



## **Sociology 207: Social Inequality**

TR 12:00-1:20, 180 PLC

**Ryan Light** - [light@uoregon.edu](mailto:light@uoregon.edu) Office Hours: Thursday, 1:30-3:30 632 PLC or schedule an alternative arrangement, including over Zoom, via email.

### **Graduate Employees:**

- Gabriella Altmire
  - Sophie Glasswell
  - Jamie Yang
  - Kason Carté
  - Ruby Oboro-Offerie
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### **Course Description**

This class provides an introduction to sociology through the lens of social inequality. Sociology is a social science with a specific set of theories and methods – the sociological toolkit - that facilitate the analysis of society and the individuals, organizations, and institutions that comprise it. One of the main topics of focus for sociologists is social inequality. Social inequality is the uneven distribution of resources in society and is often summarized in an everyday sense as the “haves and have-nots.” Why do some groups have more education on average than others? What is it like to experience discrimination and how does the experience of discrimination vary? Who suffers the most in a housing crisis? Are the rich getting richer? These are several questions that preoccupy sociologists – and other social scientists – that are interested in inequality.

Why do social scientists want to better understand inequality? Social scientists generally want to better understand inequality to play a part in changing the circumstances that generate inequalities. The idea is that we must understand something to fix it. However, social scientists generally and sociologists specifically often have very different ideas about how to go about addressing inequalities. In this way it is important to recognize that there is rarely a one-size-fits-all solution to these problems and the key is to develop careful social science to understand them. By the end of this class, you should have a good understanding of the careful, specific theories and concepts that sociologists use to understand inequality.

### **Learning Objectives**

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. You will be able to define sociology and key terms related to social inequality.
2. You will practice using the sociological imagination as a lens for understanding contemporary social issues in writing and through discussion.
3. You will strengthen your critical thinking and analytical skills by developing your own sociological perspective on complex issues.

### **Core Education Requirements**

*Social Science*

This course is designated as a *Social Science* Core Education course. At UO, core education is designed to provide a broad, interdisciplinary education that helps students, think critically and creatively, communicate clearly, and reflect ethically.

### *United States: Difference, Inequality, and Agency*

This course fulfills the *United States: Difference, Inequality, and Agency* category of the Cultural Literacy Core Education requirement, a requirement informed by UO student activism. It is meant to develop students' analytical and reflective capacities to help them understand and ethically engage with the ongoing (cultural, economic, political, social, etc.) power imbalances that have shaped and continue to shape the United States.

### **Estimated Student Workload**

This course will require approximately 7-12 hours of work per week with most of that work (about 4-8 hours) occurring outside of class and discussion section. A typical week will include 2-4 hours of reading, 3 hours of in-class time, and 1 hour for the discussion section meeting. The essay will take approximately 4-6 hours of dedicated time each to complete (e.g. if you complete without "multitasking"). The quizzes will likely take 2-3 hours of preparation for a very good score.

### **A Note on the Course Material**

In this course, we will be grappling with sensitive, personal, and sometimes controversial subject matter. Please let me know how I can best support you if you are sensitive to course content. We will strive to moderate discussion, as well as make ourselves open to difference and disagreement. We expect the same from our students. We encourage you to share your varied experiences in the spirit of community, learning, and growth. However, please know classmates are not responsible for "teaching" other students about difference. We are all responsible for our own learning about each other and the world.

### **Course Policies**

#### **Communicating with Me: How and Why**

Our class will largely communicate through our Canvas website. Announcements and emails are available there and are archived. They are automatically forwarded to your UO email and can be sent to you via text if you prefer (adjust this setting under account/notifications). I respond to emails in 48 hours or fewer, usually excluding the weekends. If I do not respond in two days, please send a follow-up email as the original likely got "lost in the shuffle."

#### *Office Hours and Questions*

I will host in-person office hours (632 PLC) from 1:30-3:30 on Thursdays. If you cannot meet during this time, please contact me via email to set up a meeting at an alternative, agreed-upon time that can include Zoom meetings.

### *Why Office Hours?*

When I was an undergraduate, I remember feeling intimidated by my instructors and confused about how to best use office hours. I didn't want to waste anyone's time or risk looking like I was behind other students. As a faculty member, I find office hours to be one of the best, if underused, aspects of my job and I've never felt that my time was wasted, or that attending office hours conveyed anything negative about a student. Students have attended office hours for many reasons from clarification on assignments, to working through difficult course material, to discussions about career goals, to fill me in on something interesting they read, listened to, or saw. Any of these reasons or more are good reasons to come to office hours in my courses. If you think that you may want a recommendation from me later – even years later – you should come to office hours at least once during the course as it is far easier for me to remember students who I know personally via these meetings.

### **Course Modality**

This is an in-person course: that means that, unlike asynchronous online/ASYNCR WEB courses, we will meet during scheduled class meeting times in PLC 180. I will accommodate absences as described in the Absences policy below. If you need additional flexibility, UO encourages you to consider ASYNCR WEB courses. If you need accommodation related to a medical or other disability, you can request those by working with the Accessible Education Center.

### **How Grades Will Be Determined**

**Core Assessments (3 quizzes ; 2 quizzes and One Paper; 1 Quiz and Two Papers):** 40 points/each - 120 points/total – 60% of grade

You have five core assessment options in this class. Three of these assessments are **quizzes** that will take place during the discussion section meetings in Week 3, Week 6, and Week 9. These will largely be non-cumulative – only address weeks 1-3, weeks 3-6, weeks 6-9 – but may include a few questions to assess your understanding of earlier topics. A study guide will be provided by Tuesday of the week that the exam takes place, and you will **need a pen** for these quizzes.

You will also have the opportunity to write **up to two papers** due at the end of the exam period during Finals Week. The papers/essays will consist of an application of major ideas from the course. There will be an extended description, including five writing prompts, for the final paper that will be distributed by Week 8. Successful final papers will be at least 1,000 words long.

These assessments are each worth 40 points, but only three of the assessments will count towards your final grade. This means that you can complete all five assessments and take the highest three scores; you can only take the three quizzes and accept all three scores; you can take two of the quizzes and complete the final paper and accept all three scores; or you can take one quiz and complete two papers.

**Discussion Section Participation and Activities (4 points/week – 40 points)**

Students are required to enroll in a weekly discussion section. Participation in section (through in-class discussions; activities and discussion boards) is worth 20% of your final grade. It is expected that you will have attended the lectures and read the material for that week before you attend section.

Discussion sections are an important part of this class, and you are strongly encouraged to attend and participate. You will be given full participation points (4 points) for the week if you attend and participate in that week's discussion activity. You can miss 2 discussion sections without losing points - provided that you participate in that week's online discussion forum by posting a thoughtful comment at some point throughout the week. However, after the second absence, you can only earn back 2.5 points for that week by participating in that week's online discussion forum. If you miss the in-person discussion and don't post that week on the weekly discussion board, you will be deducted 4 points for the week.

### **Lecture Activities (8 regular activities – 3 points each and 1 mega week 10 activity worth 6 points)**

Each week in the Canvas module, I will post an activity that you will complete. The eight activities through Week 9 will be worth 3 points/each. These are usually short reflections that offer you an ability to use what we are learning and will be due the following Monday at the end of the day. There will be a catch-up day on the Friday of week 5 and 9 where you can submit any activities that you did not submit up until that point with no penalty. Activities submitted after that point will be graded as a 0.

The week 10 activity will ask you to complete an activity to put your understanding of social inequality in motion or towards practical purposes and is worth 6 points and is due on the Friday of week 10.

### **Reading Notes (2 notes activities – 5 points each)**

You will be asked to provide at least two substantive comments and two reactions to two social scientific articles that we will be reading for the class via the Hypothesis tool on Canvas. Substantive comments are at least a sentence long engagement with the text. These can be questions or connections to other ideas or observations. Reactions are one-word notes to remind you of something that is “confusing” or “important” or “lol” or whatever.

### **Extra Credit Opportunities**

I am always happy to reward classes that are trying hard to understand the material and to even extend their understanding or push their understanding with a few extra credit opportunities. These may arise at any point in the class.

### **Late work and Attendance Policies**

Assignments are due on Canvas on their assigned dates/times. Late assignments **may** receive a 5% deduction for every day that they are late excluding weekends up to a 20% deduction. Attendance is not required but is highly correlated with success in this class. If circumstances may

affect your participation or your ability to turn work in on time, please contact me as soon as those circumstances arise. I will work with students in these situations and do not need to know any details about your situation. In accordance with UO policy, you are not required to provide documentation of these circumstances.

**Grade Summary**

Core Assessments (3 exams and 1 final paper/choose 3): 60%  
 Discussion Section Participation and Activities: 20%  
 Lecture Activities (including Week 10 Mega Activity): 15%  
 Reading Notes: 5%  
 Extra Credit Opportunities!

**Grades**

A	93+	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	<60

An A+ will only be awarded for coursework that significantly exceeds A-level performance, which generally applies to work that earns above 100% for the course.

**Required Texts and Readings**

This course uses a freely available online textbook. The FREE textbook is called *Introduction to Sociology 3e* and is available here: <https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-sociology-3e>. You can download and print required chapters for free via this link. You can also purchase a printed copy through the website if you prefer. The online textbook readings are indicated by [TB] in the schedule below. Additional readings can be accessed via Canvas and will be indicated by [C] in the schedule below.

**Course Outline**

The schedule is subject to change with appropriate notice in class or through email.

Day	Topic	Content
4/2	Introductions and Syllabus Overview	
4/4	What Is Sociology? (Part 1)	Chapter 1: “An Introduction to Sociology” [TB] Focus: 1.1, 1.3, and 1.4

4/9	What is Sociology (Part 2)	“The Promise of Sociology,” Mills [C]
4/11	Overview of Sociological Method	Chapter 2: “Sociological Research” [TB] Focus: 2.1, 2.3 Skim: 2.2
4/16	Thinking about Power	Chapter 17.1: “Power and Authority” [TB] Focus: 17.1  Dean (2018): “Everyone Wants “Power.” Everyone Thinks Someone Else Has It” [C] <b>Quiz #1 in Discussion Section</b>
4/18	Thinking about Power	Jamison (2023): “Why Everyone Feels Like They’re Faking It” [C]
4/23	Social Class, Stratification, and Privilege	Chapter 9: “Social Stratification in the United States” [TB] Focus: 9.1, 9.2, 9.3 Skim: 9.4
4/25	Social Class, Stratification, and Privilege	Jack and Black (2022): “Belonging and Boundaries at an Elite University” [C]
4/30	Race and Ethnicity	Chapter 11: “Race and Ethnicity” [TB] Focus: Entire Chapter
5/2	Race and Ethnicity	Rios (2012): “Stealing a Bag of Potato Chips and Other Crimes of Resistance” [C]
5/7	Gender and Sexuality	Chapter 12: “Gender, Sex, and Sexuality” [TB] Focus: Entire Chapter  <b>Quiz #2 in Discussion Section</b>
5/9	Gender and Sexuality	Yavorsky, Keister, and Qian (2020): “Gender in the One Percent” [C]  Meadow (2018): “Gender Troubles” from <i>Trans Kids: Being gendered in the twenty-</i>

		<i>first century</i> [C]
5/14	Intersectionality	Crenshaw (2020): Interview [C] McMillan Cottom (2019): “Dying to Be Competent” [C]
5/16	Education and Power	Chapter 16: “Education” [TB] Focus: Full Chapter
5/21	<b>Reading Day</b>	<b>Rest (No Class)</b>
5/23	Education and Power	Musto (2019): “Brilliant or Bad: The gendered social construction of exceptionalism in early adolescence” [C]
5/28	Environmental Inequalities	Chapter 20.3: “The Environment and Society” [TB] Focus:20.3  Kennedy and Hamdon (2023): “Do People Who Drive Trucks Care About the Environment” [C]
5/30	Global Inequality	Chapter 10: “Global Inequality” [TB] Focus:10.1, 10.2 Skim:10.3  <b>Quiz #3 in Discussion Section</b>
6/4	Social Movements and Social Change	Chapter 21: “Social Movements and Social Change” [TB] Focus: Entire Chapter
6/6	Social Movements and Social Change	Villarosa (2020): “Pollution is Killing Black American. This Community Fought Back” [C]
<b>6/13</b>	<b>FINAL ESSAY DUE</b>	<b>12PM ON CANVAS</b>

## **Additional University and Course Policies**

### **Access and Accommodations**

The University of Oregon and I are dedicated to fostering inclusive learning environments for all students and welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Accessible Education Center (AEC) assists students with disabilities in reducing campus-wide and classroom-related barriers. If you have or think you have a disability (<https://aec.uoregon.edu/content/what-disability>) and experience academic barriers, please contact the AEC to discuss appropriate accommodations or support. Visit 360 Oregon Hall or [aec.uoregon.edu](http://aec.uoregon.edu) for more information. You can contact AEC at 541-346-1155 or via email at [uoacc@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoacc@uoregon.edu).

### **Academic Misconduct**

The [University Student Conduct Code](#) defines academic misconduct, which includes using unauthorized help on assignments and examinations, the use of sources without acknowledgment, and recording class without “the express written permission of the instructor(s).” Academic misconduct is prohibited at UO. I will report all suspected misconduct to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. If the Office finds a student has committed misconduct, consequences can include failure of the relevant assignment or exam, or of the course.

While unauthorized help and use of sources without citation is prohibited, learning together and citing sources is crucial! Each assignment and assessment will have a note about whether and how you might work with others so that you can clearly act with academic integrity. All assignments will use the format of your choice (e.g., ASA, APA, MLA) and you can find more support in using citation methods at the [UO Libraries' Citation Guides research guide](#).

If at any point in the term you are unsure about whether a behavior aligns with academic integrity in our course, please contact me. I view student questions about academic integrity as a desire to act with integrity, so I welcome your questions.

### **Being A Good Academic Citizen:**

What it means to be a good academic citizen is changing at a rapid pace. Classroom norms differ between departments and professors. Technology and our relationship to it have much to do with these ambiguities. So, being a good academic citizen means following traditional norms of good academic behavior: don't plagiarize, including non-appropriated paraphrasing and quotation, be respectful of others ideas, and so forth. But, it is also worth considering newer norms. For my class your phones should be put away. It is distracting to others to have people fidgeting with their text messages. You *can* use a laptop, but you should stay on task and respectful of others around you. If someone is being distracting, please contact me or a GTF. Last, you may NOT sell material for this class (notes, study guides, etc.). Any student who needs help with note-taking should talk to me.

### **Artificial Intelligence Use:**

All work you submit for this course toward completion of course requirements must be your own original work done specifically for this course and without substantive assistance from others, including artificial intelligence systems (e.g., ChatGPT). Work you've completed for previous courses or are developing for other courses this term should not be submitted for this course. Please note that your work may be submitted to AI or plagiarism detection tools to ensure all work is human-created and original. Please also carefully read the academic integrity policy concerning plagiarism.



### **Your Well-being:**

Life at college can be very complicated. Students often feel overwhelmed or stressed, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationships, or just need help navigating challenges in their life. If you're facing such challenges, you don't need to handle them on your own--there's help and support on campus.

As your instructor if I believe you may need additional support, I will express my concerns, the reasons for them, and refer you to resources that might be helpful. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I care and that help is available. Getting help is a courageous thing to do—for yourself and those you care about.

[University Health Services](#) help students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. If you need general resources on coping with stress or want to talk with another student who has been in the same place as you, visit the Duck Nest (located in the EMU on the ground floor) and get help from one of the specially trained Peer Wellness Advocates.

University Counseling Services (UCS) has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at [counseling.uoregon.edu](http://counseling.uoregon.edu) or by calling 541-346-3227 (anytime UCS is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number).

### *Basic Needs*

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (346-3216, 164 Oregon Hall) for support.

[The UO Basic Needs Resource Guide](#) includes resources for food, housing, healthcare, childcare, transportation, technology, finances, and legal support.

## **Grade Culture**

A+ Quality of student's performance significantly exceeds all requirements and expectations required for an A grade. Very few, if any, students receive this grade in a given course.

A: Quality of performance is outstanding relative to that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at the highest level.

B: Quality of performance is significantly above that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at a high level.

C: Quality of performance meets the course requirements in every respect; demonstrates adequate understanding of course content.

D: Quality of performance is at the minimal level necessary to pass the course, but does not fully meet the course requirements; demonstrates a marginal understanding of course content.

F: Quality of performance in the course is unacceptable and does not meet the course requirements; demonstrates an inadequate understanding of course content.