**Social Inequality-Honors**

***Urban explorations: social (in)justice in Detroit***

**SOC 2300:501 CRN #28980**

Winter 2020

**Instructor:** Dr. Michelle R. Jacobs

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Course*** | ***Days*** | ***Time*** | ***Location*** |
| 2300 | T, Th  | 11:30 AM – 2 PM | 1129 Old Main |

*You are responsible for the information in this syllabus. Read it carefully & ask questions if necessary.*

**Course Description & Learning Objectives**

*Welcome!*

In this course we will explore urban inequalities from a sociological perspective. We will investigate the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of urban inequalities and interrogate systems of privilege and oppression that perpetuate injustice and diminish the life chances of some urban residents. A complex and interlocking array of urban issues like poverty, inequitable education, mass incarceration, and environmental degradation will be covered. Throughout the semester, individual and group level strategies for challenging and transforming systems of inequality will be explored.

Course learning objectives:

* Students will learn sociological concepts and theories relevant to social inequalities.
* Students will reflect on their social locations within systems of privilege and oppression.
* Students will understand how structural and individual level factors interact to produce and perpetuate inequalities in Southeast Michigan.
* Students will gain experience reading academic research by analyzing and grappling with sociological texts.
* Students will develop and hone critical thinking skills by participating in class discussions and completing writing assignments.
* Students will cultivate proficiency and expertise in the field of sociology by undertaking a final case study project that explores a specific aspect of social inequality in Southeast MI and proposes an intervention to reduce and/or alleviate this aspect of inequality.

**Course Materials**

***Two books (any edition) are required for this class.***

Johnson, Allen G. 2018. *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, 3rd Edition. New York: McGraw Hill Education.

Bergmann, Luke. 2010. *Getting ghost: Two young lives and the struggle for the soul of an American city*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

***Additional course readings, including PDFs and web links, are available on Canvas.***

**Course Requirements**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ASSIGNMENTS** | % |
| Participation (includes mentoring activities) | 20 |
| Reading memos | 30 |
| Visual sociology project | 10 |
| Case study project | 40 |
| **TOTAL** | 100 |

***Participation* (20%):** Participation includes attending class, demonstrating you have completed the assigned readings and any written homework – including mentoring “vulnerable youth” at Vista Maria <https://www.vistamaria.org/> via pen pal-type correspondence, and engaging in class discussions, discussion groups, in-class writing assignments, and in-class group activities. I will record attendance daily. You may miss one (1) class, no questions asked. After this one absence, every subsequent absence affects the final course grade. Students who arrive more than 15 minutes late or leave early more than twice will be penalized. You may be asked to withdraw after 3 missed classes. There are FEW exceptions to these policies. Contact me immediately if you have a verifiable emergency so we can work something out.

* *A note on our classroom environment:* I will occupy the role of a more informed and experienced co-learner with leadership responsibilities. Participants in this course are expected to be active and engaged learners who: pursue questions of interest; contribute to class and group discussions; support and challenge each other in the learning process; welcome challenges as opportunities for reflection and growth; come to class each week, on time and prepared; and seek additional support outside class as needed. Although discussions of inequalities sometimes bring strong emotions to the surface, professional behavior is expected at all times. Participants are expected to demonstrate respect for all people, including members of the class and the broader society. *In the first weeks of the semester, we will collectively develop a class code of ethics that defines positive and negative classroom behaviors.*

***Reading memos* (30%):** Thirteen full-length research articles and one book (based on ethnographic research conducted in Detroit) are assigned in this class. The articles are highlighted green on the course schedule. You are required to submit reading memos for EIGHT articles and ONE book (worth 4x points). Everyone is required to submit a memo in week 2 (Jan. 13); afterward you may choose the article topics or due dates best suited to your interests or needs. Article memos must be uploaded to Canvas by 1:00 PM on the Monday preceding the class for which the article was assigned. Late assignments will *not* be accepted. (Note: these due dates are not highlighted on the course schedule.)

Article memos must include two clearly delineated components:

* *Abstract:* In approximately *five* (sentence-length) bulleted points, describe the research *in your own words.* Important points of information include the research question and, if applicable, the research methods and findings. Be sure to define or describe key theories or concepts. You should also explain the primary contribution of the research (the “take away”) to the sociological study of urban inequalities.
* *Passage + reflection*: Directly quote and properly cite in ASA citation style what you consider to be one of the most insightful passagesfrom the article. The *passage* should be at least one sentence but no more than four or five consecutive sentences (roughly). The passage might express a primary take-away point of the reading or it might present an idea that is particularly compelling or troubling to you. In a few sentences, briefly reflect on the passage’s meaning and importance for inequalities scholarship and/or for non-academic understanding of the phenomenon discussed.

We will begin reading the book[[1]](#footnote-1) together in February, but then you will be responsible for finishing it on your own. The book memo must be uploaded to Canvas by 5:00 PM on Monday, April 27th (i.e., the Monday before our final class meeting during finals week). In addition to the above components (which *may* include up to *ten* bulleted points and *two* passages + reflections), the book memo MUST include a third component:

* *Synthesis:* Explain how Bergmann’s (2010) storytelling “brings to life” three specific aspects of urban inequality. Draw on and cite at least three research articles assigned this semester (highlighted in green on the course schedule) to support the points you are making. In other words, you should use the research articles to introduce specific aspects of urban inequality, and then provide examples from Bergmann’s book that “put a human face on” the issues.

***Visual sociology project* (10%):** In lieu of a midterm exam, you will complete a visual sociology project. Projects will be presented in class on February 11th. Detailed instructions will be discussed in class and posted on Canvas.

***Case study project* (25%):** You will conduct a *case study* in a small group (3-4 students) formulated according to collective interests. Groups will be created by the fifth week of the semester (Feb. 4) and you will need to engage continuously with group members for the remainder of the semester. Portions of class periods will be reserved for group work, discussions of progress, and troubleshooting, but much of the work for this project will occur outside the classroom. Detailed instructions will be posted to Canvas and discussed in class.

*What is a case study?*

“A case study research paper examines a person, place, event, phenomenon, or other type of subject of analysis in order to extrapolate key themes and results that help predict future trends, illuminate previously hidden issues that can be applied to practice, and/or provide a means for understanding an important research problem with greater clarity. A case study research paper usually examines a single subject of analysis, but case study papers can also be designed as a comparative investigation that shows relationships between two or more subjects. The methods used to study a case can rest within a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method investigative paradigm.”

*\*from* <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/casestudy> | *Please refer to this website for more information about choosing a case worthy of study, choosing an appropriate research method, and structuring the final research brief.*

Each group will be responsible for the following:

* **Assignment #1**: *Proposal* of the case to be studied, why it matters, and tentative case study methods (2 pages maximum)
	+ Upload to Canvas by 1 PM on Monday, Feb. 24th.
* Informal class presentation/discussion of the case study proposal (2-3 minutes)
	+ Due in class on Tuesday, Feb. 25th.
* **Assignment #2**: *Annotated bibliography* (minimum of 8 scholarly, peer-reviewed publications, including up to 2 research articles assigned in this course)
	+ Upload to Canvas by 5 PM on Friday, March 20th.
* **Assignments #3a, #3b, #3c**:
* (a) Case study written brief (8-10 pages)
	+ Upload to Canvas by 5 PM on Monday, April 27th.
* (b) Case study class presentation (10-15 minutes)
* (c) Creatively designed *media* that provides critical information about the problem to stakeholders (e.g., fact sheet, flier, bulletin, website, advertisement – *be colorful and creative* ☺)
	+ Due in class at 10:15 AM on Tuesday, April 28th.

***Late policy:*** I accept late assignments rarely and only in compelling circumstances. If accepted, late assignments lose points for being late and continue to lose points for each minute, hour, and day late. I will accept an assignment more than a week late in only the direst circumstances. *Reading memos submitted more than five minutes late will NEVER be accepted.*

**Grades**

You will be graded according to this scale:

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| --- | --- |
| Grade | Percentage |
| A | 93 – 100 |
| A- | 90 – 92 |
| B+ | 87 – 89 |
| B | 83 – 86 |
| B- | 80 – 82 |
| C+ | 77 – 79 |
| C | 73 – 76 |
| C- | 70 – 72 |
| D+ | 67 – 69 |
| D | 63 – 66 |
| D- | 60 – 62  |
| F | 59 and below |

**Final grades are *FINAL*!** No points will be added to *any* student’s grade (including yours) at the end of the semester. Please do not ask me to give you a higher grade than you earned because you need it to maintain a scholarship and/or have another special circumstance. I do not give grades; rather, you earn the grade you receive.

**Additional Student & Instructor Responsibilities**

**Student responsibilities:**

* Treat all members of the class and the broader community with *respect***.** Listen attentively when others are speaking and use *inclusive language*when it is your turn to speak. We will discuss sensitive topics in this course. Everyone is encouraged to participate in these discussions, but personal opinions must be presented in a way that does not marginalize any person or group.
* I (the instructor) reserve the right to make adjustments to the syllabus. As such, you (the student) are responsible for keeping up with any changes that are announced in class, on Canvas, or in email communications. Not attending class, not checking Canvas, and/or not checking your WSU email account are not legitimate excuses for missing assignments and other information relevant to this course.
* ***It is your responsibility to check Canvas regularly to ensure that grades are posted accurately.***
* Check Canvas when class is canceled due to weather, power outage, etc.
* You are *strongly encouraged* to communicate with me in person or by email if you have any comments, questions, or concerns about the course. Please *schedule an appointment* when you wish to meet with me during office hours or at another designated time.
* *Emails* must have a clear and informative subject line that includes your full name and the name of the coursein which you are enrolled. Emails without this information in the subject line will be promptly returned to sender. I also ask that you send emails that are appropriate for the university setting, meaning that they should have a salutation and should be written in complete sentences with real words – i.e., “you” instead of “u.”
* *Written course work* should be double-spaced with one inch margins and 11 or 12 point easy-to-read font (e.g., Times New Roman). In-text citations and works cited pages should be in American Sociological Style (ASA) citation format.
* *Religious holidays:* “It is University policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of the individual. Students with classes or examinations that conflict with their religious observances are expected to notify their instructors *well in advance* so that mutually agreeable alternatives may be worked out.”
* *Accommodative services:* “If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. The SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-202-4216 for videophone use. Once you have met with your disability specialist, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your accommodations. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University.” You can learn more about the disability office at [www.studentdisability.wayne.edu](http://www.studentdisability.wayne.edu/). To register with Student Disability Services, complete the online registration form at:
<https://wayne-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/>
* *Academic dishonesty*, which includes cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of unethical academic behavior, *will not be tolerated*. Cheating and plagiarism are forms of academic theft that destroy the integrity of academic communities. It is expected that all students enrolled in this class support the letter and the spirit of the Student Code of Conduct. It is your responsibility to review the Code of Conduct, which is available for download at the Dean of Students Office website: <http://www.doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct-services.html>. Ignorance is not a viable defense against allegations of student conduct violations.

***My policy on academic dishonesty:***Suspected academic dishonesty will be evaluated on a case by case basis. Students suspected of academic dishonesty may receive a score of 0 on the assignment or a score of 0 in the course, depending on the magnitude of the offense. Moreover, *I am obligated to report all instances of suspected academic dishonesty to university administrators.*

***Instructor* responsibilities:**

* I will come to class prepared to discuss the materials and facilitate the educational process.
* I will be available to answer questions you have about course materials during class times, office hours, or independently scheduled meetings. If you send an email and do not receive a response within 48 hours, you should assume that your email was not received and resend it.
* I will explain class assignments and outline my expectations for graded work.
* I will grade your work consistently, fairly, and in a timely fashion.
* I will treat all students with respect.
* I will acknowledge and correct my mistakes.

**Important Dates**

Monday, January 6: Classes begin

Monday, January 20: *Martin Luther King, Jr. Day* (university closed)

Friday, January 17: Last day to add/drop a course with full tuition reimbursement

Friday, February 7: Degree applications due

Monday, February 24: Early assessment period ends

Sunday, March 22: Last day to withdraw from a class *with instructor permission*

Monday-Saturday, March 9-14: *Spring break* (no classes)

Monday, April 20: Classes end

Tuesday, April 21: Study day

Tuesday, April 28: Final exam, 10:15 AM – 12:15 PM

**Course Schedule**

The course schedule is *tentative* and will be adjusted as needed. Items available on Canvas are indicated with ©.

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| ***Date*** | ***Topic*** | ***Readings & other assigned work*** |
| 1-07 | Welcome ☺; introductions & other important things | The Neoliberal Arts, Deresiewicz |
| 1-14 | Privilege, oppression, & difference | Johnson: Introduction + Ch. 1 + Ch. 2©Unpacking the Colorblind Approach, Modica |
| 1-21 | The matrix of domination & education | Johnson: Ch. 3©Savage Inequalities, Kozol©Reflections on Savage Inequalities, Anderson |
| 1-28 | Understanding the -isms | Johnson: Ch. 4 + Ch. 5 + Ch. 6 + Ch. 7*\*Guest lecturer: Kaitlin Popielarz, College of Educ.* |
| 2-04 | Structural racism in the post-Civil Rights era | ©White Supremacy Flower, Strmic-Pawl©Public Tales Wag the Dog, Rose*\*Assign case study groups by this date.* |
| 2-11 |  | ***Visual sociology project presentations*** *& designated time to work in groups on case study proposals.* |
| 2-18 | Introduction to *Getting Ghost* | Bergmann: Ch. 1©Deadly Challenges of Raising African American Boys, Dow |
| 2-24-Mon |  | ***\*Case study assignment #1: Proposals due at 1 PM on Monday, Feb. 24.******(Upload to Canvas.)*** |
| 2-25 | The “stolen streets” of Detroit | Bergmann: Ch. 2 + Ch. 3©The White Space, Anderson*\*We will discuss case study proposals during this class.*  |
| 3-03 |  | *No class meeting. Use this time to read Bergmann (2010) and work on case studies.* |
| 3-10 | Spring break ☺ | *No class meeting. Use this time to read Bergmann (2010) and work on case studies.* |
| 3-17 | Mass incarceration … | ©Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course, Pettit & Western©Costs of Mass Incarceration in Black Communities, Roberts |
| 3-20-Fri |  | ***\*Case study assignment #2: Annotated bibliography due at 5 PM. (Upload to Canvas.)*** |
| 3-24 | … and its far-reaching consequences. | ©Eviction and Urban Poverty, Desmond©Mass Incarceration and Children’s Outcomes, Morsy & Rothstein  |
| 3-31 | Wrongful conviction | ©Podcast: Sins of Detroit (available on Spotify) |
| 4-07 | Toxic cities & the environmental justice movement | ©Toxic Cities, Benz©The Health Politics of Asthma, Brown et. al.*\*Guest lecturer: Monica Lewis-Patrick from We the People of Detroit*  |
| 4-14 | Food justice activism | ©Food Justice Activism, Alkon & Norgaard©Urban Gardening as Resistance, White |
| 4-27-Mon |  | ***\*BOOK READING MEMO DUE at 5 PM.******\*Case study assignment #3a: Case study brief due at 5 PM. (Upload to Canvas.)*** |
| 4-28 | Final exam period, 10:15 am-12:15 pm | ***Case study presentations! Case study media also due.*** |

***Reading tips***

Engaged reading is *active* reading. You should take notes as you read and reread an author’s work, paying careful attention to the author’s arguments. Doing so will help you judge the strength of the author’s claims.

Think about the following questions as you read:

* What is the author’s primary focus &/or primary research question?
* What key terms contribute to your understanding of this work? How are these terms defined by the author?
* What are the author’s key claims &/or findings?
* What evidence is used to support the author’s claims/findings?
* Which theory/theories does the author use?
* Are data used to support the author’s claims?
* If so, what are the data and how are they analyzed?
* Does the author acknowledge arguments that contradict her claims? What are they?
* What are the strengths of this piece?
* What are the weaknesses of this piece?
* What is the most interesting part of the author’s work?
* What assumptions / life experiences do you bring to this process that lead to your unique interpretations?

Tips for highlighting and annotating during the active reading process:

* A pencil works as well as a pen or marker; try them all and see which you like best.
* Underline each claim an author makes.
* Circle or box definitions or essential terms.
* Use arrows or lines to show connections.
* Use vertical lines in the margins to mark entire passages.
* Star the most important items.
* Use question marks for confusing places.
* Use the margins to:
* Summarize key terms, sections, or ideas in your own words.
* Articulate disagreements with the author’s arguments.
1. *Getting ghost: Two young lives and the struggle for the soul of an American city* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)