Social Inequality

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”~ Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto, 1847

“For the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.”~ W.E.B. DuBois

“Talking about gender for most people is the equivalent of fish talking about water”~ Judith Lorber
Course description:
Our positions in the social structure (based upon social class, race or ethnicity, and gender) shape the opportunities and constraints we encounter as we move through our lives. Class, race and ethnicity, and gender are considered different but interrelated (not simply additive) axes of social structure. The structural pattern that emerges from this matrix affects individual consciousness, group interaction and group access to institutional power and privilege. Whether we like the current stratification system or not (and, we generally like it when our status gives us advantage and dislike it when we are disadvantaged), our job as social scientists is to understand it. How did the stratification system come about? Is it natural? How is it maintained or reproduced? Why is there such a strong connection between social position and health? What are the effects, and who is most affected, by sharp downturns in the economy? Inequality inevitably cuts across the social institutions of work and family, education and law, and other aspects of contemporary society. These are some of the questions we will consider as the semester unfolds Prereq: SOCI 112B or permission of program director.

Course aims (framed in questions):
What is social inequality?
Why is there social inequality? Is inequality inevitable in all societies? And what, if any, functions does inequality serve?
What is the nature of economic inequality today in American society and in other societies like it?
What is “power” and who are the powerful in society?
What is the nature of racial and ethnic inequality?
What is gender inequality?
How is social inequality sustained and, conversely, how do societies move toward greater social equality?

Required Text:

**All other readings will be available via Blackboard and indicated by BB in syllabus.

Course requirements:
To complete this course, you must satisfy the following requirements: Read all assigned material. Students are responsible for all materials presented in text, class notes or handouts, and in-class films. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain class notes from a fellow student for any missed classes.
Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for five thousand years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental ~ W.E.B. DuBois

Grading:
2 exams (30%), Homework assignments (40%), Group project (15%), attendance & participation (15%)

Homework assignments: I want students to work together and to think deeply and critically about the assigned readings. While there will be some lecturing (mainly at the beginning of the semester and class sessions), most of the course will be run as a seminar where students engage in discussion and question asking. Consequently, you are expected to read and think about the assigned materials before coming to class. In order to facilitate that process, I am placing much emphasis on weekly homework assignments. Note: there are assignment options for 10 weeks; you are expected to complete 5 and assignments must be turned into me on each wed’s class
Midterm and final exam: consist of T/F, multiple choice, and short essay format (the final exam will not be comprehensive). Exam questions will be drawn from texts and lecture.
Group presentation assignment will be to choose and explore a topic dealing with social inequality from a collaborative list we develop over the course of the semester. Specific guidelines for this assignment will be distributed.
Attendance & participation will include scores on several unannounced worksheets distributed in-class over the course of the semester (these cannot be made up if you miss a class in which a worksheet was distributed).

Attendance and Class participation
Attendance is mandatory--be sure to initial the in-class attendance sheet, especially if you are late to class (initial at end of class). For students with multiple unexcused absences, final grade will be lowered. Please inform me beforehand if you will be absent from class (e.g. student-athlete, or commuter issue, or other issue preventing coming to class) and it is your responsibility to copy missed notes from lecture, discussion or films from your classmates (not me!). If an exam is missed, the instructor must receive notification by email (preferably) or phone *before* the scheduled exam. Missed exams must be made up prior to the next class meeting through special arrangement with the instructor. Any students requesting a make-up exam will be required to provide documentation of extenuating circumstances that interfere with taking the exam as scheduled. Also, the syllabus is subject to change (readings, assignments, etc.). To maintain the integrity of the course, the instructor reserves the right to change this syllabus. Please pay close attention to class announcements made either in class or via Blackboard.

Other class room guidelines:
*Please mute your cell phone before class. My policy is if it rings during class, I answer it!

Disability Resources
If you are a student with accommodation needs, please feel comfortable in seeing me about your needs or meeting with the coordinator of Disability Resources to arrange such accommodations.
COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 (Jan 14, 16th) An Introduction to the Study of Social Inequality
*What is equality? Sociology as structural, systematic, and critical—applied to inequality*
Introductions & course logistics
Marger, Chap 1
“Why race, class, and gender still matter” (pgs. 1-16)

“Broken Levees, Unbroken Barriers”, De Parle, A & C
Growing gulf between rich and rest of us, BB

“On the one hand I must attempt to change the soul of individuals so that their societies may be changed. On the other I must attempt to change the societies so that the individual soul will have a chance.” ~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Week 2 (Jan 21, 23rd) Theories of Class and Social Inequality—Extra credit opportunities for MLK Jr. Celebration Week events attendance (see Blackboard)

*Marx and Weber; Functionalism and Conflict Theory; applied to Garrett, Tyrec and Katie*
Marger, Chap 2
“Classes in Capitalism and Pre-capitalism”, IR
Lareau, Chap 1-2

Week 3 (Jan 26, 28, 30th) The American Class System & The Upper Class and the Power Elite
Are there two Americas? A comparative perspective; the role of language in childhood socialization

People Like Us/The American Ruling Class
Marger Chap 3 & 4
The Power Elite, IR
Who rules America? Power and politics, IR
Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There, IR

Homework Option 2 due Wednesday
Week 4 (Feb 2, 4, 6th) The Middle Classes
Marger Chap 5
Lareau, Chap 3-5
No degree, and no way back to the middle, IR

Mardi Gras

Homework Option 3
due Wednesday

Week 5 (Feb 9, 11, 13th)
Poverty and the Poor
Definitions and data, theoretical explanations, a comparative perspective
Marger Chap 6
Lareau, Chap 6-7
Nickel-and-Dimed: On (not) Getting by in America, IR
Jobless poverty: A new form of social dislocation in the inner-city ghetto, IR
United States Poverty in a Cross-National Context, IR
The compassion gap in American poverty policy, BB

Homework Option 4 due Wednesday

Week 6 (Feb 16, 18, 20th) Poverty cont.
“When blacks are unemployed, they are considered lazy and apathetic. When whites are unemployed, it’s considered a depression”
~ Jesse Jackson
Marger Chap 6 cont.
American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass, IR
The indignities of unemployment, A & C
As American as apple pie: Poverty and welfare, BB
Improving the measurement of Poverty, Blank & Greenberg, BB
Welfare reform, family hardship, and women of color, A & C

Take It From Me/Segregation: Northern Style

Homework Option 5 due Wednesday

Week 7 (Feb 23, 25, 27th) Stratification Systems and Social (im)mobility
Guest speaker, Dr. Betsy Lucal, Associate Professor of Sociology, Indiana University South Bend
Week 8 (Feb 23, 25, 27th) Ideology and the Legitimation of Inequality & Public Policy and the Class System

“Violence is black children going to school for twelve years and receiving six years’ worth of education” ~ Julian Bond

Marger Chap 8 & 9
Ain’t No Makin’ it: Leveled aspirations in a Low-Income Neighborhood, IR
Aid to Dependent Corporations: Exposing Federal Handouts to the Wealthy, A & C
Media magic: Making Class Invisible, A & C

Week 9 (March 2, 4, 6th)

Class dismissed: How TV frames the working class
Lareau, closing chaps
Midterm

Week 10 SPRING BREAK%$@!?? 😊😊

Week 11 (March 16, 18, 20th) Race
Marger Chap 11
Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s, Omi & Winant, IR
The Declining Significance of Race, Wilson, IR
The Continuing Significance of Race, Feagin, IR
Mark of a Criminal Record, BB
Black Wealth/White Wealth: A new perspective on racial inequality, IR

Homework Option 6 due Wednesday

Homework Option 7 due Wednesday

Homework Opt 8 due Wed
Week 12 (March 23, 25, 27th)

Chap 11 cont.
“Crime decline in context”, Rosenfeld
Western & Pettit (Contexts Reader)
“Beyond crime and punishment: Prisons and
inequality” Western & Pettit (Contexts
Reader)
Race, ethnicity, and the criminal justice
system, ASA Series on How Race and
Ethnicity Matter, BB

NOW For profit prisons

Homework Option 9 due Wed

Week 13 (March 30, April 1, 3rd) Gender
Inequality

Marilyn Waring: If women counted? Or
Wrestling with Manhood
Marger, Chap 12
Readings: TBA

Homework Option 10 due Wed

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and
women are created equal.”~ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, First
Woman’s Rights Convention, Seneca Falls, NY July 19-20,
1848. Declaration of sentiments

Week 14 (April 6, 8, 10th) Health Inequalities

The health divide, BB
Can’t buy me whiteness: New lessons from the Titanic on race, ethnicity and health, BB
The intersection of race, gender, and ses: Health paradoxes, BB
Week 15 (April 13, 15, 17th) Group projects presentation week

Week 16 (April 20, 22, 24th) Political Inequality
Marger, Chap 13
Other readings: TBA

Week 17 (April 27, Monday, last day of class)
April 28 & 29th Reading days. Instructor available for appointment & to answer any questions before final. Final exam: April 30th, 8:30-11:30