Sociology 233-001: Social Inequality in the United States  
Fall 2015, Tues. & Thurs. 2:00-3:15  
LUB S195  

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Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 12:00-1:00 -- or by appointment  
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Texts & Website  


In addition to the textbook listed above, the articles marked by an asterisk (*) on the “Course Outline” are required reading and can be accessed from the “Content” section of the course website on Desire2Learn (D2L) or purchased as a reader from the university bookstore. The articles marked with a double asterisk (**) are also required reading and will be handed out in class (and posted on the website). That website will include announcements, other course materials, and grades. If you have any problems using the D2L website, you should email help@uwm.edu, call 229-4040, or see the service staff in Bolton 225.  

Course Description and Grading  

This course examines the changing structure of social inequality in the contemporary United States. Our class-stratified, industrial society is a relatively recent historical development, and the course begins with an overview of some of the classical theories that account for the class structure of inequality that arose with industrial capitalism. Against the background of this theoretical introduction, we will discuss how the “life chances” of Americans differ, looking first at our unequal access to health care and then at the increasing inequalities of wealth, income, and wages in the U.S. These class differences help to explain the persistence of poverty in our society, and we will discuss how poverty is measured, and how the number and the social characteristics of the poor have or have not changed. One of the defining features of a class society is that it is “open” to social advancement, and this part of the course will conclude with readings on who gets ahead in America and why.  

The second part of the course will focus upon the inequalities associated with race, ethnicity, and gender. We will discuss the history of the “color line” in American society, and the persistence of racial and ethnic differences in income and wealth. We will also examine the claims of many critics that our immigration policy and criminal justice system help to maintain racial and ethnic inequality. The course concludes with a discussion of the nature of gender inequality, the changing social roles of American women and men, and the class differences in marriage and family life.  

Your performance in the course will be evaluated by two exams, graded on a 100-point scale, that each count for a third of your grade. The first exam will cover the material in the first half of the course. The second exam will be based upon the readings and discussions in the second half of the course. In addition to these exams, there will be nine (9) in-class assignments that will ask about the each week’s assigned readings, and these assignments will count for the remaining third of your grade.
The in-class assignments will help you prepare for the exams because the essay questions on the exams are based on the in-class assignments. As explained in class, students can miss up to two assignments without penalty, but there are no make-ups for the assignments that you miss. Regular class attendance is therefore expected and will count for a large part of your grade.

This course will require you to do the weekly readings, review the lecture notes before each class and answer the questions in those notes, prepare for the in-class assignments, and study for the exams. On average, this should take about 8 or 9 hours a week of your time. In addition to the time spent in class, you should expect to spend 3 to 4 hours doing each week’s reading and several hours reviewing notes and studying for the in-class assignments and exams.

**General Education Requirements**

This class meets the UWM General Education Requirements (GER) because it explores the economic and social relations that produce inequalities of class, race, ethnicity, and gender. It examines the relationships that shape inequality, linking social structure and culture to individual action and interaction. It also examines how the inequalities of class, race/ethnicity, and gender are or are not changing. Throughout the course we will compare different theories of inequality and mobility, as well as the differing methods researchers use to study this broad subject.

One learning goal is to understand the different ways in which sociologists explain class stratification. An example of student work that will address this learning goal is an in-class short essay assignment that will ask you to identify the main argument in an assigned reading and tell why the theory underlying that argument is either a functionalist or conflict explanation. I will assess this, and other, essay assignments not only in terms of how clearly students summarize the reading, but also in terms of how accurately they identify and describe the theoretical arguments being presented.

**Course Outline**

**Thurs. 9/3**  Introduction: Inequality and Social Justice

**Tues. 9/8**  Marx’s Analysis of Capitalism & Class Inequality
   Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 2, pp. 26-38
   *Capitalism Hits the Fan

**Thurs. 9/10**  Weber’s Multi-Dimensional View of Inequality
   Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 2, pp. 38-46
   **Not Enough Lawyers?**

**Tues. 9/15**  Functionalism: The Conservative Theory of Inequality
   Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 2, pp. 46-53
   *Some Principles of Stratification

**Thurs. 9/17**  Why Class Matters: Life Chances and Health Care
   Reading: *Sick Out of Luck*
Course Outline (Continued)

Tues. 9/22  Reforming Health Care: Sicko
Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 3, pp. 54-63

Thurs. 9/24  The American Class System: Growing Income & Wealth Inequality
Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 3, pp. 63-81

Tues. 9/29  The Middle Classes: Growing Wage Inequality
Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 5, pp. 111-126
  **How to Live Happily with Robots**

Thurs. 10/1  The Middle Classes: Surviving the Good Times
Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 5, pp. 126-145
  *Nickel-and-Dimed*

Tues. 10/6  Poverty in America: Conservative & Liberal Perspectives
Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 6, pp. 146-171

Thurs. 10/8  Social Mobility: Patterns and Processes
Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 7, pp. 183-212

Tues. 10/13  Social Mobility and Unequal Opportunity
Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 7, pp. 212-219
  *The Politics of Inherited Advantage*

Thurs. 10/15  Social Mobility and the Rising Costs of College
Reading: **Where the Jobs Are, the Training Might Not Be**

Tues. 10/20  Review

Thurs. 10/22  FIRST EXAM

Tues. 10/27  Race – The Difference Between Us
Reading: *Categorical Inequality*

Thurs. 10/29  The History of Race & Ethnic Inequality: Jim Crow Segregation
Reading: *Social Inequality*, Chap. 10, pp. 289-311

Tues. 11/3  The History of Racial Inequality: Goin’ to Chicago

Thurs. 11/5  The History of Racial Inequality: Construction of the Ghetto
Reading: **Creating the Ghetto, 1910-1940**
Course Outline (Continued)

Tues. 11/10 Racial Inequality Today: Neighborhood Segregation
Reading: *Fences and Neighbors

Thurs. 11/12 Neighborhood Segregation in Milwaukee
Reading: *Race at Work

Tues. 11/17 Immigration and the Growing Hispanic Minority
Reading: Social Inequality, Chap. 10, pp. 311-329

Thurs. 11/19 Immigration and Assimilation
Readings: *They Take Our Jobs
**Fields of Tears

Tues. 11/24 Crime in the Streets & Unequal Justice
Readings: *Schools and Prisons
**Throwing Away the Key

Tues. 12/1 Gender Inequality: The Opposite Sex
Reading: Social Inequality, Chap. 11, pp. 330-354

Thurs. 12/3 Gender Inequality: The Changing Roles of Women and Men
Reading: *Toward Gender Equality: Progress and Bottlenecks

Tues. 12/8 Gender Inequality: Class Differences in Marriage
Readings: **America’s Two Gender Systems
*Unmarried with Children

Thurs. 12/10 Review

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 17th, 12:30-2:00