clip/tutorials/eval_internet.htm>.
6. Don’t forget to include the web site address

(CO4, CO5, CO6, MO13, CO15, CO16)

**Topic 2:** Relate the ideas presented in the course material on education to what you are reading about in *There Are No Children Here* (feel free to type TANCH to save key strokes). In other words, take an idea (for example, the impact of social class on student achievement), and find examples in the book to illustrate these ideas, referring to the general setting, and to specific people. (CO 1, CO4, MO11, MO13, MO14)

**Topic 3:** After reading the material in text on education, what have you learned about a quality education? Think about your own experiences with the educational institution (K-12). Do you feel that you received a high quality education? Why or why not? What specifically do you feel worked well to help you to achieve academic excellence? What could schools do to help all children to achieve academic excellence?  (CO 1, CO4, MO11, MO13, MO14)

**Topic 4:** The text discusses how functionalists, conflict theorist, and interactionists view religion. Which of these approaches do you find most interesting, and why? (CO3, MO12)

**Topic 5:** Do you think the U.S. should move toward the national health insurance models found in other Western nations? Why or why not? Refer to textbook material.  (CO 1, CO4, CO6, MO11, MO13, MO15)

**Exam:**

Take exam over Unit 4, following the assessment guidelines posted in the Course Orientation module. (CO1, CO3, CO4, CO6, MO11, MO12, MO13, MO14, MO15)