Essay Topics from John Flavin’s SOCI-202, Social Problems, class:

- A discussion of a topic from the viewpoint of “free will” or “human nature”; how does this explanation fall short in regard to patterns of behavior that characterize the problem? And a discussion of the social problem from a sociological standpoint, taking into account the theoretical perspective of Critical Constructionism; specifically, how can we use the ideas within both Conflict Theory and Symbolic Interactionism to explain the social problem in question?

- A discussion of how popular culture perpetuates the hegemony of capitalism; specifically, how does hegemony and perpetuation apply to topics such as:
  - Pregnancy / childbirth
  - Birth of a child
  - Female children
  - Heterosexual romantic love
  - Young girls’ images of female body types
  - Attitudes about “alternative” appearances
  - Definitions of femininity
  - Adult male and female body images
  - Sexuality and finding a partner
  - Engagement and marriage

- The U.S.’s demonstrated lack of tolerance for left-leaning ideologies: The two “major” political parties (i.e. Democratic and Republican) both support capitalism. This is different than, for example, much of Europe, in which political parties that represent the whole of the economic spectrum are available to voters. A discussion as to whether or not America is actually a “one-party system” and the effect on the SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION of “Freedom” in our society.

- A discussion of America’s contempt for the poor and the resulting attitudes regarding poverty and homelessness.

- Comparing and contrasting two examples of family life, the idealized “Golden Age” nuclear family of the 1950s and the “post-modern” family of today.

- A discussion of the social policies that affect families in American society, as well as the question of whether or not government should change its policies to be more “family-friendly.” Topics discussed include:
  - Family bankruptcy
  - Investment in children
  - Child care
  - Family allowance programs
  - Same-sex marriage
  - “Children having children”
• A discussion of how “crime scares” (such as missing children, serial murder, and drug scares) are relevant to today’s society and how the exaggeration of these crimes affect society.
• A discussion of how Critical Constructionism examines the benefit to the elite in society at the expense of the lowest classes in relation to topics such as:
  o The American Punishment Frenzy
  o The War on Drugs
  o The Medicalization of Deviance
  o Street Violence Versus Corporate Violence
  o Terrorism
Essay Topics from John Flavin’s SOCI-203, Marriage and Families, class:

- A discussion of the social factors that affect families, such as:
  - Biological technologies
  - Communication technologies
  - Economic conditions
  - Historical events
  - Age
  - Religion
  - Race/Ethnicity
  - Family policies

- Development of research projects relevant to marriage and family, including the following types:
  - Questionnaire/Survey
  - Naturalistic Observation
  - Focus Group
  - Experiment
  - Case Study

- Discussions of the behavioral characteristics associated with boys/men and with girls/women in our society, giving examples in relation to each gender students’ own personal experiences. Also, examination of the social movements and/or policy changes that have affected students’ attitudes or experiences regarding gender.

- Examination of topics that should be addressed and discussed by couples who are considering getting married, as well as assessments of which are the most important for the couple’s success in marriage.

- Examination of the development of a “Marriage Premise,” especially its expectations of permanence and sexual exclusivity, in our society. Discussion of how “romantic love” has changed the premise over time, as well as the meaning of the phrase “love has conquered marriage.”

- Discussion of the conflict between our society’s PRONATALIST BIAS and the apparent existence of STRUCTURAL ANTINATALISM. Examination of the policies that might be developed to address such issues as workplace inflexibility, lack of affordable daycare, or absence of paid maternal/paternal leave. Also, examination of how parenting may differ according to social class and socioeconomic status.