

SOC 2721: Social Stratification

Fall 2012

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Office hours: Mondays from 10:30am to 12:30pm, and on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 3:30pm to 4:30pm. I am also happy to meet with you, by appointment, outside of these scheduled hours.

Sociologists pay a lot of attention to stratification; some would even say that the study of stratification constitutes the core of our discipline. When you consider how we usually describe sociology as the study of society, perhaps it seems obvious then that sociologists should be highly concerned with why and how members of a society are awarded valued resources according to their social ranking. That is what this course is about; essentially, we are exploring why some people are more equal than others.

Studying stratification can be organized around two questions: (1) why do inequalities exist? and, (2) how are those inequalities perpetuated? For the first question, we will explore the theories of Marx, Weber, and a handful of scholars who have worked to revise their theories to explain contemporary conditions. For the second question, we will explore the American class system and stratification systems more generally.

Course objectives

After completing this course, if you fulfill all course requirements, attend all class sessions, and engage in a good faith effort to comprehend the material, you will be able to:

1. Apply the sociological imagination and
 - Explain unequal outcomes among different social groups
 - Identify specific mechanisms causing stratification
2. Summarize the key theoretical approaches to inequality
3. Master foundational knowledge in the study of stratification and
 - Retain key information about the distribution of wealth and income
 - Retain key information about the American social class system

Textbooks: Marger, Martin. *Social Inequality: Patterns & Processes* (5th ed.) and *Whistling Vivaldi & Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us*, by Claude Steele (2010).

You must bring the Marger text to class every day so that you can participate fully! Older editions are available from online booksellers at a greatly reduced price. Try eBay or betterworldbooks.com -- I encourage you to buy your own copy! The text of the newer one is exactly the same, except for updated tables and figures. You can easily get by with an older edition.

FYI: You can access just about anything you need to know from the EIU web page OR from the campus information line **581-5000**. Call this number for information such as the phone or email address of a faculty member, the number & contact person for any office, any weather closings or power outages, etc. Please use this number, for your own self-sufficiency and the sanity of administrative staff across campus.

Course Requirements (It's not possible to make up quizzes because of the team scores.)

Assignments	My Points	Points
Reading Quizzes (5 count) 36% total Individual score 24% 24 points each=120 Team score 12% 12 points each=60		180
2 Fieldwork Write-Ups (12%) 30 pts each		60
Exam 1 (15%)		75
Exam 2 (15%)		75
Final Exam (22%) Essay on Steele reading 10 points Multiple choice questions 100 points		110
Total		500

Quizzes & Exams

The syllabus schedule contains 6 reading quizzes for the term. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped so that your grade is based on your 5 highest scores. If you miss a day that there is a quiz, it is recorded as a zero, but you can drop that score and you will not be penalized.

The two exams and the final exam cover both the **reading** and **in-class** material. You will be assessed on your ability to meet the course objectives relevant to the material covered to that point. You will be asked to draw upon what you’ve learned from the readings, films, lectures, and exercises. If you miss either Exam 1 or 2, make ups are scheduled the last day of the semester.

Fieldwork Write Ups

You will all do fieldwork on your family and write up a “social class history” analyzing your family’s social class standing across three generations. The second fieldwork has three choices. One, you may analyze wedding announcements for class characteristics. Two, you may pair with another student and test whether there is sexism in the workplace. Three, you may write a reflective essay on your priorities for a unit on stratification in your high school sociology class. Each of these write ups is a maximum of 3 pages (double-spaced) and must reflect your engagement with the ideas presented in your textbook.

Classroom Courtesy

We will all appreciate it when each of us observes the courtesy of silencing any electronic devices. Please turn everything off or to “silent” mode when you enter the classroom. That is the rule—you are asked to take 75 minutes out of your day to attend class and let your voice mail take a message.

It’s an amazing thing that you can check your cell phone AFTER class and see who called or texted you while **you were busy getting an education**. Do NOT pull your cell out to see who called. You are in class and not available for interruptions. If you have some special circumstance where you **MUST** see who has called you or **MUST** take a particular call, let me know ahead of time.

Attendance

We all need to be here because the quality of each student’s engagement matters to the learning of the entire class. I do realize that emergencies occur, we all get sick, and life happens. To accommodate, you may reschedule Exams 1 or 2 during the last week of the semester and we will drop the lowest quiz score, which would be a zero in the case of an absence from class.

Grade appeals

I am always willing to talk with you about how your work is evaluated. If you would like me to re-evaluate an exam or a fieldwork write-up, I ask that you provide the reason for your grade appeal *in writing*. I must receive your request within one week of returning the graded assignment. Be aware that in re-evaluating student work, it is possible that I will lower the grade.

Communications Policy

Without question, email is the best way to reach me; however, my email gets very full very quickly. To be sure that I read your email:

- always include the class name (SOC 2721) in the subject line of the email.
- always begin the email in a professional manner (“Dear Professor Deerman” is good) and end it professionally (“Thank you” is good).
- Finally, please keep in mind that our relationship is a professional one between a professor and a student so avoid slang and text message language (e.g., “LOL”, “C-ya”, “Bcuz”)

Academic Dishonesty

The definition of academic dishonesty and its consequences are in the Student Code of Conduct. In the past, I have failed students who plagiarized and I have failed students who misrepresented their class attendance. **I will report every incident** to Student Standards regardless of the severity of the offense.

I take seriously the fact that there are people who dream of going to college and have no chance of ever attending; thus, I hold college students to a very high standard of conduct and expect unimpeachable behavior from each of you.

Note: All material in this course syllabus, including exam dates, may be subject to change, especially when student learning will benefit from my flexibility & responsiveness.

DISABILITIES STATEMENT

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) and let me know about any accommodations that will permit you to do your best work.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY STATEMENT

For medical emergencies, go to the nearest phone and call 911. Be sure to state the floor and room number of the emergency to the 911 operator. If possible, someone should go to the central entrance of Blair Hall to direct EMS personnel to the medical emergency scene. If the medical emergency is on the second or third floor, someone else should hold the elevator on the first floor for EMS use.

TORNADO STATEMENT

In case of a tornado warning, proceed to the center of the hallway on the first floor, near the posted severe weather signs. Under no circumstances should you attempt to leave the building.

BUILDING FIRE STATEMENT

In case of fire, activate the fire alarm and exit the building. When a fire alarm sounds, everyone must exit the building and cannot re-enter the building until allowed by the building coordinator or fire department official. The closest exits for all classrooms in Blair are on the north and south ends of the building. Do not use the elevator! Group assembly areas for all classes in Blair are either on the patio area between Blair and Old Main or on the southeast corner of the North Quad. As you exit the building, continue moving well away from the exits so that you do not impede the egress of other students or the work of fire officials. Move a safe distance away from the building.