SOC 2721: Social Stratification Spring 2013

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Office hours: TBA

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. Essentially, we are exploring why some people are more equal than others. Developing an educated perspective on stratification will introduce and reinforce the skills and abilities that allow us to function as educated citizens.

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.

Over the semester you will be asked to write frequently as a means of encouraging you to make connections as you acquire new knowledge. You will also be asked to read widely through the self-directed "Ideas Project," and the two assigned texts.

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:

- 1. Master foundational knowledge including
 - o key information about the distribution of wealth and income
 - o key concepts, findings, and theories in the study of social stratification
 - o and use this foundational knowledge to explain how stratification is more than income and wealth
- 2. Apply the sociological imagination and
 - o identify the structural causes of inequality in the US and in other countries
 - o explain unequal outcomes among different racial/ethnic groups
 - o discover how stratification happens at the micro-level, in interaction
- 3. Pursue your personal interest via the "Ideas Project" and develop
 - o research skills by identifying relevant book-length studies
 - o communication skills by preparing memos describing what you find
 - o analytic skills by discussing the idea(s) or question(s) you investigated
 - o communication skills by entering into a "paper slam"
 - o technical skills by preparing a PowerPoint slide for the paper slam

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

You must bring your text to class! You will need it to participate fully in class. The fourth edition is available from online booksellers at a greatly reduced price. Try eBay, Amazon, or betterworldbooks.com -- I encourage you to buy your own copy!

Course Expectations

Each of you is expected to come prepared for in-depth discussion of the course material. At minimum this means having read the assigned material.

Beyond the Minimum

I expect that "minimum" won't satisfy most of you. As sociology majors/minors or as future social science teachers, your aims are both professional and personal; you wish to be well-educated in this topic that is central to the discipline and you wish to capably exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Deep Preparation

A deeper preparation can be attained by completing comprehensive notes on the reading, comparing what you've learned to what you already know, and identifying where your life experience matches (or does not match) what the readings offer. A reasonable outcome from this level of preparation would be that you can assess how much you've learned and identify what you didn't realize (until now) that you don't know yet. Your aim in this process is to:

- Develop your ability to distinguish fact from opinion
- Learn the terms, concepts, facts, and theories relevant to the topic
- Discover what new ideas fascinate you

Informed Perspective

You might aim higher and assess your capacity to use the course material to draw reasonable inferences about issues that concern you now (issues that may be separate from those covered in the reading). By this I mean making an effort to develop the capacity to offer an informed perspective on the material. I don't mean an opinion, at least not in the colloquial meaning of "everyone has an opinion."

Pavoff

An informed perspective gives you the ability to converse knowledgably about stratification with people who may have never taken a sociology course, let alone this course in stratification. I want you to be the smart one in that conversation, the one who can offer evidence to back up claims, the one who can persuasively explain even to an untrained audience, the one who can be that responsible citizen we depend on for reasoned debate and wise decision-making.

Classroom Courtesy

We will all appreciate it when each of us turns 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. 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 writing assignment, I ask that you provide the reason for your grade

appeal *in writing*. I must receive your request <u>within one week</u> of returning the graded assignment. Be aware that in re-evaluating student work, it is possible that I will lower the grade.

Formal Requirements

Past students have done well when they have first taken seriously the expectations discussed above. I will assess your performance on both objective tests and through self-directed projects; this means you have the opportunity to show me what you've learned AND how you are using this knowledge to think more deeply about what matters to you.

Assignments	My Points	Points
Reading Quizzes 36 points each Individual score 24 points		180
Team score 12 points (five count) Ideas Project		40
Foundation 10		40
Significant ideas essay 35		
Paper slam (no points, this one is		
for fun)		
Chapter Essay Due one week after material is		20
assigned, choose from Chapters 2,		
3, 7, or 11		
Exam 1		75
Exam 2		75
Final Exam		110
Essay on Steele reading 10 points		
Multiple choice questions 100		
points		
Total		500

Quizzes & Exams

We will take 6 quizzes on the assigned reading. 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 so 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 on the last day of the semester. Everyone takes the makeup that day, no exceptions.

Ideas Project

Most of the time students have little choice in what they read as they learn more about a subject. This project is designed to give you the freedom to choose a book to read that knocks you out with insights, new ways of looking at things, and leaves you wanting to know more. It will be up to you to find this book; there's no way that even your best friend could identify what book would do this for you, let alone your professor! I will ask you to complete a few foundational assignments—to keep everyone on track and be sure that you have the best experience—then you will write about you have discovered. The foundation assignments are ungraded, but completing

them both will earn you 10 points (you must do both to get the full ten points!). I expect that a strong essay will require two drafts, one to get the junk out of your head, a second draft to clarify what you really want to say, and then you revise that second draft for the final paper. The foundation for your ideas project involves:

- 1. Researching the literature to see what interests you and what is available relevant to your interest.
- 2. Preparing a **memo** to let me know what kind of research you have done, what you have found, and what you think you are interested in.

The memo is due Tuesday, January 15, in class—no late papers accepted.

- a. I will give each of you feedback—basically, troubleshooting so that you head in a productive direction.
- 3. Selecting a book on your topic to read independently.
 - a. You won't be entirely on your own here! Come see me and talk about what you're reading and what you think about what you're reading.
 - b. You will also turn in a **chapter by chapter synopsis** of your selected book. **The synopsis is due on Friday, March 8, via email or hard copy.**
- 4. The grand finale is your Ideas Essay—a discussion of what you've learned, against the backdrop of what the author of your book offered.
- 5. The day that the essays are due each of you will prepare a PowerPoint slide that presents your key idea. You will only have 60 seconds to tell us about your idea so this will go quickly and (I hope, enjoyably).

Your PowerPoint is due Thursday, March 28—via email (hard copy won't help!) Essays are due Tuesday, April 2, via email or hard copy.

Chapter Essays

Once this semester you will turn in a chapter essay that you will do on your own time, with your book and notes available to you. My aim is to get you immersed in the material and hear your personal reflections on the material. In this essay, you choose a topic, idea or theory from one of the (selected) chapters and explore its significance from your point of view.

Please don't be misled by the short page requirement! I am serious about taking you seriously and I will hold your essay to very high standards.

How your writing will be evaluated

I will hold your writing to very high standards.

- > Typos, grammatical and spelling errors, etc. must be absolutely rare as llamas in Illinois. Get help on this—so that you don't lose points for easily remedied defects.
- ➤ I expect that a strong essay will require two drafts, one to get the junk out of your head, a second draft to clarify what you really want to say, and then you are ready to revise that second draft and write the final paper.
 - o I know many people don't "bother" with drafts. You might want to consider what this means...take yourself seriously enough to write seriously.
- ➤ Organization of ideas must be clear to me, as the reader. I won't know ahead of time what you are writing about—you choose the focus of everything you write in this course. So, introduce me to your main point right away, then define, illustrate, and contextualize that point in the body of the paper.

- In this class, it is ok to just end. Do you ever feel like that? Like you just want to write "the end" because you've said everything you want to say? That will be ok here. End when you're done; include a conclusion only if you feel it's helpful to your thought process.
- You might also consider going back and deleting your introduction. Chances are it lacks meaningful content—intros are often just fillers we use to get our brains working. I don't need to hear some general comment about sociology or the textbook or the class. I will be eager to find out what you found worth writing about!)

I realize that sometimes we miss the boat on a writing assignment because we misperceive the expectations (for good reason, many of us receive very little feedback on our writing so we don't really know much about expectations).

I also know that most college students don't know that their professors usually don't "get it right" the first time, either. We write about our research, send it to professional journals for publication, and then we usually receive a "revise and resubmit." (If you're curious about this, ask to see one of mine. Actually, there are three possible responses: you can also be "rejected," which is awful, or "accepted without revision," which is rare.)

You, however, won't ever be rejected here.

But you may be asked to "revise and resubmit." Instead of receiving no credit for the assignment, you will have the opportunity to respond to my critique and then "resubmit" the paper for a grade. I will review the paper once again and assign a grade according to the final work, but slightly diminished (by five points) to be fair to your peers in the class. If I don't offer you this option (also known as an "r&r"), you may request it from me and we will discuss whether this is viable.

Communications Policy

Without question, email is the best way to reach me; however, to be sure that I read your email:

- Always include SOC 2721 in the subject line of the email. Tell me what section of the class you're in—I teach a lot of students and can't even try to attach class meeting time to your names, I really on you for that!
- Always begin the email in a professional manner ("Dear Professor Deerman" is appropriate) and end it professionally ("Thank you" is appropriate).
- Finally, please keep in mind that our relationship is a professional one between a professor and a student so do not email as if we were still back sending telegrams and each word cost the sender (you) \$5.

Did you see that part about "to be sure that I read your email"?

I hope you understand that I am trying to accomplish two things here: (1) assist you to present your best self and thus get a positive response from your professors, and (2) make it possible for me to, without qualm, decline response to impolite emails.

Academic Dishonesty

The definition of academic dishonesty and its consequences are in the Student Code of Conduct. I fail students who plagiarize and I fail students who misrepresent their class attendance. **I will report every incident** to the Office of 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.

DISABILITIES STATEMENT

If you have a disability, please let me know: I want to support you doing your best work. Make sure I get a copy of your documentation and feel free to remind me if I forget to do something, like get a designated note taker or write clearly enough that you can see lecture notes on the board.

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 2nd or 3rd floor, someone should hold the elevator on the 1st floor for EMS.

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. There is a door by the entrance to the Graduate School offices that leads to the basement. If the weather is truly threatening, we may end up waiting it out in the basement. 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. Everyone must exit the building and cannot re-enter the building until allowed by the building coordinator or fire department official. The closest exits are on the north and south ends of Blair. Do not use the elevator! Group assembly areas are either the patio 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.

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.