Undergraduate Distance Education Review Form

(Required for all courses taught by distance education for more than one-third of teaching contact hours.)

Existing and Special Topics Course

Course: <u>SOC 281 Oppression and U.S. Social Problems</u>

Instructor(s) of Record: <u>Susan Boser</u>

Phone: <u>7-2791</u>   **Email:** <u>sboser@iup.edu</u>

Step One: Proposer

A. Provide a brief narrative rationale for each of the items, A1- A5.

1. How is/are the instructor(s) qualified in the distance education delivery method as well as the discipline?

This will be my first online course, though I have long had an interest in online learning. I was first trained in Web CT, completing the Intro to Web CT and Managing Web CT Student Accounts in May 2003. In June, 2009, I completed the Introduction to Moodle offered by IT Services. In addition, in April 2009, I participated in training for Quality Matters, a program in rubrics for assuring quality in online pedagogy. I also served as a member of the Online Learning Committee at IUP in academic year 2008-09 and, as an interim administrator, represented IUP and the Provost's Office on the Distance Education Advisory Council for PASSHE. Finally, I conducted the evaluation of the online Winter Session offered at IUP in AY 08-09.

Regarding my discipline: I am an Associate Professor the Department of Sociology, and have taught 10 different courses across the undergraduate (lower and upper division), masters and doctoral levels since my arrival in 2002. I hold a Ph.D. from Cornell University, and have published peer-reviewed journal articles in my field and presented at numerous national and international conferences. I have taught version of this SOC 281, SOC 231 Contemporary Social Problems, several times before, including for the Honors College. This online SOC 281 course is completely consistent with my SOC 231, which I will be offering it again in person in the spring both as a regular session, and, by request, again for the Honors College. Student quantitative ratings reflect that 96.15% of all students I have taught over the past seven years have rated the overall quality of my instruction as Superior or Above Average. Further, 98% either agreed or strongly agreed that they would take and/or recommend another course with me. At the same time, a significant number of students found their course to be challenging; in 11 out of 13 of my courses, slightly more than half of the students found the workload to be higher than average. Finally, 98.15% of the students, undergraduate and graduate, felt that they learned valuable skills in my classes.

2. How will <u>each objective</u> in the course be met using distance education technologies?

First, learning regarding each of these objectives is intended to build on itself, with the understandings and perspectives achieved in each module being actively applied in the next, such that the analyses in the latter part of the course incorporate all tools provided to that point. Some use of distance education technologies will be common to all the modules, and thus, serve all objectives. In each module, students will: complete a set of readings (some of which will be made available online), and then do an online quiz that checks for completion of readings. To support attention to and comprehension of the substantive issues, I will provide a PowerPoint that succinctly summarizes the key concepts of that module and emphasizes the critical information students will need for their writing and analysis. Students will respond to questions I pose in postings to the discussion board, and will be directed to

reference a particular concept or set of concepts from their readings in their postings. In addition, in the discussion forums, I will ask students locate relevant content appropriate to the particular topic on the internet and incorporate that in their analysis and application of the concept. Some specific ways in which use of distance education technologies will be used for specific objectives includes the following:

- **Demonstrate knowledge about the meaning and value of the sociological perspective**
  In addition to the common elements of the related modules 1, 2 and 3, students will be directed to access some information related to key sociological concepts or theorists on the internet. Some possible examples of what they might use include: *A Sociological Tour through Cyberspace* http://www.trinity.edu/mkearl/theory.html, *SocioSite: Famous Sociologists* http://www.sociosite.net/topics/sociologists.php, or the blog *Sociological Imagination* *http://thesociologicalimagination.com/*, among others. I will ask students to incorporate a critical analysis of some element of a source found on the internet in their discussion post, to familiarize themselves with the sociological resources available, and also to develop critical thinking and information literacy.

- **Describe the historical and economic roots of the social construction of race, class and gender**
  In addition to the common elements of the related modules 4, 5 and 6, students will be directed to research examples of historical and economic materials in a variety of formats and discuss these materials in their comments on the discussion board. Historical materials that students might search for and reference include historic letters, newspaper articles, the texts of various pieces of legislation, or video/audio footage of critical historical incidents (i.e., for example, interviews of key participants in the trial for the murder of Emmitt Till, etc.). Economic data might include actual data describing income and wealth disparities from the National Census Bureau, www.census.gov, a viewing of the PBS video "Affluenza," or elements from Michael Moore's website, michaelmoore.com, for example. I will ask students to incorporate a critical analysis of a source in their discussion post, in order to expand their understandings of the role of race, class and gender in the historical and economic context, and also to develop critical thinking and information literacy.

- **Evaluate contemporary institutional systems and popular culture regarding their role in fostering discrimination and oppression.**
  In addition to the common elements of the related modules 5 and 7, students will be directed to research examples of elements of popular culture. Examples include: videos on You Tube, advertisements, popular music videos, television episodes (like "Malibu Stacy" episode of the Simpsons animated television show) films, such as various Disney films (Cinderella, the Little Mermaid); or documentaries that expose the role of popular culture such as the film *Slim Hopes,* by Jeanne Kilbourne on the media's use of women's bodies to sell products. I will ask students to incorporate a critical analysis of a source found on the internet in their discussion post in order to expand their understandings of the role of popular culture in fostering discrimination and oppression, and also to develop critical thinking and information literacy.

- **Conduct critical analysis of current social issues in light of race, gender and class at the individual, organizational and systemic levels**
  In addition to the common elements of the related modules 8 and 9, students will supplement their readings with research on another contemporary social problem of their choice, and provide a critical analysis of the topic at the level of the individual, organization or system. Potential internet sources included news feeds, newspaper articles at the national level (i.e., New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post); video clip or news stories any contemporary news program (CNN, CBS, NBC, ABC, NPR, PBS), etc. Students may alternatively access policies from an organization, such as IUP, or other public, non-profit or private company related to human resources, codes of conduct, sexual harassment policies, benefits packages etc., or they may locate texts of various recent pieces of legislation (such as California's anti-immigrant Propositions 187 or its proposition 209, which effectively ended affirmative action on the state level in California.) I

The bulk of the grade (70%) will come from student writing. Students will prepare an initial reflection paper, asking them their beliefs about some social issues (i.e., what it means to be a woman/man, why are people poor) and what influenced their thinking about these things. Then, directions for forum postings in each module will require students to demonstrate their knowledge about the topics by applying the concepts to their research and in their own lives. Further, the information and concepts of each module build on the preceding one, and the mid-term and final exams are comprehensive essays that require students to apply the concepts to particular scenarios that I will write. Finally, students will also be asked in a final reflection paper to review their initial reflection paper and their postings throughout the course and assess how their own thinking has evolved, and what implications that change has for them.

I will monitor all writings for patterns of understanding of concepts and applications, and will take a close look at any aberrations in expected patterns. Aberrations in expected patterns might include: students who routinely score well on quizzes, but whose discussion posts reflected poor understanding of the concepts; inconsistency in representation and application of concepts; and inconsistency in writing style. As warranted, I will use the "Turn It In" website to evaluate any writings that I suspect of plagiarism of published work.

B. Submit to the department or its curriculum committee the responses to items A1-A5, the current official syllabus of record, along with the instructor developed online version of the syllabus, and the sample lesson. This lesson should clearly demonstrate how the distance education instructional format adequately assists students to meet a course objective(s) using online or distance technology. It should relate to one concrete topic area indicated on the syllabus.

Step Two: Departmental/Dean Approval

Recommendation: ☑ Positive (The objectives of this course can be met via distance education)

☐ Negative

Signature of Department Designee	11-16-09 _Date_

Endorsed:

Signature of College Dean	11-16-09 _Date_

Forward form and supporting materials to Liberal Studies Office for consideration by the University-wide Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. Dual-level courses also require review by the University-wide Graduate Committee for graduate-level section.

Step Three: University-wide Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Approval

Recommendation: ☑ Positive (The objectives of this course can be met via distance education)

☐ Negative

Gail S Sedhurst _Nov. 17, 2009_
Signature of Committee Co-Chair   Date

Forward form and supporting materials to the Provost within 30 calendar days after received by committee.

Step Four: Provost Approval

☒ Approved as distance education course   ☐ Rejected as distance education course

_____ (an) 11/18/09
Signature of Provost   Date

Forward form and supporting materials to Associate Provost.

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Recommendation: ☑ Positive (The objectives of this course can be met via distance education)

☐ Negative

Gail S Sedhust ___Nov, 17, 2009___
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Forward form and supporting materials to Associate Provost.

Seccombe, K. (2007). *"So You Think I Drive a Cadillac?" Welfare Recipients' Perspectives on the System and Its Reform, 2nd Ed.* Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

On E-reserve:
Additional required readings will be placed on e-reserve through Stapleton Library. To access the course readings: Go to the website for Stapleton Library. On the home page, click on "Library Services", then on "E-reserve". Next, click on "Electronic reserves and reserve pages." The next site provides several options for accessing the readings for this course. You may select "instructor" and enter "Boser" or you may select "course number" and enter 231, etc. This will bring you to a list of courses of that type; from that, select Soc 231. At this point you will be asked for the password, which is "bossoc231" (lower case only). This will take you to a page that lists the readings for the course.

Learning Activities
Reflective essays Students will complete two reflective essays, one at the beginning of the course and a second at the end. These essays should be approximately 3 pages, double-spaced, with 12 pt. font and 1" margins. The essays should not be just free stream-of-consciousness brainstorming; rather, they should reflect attention to organization of ideas, sentence structure, grammar and punctuation.

- Reflective Essay 1, will be completed and submitted by **9:00 a.m., Dec. 29, 2009**. For this essay, please respond to the following questions:
  - What does being a woman/man mean to you?
  - Why are some people poor in the US?
  - What has influenced your thinking on this?

- Reflective Essay 2, will be completed and submitted by **5:00 p.m. on January 15, 2010.**
  Review your first reflective essay and your posts to the discussion forums for this course. Discuss any shifts or expansions in your own perspectives or position regarding the various issues associated with race, class and gender. Describe the implications, if any, that you see this having for you.

The reflective essays will be graded in terms of the quality and depth of the reflective process itself and the logic supporting the position held. In other words, show me that you have really thought about your beliefs and where they come from. *However, the particular beliefs and personal positions you hold will be respected, and will not in any way affect grading.*

Learning Modules The course is set up in a series of 10 modules. In each module you will first complete a set of readings (some of which will be made available online), and then do an online quiz that checks for basic understanding of the readings. You may take a quiz only once. In addition to the readings, each module includes a PowerPoint that succinctly summarizes the key concepts of that module and emphasizes the critical

information you will need for their writing and analysis. After completing the readings and studying the PowerPoint, you will post your thoughts about the readings in the discussion forum.

Discussion participation This course involves a substantial amount of participation in discussion forums. For each module, you will be asked to post to that module's forum. You will be required to respond to at least one of the questions provided, though you may also post other thoughts or questions about the material. Your posts should summarize your thoughtful reflection on the readings, and include at least one reference to each author read **as directed for that particular module.** Please cite references using APA style. Your posts should not be solely opinion. Please demonstrate your rationale for your position through logic and/or an example. This should demonstrate critical thinking about the reading, relating it to other readings, class discussion, observations or experience. Your postings will be graded collectively for each module, in terms of quality, as follows: 2 points – thoughtful critique; 1 point – superficial restatement of content with limited reflection; 0 points – incomplete or significantly inaccurate. Thus you can earn a maximum of 3 points for each module, for a total of 30 points toward your final grade.

Exams There will be 2 exams, a **mid-term exam due at 12 noon on Wednesday, January 6,** and a **final exam due at 12 noon on Monday, January 18, 2010.** Both of these will be essay exams that require application of concepts in response to particular situations I will pose to you. More instructions will be provided at the time of the exam.

Grading
The course grade will be determined by the two reflective essays, the 10 quizzes based on course readings, the quality of participation in the discussion forums, and 2 exams, as follows:

Reflective Essays - 2	10 points (5 points each)
Quizzes - 10	30 points (3 points each)
Discussion Forum – 10	30 points (3 points/module)
Mid-term	15 points
Final	15 points

Your letter grade will be determined as follows:

A = 90-100	D = 60-69
B = 80-89	F = below 60
C = 70-79	

How to do well in this course: SOC 231 introduces some concepts that may be challenging to grasp at first, as well as some material that may be controversial when first encountered. However, developing a strong grasp of the concepts right from the beginning is very important for the analysis we do in the second half of the course. The quizzes are an opportunity for you to make sure you understand what you are reading, and the discussion forum is where we will deepen that knowledge together.

Missing a particular module will have an immediate and direct effect of reducing your final grade by 6 points. However, the information and concepts of each module build on the preceding one, therefore missing a module may also make it difficult or you to do well in the course overall. Strong participation both on the quizzes and in the discussion forum is essential to prepare you well for the mid-term and final exams, and therefore, active participation in each module is strongly recommended.

In addition, while I will read and respond to posts in the forum, you may also email me with any particular questions you have. I will give you a response within 6 hours, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. I will not respond between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m. the next morning.

Academic Integrity
IUP students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity. You are responsible for knowing and abiding by the IUP Academic Integrity Policy, (website: http://www.iup.edu/teachingexcellence/nfo/acadintegrity.shtm) including the definitions of cheating, plagiarism, and other violations of academic integrity. Plagiarism involves using the words, facts, or ideas of another person or source as if they were your own. It is illegal and violates both university policy and the principles of scholarship. To avoid plagiarism, you must properly cite other people's words, facts, and ideas that you incorporate into your work. If you paraphrase (put into your own words) or quote (use the author's exact words) from any source (including material from the Internet), the paraphrase or quote must be cited properly. Quotes need to be placed in quotation marks, with the page number(s) indicated in the properly formatted citation of the source.

Students should be aware that I will follow up on any indications of plagiarism; documented cases can result in a failed grade for the paper and, potentially, for the course.

Course Outline

Module 1 Orientation to sociology and the sociological imagination

Readings:
McIntyre, Introduction and Chapters 1-3
[Reserve] Stoecker, R. *Research methods for community change,* Chapter 1

Module 2 Social constructions of race, class and gender

Readings:
Required - McIntyre, Chapters 4 and 14

And choose 2, one each from different topic below.

Topic	Reading
General	Miller, *Domination and Subordination*;
Race	From Rothenberg: Omi & Winant, *Racial Formations*; Wright, *The ethics of living Jim Crow;* (e-reserve) Dyer, *The matter of whietness*;
Class	From Rothenberg: Gans, *Deconstructing the underclass*; (e-reserve) hooks, *Where we stand: Class matters* – Intro, Chapter 2
Gender	From Rothenberg: Lorber, *The social construction of gender*;

Module 3 Understanding systems of oppression

Readings:
Required: McIntyre, Chapter 12; [e-reserve] Wildman, *Making systems of privilege visible*

And choose **2**, one each from topic below.

Topic	Reading
Race	From Rothenberg: Tatum, *Defining racism: "Can we talk?"*; McIntosh, *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible backpack;* Sethi, *Smells like racism*
Gender	From Rothenberg: Johnson, *Patriarchy;* Frye, *Oppression*

Module 4 Historical roots of US systems of oppression

Readings: Rothenberg, *Part VI Introduction* (p. 435-443), US Commission on Human Rights, *Indian Tribes: A continuing quest for survival*; Ettelbrick, *Lesbian and gay rights in historical perspective;* plus familiarize yourself with the wording of some of the critical legal texts: Selections 85-89, 92, 93, 100, 103, and 104.

Module 5 Evidence of present day discrimination

Readings:
Rothenberg: US Commission on Civil Rights, *The problem: Discrimination.*
Also, please select any 4 additional readings from Part III for your postings in this module's discussion forum.

Module 6 The role of economics

<u>Readings</u>:
Required - McIntyre, Chapter 13;

And choose **3**, from **at least 2 different topics** below.

Topic	Reading
Race	Malveaux, *Still at the periphery: The economic status of African Americans;* Conley, *Being black, living in the red: Wealth matters;* [e-reserve] Lipsitz, *The possessive investment in whiteness*
Gender	National Committee on Pay Equity, *The wage gap.*
Class	From Rothenberg: *Mantsios, Class in America: Myths and realities:* Sklar, *Imagine a country;* Pear, *Number of people living in poverty ib ncreases in the US;* Krugman, *The sons also rise;*

Module 7 Popular culture as a shaping force in the contemporary US

<u>Readings</u>:
Required: McIntyre, Chapter 7 & 10

And choose **2**, from at least 2 different topics below:

Topic	Reading
Race	From Rothenberg: Paul, *Where bias begins: The truth about stereotypes;* Davis, *Masked racism: Reflections on the prison industrial complex;* Chafe, *Sex and race: The analogy of social control;*
Gender	Chafe, *Sex and race: The analogy of social control;* Biber, *Am I thin enough yet?*
Sexuality	Mohr, *Anti-gay stereotypes;*
Class	Mantsios, *Media magic: Making class invisible;* Hesse- Ryan, *Blaming the victim*
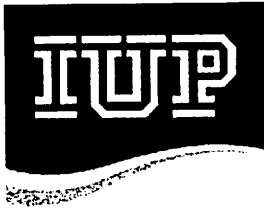
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Update this Quiz

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Preview Quiz 2 - Social Constructions

Start again

Students will see this quiz in a secure window

Note: This quiz is not currently available to your students
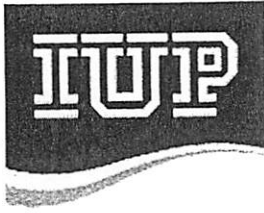
1 Sociologists tend to argue that "race" is a creation of

Marks: 1

Choose
one
answer.

  a. social scientists

  b. nature

  c. society

  d. genetics

2 McIntyre cites research that suggests that the economic inequality that exists between men and women

Marks: 1

Choose
one

  a. is related to the fact that men tend to work more hours than women

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Update this Quiz

Info   Results   Preview   Edit

Preview Quiz 2 - Social Constructions

Start again

Students will see this quiz in a secure window

Note: This quiz is not currently available to your students

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Marks: 1

Choose
one

- ⊙ a. is related to the fact that men tend to work more hours than women

   c. biological sex.

   d. expected behaviors associated with particular sex roles in society.

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○ c. biological sex.

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Soc 281
Oppression and U.S. Social Problems

Sociological Concepts

- *Social Construction*
  - System of shared beliefs about reality in which:
    - How we act depends on how we see "reality" and the judgments we make about that
    - People learn from others how to see and judge "reality"
    - People are constantly interpreting behaviors of themselves and others, and assigning "meaning"
  - Shared beliefs can become institutionalized into a system.
  - These shared beliefs are often invisible.

One powerful set of shared beliefs: the invention of categories as a way of sorting people into groups.

- We assign meanings to these categories

- We internalize the meanings, too – it becomes how we define ourselves.

Dominant groups:

- People with particular, similar characteristics who enjoy greater privilege compare with other groups.
- Have the power to define: "normal", roles for minority group
- Has the greatest influence in determining the culture of society as a whole; thus can legitimize an unequal relationship
  (Miller, 1976)
- Whiteness is equalized as normal, which secures a position of power (Dyer)

Minority Groups:

- People with particular similar characteristics who are singled out from others in their society for differential and unequal treatment (Wirth, 1945, p. 347)
- Must focus on survival
- Often know more about the dominants then vice versa, more than they even know about themselves (Miller, 1976)

Prejudice

- A negative or hostile *attitude* toward a person who belongs to a group simply because he or she belongs to the group and is therefore assumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group (McIntyre, p. 228)

- Is sustained by stereotypes – oversimplified generalized images about members of a particular group. It categorizes all members of a group as having certain characteristics, and denies individual differences (McIntyre, p. 229)

Discrimination

- Unlike prejudice, discrimination refers specifically to behavior – treating people unfairly because of their membership in some group (McIntyre, p. 231)
- Individual discrimination – micro level, acts by a person, toward a person
- Institutional discrimination - denial of opportunities and equal rights to individuals and groups as part of normal operations.

Related sociological concepts:

- Ethnocentrism:
  - The tendency to judge other peoples, their customs and their norms as inferior to one's own people, customs and norms (McIntyre, p. 50)

- Cultural relativism:
  - Seeking to understand other people and their ways in terms of the cultural context of those people (McIntyre, p. 53)

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Reification

- Tendency to see the humanly-made world as having a will of its own. This renders invisible the people who are wielding these tools. If invisible, our power is reduced. Further, when reifying, we will fail to question:

  - Who made the choices?
  - What do they gain from this?
  - Who stands to lose?
  - In what ways will society change?
  - Who will be held accountable if these choices hurt others?

In a complex society, the tendency toward reification is strong. These leads to feelings of helplessness.
(Gans, 1990)

Racial formations

- Science has tried and failed to find a basis for racial difference
- Political, economic and social forces determine the content, importance and meanings of racial categories (Omi & Winant, p. 14.)
- Meanings may change, but the presence of a system of racial meanings and stereotypes is a permanent feature of US society (p. 15)
- Media plays a key role in shaping the racial ideology

Social construction of gender

- Sex: biological identification in terms of reproductive capacities.
- Gender: socially constructed role – does not emerge from biological difference.
- Not all societies identify only two sexes; some recognize transsexual individuals as another category.
- The categories of gender, like race, have stereotypes and convey meaning. This is used to justify difference in roles and status, and therefore, difference in rights.
- Example: "physiological differences" have been the justification for differential funding, prestige and structure of organized sports for women. Yet – medical research has largely ignored that difference, in that clinical trials and research have been conducted primarily on me. (Lorber, 1994)

Social constructions of class

- Understandings about the underclass have shifted over time:
  - Originally associated with joblessness - people pushed to the margins by an industrial economy.
  - In the 1970s, focus shifted from "joblessness" to "chronic poverty" and generally included two elements: 1) strongly associated with racial minority groups, and 2) added attention to behaviors that were considered deviant to middle class norms. Image emerges of the poor as "undeserving"

- These social constructions permitted use of labels as a short hand for describing this population. Implications of this:
  - Judgment of the poor – makes poverty their fault
  - Taps into and draws on racial prejudice, while also hiding it through different language
  - Flexible term – can be expanded or changed as needed.
  - Synthesizes – creates images that lump all people together, hiding the differences and leaving them invisible.

Implications for social policy

- "One size fits all" policy -> ineffective, because the poor are not homogenous.
- Reification – permits those making policy to avoid accountability. Example: attention is on time limits on welfare, because "people will become lazy and unmotivated." Policy makers do not need to attend to the absence of jobs, health care, or child care, or to the inequities in education. (Gans, 1990)
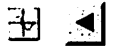
Research is a socially constructed process!

- The rules we use to decide what is true in the social world are also invented.
- Therefore we must look critically at the rules we use to assess and understand the world.
  - Who benefits from this way of doing things?
  - Who benefits from the invention of labels and categories? Who is hurt by them?
  - What do people take for granted?
  - What do they refuse to doubt?

When these things become visible, we have choices.

- Basic (academic) research – driven by researcher and funder, benefits the researcher and funder, unrelated to immediate practical needs in the community.
- Applied research – driven by organizational interests, closely related to immediate, practical needs.
- Community-base research – problem-solving oriented, provides tools that enable local people more voice in decisions that affect their lives

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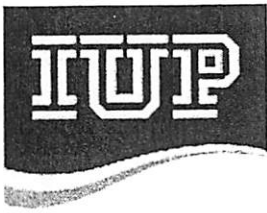
This forum allows everyone to choose whether to subscribe or not

Force everyone to be subscribed

Show/edit current subscribers

Subscribe to this forum

Please post your thoughts regarding one of the questions I posted below. Your comments need to reference at least 2 different readings. Please feel free to also pose questions under that topic, or to start a new topic if you like. I encourage you also to respond to or build on others' posts, and to incorporate links to other resources on the web.

Add a new discussion topic

Discussion	Started by	Replies	Last post
Understanding "difference"	Susan Boser	0	Susan Boser Thu, 24 Sep 2009, 05:26 PM
Racial formations	Susan Boser	0	Susan Boser Thu, 24 Sep 2009, 05:24 PM
Gender	Susan Boser	0	Susan Boser Thu, 24 Sep 2009, 04:54 PM

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Move this discussion to ...

Display replies in nested form

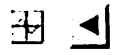Move

Understanding "difference"
by Susan Boser - Thursday, 24 September 2009, 05:26 PM

The readings in Rothenberg are all related to the notion that social constructs about categories of people **are real,** in that they have real effects on the lives of real people. However they are not natural or inevitable. They are created by people, about people. Yet, real differences among people do exist. When does sorting people by differences, creating categories of people, become a problem? How does it happen? Why? Use examples from your readings to explain and support your position.

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Gender

Search forums

Display replies in nested form

Move this discussion to ...

Move

Gender
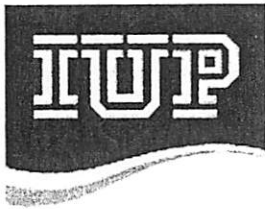by Susan Boser - Thursday, 24 September 2009, 04:54 PM

While reading Lorber's article, pay close attention to her discussion of sports. Explore some sites on the internet related to sports, and discuss what how these mass-media outlets do in their constructions of femininity and masculinity. And what do they do in their construction of race and ethnicity?

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