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The differences between individuals and groups within society has long been at the center of sociological investigation. Sociologists refer to social inequality that is built into the structure of society as stratification – the structured ranking of entire groups of people that perpetuates unequal economic rewards and power in a society. The categories most often at the center of the hierarchical ranking of people in a society are those of social class, race / ethnicity and gender. Class, race, gender are social structures, constructed through social interaction and manifested in the institutions of society, interpersonal interactions and in the minds and identities of those living in stratified societies.

How a society is stratified matters in shaping the social location of different groups in contemporary society. It matters by influencing the process of social mobility and by configuring the opportunity structures experienced by different groups in society. It matters in structuring the familial, educative, occupational and political experience. It matters for our health, exposure to risk and longevity. Finally, the intersection of race, class, and gender matters because it determines and legitimates patterns of income and wealth distribution, political power, cultural capital, and the distribution of life chances.

Our objective this semester is to explore: the modern American class system and the divisions within, current data on inequality in the US, the role of public policy in creating and perpetuating social inequality, the ideological justifications for inequality and the subtle and often unseen ways in which inequality is structured into daily life.

The two books I have chosen for this course were written and designed to facilitate your understanding of the many dimensions of social stratification. There are two (2) required texts for this course, available at both campus bookstores.

Social Inequality: Patterns and Processes (6th edition) by Martin Marger
The Meritocracy Myth (3rd edition) by S. McNamee and R. Miller

The authors have worked hard to make a number of complex ideas as understandable as possible. You must do a little work as well. You will be expected to have read and assimilated the required readings for each class meeting. The reading assignments should be done before the topic is discussed in class. These two, required texts are available at the UMC Bookstore and the Bookstore on The Hill.

Exams and Grading: I expect lively and thoughtful participation by all members of this class. I expect you to read the appropriate material for each class meeting and come ready to talk, share, apply, refine, and/or challenge the topic at hand. I favor frequent and informed participation. I strongly encourage you to make every effort to become a “regular member” of this class. Please bring your book(s) to each class meeting. Your grade for this course will be based on the following criteria: class engagement (10%);* seven exams (10% each / 70% total);** and a “social stratification” research project (20%);***

In determining final grades I do use the "+, -" system." If you are going to miss an exam, it is vital that you notify me prior to that exam. Class engagement and participation are highly encouraged and considered for borderline grades.

* **Class Engagement (10%):** Your regular attendance and active participation in class discussions and activities is an essential component of this class. You are expected to engage in civil discourse on issues and readings relevant to each session, as well as help co-facilitate our class discussion. We all have a responsibility to make a small seminar-style class such as this work well. Beyond two absences, your grade for engagement will be reduced by one-half letter grade for each subsequent absence, except in the case of high-holiday observance, family emergency or medical emergency.

** **Exams (70%) Exam Dates:** 1/28; 2/13; 3/4; 3/20; 4/10; 4/24, Cumulative Final Exam 5/3.

*****Research project topics and criteria to be discussed in-class.** These projects will be due on April 24th. They will be presented in-class on 4/29 and 5/1.

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who qualify for academic accommodations must provide me notification from Disability Services and discuss specific needs with me, preferably during the first two weeks of class. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard Hall, room 322.)

Classroom Behavior Policy: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set re limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities.

Student Honor Code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and nonacademic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion).

Policy on Discrimination and Harassment: The University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships applies to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550

Religious Observances: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, please inform me as to any classes you expect to miss due to religious observance.

Please have read each of the following chapters for the assigned date(s).

Jan. 14, 16 - Social Inequality; chapter 1

Jan. 21, 23 - Social Inequality; chapter 2

Jan. 28 - Exam 1

Jan. 30 - Social Inequality; chapter 3

Feb. 4 & 6 - Social Inequality; chapter 4

Feb. 11 - Social Inequality; chapter 5

Feb. 13 - Exam 2

Feb. 18 & 20 - Social Inequality; chapter 6

Feb. 25 & 27 - Social Inequality; chapter 7

Mar. 4 - Exam 3

Mar. 6 - Social Inequality; chapter 8

Mar 11 - The Meritocracy Myth; chapters 1, 2, 3,

Mar. 13 - The Meritocracy Myth; chapters 4, 5, 6, 7

Mar. 18 - The Meritocracy Myth; chapters 8, 9, & 10

Mar. 20 - Exam 4

Spring Break

Apr. 1 - Social Inequality; chapter 9

Apr. 3 & 8 Social Inequality; chapter 10

Apr. 10 - Exam 5

Apr. 15 & 17- Social Inequality; chapter 11

Apr. 22 - Social Inequality; chapter 12

Apr. 24 - Exam 6

Apr. 29 - Research project presentations

May 1 - Research project presentations

***May 3 (Final) Exam 7 (7:30pm - 10pm) (cumulative)**

