COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will examine the roots of urban inequality and the processes which maintain it. We will focus on topics such as the origins of urban inequality, discrimination in hiring, cultural adaptations to concentrated poverty, housing policies, social and cultural capital and their role in class reproduction, how schools maintain inequality, how inequality shapes family structures and vice versa, and the criminal justice system’s impact on inequality. The focus will be on the processes which create and recreate inequality. Race and class will be closely studied.

GRADING

Attendance: 5%
Participation: 10%
Discussion Questions: 15%
Midterm: 25%
Policy Memo: 15%
Final: 30%

Attendance: If for any reason you need to miss class, see me before you need to miss. Make up assignments are a possibility for excused absences. Excused absences include doctor verified sicknesses and deaths of loved ones.

Participation: Participation is comprised of active, informed engagement in classroom discussions. You cannot receive participation credit if you are not in attendance.

Pop Quizzes: If at some point I suspect that many students aren’t reading, I will give a pop quiz. These points will be incorporated into your participation grade.

Discussion Questions: Each day, you need to come to class with two written discussion questions, to be turned in at the beginning of class. These will be used 1) to take attendance, 2) to gauge your engagement with the reading, 3) to occasionally start class discussions. Please turn in one copy of your discussion questions, and keep another in case you are called on to present your questions to the class. Discussion questions will not be used in every class period, but you should always be prepared for when they are used. Discussion questions cannot be made up except for in the case of an excused absence.

Questions will be graded in the following way:

0 = Not handed in. No late discussion questions will be accepted. If you come in late, put them on my desk before going to your seat.
1 = Questions are handed in but the questions show little evidence of having completed the readings.

2 = Questions show that the reading has been completed, but not thought about in depth.

3 = Questions show evidence of engagement with the reading. Question is thought provoking, connects to other readings, is intellectually critical of the readings, or raises an interesting point for class discussion.

If you don’t understand the readings, you can still receive full credit for your questions. Show that you’ve read and engaged with the readings by writing something like, “Wilson says X. I understand X to mean Y, but is this correct? And how does that fit in with what Young said about Z?”

You may also use your discussion questions to relate current events/news articles to the readings.

Policy Memo: On the last day of class, you need to hand in a policy brief. In this policy memo, you will focus on one existing policy or program that addresses urban inequality. You need to explain what the program does, who it serves, why the issue it addresses is a problem, and how effective the program is in resolving that problem. What factors does the program or policy address well? What does it ignore? What unintentional consequences might it create? After explaining the program, spend half of your discussion using the class readings and concepts to evaluate the program/policy. What did you learn in this class that makes you think the program will work or fail? Why? Would the program work in other places? What factors does the program not consider that may be relevant to decreasing inequality?

Format: Pretend you are giving this to your mayor, governor, or to President Obama. They’re busy. Put it in a format that they could look at quickly. Use subheadings, use bullet points. If you feel uncomfortable using this format, you may write a traditional paper.

Here are some possible programs to consider, though you are welcome to research programs and policies not on this list: The Harlem Children’s Zone, Head Start, Moving to Opportunity, Section 8, healthy marriage initiatives, the earned income tax credit, prisoner re-entry programs, micro-finance programs, New York City’s Conditional Cash Transfer Program, A Better Chance, and the Bonner Foundation. National, state, and local projects are acceptable. If you would like to focus on an international policy, you may do this, but see me for further instructions.

POLICIES

Plagiarism and Cheating

Students who are caught plagiarizing or cheating will fail the course.

Accommodations

All reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate students’ needs. In order to do so, you must let me know as soon as possible so that arrangements may be made. If special accommodations are needed for the exam, I must be notified no later than one week prior to the exam date.
Grade Concerns

Mistakes do happen while grading. If you would like me to review your grade, I will do so, but only twenty four hours after you receive the graded material back. You must also write at least a paragraph about why you disagree with your grade. When re-evaluating your work, I have the right to raise OR lower your grade.

Email

I will do my best to respond to your emails within 24 hours. If your question requires a long answer – questions about the course material, grades, or class atmosphere – please make an appointment to meet with me.

Books For the Class


READINGS

May 4: Introduction

Review syllabus
In Class Movie: “A Class Divided”

May 6: Poverty in the United States

At home, watch: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story/13_detroit.html (Click on “video.” The video is five minutes long.)

Read:
The Kerner Commission Report
The Kerner Commission 40 Years Later

The Creation and Maintenance of Economic Inequality

May 9: The Roots of Concentrated Poverty


May 11: Labor Market Discrimination


Take an Implicit Association test on race at one of these two websites: 
http://www.understandingprejudice.org/iat/index2.htm or https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/research/

Come to class prepared to discuss the test. You do not have to share your results but please be open to a general discussion.

May 13: Culture and Inequality


May 16: Social Capital


May 18: Welfare


Guest speaker: Carolyn Barnes

Housing

May 20:

Look at the racial composition and segregation of your hometown and four other cities: http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/explorer?ref=us

May 23:


In Class Movie: *Race: The Power of an Illusion – The House We Live In*

May 25:


Review for midterm

May 27: **Midterm**

May 30: Memorial Day. No Class!

**Education**

June 1: School Inequality


Summer Can Set Kids on the Right or Wrong Course. *National Summer Learning Association* (2 pages)


June 3: Culture, Schooling, and Class


Optional:


June 6: Culture, Schooling, and Identity.


Guest speaker: Dr. Dwight Lang

**Family**

June 8: Motherhood and Childbearing

Selections from *Families as They Really Are*. pp. 307-325.


http://marriagecalculator.acf.hhs.gov/marriage/calculator.php

June 10: A day off class to work on your policy memos.

June 13: Fatherhood


**Crime**

June 15:


June 17:


Guest Speaker: Dr. Janette Kawachi from Catholic Social Services

**Policy Fair**

June 20:

- No readings!
- POLICY MEMO DUE
- Presentations of your policy project

June 24

**Final: 8am – 10am**