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SOCI 325.01: Social Stratification

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**Social Stratification
Spring 2016
University of Montana**

Course Number: 31795 – SOCI 325
Day: Tuesdays & Thursdays
Time: 11:10am – 12:30pm
Class Location: JRH 204

Teaching Team Contact Information

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Thursdays 10:00am – 11:00am

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Thursdays 12:40pm – 1:40pm

Course Overview

Course Description

Social stratification is the study of social divisions based on class, power, status, rank, and a host of other factors. Sociologists, economists, journalists, policy-makers, and social activists have long been concerned with inequalities that exist in society, how they are generated, and what consequences they have for society and for individuals.

Stratification is a broad topic that encompasses complex theories, various methodologies, and a number of academic disciplines. It is also a dynamic area of sociological research, since systems of inequality change over time in response to changes in the economy, politics, social policies, and attitudes.

We will use a combination of theoretical readings, empirical works, lectures, class discussions, and exercises to examine the phenomenon of inequality in the U.S. Some lectures and class discussions will explore how theories of stratification relate to current events and contemporary debates about inequality in the U.S.

Course Objectives

First, students will get consider the role of inequality in today's society. They will be introduced to common measures of inequality including status, power, income, and wealth. Next, students will explore four theories of stratification; Functionalist, Marxist, Post-Marist, and Weberian. They will learn the logic of each theoretical perspective and consider how proponents of each perspective would make sense of contemporary inequalities.

Students will then examine how inequality is lived by exploring the lifestyles, consumption patterns, and experiences of people of color, low income people, women, and immigrants. Next, students will gain insights into the mechanisms that produce and sustain inequality, including incarceration, systems of production, redlining, labor market discrimination and social networks. Finally, students will examine several strategies for reducing or eradicating inequality, and debate the merits of each.

Expectations of Students

Preparation

Be prepared for class. Always read the assigned reading materials in advance of class so that you can follow the lecture and participate fully in discussions. Bring the assigned reading materials to class with you so that you can refer to them during lectures and discussions.

Take careful lecture notes. You should obtain lecture notes from another student if you are unable to attend class. The instructor, teaching assistant and preceptors will not provide lecture notes or PowerPoint slides to students who miss class.

Participation

Class sessions will include a mixture of lectures, discussion, and exercises. I strongly encourage you to participate actively during all discussions and exercises. In order to maintain a respectful, open, and inquisitive classroom environment, please observe the following guidelines:

- Explain your views using reasoned arguments, and provide evidence for assertions of fact.
- Use personal anecdotes sparingly. When sharing a personal anecdote, always connect it back to the course material.
- Respect others' views and listen. You do not have to agree with your classmates, but try your best to give them your full attention and consideration when they are talking during class discussions.
- Texting, emailing, surfing the web, and using social media should not be done during class time. They disrupt your classmates and are disrespectful to your teaching team.

Communication

You should maintain a university email account and check it regularly for class announcements. I will communicate regularly with students in this class via email. You are responsible for all information contained in these emails. University policy prohibits me both from responding to emails sent from personal, non-UM email accounts, and from sharing grade information with students via email.

Feel free to contact me via email or in my office hours with questions or concerns about the course and/or your performance in the course. If you email me during the work week, I will do my best to get back to you within 48 hours. When emailing me, always include “SOCI 325” or “Social Stratification” in the subject line of your email. When I answer questions during class that students have emailed me, I consider the question answered.

A Note about Classroom Culture

My classroom is a somewhat casual environment for learning; I use jokes, short stories, and pop culture references to animate the course material, and I encourage students to engage with me and each other during class sessions. However, this does not mean that this is an easy course. The assigned readings are dense and theoretical and the exams (in-class and take-home) are quite challenging. In order to pass the course, you must prepare carefully, pay close attention to details, and demonstrate accurate understanding of the course material on the exams. This is by design. I nurture a somewhat casual classroom environment in order to spark students’ interest in the course material, and I develop challenging exams to ensure that students develop a deep and accurate understanding of that material.

A Community of Diverse Learners

I start each semester with the assumption that I will have a diverse group of learners in my courses. I assume that the students in my classes have diverse worldviews and experiences, disparate learning styles, varied levels of academic preparation, and dissimilar amounts of prior exposure to the discipline of Sociology. I view this diversity positively, believing that it makes the teaching and learning experience more interesting, dynamic, and relevant than it would be if my classes were comprised of homogenous learners. Over the years I have developed several techniques to integrate diverse learners into my classrooms. I provide structured, linear class sessions, and encourage students to participate actively and frequently. I encourage students to interrogate, and in some cases challenge, the course material when it does not make intuitive sense to them. While my pedagogy welcomes and celebrates a diverse community of learners, my exams focus exclusively on the course material. Students will not earn points on exams (in-class or take-home) for describing their worldviews, experiences, personal opinions, or information that they gleaned in other Sociology courses. I view this as a matter of fairness; while diversity of worldview, experience, opinion, and prior exposure to Sociology enrich the teaching and learning experience, they cannot (and I would argue should not) be assigned value by the instructor or other members of the teaching team.

Academic Honesty

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php), which is available for review online (http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).

Accessibility

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or (406) 243-2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Course Requirements

Exams

There are four in-class exams in this course. All in-class exams have the same format; they will contain a combination of identifications, and short answers. Students must generate all information on their exams; there will be no multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank or true/false questions.

In-class exams will cover all material (readings, lectures, exercises, media, discussions, etc) covered in the preceding section of the course. Exam 1 will cover all material from January 26th through February 18th. Exam 2 will cover all material from February 25th through March 15th. Exam 3 will cover all material from March 22nd through April 14th. Exam 4 will be partially cumulative. Roughly 60% of the final exam will cover all material from April 21st to May 5th, and roughly 40% will cover major concepts and theories from the entire semester. Exam 4 will take place during exam period on Friday May 13 at @ 8am.

To help students prepare for the in-class exams, the teaching team will hold two review sessions before each one and will maintain a moodle forum for each exam. Students can post questions on the moodle forum and the teaching team will check it twice a day in the 5 days leading up to each in-class exam.

Students who arrive late to an in-class exam will not get extra time to complete the exam. Make-up exams are available under two conditions: 1) you must have a valid excuse (this almost always means a legitimate medical excuse with adequate documentation); and 2) you must receive my written permission to do so at least 24 hours in advance. It is your responsibility to provide legitimate written verification of your excuse to me. If I do not receive verification from you, you will not be allowed to take the make-up exam. If you receive permission to take a make-up exam, you will be required to take the exam at Testing Services on campus for a nominal fee.

Take-Home Exams

In addition to the in-class exams, students must complete one take-home exam. Take-home exams consist of one essay question, which students answer outside of class time. Students will have 72 hours following the in-class exam to complete their take-home exams. The essay questions cover the same material as the in-class exams that they correspond to. There will be take-home components for in-class exams 1, 2 and 3. There will not be a take-home component for exam 4.

Students can earn between zero and 15 points on take-home exams. Students must complete at least one take-home exam to pass the course. Students may attempt as many take-home exams as they like, but only one score (the highest score earned) will count toward their final grade.

The TA will grade the take-home exams using a rubric created by the instructor. After their take-home exam has been graded and returned to them, students are encouraged to meet with the TA to discuss their performance on the assignment, and review the TA's comments. If students have additional questions after meeting with the TA, they are encouraged to meet with the instructor during her office hours. After their meeting with the TA and instructor, if students believe that a grading mistake was made, they may request a re-grade of their take-home exam via email. The instructor will then review the take-home exam and confer with the TA. As a result of a re-grade, it is possible for a student's grade to go up, go down, or remain the same.

Course Grade

Students' final grades will be based on five components. The weight of each component is:

Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	20%
Exam 4	25%
Take-Home Exam	15%

Extra Credit

Students can earn a maximum of 5 extra credit points in this course. To earn these points, students may pursue one or more of the following options:

For up to 5 extra credit points, students can participate verbally in class discussions.

- Students who ask insightful questions about the course material and/or make thoughtful contributions to the class discussions will be eligible to earn these points.
- The teaching team will track verbal participation throughout the semester. Any extra credit points that students earn will be posted to the moodle gradebook during finals week.
- Students will not earn extra credit points:
 - For asking questions that indicate that they are not paying attention.
 - For repeating points that their fellow students have already made.
 - If they attend class infrequently or erratically.
 - If they routinely arrive late to class or leave class early.

For up to 4 extra credit points, students can tweet about class content.

- Students who tweet about the course material will be eligible to earn these points. Tweets should include a direct reference to the course material (a concept, article title or author will do) and a link to some content external to the course material (such as a link to media coverage or a photo)
- Students must use the hashtag #UMSocialStrat to be eligible for these points.
- Students must register their twitter handles with the TA by Thurs. May 5th at the end of class.
- Students must tweet a minimum of 3 times during 2 course units to be eligible for these points.
- Students will not earn extra credit points:
 - For tweeting during class sessions.
 - For tweeting exam content.
 - For tweeting complaints about the teaching team or other students in the course.
 - For employing offensive or coarse language in their tweets.

For up to 3 extra credit points, students can attend a panel at the Fourth Annual Eccles Family Rural West conference and write a short paper linking what they learned at the panel back to the course material.

- The conference will take place on campus on March 18th and 19th and is free of charge.
- Students can find information about the [conference and panels](http://ruralwest.stanford.edu/site/conference/2016/panels) online (<http://ruralwest.stanford.edu/site/conference/2016/panels>).
- Students must check in with the instructor at the beginning of the panel and stay for the entire panel.
- Students must submit their papers on moodle Friday March 25th at 12:30pm.

The maximum amount of extra credit that any student can earn is 5 points.

Tokens

Deadlines are necessary for academic courses. They enable instructors to predict their grading workload during the semester, and make it possible for students to plan ahead for periods of intensive studying. They create an even playing field by ensuring that all students have the same amount of time to complete assignments. Firm deadlines are particularly essential for courses that have in-class exams. Without firm exam times, instructors would have to schedule (and proctor) dozens of make-up exams throughout the semester, which is not sustainable.

As we all know, though, real life sometimes interferes with academics. When this happens it becomes challenging (and in some cases impossible) for students to meet academic deadlines. Students in this situation often experience tremendous anxiety. Many throw themselves on the mercy of the instructor, hoping that the instructor will be understanding and/or be able to offer flexibility about deadlines. The course uses “tokens” both to provide students with some flexibility around take-home exams, and to reward wise planning and careful time management.

Every student in this class will start the semester with ten tokens.

During the semester, students can exchange their tokens for the following:

- Make-up for an in-class exam with valid excuse (described on page 4) (10 tokens)
- 48-hour extension on a take-home exam or the Rural West extra credit assignment (8 tokens)
- 24-hour extension on a take-home exam or the Rural West extra credit assignment (6 tokens)
- Opportunity to revise and re-submit a take-home exam after it has been graded (4 tokens)

At the end of the semester, students may exchange leftover tokens for the following:

- 1 extra point (4 tokens)
- 2 extra points (6 tokens)
- 3 extra credit points (8 tokens)
- A 20 minute appointment with the instructor outside of office hours (10 tokens)
 - This appointment must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance
 - This appointment must take place during finals week

If you plan to use your tokens to extend your deadline for a take-home exam or the Rural West extra credit assignment, you must contact the instructor via email at least two hours before the original deadline. If you plan to use your tokens to revise and resubmit a take-home, you must contact the instructor via email by Friday May 6th at 12:30pm. Students must submit their revised take-home exams and a short revision memo on moodle Monday May 8th by 12:30pm.

Important: students may not use their tokens to revise in-class exams. They may only use their tokens to reschedule in-class exams if they have a valid excuse (described on page 4).

Course Materials

Required Book

David Grusky and Szonja Szelenyi, eds. 2011. The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class and Gender. Boulder: Westview Press.

I have assigned the second edition of this book. I strongly recommend that students buy this edition and not the previous edition of the book. Some of the required articles for this course are not included in previous edition. The page numbers differ by edition, which will make it hard for students to follow along during lectures and class discussions if they are using a previous edition of the book.

Required Article

In addition to the book, one supplemental reading is required for this course. This reading will be available on the course moodle page. Students are strongly encouraged to bring an electronic or hard copy of this reading to class with them the day it is assigned. This reading is marked with ** on the syllabus.

Course Schedule

Important dates

Tues. Feb 23	In-Class Exam 1
Fri. Feb 25	Take-Home Exam 1 due 12:30pm via moodle
Thurs. March 17	In-Class Exam 2
Sun. March 20	Take-Home Exam 2 due at 12:30pm
Fri. March 25	(optional) Rural West extra credit assignment due at 12:30pm via moodle
Tues. April 19	In-Class Exam 3
Fri. April 22	Take-Home Exam 3 due at 12:30pm via moodle
Thurs. May 5th	(optional) Register your twitter handle with TA by the end of class
Fri. May 6th	(optional) Email instructor if you intend to revise and re-submit a take-home exam by 12:30pm
Mon. May 8th	(optional) Revised take-home exam and short revision memo due at 12:30pm via moodle
Fri. May 13	In-Class Exam 4

See next two pages for detailed course schedule.

Unit 1: Introduction to Social Stratification

Topic	Date	Author	Article Title	Pages
<i>Introduction to Course</i>	Tues. Jan 26			
<i>Inequality: Necessary Evil or Just Plain Evil?</i>	Thurs. Jan 28	David B. Grusky Claude Fischer et al.	“The Stories About Inequality That We Live to Tell” “Inequality By Design”	2-14 20-24
<i>Measuring Inequality: Status & Power</i>	Tues. Feb 2	C. Wright Mills	“The Power Elite”	101-111
<i>Measuring Inequality: Income & Wealth</i>	Thurs. Feb 4	Melvin Oliver & Thomas Shapiro Emmanuel Saez	“Black Wealth/White Wealth” “Striking it Richer”	296-303 86-89

Unit 2: Theories of Inequality

Topic	Date	Author	Article Title	Pages
<i>Functionalist Perspectives</i>	Tues. Feb 9	Kingsley Davis & Wilbert Moore	“Some Principles of Stratification”	16-19
<i>Marxist Perspectives</i>	Thurs. Feb 11	Karl Marx	“Classes in Capitalism & Pre-Capitalism”	36-47
<i>Post-Marxist Perspectives</i>	Tues. Feb 16	Erik Olin Wright	“Class Counts”	48-55
<i>Weberian Perspectives</i>	Tues. Feb 18	Max Weber	“Class, Status, Party”	56-67
	Tues. Feb 23	In-Class Exam 1		
	Fri. Feb 25	Take-Home Exam 1 due @ 12:30 via moodle		

Unit 3: Some Causes of Inequality

Topic	Date	Author	Article Title	Pages
<i>Incarceration</i>	Thurs. Feb 25	Bruce Western	“Incarceration, Unemployment, & Inequality”	208-213
<i>Systems of Production</i>	Tues. March 1	William Julius Wilson	“The Declining Significance of Race”	282-295
<i>Redlining</i>	Thurs. March 3	Douglas Massey & Nancy Denton	“American Apartheid”	170-181
<i>Labor Market Discrimination</i>	Tues. March 8	Francine Blau & Lawrence Kahn	“The Gender Pay Gap”	426-445
<i>Labor Market Discrimination</i>	Thurs. March 10	Marianne Bertrand & Sendhil Mullainathan Devah Pager	“Are Emily & Greg More Employable Than Lakisha & Jamal?”	254-259
			“Marked”	260-268
<i>Information, Social Networks & Resources</i>	Tues. March 15	Mark Granovetter Eszter Hargittai	“The Strength of Weak Ties”	589-593
			“The Digital Reproduction of Inequality”	660-670
	Thurs. March 17	In-Class Exam 2		
	Sun. March 20	Take-Home Exam 2 due @ 12:30 via moodle		

Unit 4: How Inequality is Lived

Topic	Date	Author	Article Title	Pages
<i>Lifestyles of the Wealthy</i>	Tues. March 22	David Brooks G. William Domhoff	“Bobos in Paradise” “Who Rules America?”	128-135 112-117
<i>Culture & Consumption</i>	Thurs. March 24	Tak Wing Chan & John Goldthorpe	“The Social Stratification of Theatre, Dance & Cinema Attendance”	636-647
	Fri. March 25	(optional) Rural West extra credit assignment due @ 12:30pm via moodle		
<i>Immigration & Assimilation</i>	Tues. March 29	Alejandro Portes & Min Zhou Mary Waters	“The New Second Generation” “Black Identities”	237-249 250-253
<i>Urban Poverty</i>	Thurs. March 31	William Julius Wilson	“Jobless Poverty”	159-169
<i>Spring Break – No Class</i>	Tues. April 5			
<i>Spring Break – No Class</i>	Thurs. April 7			
<i>Rural Poverty</i>	Tues. April 12	** Jennifer Sherman	“Coping with Rural Poverty”	891-908
<i>Discrimination, Self-Esteem & Achievement</i>	Thurs. April 14	Joe Feagin Claude Steele	“The Continuing Significance of Race” “Stereotype Threat & African-American Student Achievement”	269-275 276-281
	Tues. April 19	In-Class Exam 3		
	Fri. April 22	Take-Home Exam 3 due @12:30pm via moodle		

Unit 5: Solutions for Inequality

Topic	Date	Author	Article Title	Pages
<i>Opting Out of Labor Market Discrimination</i>	Thurs. April 21	Lisa Belkin	“The Opt-Out Revolution”	332-336
<i>Reducing Labor Market Discrimination</i>	Tues. April 26	Claudia Golden & Cecilia Rouse Barbara Reskin	“Orchestrating Impartiality” “Rethinking Employment Discrimination & Its Remedies”	351-364 378-388
<i>Integrating Neighborhoods</i>	Thurs. April 28	Stefanie DeLuca & James Rosenbaum	“Escaping Poverty”	214-219
<i>Investing in Children</i>	Tues. May 3	James Heckman	“Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children”	711-716
<i>Course Review & Wrap- up</i>	Thurs. May 5			
	Thurs. May 5	(optional) Register your twitter handle with TA by the end of class		
	Fri. May 6	(optional) Email instructor if you intend to revise and re-submit a take-home exam by 12:30pm		
	Mon. May 8	(optional) Revised Take-Home Exam and short revision memo due at 12:30pm via moodle		
	Friday May 13 8:00am – 10:00am	In-Class Exam 4		