

SOC 248 Social Inequality
Summer 2020 On-line Course Syllabus
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

That our society is stratified, or "layered," into various social classes has been considered fundamental in sociology since its beginnings. The changes within and between these classes, the social forces that hold them in place, and the ensuing consequences for people's life-chances is the focus and concern for those who study social stratification and inequality. When they look at "society at large," or the groups that make it up, they typically ask - "Who gets what, and why? Who benefits from this particular social arrangement? How is power distributed?"

Accordingly, this course explores the distribution of wealth, income, power, and prestige in American society. This course examines the structure of politics and power and their relationship to the economy, both nationally and globally. It also examines the various dimensions of inequality as they manifest in the context of class, race, and gender. We will do this from the points of view of two major sociological perspectives: The Order or Structural perspective, and the Conflict perspective. In addition, we will be developing our own synthesis of the material as we read, reflect, and write throughout the course.

COURSE GOALS:

- * To enhance writing skills
- * To acquire an in-depth understanding of major sociological perspectives on social stratification and inequality: its causes and consequences;
- * To develop this same level of understanding with regard to the impact of stratification on people's life-chances, opportunities, and potential;
- * To access information on the current and historical distribution of wealth; income, power, and prestige in the U.S. in general and among "the power elite" in particular;
- * To develop an understanding of Global stratification as a world-wide social fact;
- * To see one's own life within the context of a system of stratification.

REQUIRED TEXT:

D. Stanley Eitzen. et. al., In Conflict and Order: Understanding Society, 14th edition. Pearson Publishing Company, Boston, Massachusetts. 2017. Student Editions (ISBN 13: 978-0-13-387582-9)
(ISBN 10: 0-13-387582-2)

GRADING:

A 93-100
A- 90-92
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79
C 73-76
C- 70 -72
D+ 67-69
D 63-66
D- 60-62
F 0-59

The final grade for the course will be computed using the following formula:

Discussion Board Posts	20%		
Three Essay Exams:	60%	or	(20% each)
One Application Project:	20%		

INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY AND CONTACTS:

The student is responsible for making the initial contact with the instructor via email the first week of the semester and confirm that they are indeed in the course, have the texts (or have them ordered), and have read the syllabus. At this time, any questions regarding the syllabus and course expectation can be clarified. *Students may reach me through my email address at any time.*

THREE ESSAY EXAMS:

I organize the semester (roughly) into three, five-week segments with an exam due at the end of the each of the five weeks. The exams will ask the student to identify core concepts, themes, and theoretical perspectives from the assigned readings, summarize and synthesize their essence and significance, and then develop one's own informed point of view on the material as a synthesis or "mixture".

Exams can be one or two days late; beyond that the student must contact me to discuss the possibility of a due date extension. Exams should be submitted as email attachments.

Since this is a "writing intensive" course, the student will have the opportunity to re-write **the first two** essay exams. The overall grade will be **an average** of the two writing efforts. *The re-write is to be turned in one week later.* There is no limit to how much you can write on any given exam question. So respond as thoroughly as you can in consideration of the text material covered by the question. (Solid exams are at least 8-10 pgs. long)

APPLICATION PROJECT:

The application project represents an opportunity for the student to take central concepts presented in the course material (e.g., class, status, power, wealth, social capital or connections, social mobility, socialization and values, etc. etc.) and apply them to oneself and one's own life circumstances. This is a particularly effective way of understanding the movement and current position of one's life sociologically.

It is also essential that the student check both Blackboard Announcements for exam due dates and the Discussion Board section for what are called "Food For Thought" posts. Students will be expected to respond to each of the Discussion board posts, or the responses of others in the class, within a week of the posting. I'll send you an email letting you know when a post has been made. We're looking for thoughtful, mindful, reflections on the various ideas or themes prompted by the post, or the comments shared by our classmates.

GETTING STARTED

- 1) Obtain the syllabus, and then the books for the course. The syllabus includes reading assignments and exams for each of the Three Parts of the course. **Be sure to then email me and make your first contact by letting me know you have the materials and are ready to begin.** The exams are due on the given due date posted in Announcements - give or take a day or two. *Please do not wait until the end of the semester to submit your work, I will not accept it.*
- 2) Look over the reading assignments for the first part of the course. Notice the chapter titles, and subtitles within the chapters, and then look at the questions constructed for that material. I trust you will see the connection between the two. If not, contact me for clarification.
- 3) *Now, begin your reading with one eye on the reading material - and the other on the test question you're addressing.* In this way you can think about what you are reading in the context of the question. This procedure can then guide your highlighting and note taking as you read. It helps you process the pages effectively, identifying core concepts and ideas you know you'll use later in your essay writing.
- 4) This process will also help you develop **content-based** responses to your exam questions which will ground your writing, and thus strengthen it, in the reading material. **You're encouraged to use brief quotes to help make your point(s).** Just enclose in quotes and cite the page #.

NOTE: Be sure and email me if you need anything clarified.

Sociology of Inequality Reading Assignments

Part One:

1st 5 weeks

(Covered on 1st exam)

* In Eitzen Text:

Preface

Chapter 1, "The Sociological Perspective"

Chapter 2, "The Duality of Social Life"

Chapter 11, "The Economy"

Chapter 12, "Power and Politics"

Part Two:

2nd 4 weeks

(Covered on 2nd exam)

* In Eitzen Text:

Chapter 16, "Structural Sources of Social Change"

Chapter 7, "Social Stratification"

Chapter 8, "Class"

Part Three:

3rd 4 weeks

(Covered on 3rd exam)

* In Eitzen Text:

Chapter 9, "Racial Inequality"

Chapter 10, "Gender Inequality"

Chapter 17, "Human Agency"

NOTE: **The Application Project** material is ideally identified throughout the semester as you read, and is then written and turned in during the last week of classes.

First Exam
Due: June 26

NOTE: *Clearly identify the questions, and the particular part you're working on, for each of the exams – beginning with this one.*

1. What do you consider to be the major points the authors are attempting to make in the Preface? Identify *each point in italics*, and then discuss it – i.e., what it is, and why it is important or significant? (Pay particular attention to the 1st pg. material especially).
2. (A.) Identify and discuss the core principles, ideas, and assumptions that make up the framework of the Sociological Perspective and the framework of the Sociological Imagination? (B.) Why is it useful to learn to think this way? And (C) Why is it such a challenge to “Think Sociologically”? (Chapter 1)
3. (A.) What are the core principles, ideas, and assumptions regarding the nature of society that make up the frameworks of the Order and the Conflict Perspectives? (B.) How, specifically, does the Synthesis offered integrate the order and conflict models of society. (Be sure to be specific here.) (Chapter 2)
4. A central assertion of the Conflict model is that capitalism is a major source of many social problems. (Material in Chapters 11 & 12)
(A.) What specific information do these two chapters present that lends support to this position? Discuss as many of the points made *in each* as possible.
(B.) What are your own thoughts about this issue after reading the material?

Second Exam
Due: July 23

1. The authors begin Chapter 16 on the Structural Sources of Social Change by saying; “We are in the midst of three societal ‘earthquakes’. ...These social changes are more far-reaching and occurring more rapidly than at any other time in human history.” They go on to say that the purpose of this chapter is to develop an understanding of these three macro social trends, and the impact they have within society.

(A.) So, having processed the chapter, the question to you is: *What is your understanding of each of the three major structural changes discussed – and how do they each impact society at one level or another?* Be sure to be specific and express your understanding in your own words. You are encouraged to use quotes mindfully.
2. In Chapter 7 on Social Stratification the authors state that “the pattern of structured inequalities” in a society is called social stratification. It is essential to

understand them because they impact human behavior so profoundly. With this in mind:

- (A.) Identify and discuss the “important concepts” that are introduced; (B.) Discuss the four major hierarchies – class, race, gender, sexuality; and (C.) Describe the various theories used to explain stratification along with their respective critiques.
3. Chapter 8 takes up the issue of social class. (A.) Discuss the dimensions of inequality and their significance; (B.) Describe both the Order and Conflict conceptions of social class along with your own position of it; and (C.) Discuss the consequences of social class for those living in a given society.

Third Exam
Due: August 7

1. The third exam works with the material in Chapters. 9, 10, and 17. **For each of the chapters complete the following being sure to label each of the three components: The What?, The So What?, and So Now What?**

(A.) Summarize the material presented in your own words, making sure to include the key themes, concepts, and significant points developed in the chapter. Please include examples for each of the concepts. I refer to this as an exercise in identifying and discussing “**The What?**” of a chapter. In other words, what are its major ideas? What is the chapter trying to accomplish? What is the content of the chapter about?

(B.) After completing each chapter summary, develop an essay that addresses what I call “**The So What?**” In other words what is the significance or importance of this material? How does it advance our understanding of social stratification and inequality? Why should we pay attention to this information and take it into consideration?

(C) **So Now What?** After completing the written work in parts (A) and (B), develop a brief essay that explains how this material has expanded or otherwise impacted your personal understanding of social inequality. Knowing what you now know, what difference could this make in your everyday life?

Application Project
Due: August 14

The purpose of the Application Project is to help you to see and understand your life in the context of some major concepts used in the study of social stratification. A few that come to mind for me, and offered here only as examples, are social class (working class in particular), socialization into particular values, life-chances or opportunity structure, power, race, gender, and the ethic of work and upward mobility.

As you move through the course material, look for key concepts that help explain the structure, movement and direction of your life up to this point in time. *Identify six or seven.* Then, develop an essay utilizing each of these concepts as tools to help explain and understand your current position in society. **In other words, sociologically speaking, how did you get to be where you are? You were born, and then what were the major social forces that played a role in shaping your life – and how?**

