

SOCI 3324 Social Inequality  
(Online) Fall 2017 Syllabus

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Skype and Chat: By Appointment

Required Texts: (1) *Social Inequality and Social Stratification in US Society*. 2013. Christopher Doob (ISBN-13: 978-0-205-79241-2); other articles and videos as assigned.

This course introduces you to the sociological study of social inequalities based upon class, race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, etc. As the title of the book suggests, we will focus primarily upon inequality within the United States.

Social inequality is a major feature of our daily experience. Social inequality refers to the lack of social equality where individuals do not have equal social status. Social stratification refers to the hierarchical arrangement of social classes, castes and strata within a society. Social stratification in many Western societies like the United States is comprised of three main layers – upper class, middle class and lower class. We can discern differences in social prestige, income, power, opportunities, etc. that accompany these various layers.

### Learning Outcomes

In this course we will investigate various manifestations of social inequality as we pursue two overarching goals: 1) learning to identify areas of inequality in our everyday lives and 2) learning to question the assumed mechanisms underlying social processes. This is key for you to understand – there is nothing natural about inequality – it is a socially created and maintained condition that we generally take for granted. We will grapple with a number of sociological questions that are crucial to understanding differences in wages, educational attainment, health and other social outcomes. How are social groupings created? Why do they persist? How are they justified? What are the implications of creating social groups? The primary objective of this course is for you to think deeply about these questions. I hope by the end of

the class you will be convinced that these are question worth thinking about.

### Online Decorum and Expectations

Communication and discussion in cyberspace occur in a social environment where the normal rules of social interaction apply. The virtual nature is no excuse to behave inappropriately or to post unacceptable messages.

Unacceptable messages include those that harass, intimidate, threaten, belittle, ridicule, expressed hatred for, or aggression toward others. Let us be mindful to avoid words that imply that some groups of people are less worthy than others (e.g., avoid racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, age-ist, xenophobic, and homophobic language).

Students are expected to maintain decorum that includes respect for other students and the instructor; to regularly log in to the course; and, to display an attitude that seeks to take full advantage of the educational opportunity.

All students are expected to be prepared to work and actively participate in the online activities.

### Course Components

**1. Chapter quizzes** -- 10 @ 10 points each (lowest score dropped) (90 points)

- ☐ 10 question multiple choice quizzes for each textbook chapter
- ☐ Quizzes are open-book; you have 25 minutes to complete the 10 question quiz.

**2. Journal assignments** -- 3 journals @ 25 points each (75 points)

You will write 3 short journal responses to questions derived from content contained in the first 4 chapters of your textbook. Journal prompts will include both concepts introduced in these first 4 chapters and/or applications of these concepts to real-world scenarios. These posts will introduce you to and reinforce your knowledge of the academic vocabulary of inequality/stratification that will make the discussion more productive.

The goal of these journal entries is to reinforce Objectives 1 & 2 of the course – specifically, the examination of basic sociological

concepts to the study of social inequality. Your understanding of these concepts is crucial to your ability to identify the social processes that contribute to social inequality and social stratification (Objective 2) .

When replying to the journal prompt, assume the reader of your post is a friend who has never taken this class and is not familiar with the terminology. Each journal entry should:

1. Explain the concept without plagiarizing the textbook or Internet;
2. Provide examples illustrating the concept;
3. Link the concept and examples back to social inequality/stratification
4. Be between 250-350 words in length (include the word count in your entry).

Posts under 250 words will not be graded; posts over 350 words will not be graded. Posts without the word count will have 2 points deducted as a penalty for not following instructions.

I will be looking for evidence of serious effort and engaged thought. Your journal posts will be graded according to the (1) accuracy and comprehension of the concept(s); (2) the quality of examples you provide; and (3) your connection of the concept(s) back to social inequality/stratification.

Your journal grade will be allocated over 2 steps – a first draft (10 points) and a revised second draft incorporating the provided feedback (10 points). Revisions are due one week after your first draft is graded. If you choose not to revise your original journal, your final journal grade will be adjusted to the 25-point scale. For example, if you receive a 6 on the first draft of your journal and do not submit your revisions by the deadline, your final journal grade will be a 15 (6 x 2.5) out of 25 points.

**3 . Discussion (100 points)** – Discussion begins around midterm  
(a) 2 Discussions – 50 points each (100 points)

Discussion will begin after you have become familiarized with the vocabulary and concepts in the study of social inequality/stratification.

Therefore, Discussion will commence after Part 1 material has been completed. I expect to see sociological concepts introduced in the first 4 chapters of the textbook (which you have been journaling) integrated into your discussions.

**See the Discussion Grading Rubric for specificity on how your discussion will be graded.**

### **Discussion Guidelines**

To post to the Discussion Board enter your group's "Discussion Board" area of the course. Then click on the title of the forum you want to enter. You will not be able to read your classmates discussion posts until you post your own discussion. Gaming the system to bypass this requirement will nullify your grade for the discussion. In other words, you will receive a grade of 0 for that particular discussion forum.

Make sure you check your answers for spelling and grammar. When you are ready to post your answer click "Submit". When you are ready to reply to an answer given by your classmate, go to the thread of the person you want to respond to. (Do not click on the author's name or you will open an e-mail window.) Click on the "Reply" button in the lower right hand corner and type or paste in your reply. Click "submit" and you are done.

**I strongly recommend that you carefully compose your answers on a word processing program.** Before posting your answers, check them for spelling and grammatical errors, then save them, and then copy and paste them to the Discussion Board. It is important that you save your document in your word processing program before you paste it to the discussion board. If, for whatever reason, the Discussion Board "eats" or "loses" your answer, you can just cut and paste it on the Board again if your answer has been saved on your computer.

### **Suggestions for Replying to the Postings of Your Classmates**

In addition to writing your own answer, each week you will compose a response to two posts of other group members. In your replies to other students you can:

- ☐☐☐☐ Expand on or clarify a point made in the answer
- ☐☐ Offer an additional argument to support a position taken in an answer.
- ☐☐☐☐ Suggest ways in which an idea could be more clearly expressed.
- ☐☐ Identify passages where you think the writer misunderstood a concept or applied it incorrectly.
- ☐☐ Disagree with a point or position and elaborate upon your disagreement.

If you are disagreeing with the views of another student, please be constructive and respectful. You may criticize a position but not the author. Just writing "Your position on affirmative action stinks" will not do! State precisely the point you disagree with. (Make sure you have not misinterpreted the writer's position.) Offer reasons why you think their view is incorrect and support your position by citing the text or other sources.

#### 4 “ Myth Buster” Assignment (100 points)

For this assignment, you will be a “myth buster”. You are expected to present evidence that either confirms or “busts” common myths and beliefs about social welfare spending. Use the Myth buster template to complete the assignment. Make sure you use credible data sources and information to determine the veracity of specific beliefs about “welfare”. You will need to provide either the links to your sources or pdfs of

your sources. These must also be uploaded into Blackboard. Missing sources will reduce your grade by 25 points.

Remember: Welfare is a term that has various meanings. Popularly, it is used to describe a variety of government assistance programs for poor families and communities. Spending on food stamps (S.N.A.P), monthly income assistance (T.A.N.F), free school lunches, and payments for medical assistance (Medicaid), are frequently lumped under the term “welfare”. However, all of these programs are distinct. They each have specific participation requirements, limits on assistance and in some cases different target populations. Keep this in mind as you analyze common ideas about “welfare”.

#### Course Components Summary and Grade Determination

(1) Quizzes	90 points
(2) Journals	75 points
(3) Discussion	100 points
(4) Mythbusters Assignment	100 points
Total Points	365

Your final course grade will be assigned according to the following point distribution:

328-365	A
292-327	B
255-291	C
219-254	D
<=218	F

**Academic Dishonesty:** All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students caught cheating will receive an F for that assignment with more severe sanctions as appropriate.

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/728eec25-f780-4dcf-932c-03d68cade002.pdf>.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. *Any student with a disability that affects his/her academic performance should contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities in the SHSU Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786) to request accommodations.*

**Religious Holidays:** The Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. Religious Holy Day means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation. Students should contact the instructor as soon as possible regarding any missed classes or exams due to Religious Holy Days. <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/0953c7d0-7c04-4b29-a3fc-3bf0738e87d8.pdf>.

**University Code of Conduct:** Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students shall arrive to class on time and be respectful to their other students. If a student needs to arrive to class late or leave class early the student will make the professor aware of these needs prior to class time. All cell phones and beepers must be turned off and stowed away while in the classroom. If a cell phone is out during an exam, the student will receive an F for that exam. Students who disrupt the class will be contacted by the professor to adjust their behaviors. In extreme cases students who cannot comply with these requirements can be removed and resigned from the class. <https://netreg.shsu.edu/mirror/codeofconduct.html>.

**Evaluation:** Students will have the opportunity to evaluate the professor during the semester.