

SOC 2721: Social Stratification Spring 2008

Dr. Gene Deerman

Office: 3148 Blair Hall

Contact Info: 581-7831 (office) and medeerman@eiu.edu

Office hours: T/Tr 4pm-5:30, Wednesdays 10am-11am, and by appointment

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's 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 functionalists. For the second question, we will explore the American class system, and stratification systems more generally, including racialized and gendered systems.

We will conclude the semester by examining how social groups exercise power in American politics. Since this is an election year, I hope to provoke you into applying insights from the course to outcomes in the primaries (and beyond).

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
 - Assess efforts to reduce inequality
 - Recognize that our everyday behavior is shaped by our place in society
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 information about the findings of major studies of inequality

Textbook

Marger, Martin. *Social Inequality: Patterns & Processes* (4th ed.) You must bring this text to class! You will need it to participate fully in class. It is available from online booksellers at a greatly reduced price. Try ebay or betterworld.com -- I encourage you to buy your own copy!

Course Requirements

Assignments	My Points	Points
Reading Quizzes (5 count) Individual score 30% 30 points each=150 Group score 15 % 15 points each=75		225
Exam 1 20%		100
Team Presentations (2, worth 25 pts each) 15%		50
Comprehensive Final Exam 25%		125
Total		500

Quizzes & Exams You will take 6 reading quizzes over the term. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped. Therefore, if you miss a day that there is a quiz, it is recorded as a zero but, you can drop a score and not be penalized. Only your highest five quiz scores count toward your grade.

Exam 1 covers 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. If you miss Exam 1, you may schedule a makeup during finals week.

Your final exam is **cumulative**. All the material from the term is fair game for the final exam. The “easy” portion of the final will include some questions from the quizzes again and the “hard” portion you will be asked to apply what you’ve learned to a new situation or problem.

Classroom Courtesy All electronic devices must be turned 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 to anyone. If you have some special circumstance where you **MUST** see who has called you or you **MUST** take a particular call, let me know ahead of time. Students who fail to observe this simple courtesy may be asked to leave the classroom.

Attendance We all need to be here because the quality of each student’s engagement matters to the learning of the entire class. I will not give points for attendance because you are in charge of your own education and must take responsibility for your own attendance.

I do realize that emergencies occur, we all get sick, and life happens. To accommodate, you may reschedule Exam 1 during finals week and we will drop the lowest quiz score, which would be a zero in the case of an absence from class. From this policy you can infer that I believe missing two classes (or the equivalent of one week of class) to be the maximum tolerable number of absences.

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, I ask that you provide a write-up of the reason for your grade appeal. I must receive this write-up within one week of returning the graded assignment.

I will only address questions about grades that are turned in to me in writing. 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. Therefore, I have some simple guidelines I ask you to follow when communicating to me via 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).
- ALWAYS... I repeat ALWAYS, sign your email with your first and last name!
- Finally, please keep in mind that our relationship is a professional one between a professor and a student and therefore use proper English in your email and avoid slang and various forms of text message language (e.g., “LOL”, “C-ya”, “Bcuz”, “ttyl”, “LMAO”).

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 Judicial Affairs 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 instructor 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. Under no circumstance should the elevator be used. 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.