SYO4530: SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN AMERICA
Spring 2014

Instructor  Dr. Robert G. White, Turlington 3356 (rwhite@ufl.edu)
Office hours: Wednesday (1:00-4:00) and by appointment.

Meeting Times  Tuesday 8th and 9th periods (3:00-4:55) and Thursday 9th period (4:05-4:55)
Turlington Hall #2319

Course Description

This course reviews conceptual and empirical research concerning social inequality. We will study social processes related to schooling, markets, communities, family and public policy and their consequences for social inequalities in the United States. Our readings and discussions will cover wide ranging theories and evidence to address a central question about equality: How likely is it that children in today’s America will achieve the socioeconomic status of their parents? Following a half century of economic growth allowing successive generations to experience ever higher living standards and wealth, the close of 20th century ushered a takeoff in inequalities that poses fundamental questions about the meaning of opportunity in modern America.

Drawing from in-depth interviews, ethnography and survey research we will examine inequalities in opportunities and outcomes related to education, health and socioeconomic status. We will also consider how these inequalities occur between social groups defined by race, ethnicity and gender. Studying these different dimensions of inequality will provide our entry for considering the many social processes allocating opportunities and outcomes and distinguishing social inequality in America.

Understanding how social inequalities emerge and persist in a democracy is essential for an informed citizenship. This course is designed to be appropriate for any inquisitive student and has no prerequisite. The course may be especially useful for students planning careers in law, medicine, education, public policy and social services.

Required Text

There is one required text for our class:


This text is available at the University of Florida Bookstore and will include a large number of our required readings. Additional required journal articles and book chapters will be available on the Sakai course website.

The course requirements provide many opportunities for engaging in different ways with our course material. The most important requirement is completing the assigned readings before class and arriving to class prepared to discuss your reactions. Our class will greatly benefit from your insights about our readings’ findings (and follies) as well as your questions about the material. We will especially value any thoughts you might share about how your own life experiences relate to our readings.

You will also have the chance to be a discussion leader during one class of the semester. You and 4 or 5 other students will be scheduled to lead discussions for a single Thursday class. Prior to class, you will meet with the other designated discussion leaders to plan a creative and fun presentation of your Thursday class
readings and develop a set of discussion questions. At the start of class, your group will jointly present a 15 minute summary of the readings before then leading small group discussions for approximately 25 minutes. Your discussion questions will be distributed to your classmates and we’ll talk in small groups before rejoining as a large group to share our findings and continue the discussion. Explicit guidelines will be provided at the beginning of the semester for preparing the group presentation. Your participation as a discussion leader and your group’s discussion questions will contribute 15% of your grade.

Six quizzes will reward your timely reading and preparation for class. The quizzes will occur at the start of every other Thursday class and will involve a small number of questions that assess whether you completed all the readings since the prior quiz. The quizzes do not assess your understanding of conceptual issues but rather are designed to simply determine whether you completed all the required readings. Each quiz will be worth 4 points. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester, giving the quizzes a total of 20 points (20% of the overall course grade). There will be no make-up quizzes. All the quizzes are open note – you will be allowed use of all your notes and lecture slides during the quiz (but not the readings themselves).

A mid-term exam on Thursday, February 28 and a final exam during finals week will both consist of multiple choice, short answers and essay questions. Review sessions will be held in the Thursday classes preceding each exam. The final exam will cover only the class material since the mid-term exam. Make-up exams will not be permitted for any reason other than the extraordinary circumstances described in the Course Policies section at the end of the syllabus.

You can earn up to an additional 7 bonus points for your participation in class! Although we are a large group, you will find many opportunities to participate during class. I keep track of who participates and how much they participate throughout the semester in order to assign any possible bonus points at the end of the semester. And asking questions counts as participation!

The final course grade will be based on the following:

| Participation as Discussion Leader. | 15 points |
| Six in-class quizzes. | 20 points |
| In-class midterm. | 30 points |
| Final exam. | 35 points |
| Extra Credit Bonus Participation Points. | 7 points |

Letter grades will be determined by the following:

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UF policies for assigning grade points may be found at [https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx)
Weekly Readings

Our class experience will be excellent if everyone comes to class prepared to discuss the readings. Participation in class discussion is essential for both your own and your classmates’ success in the course. Please come to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss your reactions, questions and concerns. Be careful to always plan for longer reading assignments for Thursday classes than for Tuesday classes on account of the longer class time on Thursdays. Below are the topics covered over the semester and their required readings. Readings marked (GS) are in the Grusky and Szelenyi text. All other readings are available for download from the class website on Sakai e-learning.

1. What is Equality Anyway?
2. Framing Inequality: Functionalism, Conflict and Status
3. Poverty and Risk in Low Wage Markets
4. Social Mobility
5. Gendering and Gender Inequalities in Markets
6. Race and Ethnic Stratification
7. Economic Inequalities in Educational Attainment
8. Neighborhood Consequences for Life Chances
9. Race and Socioeconomic Inequalities in Health
10. Reducing Social Inequalities in an Opportunity Society

The development of this course was supported by a grant from the University of Florida’s Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations. The CSRRR is committed to de-stigmatizing race in America. With the objective of fostering communities of dialogue, the Center embraces historically and empirically based thinking, talking, teaching, and writing on race. If you would like more information on the CSRRR, its mission and work please visit their website at http://www.law.ufl.edu/centers/csrrr.

(See the following page for course policies.)
Course Policies

Academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes: plagiarism; giving or receiving assistance during an exam; falsification, forgery or alteration of academic records or documentation. Any academic dishonesty detected in this course will result, at the very least, in the student(s) receiving a zero on that assignment or exam. Academic dishonesty may also result in dismissal from this course and disciplinary action.

Plagiarism. The University of Florida Academic Honesty Guidelines description of plagiarism:

The attempt to represent the work of another as the product of one's own thought, whether the other's work is published or unpublished, or simply the work of a fellow student. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, quoting oral or written materials without citation on an exam, term paper, homework, or other written materials or oral presentations for an academic requirement; submitting a paper which was purchased from a term paper service as your own work; submitting anyone else's paper as your own work.

If you’re concerned whether you might be plagiarizing, simply ask the Teaching Assistant or your instructor for clarification about the acceptable guidelines for collaboration. The University of Florida’s regulations concerning plagiarism are outlined in http://regulations.ufl.edu/chapter4/4041.pdf

Accommodation. Students with disabilities who require classroom accommodation must register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean's Office will determine the accommodation required. This process must be completed at least one week in advance of the needed accommodation. See http://www.dso.ufl.edu/ for more information.

Make-up exams. Students who do not attend a regularly scheduled examination are not entitled to take the examination at another time. Make-up exams are allowable only when a student demonstrates to the instructor's satisfaction that he or she has an excusable reason (detailed next) for missing an exam. Note that our final exam time cannot be changed. It is determined by the university registrar's office.

Excusable absences. While there are some health and family obligations which constitute reasonable excuses for missing a class or exam, the standard is whether a motivated student would reasonably place the personal consideration before the academic obligation. If such a situation arises, students should consult with me at the earliest possible time before the class or exam. In situations that arise at the last minute, students should email me. Do not phone me. Sending an email before the scheduled event does not by itself grant a student an excusable absence and/or entitlement to a later examination. In the absence of prior notification, the student must demonstrate that prior notification was not reasonably possible. Make-up exams are never given in advance of the class exam.

Incomplete grades. No "Incomplete" grades will be given in this course. Exceptions to this rule are granted only in the most compelling circumstances. If such a situation arises, students should consult with the instructor at the earliest time. Incomplete grades require a standard written contract establishing conditions for completion of the course and a date by which all requirements must be completed.

Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

Contacting me. If you need to email me, please email me directly. Do not email me through the Sakai course website. I do not check that email. Always put SYA4530 in the subject line of your message. If you neglect to do this, I will not receive your email. I normally check and respond to email once daily during normal working hours, Monday through Friday. E-mail is best suited for discussion of simple matters. Please come to office hours if you have a complex question.