

Class, Status, and Power
Sociology 2420 Spring 2009
Tues. and Thurs. 2:00-3:15 Baldwin 311

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Office hours: Tuesday 9:00-10:00 (or by appointment)

This course examines inequality by reviewing a variety of answers to the question that drives most research on inequality: "Who get what and why?" We will read theoretical and empirical works that discuss the origins of inequality as well as the different forms it takes. We will also study social mobility and examine how why a person's place in the social hierarchy is connected to race, gender, social networks, labor markets, and other social structures. By the end of the course, you will be able to discuss and critique different approaches to the study of inequality and clarify your own beliefs regarding who gets what and why.

Requirements

What to Expect in Class

Your primary responsibility is to come to class with comments and questions about the readings. We will be reading material that is thought provoking, contradictory, and sometimes controversial or complex. Consequently, we will need to discuss the readings to get the most out of them. I will encourage everyone to participate in that discussion by asking you to identify the main point of the readings, critique the readings, and explain why the readings may or may not reflect your life experiences. (You will not be able to fulfill your responsibilities if you sit passively in your seat, forget to read, or miss class.)

Things to Do in the First Week of Class

Get the Readings

In the spirit of reducing inequality, I have not required you to buy any reading material for this course. Instead, all of the readings are available through the course website as one large pdf file. If you have trouble getting any of the readings please let me know immediately.

Explore the Course Website

This website will serve as the definitive source of information about the course. Please refer to its pages for the most up-to-date information, links to assignments, supplementary material, and much more.

Other Information

Quizzes

Over the course of the semester, we will have six surprise quizzes. All quizzes will take place during the first five minutes of class. If you arrive after the quiz is over, you will not be given the opportunity to take the quiz. There will be no make-ups for quizzes, but I will drop your lowest quiz grade to allow for unforeseen emergencies.

Portfolio

During the semester, you will collect five items (i.e., newspaper articles, cartoons, interviews, songs, photographs, etc.) about a particular kind of inequality and assemble them in a portfolio that highlights the connections among them and examines each one using insights from class. The items should be collected throughout the semester, but the final portfolio will not be due until the end of the semester. More detailed instructions will be distributed in class.

Group Presentation

Students who created portfolios about the same topic will make a joint presentation of their findings at the end of the semester. More detailed instructions will be distributed in class.

Exams

We will have two exams this semester--please mark the dates on your calendar. Both exams will be a combination of short essay and longer essay questions, and they will require you to recall, understand, and synthesize material from the readings and our discussions in class. Make-up exams will only be given to students who have an approved excuse for missing the exam.

Grading

Grades for the course will be based on the following items:

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|--------------------|-------------|
| 5 (of 6) Quizzes | 10% |
| Portfolio | 20% |
| Midterm Exam | 30% |
| Group Presentation | 10% |
| Final Exam | 30% |
| Total | 100% |

Final grades for the course are based on the following scale:

| Letter Grade | Number Grade |
|--------------|--------------|
| A | 93 to 100 |
| A- | 90 to 92 |
| B+ | 88 to 89 |
| B | 83 to 87 |
| B- | 80 to 82 |
| C+ | 78 to 79 |
| C | 73 to 77 |
| C- | 70 to 72 |
| D+ | 68 to 69 |
| D | 63 to 67 |
| D- | 60 to 62 |
| F | 59 and below |

For more information about the plus/minus grading system, see the page below.

<http://bulletin.uga.edu/bulletin/PlusMinusGradingFAQ.html>

Disabilities

If you have a disability and would like to request classroom or other accommodations, please contact me. You may also want to check out the services available on campus. (For more information, see: <http://www.dissvcs.uga.edu/>)

Academic Honesty

All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty" (see especially section 7). Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. (For more information, see: <http://www.uga.edu/honesty/index.html>)

Withdrawing from the Course

If you plan to withdraw from this course, you should be aware of the University regulations regarding withdrawals. (For more information, see: <http://www.franklin.uga.edu/students/withdraw.htm>) Also, if you are receiving H.O.P.E. scholarship funds, make sure to check with the Office of Student Financial Aid before withdrawing from the course. Withdrawal may affect your scholarship. (For more information, see: <http://www.uga.edu/osfa/contact.html>)

Rescheduling Final Exams

You may reschedule the final exam if you meet the appropriate university requirements. (For more information, see: <http://www.curriculumsystems.uga.edu/FinalExamConflicts/FinalExamConflicts.html>)

Human Rights/Grievances

Any student who feels that he or she has not been treated in a fair or professional manner should follow the Department of Sociology's Human Rights Statement. (For more information, see: http://uga.edu/soc/undergraduate/pdf/Human_Rights_Statement.pdf)

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Any student who feels that he or she has been discriminated against or sexually harassed in any class should contact the UGA Equal Opportunity Office. (For more information, see: <http://www.uga.edu/eoo/>)

| Date | Readings |
|---------------|---|
| Jan. 8 Thurs. | Introduction to the Course: Who Gets What and Why? |
| 13 Tues. | ----- Inequality: An Introduction ----- "Inequalities" by Jackson "Are Justice and Inequality Compatible?" by Sawhill and McMurrer |
| 15 Thurs. | ----- Empirical and Imagined Levels of Inequality ----- "The Development of Inequality" by Sernau |
| 20 Tues. | "Poverty, Work, and Policy: The US in Comparative Perspective" by Burtless "The Compassion Gap in American Public Policy" by Block et al. |
| 22 Thurs. | "Harrison Bergeron" by Vonnegut "From <i>Rise of the Meritocracy: 1870-2033</i> " by Young |
| 27 Tues. | ----- Does Society Need Inequality? ----- "Some Principles of Stratification" by Davis and Moore |
| 29 Thurs. | "Talent and the Winner Take All Society" by Frank "The Positive Functions of the Undeserving Poor" by Gans |

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| Feb. 3 Tues. | ----- Mobility ----- "The Two Acre Lot" by Alger "U.S. Intragenerational Economic Mobility from 1984 To 2004" by Acs and Zimmerman |
| 5 Thurs. | "Is the American Dream Alive and Well?" by Sawhill and Morton "The American Dream is Alive and Well . . . in Finland" by Holland |
| 10 Tues. | ----- Exam 1 ----- |
| 12 Thurs. | ----- Who Are We? ----- In-class film: <i>People Like Us</i> (Parts I and II) |
| 17 Tues. | Discussion of <i>People Like Us</i> |
| 19 Thurs. | Class and Status "Introduction" by Wright |
| 24 Tues. | <i>Class Counts</i> sections 1.1-1.7 by Wright |
| 26 Thurs. | "Class, Status, Party" by Weber |
| Mar. 3 Tues. | Race and Ethnicity "The Realities of Races" by Marks In-class film: <i>Race: The Power of an Illusion</i> |
| 5 Thurs. | "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America" by Fields "Beyond Black and White" by Lee et al. |
| 10 Tues. | Spring Break |
| 12 Thurs. | Spring Break |
| 17 Tues. | Sex and Gender "Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender" by Lorber |
| 19 Thurs. | "The Nature of Gender" by Udry |
| 24 Tues. | "Calling the Bluff of Value-Free Science" by Risman |
| 26 Thurs. | "Gender as a Social Structure" by Risman |
| 31 Tues. | Geography "Concentrated Rural Poverty and the Geography of Exclusion" by Lichter and Parisi "Concentrated Poverty in America" by Berube |
| Apr. 2 Thurs. | Intersectionality "The Intersection of Gender and Race in the Labor Market" by Browne and Misra |
| 7 Tues. | ----- What Can We Get? ----- Education "Schools: The Great Equalizer and the Key to the American Dream" by Johnson |
| 9 Thurs. | "Race, Income, and the Impact of Merit Aid" by Dynarski |

14 Tues. **Jobs**
"Sex Differences in Earnings" by Padavic and Reskin

16 Thurs. **Health**
"The Health Divide" by Berkman
"Cause of Death: Inequality" by Reuss
Portfolios Due Today

21 Tues. **Presentations**

23 Thurs. **Presentations**

28 Tues. **Presentations (last day of class)**

May 5 Tues. -----**Final Exam 3:30-6:30**-----