COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social inequality in the United States is characterized by a great paradox. On one hand, this country is more unequal than any other industrialized democracy in the world and the gap between rich and poor is growing wider. On the other, American culture is rooted in a deeply held belief in meritocracy, equality, and opportunity. This course will explore this paradox by examining the causes, consequences, and possible solutions for ameliorating social inequality. We will first discuss how sociologists define, measure, and explain various types of social inequality, with a central focus on class, race/ethnicity, and gender. Next, we will explore some of the primary institutional mechanisms responsible for structuring and perpetuating these three types of inequality: the family, the education system, labor markets, public policy, and the criminal justice system. We will conclude the course by discussing how dominant American cultural norms of individual responsibility, meritocracy, and colorblindness complicate collective attempts to address inequality. This course will ultimately teach students to think sociologically about how to overcome the challenges of race, class, and gender inequality in the United States.

COURSE GOALS

By the end of the course students should be able to:
1. Identify and explain the core theories of social inequality
2. Analyze how race, class, and gender structure access to opportunities in the U.S.
3. Explain the policy origins and possible policy solutions to these inequalities
4. Apply course concepts and findings to evaluate social inequality in Winston-Salem

ASSESSMENT

Participation & Attendance  15%
Section Assignments (2)  50%
Final Project  35%

IMPORTANT DATES

Thursday, October 4  First Assignment Due by 9am on Sakai
Tuesday, October 9  Students Select Final Project Option 1 or 2
Thursday, November 12  Second Assignment Due by 9am on Sakai
Tuesday, November 27  Third Assignment Due by 9am on Sakai
Thursday, December 13  Final Assignments Due
Course Requirements

Participation & Attendance: Class participation includes both attendance in class (35%) and active engagement in the class and during office hours (65%). If you will miss class, email me in advance to let me know otherwise you will lose points on your grade. Being an active participant means you regularly share your thoughts, observations, and questions about the readings. You can do this in class, in office hours, or by email to the professor. General guidelines for good participation include:

- Come to class on time
- Do the readings and bring them (and your notes) with you
- Be engaged (NO texting, email, Facebook, sleeping, etc)
- Ask thoughtful questions during discussions
- Volunteer answers to others’ questions
- Share reactions or questions during office hours and by email
- Be respectful of others
- Question your own assumptions

Section Assignments: There will be section assignments at the end of our three course sections. You are required to complete two of them. These assignments will be 4-5 page double-spaced writing assignments related to the just completed section. For the first section assignment you will conduct a photographic analysis of class inequality at Wake Forest. Additional details will be posted on Sakai.

Final Project: You have two options for your final project for this course. You will have until October 9 to decide which option you will pursue.

Option 1: Group Project and Presentation: Students who select this option will work in groups of 2-4 to research a particular aspect of social inequality in Winston-Salem, NC. Students will choose their topics by fall break and work together to compile an assessment of a specific local social problem. You will (1) use local data to explain how severe the problem is and how it intersects with race, class, and/or gender inequalities, (2) use the course readings to place your local problem in a broader context, (3) meet with at least 2 community leaders working on your topic to identify what they see as major needs in the community and learn about how they address those needs within their organizations, and (4) explain if and how Wake Forest students might partner with these local organizations or campus groups to remedy these issues. You will present this information in an oral presentation to the class and in a 15-20 page report. Group members will grade each other’s performance in the project and evaluate their own participation. These ratings will contribute to the final assignment grade. Additional details will be posted on Sakai.

Possible topics for group projects include but are not limited to:
1. Health Care (or Food and Nutrition)
2. Immigration
3. Homelessness
4. Domestic Violence
Option 2: Individual Research Proposal: Students who select this option will work independently to submit a proposal for a research project related to social inequality. The final assignment (10-15 pages in length) will present a (1) a research question, (2) a literature review, and (3) a detailed description of the data and research methods that will be used to answer the question.

Course Policies

Students with Learning Disabilities: If you have a disability that may require an accommodation for taking this course, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) within the first two weeks of the semester. Please also notify me within the first two weeks of class if you require modified instructional procedures.

Cell phones should be turned OFF during class. Laptops should be used only for note-taking or in-class assignments.

Honor Code Violations: ANY suspected honor code violation will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Sick Policy: If you are sick, please do not come to class. Instead, visit Student Health. There you should ask for a document that excuses you from class for a specific period of time. This document is required to make up missed assignments or exams.

Late Assignments: You will be given ample notice of all paper, homework, and exam deadlines for this class. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Late assignments will be penalized half a grade (five points) for each day they are late. Late homework assignments will not be accepted except in exceptional situations.

Grade Disputes: All grade disputes must be submitted in writing within one week of the day the assignment is returned to you. In your written response, you must explain – giving specific examples from your assignment and my comments – why you believe you received the wrong grade. I will re-grade the assignment, but your grade may go up or down with the re-grade.

Disaster Plan: In the event that the university closes due to pandemic or other disaster, read and study the required course materials on your own. Reading quizzes (distributed over Sakai, if the internet is available, or by postal service if the internet is not available) must be completed to test your comprehension of the readings. Submit any other required assignments via Sakai or by postal mail to the professor. You will be mailed or emailed any relevant exams with explicit instructions. The return date will be specified in the mailings. If the internet is available, the professor will be available for office hours using Webex and Google messaging (brownhe).

Required Books


Other readings are available on Sakai in the Resources tab.
COURSE READING SCHEDULE

Thursday, August 30, 2012 - Welcome and Introduction
Course introduction

Section 1: Class Inequality

Tuesday, September 4, 2012 - Key Theories and Concepts of Class Inequality

Thursday, September 6, 2012 - Key Theories and Concepts of Class Inequality

Tuesday, September 11, 2012 - Key Theories and Concepts of Class Inequality

Thursday, September 13, 2012 - Key Theories and Concepts of Class Inequality

Tuesday, September 18, 2012 - Class Inequality on a University Campus

Thursday, September 20, 2012 – Class Inequality at Wake Forest
No Readings – Guest Speaker: Hattie Mukombe, Wake Forest Admissions Office

Tuesday, September 25, 2012 – Class Inequality at the Extremes

Thursday, September 27, 2012 - Health, Nutrition and Class Inequality
McGreal, Chris. 2009. “Record numbers go hungry in the US.” the Guardian, November 17

Tuesday, October 2, 2012 – Public Policy and the Sources of Class Inequality

Fischer, Claude S. et al. 1996. Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth. (Chapter 8)

Sharp, Gwen. 2011. “Hidden Beneficiaries of Federal Programs” The Society Pages,

Thursday, October 4, 2012 - FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE

Section 2: Racial Inequality

Tuesday, October 9, 2012 – Key Concepts in the Study of Racial Inequality


Thursday, October 11, 2012 – Key Theories in the Study of Racial Inequality


Tuesday, October 16, 2012 – Labor Market and Wage Inequality


Thursday, October 18, 2012 - Discussion of Final Projects

No readings

Tuesday, October 23, 2012 – Learning about Race


Thursday, October 25, 2012- Immigration and the Changing Landscape of Racial Inequality

Marrow, Helen. 2011. New Destination Dreaming: Immigration, Race, and Legal Status in the Rural American South. (Chapters 4-5)

Tuesday, October 30, 2012 – Public Policy and Racial Inequality


Thursday, November 1, 2012 - SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE

Section 3: Gender Inequality

Tuesday, November 6, 2012 - Key Concepts in the Study of Gender Inequality

Meadow, Tey. 2010. “A Rose is a Rose: On Producing Gender as a Legal Category” in Gender and Society, pp. 814-837

Thursday, November 8, 2012 – Gender Inequality on Campus


Tuesday, November 13, 2012 - Gender Inequality in the Home and Work

Hochschild, Arlie Russell, and Anne Machung. 1990. The Second Shift. (Chapter 1)


Thursday, November 15, 2012 – Gender and American Politics


In Class: Assign chapters for next class

Tuesday, November 20, 2012 -- No Class
Thanksgiving Break

**Thursday, November 22, 2012 -- No Class**

Thanksgiving Break

**Tuesday, November 27, 2012 – THIRD ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Discuss Final Assignments

**Thursday, November 29, 2012 – Gender Inequality and Public Policy**

Gornick, Janet C., and Marcia K. Meyers. 2005. *Families That Work: Policies For Reconciling Parenthood And Employment*. (Everyone read chapter 1 and at least one other chapter from chapters 5-7)

**Tuesday, December 4, 2012 - Student Presentations**

Presentations of Final Projects

**Thursday, December 6, 2012 – Student Presentations**

Presentations of Final Projects