

SYLLABUS SOCIOLOGY 4071 [Section 002]

<u>Course Title:</u>	<i>Social Stratification</i>
<u>Time:</u>	Tuesday and Thursday 8:00am - 9:15am
<u>Place:</u>	Hellems 211
<u>Instructor:</u>	<i>Tom Mayer</i>
<u>Instructor's Office:</u>	Institute of Behavioral Science Building 2 1546 Broadway 303-492-2138 Thomas.Mayer@colorado.edu
<u>Office Hours:</u>	Wednesday 2:00 - 4:00 PM or by appointment

Course Description

The analysis of social stratification is often considered the heart of sociology. Every known human society has a system of social stratification. This course examines the structure and dynamics of social inequality with particular attention to the United States. It focuses on three forms of inequality: economic inequality, power inequality, and status inequality. The course begins with a broad survey of economic inequality in America and how this has changed over the last several decades. It then considers the experience of people who work and are still poor, followed by a review of the principal theoretical perspectives on social inequality. The heart of this class is the fourth section, which considers class inequality in the United States. Here we consider both the nature of the main American social classes and the way in which they change over time. This is followed by discussions of inequality based upon gender and race. These discussions focus upon the relationship between gender and race inequality on the one hand and class inequality on the other. The final section considers the future of social inequality. Although the lectures and readings will focus on stratification in the contemporary United States, frequent comparisons will be made with systems of social inequality at other times and other places.

Social stratification is a huge topic, and any single course can only hope to address a small part. Issues of social inequality arise in virtually every sociology class. This course will have a mixture of lectures, class discussions, and student presentations. Student presentations are voluntary, but will not require reading beyond the regular assignments..

Course Requirements

Students in Sociology 4035 are asked to write two short essays on social stratification. There will also be two midterm examinations and a final exam. Grades will be based upon the (a) the two midterm examinations, (b) the final examination, (c) the two essays, and (d) class attendance (which will be taken regularly). By participating regularly in class discussion and by making a voluntary class presentation, students can improve their grade by a small amount. The course requirements have the following (approximate) weights:

Attendance	20%
First midterm exam	15%
Second midterm exam	15%
First essay	15%
Second essay	15%
Final exam	20%

Each of the two essays must be five pages (typewritten and double spaced) or less. The first essay (due on Thursday, February 16) is review and evaluation of either Collins and Yeskel, *Economic Apartheid in America* or Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed* (see

descriptions of these books below) . The second essay (due on Thursday, April 20) involves the formulation and discussion of a testable hypothesis about social stratification.

Critical Dates

February 16	First essay due
March 2	First midterm examination
April 6	Second midterm examination
April 20	Second essay due
May 10 (Wed.)	Final examination (10:30am - 1:00pm)

Required Books

Chuck Collins and Felice Yeskel: *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and Insecurity*. Revised and Updated Edition. (New York: The New Press, 2005). 254 pages.

An expose of the growing economic gap between winners and losers in the emerging global economy. This book is written with passion and a definite point of view. It reflects the work of scholars associated with the organization *United for a Fair Economy* and contains numerous easily understood charts and cartoons.

Barbara Ehrenreich: *Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By in America*. (New York: Henry Holt, 2001). 230 pages.

A well known writer tries to survive on low paying jobs as a waitress, house cleaner, nursing home worker, and Wal Mart salesperson. Her experiences at work, efforts to find housing, and the relationships she forms shed new light on the lives of the working poor in the United States. This book has already become a classic of social criticism and popular ethnography.

Harold R. Kerbo: *Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in Historical, Comparative, and Global Perspective*. Sixth Edition. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006). 690 pages.

A clear and reasonably complete text on social stratification written from a class conflict perspective. The author is an important scholar of social stratification. The original version of this book appeared in 1983. While maintaining the basic organization, it has become deeper and more comprehensive with each subsequent edition. Wherever possible, the various charts and tables have been updated while new research has been added.

Thomas M. Shapiro (ed.): *Great Divides: Readings in Social Inequality in the United States*. Third Edition. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005). 448 pages.

An astute collection of classical and contemporary writings on the sociology of inequality. The selections avoid technical material, but they do include many important recent papers on social stratification. The readings are partitioned into five parts: Opportunity and Inequality in the United States, How Social Stratification is Generated, Class, Race and Ethnicity, Gender, and Education and the Environment.

Class Schedule

A. Economic Inequality in the United States (January 17-29)

1. *Growth of Economic Inequality* (January 17 and 19)

Required reading:

Collins and Yeskel 1-64

2. *Causes of Economic Inequality* (January 24 and 26)

Required reading:

Collins and Yeskel 65-125

B. The Experience of Working Poverty (January 30 - February 12)

3. *What Is a Job Worth?* (January 31 and February 2)
Required reading:
Ehrenreich 1-119
4. *Low Wages and Big Corporations* (February 7 and 9)
Required reading:
Ehrenreich 121-230

C. Theories of Social Inequality (February 13-26)

5. *Conflict Theories of Inequality* (February 14 and 16)
Required reading:
Kerbo 80-103, 125-135
Shapiro 36-43, 57-70, 96-112

First Essay Due on February 16

6. *Functionalist Theories of Inequality* (February 21 and 23)
Required reading:
Kerbo 103-108, 114-126
Shapiro 76-94

D. Class Inequality (February 27 - March 24)

7. *The Upper and Corporate Classes* (February 28 and March 2)
Required reading:
Kerbo 143-203
Shapiro 139-164

First Midterm Examination March 2

8. *The Middle and Working Classes* (March 7 and 9)
Required reading:
Kerbo 204-236
Shapiro 165-185
9. *Social Mobility and Geographic Migration* (March 14 and 16)
Required reading:
Kerbo 367-410
Shapiro 22-26, 71-76, 121-131, 380-391
10. *The Impact of Globalization* (March 21 and 23)
Required reading:
Kerbo 441-468
Shapiro 16-19, 112-120, 132-138

E. Race Inequality (April 3 - 16)

11. *Race, Employment, and Wealth* (April 4 and 6)
Required reading:
Kerbo 325-349
Shapiro 193-199, 224-234, 251-263

Second Midterm Examination April 6

12. *Race, Education, and Residence*
Required reading:
Kerbo 349-366
Shapiro 235-250, 392-417

F. Gender Inequality (April 17 - 30)

13. *The Origins of Gender Inequality* (April 18 and 20)
Required reading:
Kerbo 288-306
Shapiro 292-307, 315-332

Second Essay Due April 20

14. *Gender and Work* (April 25 and 27)
Required reading:
Kerbo 306-324
Shapiro 53-56, 345-353, 366-377

G. Conclusion (May 1 - 5)

15. *The Future of Social Inequality* (May 2 and 4)
Required reading:
Kerbo 547-590

Final Examination Wednesday May 10, 10-30am - 1:00pm