Sociology of Inequality and Difference

Course Description
This course is concerned with the sociological approach to social inequality and difference, particularly in relation to class, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. We begin with a look at how inequality was conceptualized in classical social theory and then examine three conventional approaches to the study of inequality and difference: functionalism, conflict theory and social constructionism. As a way of grounding these approaches, we will read four works that explore the issues of inequality and difference in American society: Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed*, Mitchell Duneier's *Sidewalk*, Philippe Bourgois' *In Search of Respect*, and Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*.

Required Texts
Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*,
Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk*.
Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*
Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*
Course Reader

Course Requirements
Participation & Attendance: 15%
Group Presentation: 15%
4 Response Papers: 20%
Final Paper: 50%

Participation and Attendance
Participation and attendance will be an important part of this class. Participation includes completing the assigned readings, engaging in class discussions, active contributions to small group work, and engaging in the class issues through the online discussion board. The attendance policy for the course follows university policy.

Group Presentation
At the start of the semester, group presentations will be scheduled. Students are expected to give one group presentation during the semester. For the presentation, the group will identify key issues from the readings and illustrations of these issues from our local community. In addition, the group will be responsible for introducing questions for class discussion.

Response Papers
Students will be required to complete four short response papers for the course. For each section of the course (Structure of Social Inequality, Functionalism, Conflict Theory, and Social Constructionism), students will be expected to submit a paper that discusses the relevant sociological approach to the respective works by Ehrenreich, Duneier, Bourgois and Morrison. For example, at the end of week 4, students will analyze Ehrenreich's experiences working in low-wage jobs by utilizing the theories of Rousseau, Marx and/or Weber. These response papers can also serve as initial thought pieces for the final paper. Each response paper must be a minimum of three pages, typed, double-spaced, with 12 point Times New Roman font.

Final Paper
For the final paper, students will be expected to compare and contrast two of the approaches to social inequality and difference in relation to one of the works by Ehrenreich, Duneier, Bourgois or

Morrison. With prior approval, students may opt to use a different work for this comparison. The paper must be a minimum of 10 pages, typed, double-spaced, with 12 point Times New Roman font.

Late Work Policy

All work is due by 5:00 pm on the day indicated in the syllabus, unless otherwise amended by me. Only university-recognized excuses will allow for late work to be submitted without penalty. Otherwise, work handed in past the deadline will be penalized with an automatic 5% reduction in grade for each day late.

Course Schedule
(Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are in the Course Reader and on Reserve. Readings from journals can be downloaded through electronic databases.)

PART I: THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY
Weeks 1 & 2
Readings: *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse On the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, Preface and Second Part
*Karl Marx, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" and "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" from *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp 473-483, 70-81
*Max Weber, "Class, Status, Party," from *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, pp 180-195 and *Economy and Society*, pp 26-54

Weeks 3 & 4
Readings: Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*
Due Week 4: First Response Paper

PART II: FUNCTIONALISM
Weeks 5 & 6
Readings: *Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, pp 1-8, 31-87
Talcott Parsons, "Equality and Inequality in Modern Society, or Social Stratification Revisited," *Sociological Inquiry*, 40(2): 13-72
Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, 10(2): 242-249
Melvin Tumin, "Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis," *American Sociological Review*, 18(4): 387-394
Mark Abrahamson, "Functionalism and the Functional Theory of Stratification: An Empirical Assessment," *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(5): 1236-1246

Weeks 7 & 8
Readings: Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk*
Due Week 8: Second Response Paper

PART III: CONFLICT THEORY
Weeks 9 & 10
Readings: * Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, pp 15-66, 87-110
*Ralf Dahrendorf, "On the Origins of Inequality Among Men" from *Essays in the Theory of Society*, 151-178
Randall Collins, "Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, 36: 1002-1019
David Jacobs, "Inequality and Police Strength: Conflict Theory and Coercive Control in Metropolitan Areas," *American Sociological Review*, 44: 913-925

Weeks 11 & 12
Readings: Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect*
Due Week 12: Third Response Paper

PART IV: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM
Weeks 13 & 14
Readings: *Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, pp 19-92

*Patricia Hill Collins, "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection" from *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality*
*Steven Seidman, *The Social Construction of Sexuality*, pp 13-24
Nancy Foner and George Frederickson, "Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States," from *Not Just Black and White*, pp 1-22

<u>Week 15</u>
Readings: Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, entire
Due Week 15: Fourth Response Paper

Final paper due one week from the last class.