

SOCY 241 - Inequality in American Society
Spring 2012

Instructor: Mark Gross
Email: markcgross@gmail.com
MWF- 11:00pm-11:50pm
Room: Art-Socy 3207

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I. Course Description

The purpose of this course is to explore the nature of social inequality in American society. Although inequality is manifested in many forms including political, racial, economic, gender, global, etc, the primary focus of this course will be on class and racial inequalities in the US. Both structural and individual explanations of inequality will be explored, with a focus on how macro-level and social factors influence micro-level/individual outcomes.

The course will be broken down into two main sections focusing on class and racial inequality, respectively. Generally, class will consist of Monday and Wednesday lectures and discussions focusing on major concepts. Fridays will largely be reserved for in-depth discussion of that week's readings and issues raised in class. Thus, each week's required readings must be read by that Friday. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings in-depth. Whenever possible I will try to incorporate alternative modes of teaching other than lecturing including group discussions, films, and guest lecturers.

II. Required Books

Kerbo, H. (2012). *Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in Historical, Comparative, and Global Perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Ehrenreich, B. (2002). *Nickle and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by In America*. Holt Paperbacks.

Massey, D. (1993). *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Alexander, M. (2010). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York Jackson, Tenn: New Press Distributed by Perseus Distribution.

*All other assigned readings will be posted on Blackboard

III. Grading/Assignments

Your final grades for the course will be based off of a midterm, two short papers, discussion participation, and a final paper.

Discussion Participation/Blackboard/In-class quizzes: 20%

Two Short Papers (4-5 pages): 25%

Movie Responses (2 pages): 10%

Midterm: 20%

Final Paper (8-10 pages): 25%

All written assignment must follow the following guidelines: Times New Roman, 12pt, double-spaced, standard margins, stapled.

-Participation in discussions is mandatory. Friday will provide the bulk of our discussion time but my aim is to incorporate discussions into every lecture. This requires not only coming to class and doing the readings but also actively participating in the discussion at hand. Additionally, 3 unannounced short quizzes will be given throughout the semester. They will be based off of the readings for that week. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

*Students who have issues with participating in group discussions can arrange with me in advance to write a short paper as makeup. In these situations class attendance is still a required aspect of your participation grade. Talk to me within the first 2 weeks of class if you prefer this option.

-Blackboard discussion posts are also a required aspect of your participation grade. Students must contribute substantially to group discussions on Blackboard at least 7 of the 15 weeks over the course of the semester. You can choose which weeks to participate as long as you have 7 total posts by the end of the semester. Each week that you choose to participate, if you choose to post a question it must be posted by 10pm on the Wednesday of that week. If you are responding to a question you must post by 10pm on Thursday of that week. Questions will be brought up in Friday's discussions. Posts must be rooted in the readings and in the form of either a well thought-out discussion question or response to a classmate's post. Posts should be at least a paragraph in length.

-Movie responses must be 2 pages in length and will relate the movie to material from class (lectures, readings, specific discussions). Since these are short, make sure that you use your space wisely. Avoid simple descriptions of the movies, rather work to tie concepts from the movie into readings, etc. They will be due the Wednesday following the movie.

-The two short papers are due on the following dates: March 28th and April 25th. I will give prompts in class. These papers must be 4-5 pages in length.

-The Midterm will be held in class on April 4th.

-The Final Paper/Exam will be based off of prompts given in class and must be 8-10 pages in length. It is due, Monday May 14th in my mailbox. There will be no in-class Final Exam.

I. Course Outline and Reading Schedule (subject to change)

*Readings should be completed by the Friday of the week they are assigned

Week 1:

1/25-Introduction to the course

1/27- Major Concepts

Read: Kerbo: Ch. 1

Week 2:

1/30, 2/1- Introduction to Inequality in the US

2/3- Discussion

Read: Kerbo: Ch. 2

Week 3:

2/6, 2/8- History of Inequality and Classical Theories of Inequality

2/10- Discussion

Read: Kerbo: pp. 52-63, 74-81, and 90-115; The Communist Manifesto

Week 4:

2/13, 2/15- Modern Theories of Inequality

2/17- Film

Read: Kerbo: pp. 131-136; excerpt from Wright, E. O. (2010). *Envisioning Real Utopias*. (New York: Verso).

Week 5:

2/20, 2/22- The Upper and Corporate Classes

2/24- Discussion

Read: Kerbo: Ch. 6 & 7

Week 6:

2/27, 2/29- The Middle and Working Classes

3/2-Film

Read: Kerbo: Ch. 8, Ehrenreich: Intro & Chapter 1

Week 7:

3/5, 3/7- American Workers

3/9- Discussion

Read: Ehrenreich: Chapter 2, 3, & Evaluation

Week 8:

3/12, 3/14- Poverty, the Poor, and Homelessness

3/16- Film

Read: Kerbo: Ch. 9; excerpts from Edin, K & Lein, L. (1997). *Making Ends Meet*. (New York: Russell Sage).

Spring Break March 18-25

Week 9:

3/26-Introduction to Racial Inequality

3/28- Racial Inequality (cont) *Paper #1 due in class today*

3/30- Film

Read: Kerbo: Ch. 11; reading TBA

Week 10:

4/2- Theories of Racial Inequality

4/4- Midterm Exam (In class)

4/6- Discussion

Read: Omi, M. & Winant, H. (2002). Racial Formations in Race Critical Theories: Text and Context (Wiley-Blackwell).; Winant, H. (2000). Race and Race Theory, Annual Review of Sociology, 26, 169-185.; Feagin, J. & Feagin, C. (1998) Theoretical perspectives in race and ethnic relations, in Race and Ethnic Conflict: Contending Views on Prejudice, Discrimination and Ethnoviolence (San Francisco, CA, Westview Press).

Week 11:

4/9, 4/11- History and Formation of Racial Segregation

4/13-Film

Read: Massey and Denton: Ch. 2 & 3

Week 12:

4/16, 4/18- Racial Segregation and the Creation of the Underclass

4/20-Film

Read: Massey and Denton: Ch. 4 & 5

Week 13:

4/23- Educational Inequalities

4/25- Educational Inequalities (cont) *Paper #2 due in class today*

4/27- Discussion

Read: excerpt from Kozol, Hitting them Hardest When They're Small; excerpt from Kozol, Savage Inequalities.

Week 14:

4/30, 5/2- The Criminal Justice System

5/4- Film

Read: Alexander: Ch. 1-3

Week 15:

5/7, 5/9- The Criminal Justice System (cont) *Last Day of Class*

Read: Alexander: Ch. 4-6

Final Papers Due Monday, 5/14 by 1pm in my mailbox

VI. Other Important Issues

Academic Integrity

Cheating or any form of academic dishonesty can result in a permanent grade of “F/dishonesty” for the course. Written documents regarding late assignments or missed exams that contain false information are considered academic dishonesty cases and will be handled accordingly.

Additionally, in accordance with the university’s nationally recognized Honor Code, on every homework and lab assignment, exam, and on the final project, you must write by hand the following honor pledge at the top of your work “I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/exam” and sign your name.

Students with Learning, Emotional, Psychological and Physical Disabilities

In accordance with university policy, every effort will be made to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form that has been updated for the Fall 2011 semester. This form must be presented to me no later than September 9, 2011. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who do not provide me with documentation that has been reviewed by DSS after September 9, 2011. If you are having difficulties in reading, note taking, writing, or preparing for exams, please take advantage of the campus Learning Assistance Service. See www.counseling.umd.edu/LAS for further information.

Disruptive Students

It is university policy and my policy that students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to show civility with one another, the teaching assistants, or myself will be subject to being referred to the Office of Student Conduct or to Campus Police. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct. See www.jpo.umd.edu for further information.

Absences

University policy (testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html) excuses the absences of students for illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of university, or due compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control. Students who miss a single class for a medical reason are not required to provide medical documentation, but students who are absent more than once are responsible for providing various forms of documentation, depending on the nature of the absence.

Medical Excuses

Campus Senate policy requires students who are absent due to illness/injury to furnish documentary support to the instructor. I require students to contact me by email or in phone prior to class time to indicate that you have an illness or an injury. You must provide written documentation verifying your illness/injury immediately upon your return to class in the case that you miss more than one class. You will not be allowed to turn in missed assignments or

make up quizzes, tests, papers, etc. if you have not provided this documentation. Documentation not presented to me in a timely manner will not be accepted. In addition, if it is found that you have falsified the documentation provided, I will refer you to the University's Student Conduct Office."

Religious Observance

In accordance with university policy on religious observance, by September 9, 2011, students must provide me in writing a request for a make up assignment or exam if I have indicated a date on this syllabus that you are unable to make due to a specific religious observance (specify) on a specific date. Please see refer to the Online Undergraduate Catalog Policy on Religious Observance.

Inclement Weather

If campus is closed due to inclement weather or other campus emergencies, and assignments and/or exams are schedule during the closure, the assignments and/or exams are due the next time our class meets.