SOCIOLOGY 130: SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

Summer 2012, Monday-Thursday, 8:00am, 122 Barrows

Instructor: Marcel Paret, mparet@berkeley.edu, 410 Barrows Hall

Office hours: Wednesdays, 11:00am-12:00pm, Caffe Strada (corner of College & Bancroft).

This course is an introduction to the study of inequality in the United States. The goal is to expose you to some of the different forms of inequality, and inspire you to think critically about where inequality comes from and why it persists. Each week we will cover a new area of inequality, though each area is diverse on its own. Throughout the course we will pay attention to class, race, gender, and sexuality as interweaving modes of social division. We will also examine the dynamic interplay between the economy and the state, as well as the role of institutions such as schools and the family. The intention of the course is for students to develop their own understanding of what characterizes contemporary American inequality through a dialogue with existing scholarship.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

The classes will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, small group work, videos, and other activities. You are expected to attend and actively participate in every meeting. Attendance will be taken. Active participation means listening to and hearing your fellow classmates, following the lecture, raising comments and questions, and putting effort into class activities. In short, it means being engaged. You should arrive prepared to discuss the reading. This means reading carefully, making a serious attempt to understand the argument, identifying things you do not understand, and developing questions. I expect each person to speak at least once during class every week. Attendance and class participation account for 20 percent of the overall course grade.

POP QUIZZES

During the course I will give three OR four pop quizzes. They are “pop” quizzes because I am not going to tell you when they will be. They are designed to be an incentive for you to do the reading before you arrive in class, and to follow what happens in class. They will require you to demonstrate basic comprehension of the course material, rather than memorize minor details or abstract larger themes and comparisons.

If you are not in class on the day of a pop quiz you will be given a grade of 0. There will be no makeup quizzes. I will, however, drop your lowest grade on the pop quizzes when calculating your final grade. The pop quizzes will account for 20 percent of the overall grade.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There will be three writing assignments, comprising 60 percent of the overall course grade. Below is a brief description of each writing assignment. Detailed descriptions of the assignments will be handed out in class, but I am providing these preliminary descriptions so that you may begin thinking about them and preparing.

I encourage you to use the Writing for Sociology guide, which is available on the Berkeley
Sociology website: [http://sociology.berkeley.edu/](http://sociology.berkeley.edu/) (choose "Undergraduate Program" and find the link to the Second Edition of Writing for Sociology). It is free and has many useful tips, mostly written by the people who grade your papers, about how to approach and carry through sociology writing assignments.

There will not be any extensions. Late papers will be graded down. The papers will be graded by Daniel Laurison ([daniel.laurison@berkeley.edu](mailto:daniel.laurison@berkeley.edu)). If you believe that you have been graded unfairly, please contact Daniel first to discuss your concern. If after doing so you would like to have your grade reconsidered, please submit a written request to Marcel explaining the reasons why, along with a copy of your paper. Marcel will re-grade the paper, and your grade may go up or down.

**Writing Assignment #1: Personal Reflection**

Length: 500-700 words. Due: Friday, May 25, 3:30pm. Grading: 10 percent.

The readings for class 2 (Davis and Moore) and class 3 (Inequality by Design) present two different understandings of inequality. Using a personal example from your own life, you will be required to make an argument for one of the two positions.

**Writing Assignment #2: Oakland Assessment**

Length: 1000-1200 words. Due: Friday, June 15, 3:30pm. Grading: 20 percent.

This paper will require you to choose from a set of ongoing issues in Oakland. You will be required to identify empirical data (e.g. Newspaper article, YouTube clip) and interpret it using readings from weeks 2, 3 and 4 (classes 6 through 16).

**Writing Assignment #3: Final Paper**

Length: 2800-3000 words. Due: Friday, June 29, 3:30pm. Grading: 30 percent.

The final paper will be your chance to synthesize what you have learned during the six weeks of the course. Your assignment will be to compile a report for an outsider who is visiting from another world, and wants to know the basics about American inequality. Drawing from the readings of the course, you will be required to summarize the key features of American inequality.

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION**

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WEEK 1: HOW TO THINK ABOUT INEQUALITY

Class 1 (5/21). Introduction.


Class 3 (5/23). Political view of inequality.


DUE DATE (5/25). Personal reflection assignment. Due at 3:30pm in Barrows 410.

WEEK 2: LABOR AND MOBILITY


Class 6 (5/29). Unions and work.


Class 7 (5/30). Working poverty.


Class 8 (5/31). Culture and intergenerational reproduction.

WEEK 3: GENDER, FAMILY, AND SEXUALITY


Class 10 (6/5). Gendering labor.

Class 11 (6/6). The welfare state.

Class 12 (6/7). Marriage and sexuality.

WEEK 4: RACE, SEGREGATION, AND MASS INCARCERATION

Class 13 (6/11). Spatial concentration of poverty.

Class 14 (6/12). Criminalization of Bay Area youth.

Class 15 (6/13). Effects of incarceration.

Class 16 (6/14). Race-making institutions.

DUE DATE (6/15). Oakland assessment. Due at 3:30pm in Barrows 410.
WEEK 5: MIGRATION AND ILLEGALITY

Class 17 (6/18). Producing illegality.

Class 18 (6/19). Criminalizing work.


WEEK 6: CONSEQUENCES OF INEQUALITY

Class 21 (6/25). Inequality and Community.

Class 22 (6/26). Inequality and resistance.

Class 23 (6/27). Review session.

DUE DATE (6/29). Final paper. Due at 3:30pm in Barrows 410.