Sociology 190
Sociology of Discrimination
Fall 2017 – Thursdays, 10am-12noon – 106 Wheeler Hall

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Introduction
We will examine the social scientific literature on discrimination. We will investigate causes of
discrimination, definitions of discrimination, effects of discrimination, and possible policy
responses to discrimination.

Grades
Grades are calculated as follows: 25% from effective participation, and 75% on the written work.

Written Assignments
There are two types of writing assignments: 1) weekly responses and 2) a final paper.

Weekly Responses
Participants must prepare a short response to the reading for the week and e-mail it to
socpost@gmail.com by 5pm on the Tuesday preceding the class. Please do not include
attachments in your e-mail; just place your response in the body of the e-mail message and place
“Soc 190” in the subject line of your e-mail message. If you do not put “Soc 190” in the subject
line your e-mail will probably be lost.

These short responses should reference specific pages of the reading. In your response you should
provide an assessment of the readings (whether you believe each is accurate or not and, if so,
why or why not?).

Weekly responses will count 25% of the seminar grade. They will be evaluated on their
thoughtfulness and promptness – late responses will not receive credit.

Final Paper
This course requires a final paper in which you delve more deeply into a particular dimension of
discrimination with respect to a particular community or target of discrimination. However, to
improve the quality of the final paper you will deliver material about the paper three times during
the term (Oct 5, Oct 26, and Nov 16) before the final paper is due. You will receive feedback on
each stage to aid your work, culminating in the final version of the paper.

The final paper makes up 50% of the seminar grade.
Class Meetings
Attendance and verbal participation (i.e., speaking in class) is required each class period. Seminars depend crucially on each student speaking in class. But, speaking in class does not mean simply conveying one’s own experience. The discussion of the class is to center on the readings—what do they say, how do we interpret what they say, what do the words in the reading imply concerning other viewpoints we have read and discussed. Thus, useful discussion will reference the reading assigned for the class as well as readings we have already completed, probing the logic and implications of that reading and the previous ones. Hence, only those who do the reading and reflect on it ahead of class time will be able to participate helpfully.

As you can see, therefore, seminars run on the dialogue we have together. Seminars are not lecture classes. When a seminar is running well it does so because the students arrive prepared to discuss the readings; they have read the material and they have thought about it before class. The professor in such a class does not lecture, ideally; instead, the professor brings forward questions to help the discussion move along. Thus, the professor’s job is to keep us probing, searching, questioning. The only way this can work, of course, is if every student is prepared to engage each week. Because I want to establish that kind of “supportive for learning” environment, in which each is ready to participate throughout every class, I will call on persons to respond to questions and aspects of the reading regardless of whether or not they have volunteered to do so. I will describe the grading of participation at our third class meeting.

Reading Materials
Everyone is expected to read the material before class and come to class prepared to discuss the reading. The reading is located in a few different places. Some of the articles are in a reader that you may purchase at Copy Central at 2560 Bancroft. Some readings are available via electronic depositories that can be reached from the UC-Berkeley network. One that sociologists frequently use is JSTOR; articles that can be accessed on JSTOR are noted in the syllabus with a bold JSTOR after the citation. At least one other reading is available in a non-JSTOR electronic archive; any such article will have OsKiCat or Google Scholar after the citation. If it says OsKiCat then you should use OsKiCat to find the electronic version of the journal, and then find the paper. If it says Google Scholar, you’ll need to search for the paper using Google Scholar.

Because students are adept at finding books cheaper than bookstores can offer them, bookstores often have to pay the cost of returning books to publishers. To avoid this dynamic, a dynamic that further drives bookstores toward bankruptcy, I have not ordered the book assigned for this class. However, it is available in paperback at amazon.com and perhaps at other locations as well.

I am the author of the only book on the syllabus (listed below). If you present to me a receipt from University Press Books for a new copy of the book, I will refund to you the author’s royalty of 20 percent of the list price. This is my way of supporting local businesses and education.

Course-plan

– Aug 24 – Introduction to the Course, Inequality vs. Discrimination, and Illustrative Kinds of Possible Discrimination

– Aug 31 – Selected Possible Psychological Causes of Discrimination


– Sep 7 – Taste Theory of Discrimination and Statistical Discrimination


– Sep 14 – Discrimination as Defined in US Law


– Sep 21 (Reading Session) –

– Sep 28 – Discrimination as a (Damaged) Social Relation


– Oct 5 – Marxist Theories of Discrimination – Draft Paper topic due


Oct 12 – Simple Demographic Causes of Discrimination & Additional Possible Complexity


Oct 19 – Effects of Discrimination?


Nov 2 – Policy Response: Revise/Restore Affirmative Action?


– Nov 9 – Policy Response: Re-Evaluate Jobs and Reward Structures?


Gilens, Martin. 1996. “‘Race Coding’ and White Opposition to Welfare.” *American Political Science Review* 90: 593-604. JSTOR


– Nov 23 – Thanksgiving

– Nov 30 – Provide Reparations?


– Dec 7 – Wrap-up Discussion

– Tuesday, Dec 12 – Final Papers (in hardcopy) due at my office at 12noon.