SOCIOLOGY 207
Winter 2007
Greg McLauchlan

Office Hrs: M 1:30-2:30, W 4-5, or by appt.
630 PLC  346-5028

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

This course will examine the causes, structure, and consequences of social inequality. The emphasis will be on the United States experience, but there will be some comparisons with other societies and we will also look at inequalities on a global level toward the end of the term. We will focus on systems of class, racial, gender, sexual orientation, and physical ability inequalities, and we will examine the environmental dimensions of inequality. Attention will be given to efforts to reduce or redress social inequalities—including the role of historical and contemporary social movements and political struggles—and the relative success or failure of such efforts.

Readings (also on 2-hour reserve in Knight Library)


Barbara Ehrenreich, NICKEL AND DIMED: On (Not) Getting By in America, 2001 Henry Holt

A xerox packet of articles and excerpts from books, available at UO Bookstore (an * indicates a reading is in the xerox packet; "NEWS" refers to newspaper articles reprinted in the last section of the xerox packet)

Requirements

A midterm examination on Monday of week 6; a final examination at the scheduled time; participation in and short assignments for weekly discussion sections. [Note: make up exams possible only with written medical excuse; no early exams will be given]. Exams will consist of objective questions (true/false or multiple choice) emphasizing comprehension of readings and lecture material. Exams are open note, but not open book. Grading (points): Midterm 35; Section papers 30; Final 35.

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My TA: ____________________________ Office Hr: ______ Discussion Section time/place: ____________

Discussion sections: attendance and participation in weekly discussion sections is required. Reading response papers: In weeks 3, 5, 7, and 9 students will turn in (in section) a short, two-page response paper on the readings for that week and the previous week (typed, single spaced). Thus, you will write short papers on readings for weeks 2&3 on class inequality; 4&5 on racial inequalities; 6&7 on gender and physical ability inequalities; 7&8 on sexual orientation and environmental inequalities. Note: everyone must do the paper due week 3, but you only need to do 2 of the remaining 3 papers, for a total of three response papers. Your reading commentary should include: 1) a succinct summary of the main arguments, and main data or evidence, presented by authors of four of the readings (two from each week, one of which can be from the NEWS readings) and 2) a brief critical assessment of one or more of these readings (you may agree or disagree with the author—say why). Also, you should conclude your response with one brief question the readings or lectures raised for you that week. Sometimes your questions may be used to stimulate section discussions. These commentaries will serve as a journal record of your thoughts about the course materials (and can be
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used as part of your notes in the open note midterm and final exams). The three short assignments will be graded as: Excellent 9-10 points, Good 8-8.5 points, Satisfactory 7-7.5 points, Marginal 5-6.5 points (total for three short papers: 30 points). Late papers can be accepted up to one week late, but they will incur a penalty of 1 point/day off for up to 4 points penalty. Please contact your TA via email or phone if you have any questions about the course or section requirements. Additionally, you will receive 2 bonus points for attending all section meetings (you can have one excused absence), and for oral participation in section discussions (raising your grade it when it is on a borderline). Important: it is your responsibility to keep all the reading responses returned to you and you should always keep a copy (and disc backup copies) of all your course materials in case there is a need to resolve a discrepancy later.

Course readings for each week are indicated in the calendar below. Lectures will include unique material as well as complement and elaborate on the readings, thus I cannot emphasize too strongly the value of completing the reading for each lecture date on time, and attending the lectures—this is the key to doing well in this course. Usually part of one weekly class meeting will include a film or guest presentation. Material from these will be included in the exams.

Grading: 100-98 A+; 97-92 A; 90-91 A-; 88-89 B+; 82-87 B; 80-81 B-; 78-79 C+; 72-77 C; 70-71 C-; 68-69 D+; 60-67 D; 59- F

Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Class Meetings

Week 1. Introduction and course overview. The nature of inequality; theoretical and philosophical perspectives. Capitalism and social class inequalities in modern society.

WED: Framework essay #1, "Constructing Categories of Difference", read pp. 2-8 (up to “Creating Categories”); “Dichotomizing Class” pp. 21-22; “Constructing the Other…” pp. 25-32 in (in R&T); Michael Zweig “What’s Class Got to Do With It” (R&T #13). FIELD GUIDE pp. 1-7, 9. NEWS “Very richest’s share”, “For Many Airline Pilots”, “Goldman chairman”.

Week 2. Class stratification and inequality. Life experiences, social outlook, and power. Portraits of the rich, the middle class, the working class, the poor. The role of government and the school system in relation to class inequality. Corporate welfare and social welfare.

MON: Martin Luther King Day—Holiday, no class meeting

WED: David Kay Johnston “Richest are leaving even the rich far behind” (in *); G. William Domhoff “Class and power in America” (in *); Elisabeth Drew “Selling Washington” (in *). FIELD GUIDE pp. 11-15, 75-78, 80, 84, 86-87, 89, 102. NEWS: “The death of Horatio Alger”, “Losing our country”

Week 3. Class inequality continued. Poverty in America—case study of homelessness. Work in America—its relation to individual fulfillment, meeting basic human needs, power, and exploitation. The labor movement and the role of unions. Work, the consumer society, and inequality.

MON: Nancy Wiebek “America’s economic transformation” (R&T #15); Seelah Kolhatkar “Inside the billionaire service industry” (in *). FIELD GUIDE: pp. 91-92, 95-105. NEWS: “Bring a no. 2 pencil and $6,000”, “Big increase in people lacking health insurance”, “Program puts a face on poverty”, Ceremony honors homeless” [video: Citizens Without Addresses]

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Week 4. Class Inequality—conclusion. Racial Inequality: theories of racial formation in the U.S. The effects and experience of racism. The civil rights movement and efforts to combat racism.


Week 5. Racial inequality in the US today. Social policies to foster equality; the affirmative action debate. Building a multicultural and diverse civic culture.

MON: George Lipsitz “The possessive investment in whiteness” (R&T #45); Leonard Steinhor and Barbara Diggs-Down “A day in the life of two Americas” (R&T #28); Clara E. Rodriguez “Latinos in the US race structure” (R&T #5); Yen Espiritu “Asian American panethnicity” (R&T #7). NEWS: “A lynching memorial”, “Japanese-Americans relive barbed era”, “For many Muslims”, “Congressman criticizes election of Muslim”, “A national disgrace” [video on the civil rights movement: “Mississippi: Is this America?”]

WED: Frank Wu “The model minority: Asian American ‘success’ as a race relations failure” (R&T #49); John Lawrin “Why are Droves of Unqualified, Unprepared Kids Getting into Our Top Colleges?” (R&T #37); Paul Kivel “Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice” (R&T #64). NEWS: “Fatal flaws”, “Police try to back up anti-profiling pledge”, “Eugene attempts to deny racism” [Guest speaker on diversity and the college experience]


MON: MIDTERM EXAM; bring #2 pencil, notes, scantron sheet

WED: Walter Williams, “The Berdache Tradition” (R&T #10); Michael Kimmel, “The Gendered Society” (R&T # 11); Marilyn Frye “Oppression” (R&T #21). Recommended: Laurel Richardson, “Gender Stereotyping in the English Language” (R&T #58) NEWS: “Rethinking biology 101”, “Vagina is not a dirty word”, “Thinner: the male battle with Anorexia” [Video: "Still Killing Us Softly"]

Week 7. Gender continued. The politics of housework and the family; gender and violence; the men's movement; efforts to create gender equality. Disability, inequalities, and political change.


mobility”. [Guest speaker on disability rights and public policy]

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MON: Michael Kauth, “The Hazards of Naming Sexual Attraction” (R&T #18); Laura Stepp, “Anti-gay Slurs Common at School: A Lesson in Cruelty” (R&T #34); Almas Sayeed, “Chappals and Gym Shorts: An Indian-Muslim woman in the land of Oz” (R&T #33). NEWS: “Anti-gay initiative…”, “Gay measure’s impact”, “More than mere partners” [video excerpt: Before Stonewall]

WED: Bert Archer, “The End of Gay” (R&T #20); NEWS: “Marriage by gays gains big victory”, “Strong support is found for ban on gay marriage”, “Korean actor’s reality drama: coming out” [Guest speakers from UO LGBT Alliance]


** FINAL EXAM: 10:15 Monday March 19 (Bring #2 pencil, notes)