

SEP 17 2010

10-8
App-9/28/10

Undergraduate Distance Education Review Form

Senate Info. 11/2/10

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

Existing and Special Topics Course

Course: SOC 231 Contemporary Social Problems

Received

Instructor(s) of Record: Susan Boser

SEP 23 2010

Phone: 7-2791

Email: sbosers@iup.edu **Liberal Studies**

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 third online course. 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, and have subsequently completed another training in Quizzes in Moodle. 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. At the present time, I serve on the UWUCC's subcommittee to review Distance Education proposals. I have offered two online classes thus far: SOC 281 Oppression and US Social Problems in Winter 2009, and SOC 251 Sociology of Human Sexuality in Summer 2010. I also requested evaluations of both classes, to obtain feedback from the students on their experience of the course.

Regarding my discipline: I am an Associate Professor the Department of Sociology, and have taught 11 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 this particular course, SOC 231 Contemporary Social Problems, several times before, including for the Honors College. I hope to offer it online for the Winter Session. 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 each objective 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 will ask students to incorporate a critical analysis of one of these sources in their discussion post to supplement their analysis of the works we will be reading, and also to develop critical thinking and information literacy.
- **Assess current US social welfare policy in terms of its impact on the individuals it seeks to help**
In addition to the common elements of the related modules 8 and 9, students will supplement their readings with internet research on the impact that US social welfare policy has on individuals. Possible websites include Administration for Children and Families, www.acf.dhhs.gov, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, www.cnpp.usda.gov, Child Welfare League of America, www.cwla.org, Children's Defense Fund, www.childrensdefense.org, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, www.chpp.org, Citizens for Tax Justice, www.ctj.org or the Economic Policy Institute www.epi.org, The Urban Institute, www.urban.org, or

U.S Department of Health and Human Services, www.dhhs.gov, among others. Students will be asked to support their posts to the discussion forum with research from one of these sources.

- **Apply knowledge from the course to identify options for supporting social change**
In addition to the common elements of the related modules 10, students will supplement their readings with internet research on examples of activism, both as activist efforts in and of themselves, and also for film clips or videos depicting historical efforts at social change. Examples include, *Eyes on the Prize*, PBS series on the Civil Rights movement; relevant incidents such as Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" Speech; video interviews of individuals who participated in the trial for the accused murderers of Emmitt Till; video on Cesar Chavez; video and interviews from the Stonewall Riots of 1969, etc. Students will reference material from these sources in the posts discussing critical analysis of options for supporting social change.

3. How will instructor-student and student-student, if applicable, interaction take place?

The primary location for interaction will be the discussion forums, one for each module. Students will be required to respond to my posted questions, but may also post questions or topics of their own as well. Students will be encouraged to respond to or integrate thoughts from other students in their post. As instructor, I will read and respond to posts in the forum. However, in addition, students may email me with any particular questions. I will provide 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. at night and 8 a.m. the next morning.

4. How will student achievement be evaluated?

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	40 points (4 points/module)
Final	20 points

The letter grade for the course will be determined as follows:

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

5. How will academic honesty for tests and assignments be addressed?

Students will only have one opportunity to take the quiz for each module. The questions and the order of the multiple choice answers on the quizzes will be shuffled, so as to vary the presentation to different students. The final exam will be timed, and students will only have one opportunity to take that as well. Questions and answers within questions will be shuffled, so as to vary the presentation to different students.

Half of the grade (50%) 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. 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

9-15-10
Date

Endorsed:


Signature of College Dean

9/23/10
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


Signature of Committee Co-Chair

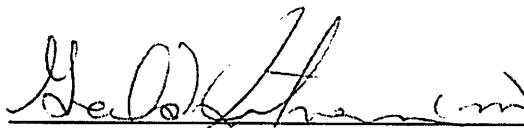
9-28-10
Date

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


Signature of Provost

10/1/10
Date

Forward form and supporting materials to Associate Provost.

SOC 231 Contemporary Social Problems

Dr. Susan Boser
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Course Description: Using a sociological perspective, this course examines pressing social problems as they relate to the social construction of race, class and gender in contemporary American society. These issues will be considered through multiple lenses, including historical, economic and social, with connections to current social policy. Particular emphasis will be placed on the topic of poverty and the US social welfare system.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge about the meaning and value of the sociological perspective
- Describe the historical and economic roots of the social construction of race, class and gender
- Evaluate contemporary institutional systems and popular culture regarding their role in fostering discrimination and oppression
- Conduct critical analysis of current social issues in light of race, gender and class at the individual, organizational and systemic levels
- Assess current US social welfare policy in terms of its impact on the individuals it seeks to help
- Apply knowledge from the course to identify options for supporting social change

Conceptual Framework	INTASC Standards	NCSS Program Standards	Course Objectives	Course Assessment
1a	1	5 Individuals, Groups, & Institutions	To examine the social causes and consequences of contemporary social problems To identify societal responses to social problems and ways that social change occurs	Midterm Evaluation Final Evaluation

About this course:

This online course will take place for three weeks during the Winter Term 2010-11. It is set up in 10 Modules, which you will complete in sequence, and be open and available to you as follows:

Modules 1-3	Week 1
Modules 4-7	Week 2
Modules 8-10	Week 3

You should work at your pace, at a time that works best for you within each week. However, while you can access the readings and PowerPoints from previous modules at any time throughout the courses, you can only access quizzes one time, and the discussion forums will be closed at the end of the week.

Readings:

Kozol, J. (1992) *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. New York: Harper Perennial

McIntyre, L. (2006) *The Practical Skeptic, 3rd Ed.* Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

Rothenberg, P. (2010). *Race, Class and Gender in the United States, 8th Edition*. NY: Worth Publishers.

Secombe, 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 E-reserve link at the website for Stapleton Library at <http://ereserve.lib.iup.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search> 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.

Communicating with me.

The primary location for our interaction will be the discussion forums, one for each module. Students will be required to respond to my posted questions, but may also post questions or topics of their own as well. Students are strongly encouraged to respond to or integrate thoughts from other students in their post. As instructor, I will read and respond to posts in the forum. I will respond to your posts collectively, rather than to each one individually.

However, please feel free to email me (sboser@iup.edu) with any particular questions you have. **Please put SOC 231 in the subject line, so I will be sure to see it.** I will provide a response within 6 hours, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. I will not respond between 9 p.m. at night and 8 a.m. the next morning.

We can also talk by phone if you prefer. Send me an email with your phone number and some times I can reach you between 9 and 5 within the next day or two, and I will call you.

Required Technology Skills and Software

Students enrolled in this course should possess the following technology skills:

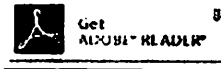
- The ability to access information via the Web

- The ability to use Moodle and associated tools, including discussion/chat, quizzing, and assignment submission features
- The ability to use word processing software and to save in Rich Text Format
- The ability to use Internet communication tools, specifically e-mail
- The ability to demonstrate netiquette (appropriate online conduct)

Software

This is a listing of the software required for students to participate in all course activities. This includes software that students must have on their computers to run the learning management system and its components, software needed to open course-related documents and to play course-related media, etc. If you do not have this software currently loaded on your computer or are unsure, you can download the software for free by clicking the following links:

[Adobe Reader](#)



Technical Support

To obtain technical support for computer issues related to this course, please contact Indiana University of Pennsylvania's student helpdesk at 724-357-4000 (the hours are restricted during the holidays). You should be prepared to give specific details regarding your technical issue(s), including what you were doing before the error occurred and the exact text of any error messages received. If you experience issues outside of the normal helpdesk hours, you can also submit your error or question via e-mail at it-supportcenter@iup.edu or via electronic form available online in Moodle. Click the "Contact the IUP IT Help Center" link in the upper right hand corner of any Moodle page.

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 per the instructions on the link for this assignment. 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 per the instructions on the link for this assignment.

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 As noted above, 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 a very brief 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. You are also encouraged to respond to other students' comments in your posts. 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:

- 4 points – thoughtful response to the question, accurately references key points in readings, PLUS connects to other students' comments, and/or other resources on the web, AND poses thoughtful questions that further the conversation.
- 3 points - thoughtful response to questions or comments posed, accurately references key points in readings
- 2 points – brief or superficial restatement of content with limited reflection, reasonably accurate with perhaps minor errors. Failure to cite references accurately.
- 1 point – incomplete or significantly inaccurate
- 0 points – Little to no response, or plagiarized response.

Thus you can earn a maximum of 7 points for each module, for a total of 70 points toward your final grade.

Exams There will be 1 exam, a **final exam due on the last day of class**. This will be a multiple choice exam that requires 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 brief quizzes based on course readings, the quality of participation in the discussion forums, and 1 exam, as follows:

Reflective Essays - 2	10 points (5 points each)
Quizzes - 10	30 points (3 points each)
Discussion Forum – 10	40 points (4 points/module)
Final - Essay	20 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 7 points. Further, the information and concepts of each module build on the preceding one, therefore missing a module may also make it difficult for 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 final exam, and therefore, active participation in each module is strongly recommended.

Online Etiquette

Forums and chat within this course are for class purposes only, unless otherwise stated. Please remember to conduct yourself collegially and professionally. Unlike in the classroom setting, what you say in the online environment is documented and not easily erased or forgotten. Please follow these guidelines:

- Avoid using ALL CAPS, sarcasm, and language that could come across as strong or offensive.
- Read all postings before posting your responses to discussion topics so as to not repeat information. (This is particularly important in the open forums that you will participate in. In most other cases it will not be possible for you to read the posts of others until you have made your original post, so some duplication may occur.)

- Focus on one topic at a time when chatting or posting to forums.
- Remember that unlike in face-to-face learning environments what you say in discussions and chats is documented and available to be revisited. Choose your words carefully.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student who has a documented disability and need special accommodations, I will work with you to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure you a fair opportunity to perform in the class. Please advise me in the first two days of the session regarding the disability and the desired accommodations.

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>). Practicing academic integrity means you do not:

- Provide or receive unauthorized assistance in coursework, including papers, quizzes, and examinations.
- Use unauthorized materials and resources during quizzes and tests.
- Possess course examination materials without the prior knowledge of the instructor.
- Plagiarize
- Engage in behaviors that are disruptive or threatening to others.
- Use computer technology in any way other than for the purposes intended for the course.

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

WEEK ONE:

Module 1 Orientation to sociology and the sociological imagination

Readings:

McIntyre, Introduction and Chapters 2-3

[E-Reserve] Stoecker, R. *Research methods for community change*, Chapter 1
<http://ereserve.lib.iup.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search>

Module 2 Social constructions of race, class and gender

Required - McIntyre, Chapters 4 and 14

And choose 2, one each from different topics below.

Topic	Reading
General	Miller, <i>Domination and Subordination</i>
Race	From Rothenberg: Omi & Winant, <i>Racial Formations</i> ; Wright, <i>The ethics of living Jim Crow</i> ; (e-reserve) Dyer, <i>The matter of whiteness</i> ; http://ereserve.lib.iup.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search
Class	From Rothenberg: Gans, <i>Deconstructing the underclass</i> ; (e-reserve) hooks, <i>Where we stand: Class matters</i> – Intro, Chapter 2 http://ereserve.lib.iup.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search
Gender	From Rothenberg: Lorber, <i>The social construction of gender</i> ;

Module 3 Understanding systems of oppression

Readings:

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

<http://ereserve.lib.iup.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search>

And choose 2, one each from topic below.

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

WEEK TWO:

Module 4 Historical roots of US systems of oppression

Readings: Rothenberg:

- *Part VII Introduction* (p. 491-498)
- US Commission on Human Rights, *Indian Tribes: A continuing quest for survival*;
- Ettelbrick, *From criminals and psychopaths to the family next tore*;

- plus familiarize yourself with the main points of some of these critical legal texts: Selections 3, 4, 7-10, 13-18, 21, 103-104.

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 IV for your postings in this module's discussion forum.

Module 6 The role of economics

Readings:

Required - McIntyre, Chapter 13;

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

Topic	Reading
Race	Muhammad, <i>Race and extreme inequality</i> ; Gates, <i>Forty acres and a gap in wealth</i> ; Lui and others, <i>The economic reality of being Latino/a in the United States</i> ; [e-reserve] Lipsitz, <i>The possessive investment in whiteness</i> http://ereserve.lib.iup.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search
Gender	The Wage Project, <i>The wage gap and its costs</i>
Class	From Rothenberg: Sklar, <i>Imagine a country</i> ; Reuss, <i>Cause of death: Inequality</i> ; Krugman, <i>The sons also rise</i> ;

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

Readings:

Required: McIntyre, Chapter 7 & 10

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

Topic	Reading
Race	From Rothenberg: Snyder, <i>Self-fulfilling stereotypes</i> ; Davis, <i>Masked racism: Reflections on the prison industrial complex</i> ; Chafe, <i>Sex and race: The analogy of social control</i> ;
Gender	Chafe, <i>Sex and race: The analogy of social control</i> ; Biber, <i>Am I thin enough yet?</i>
Sexuality	Mohr, <i>Anti-gay stereotypes</i> ;
Class	Mantsios, <i>Media magic: Making class invisible</i> ; Hesse- Ryan, <i>Blaming the victim</i>

WEEK THREE:

Module 8

Perspectives of those living with the consequences of social policy: Welfare
Readings:

McIntyre, Chapter 8, 9, 11; [e-reserve] Canada, *Fist, stick, knife, gun* selections;
<http://ereserve.lib.iup.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search>
Seccombe, *So you think I drive a Cadillac?* Chapter 1, plus any other chapter of your choice.

Module 9

Perspectives of those living with the consequences of social policy: Education
Readings:

Kozol, *Looking backward*, Chapter 1, plus any other chapter of your choice, and in Rothenberg: Feldman "*Savage Inequalities*" revisited.

Module 10 Implications for Social Change

Readings:

Required: From Rothenberg: Ayvazian, *Interrupting the cycle of oppression: The role of allies as agents of change*;

And choose 2, one each from different topics:

Topic	Reading
Race	[e-reserve] Wise, <i>Membership has its privileges: Thoughts on acknowledging and challenging whiteness</i> ; Tatum, <i>Breaking the silence</i> http://ereserve.lib.iup.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search
Gender	In Rothenberg: Thompson, <i>A new vision of masculinity</i>
Action	Lovato, <i>Upload real change</i> ; Leonard, <i>Rethinking volunteerism in America</i> ; Pitt, <i>Here. Now. Do something.</i>

(Note to Proposal reviewers: This is the content on the entry page students will find when they go to the course website on Moodle. I have also included at the end the entry into Module 3, which is the sample I am providing with the proposal.)

Welcome to SOC 231 - Contemporary Social Problems! Using a sociological perspective, this course examines pressing social problems as they relate to the social construction of race, class and gender in contemporary American society. These issues will be considered through multiple lenses, including historical, economic and social, with connections to current social policy. Particular emphasis will be placed on the topic of poverty and the US social welfare system.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge about the meaning and value of the sociological perspective
- Describe the historical and economic roots of the social construction of race, class and gender
- Evaluate contemporary institutional systems and popular culture regarding their role in fostering discrimination and oppression
- Conduct critical analysis of current social issues in light of race, gender and class at the individual, organizational and systemic levels
- Assess current US social welfare policy in terms of its impact on the individuals it seeks to help
- Apply knowledge from the course to identify options for supporting social change

About this course:

This online course will take place for three weeks, during Winter Term. It is set up in 10 Modules, which you will complete in sequence. They will be open and available to you as follows:

Week 1: Modules 1-3

Week 2: Modules 4-7

Week 3: Modules 8-10

You should work at your pace, at times that work best for you within each week. However, while you can access the PowerPoints and discussion forums from previous course weeks at any time throughout the courses, you can only access quizzes one time.

The following links will help you with some specific questions you may have as the course proceeds.

- [Syllabus Word document](#)
- [Online Civility Resource](#)
- [Technical Support file](#)
- [News forum](#)

First assignment: Reflective Essay I. Now before we get started with the course, I'd like you to explore your own thinking about some of the subjects we will be discussing. Please click on the link for *Reflective Essay I*, below, to find the details of this assignment.

Module 3: Social constructions of race, class and gender

This module is probably the most challenging one in this course. Allow yourself a little extra time with this material, and don't get discouraged. It will all come together.

- [Readings for Week 3 Resource](#)
- [Main Concepts: Social construction of Race, Class & Gender Powerpoint presentation](#)
- [Quiz 2 - Social Constructions](#)
- [Discussion for Module 2 - Social constructions Forum](#)



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Week 3 Social Construction of Race, Class and Gender

Readings:

Required - McIntyre, Chapters 4 and 14

And choose 2, one each from a different topic below:

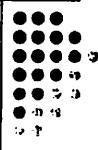
Topic	Reading
General	Miller, <i>Domination and Subordination</i> ;
Race	From Rotherberg: Omi & Winant, <i>Racial Formations</i> ; Wright, <i>The ethics of living Jim Crow</i> ; (e-reserve) Dyer, <i>The matter of whiteness</i> ;
Class	From Rotherberg: Gans, <i>Deconstructing the underclass</i> ; (e-reserve)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

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
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Soc 231
Contemporary 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)

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 men. (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"

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)

- 
- 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.

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

Question 1 

Marks: 1

Sociologists tend to argue that "race" is a creation of

Choose one answer.

- a. genetics
- b. nature
- c. society
- d. social scientists

Question 2 

Marks: 1

Gans argues that the buzzwords and labels used to represent the underclass have particular dangers in that they

Choose one answer.

- a. have particular power. While they may seem inoffensively technical on the surface, they can often carry a great deal of judgment.
- b. can function as racial codewords that hide racist feelings, leading to policies based on repressed racism.
- c. their flexibility allows others to come to be added to the group over time.
- d. synthesize groups, lumping diverse groups of people together and reducing understandings of their diversity.
- e. All of the above.

Question 3 

Marks: 1

As far as sociologists are concerned, the concept of "race" is important because

Choose one answer.

- a. understanding a person's race allows us to predict his or her behavior in general.
- b. understanding a person's race allows us to predict his or her IQ.
- c. people in different racial groups tend to have different personalities.
- d. people tend to be treated differently depending on their racial characteristics.

Question 4 

Marks: 1

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

Choose one answer.

- a. is explainable in terms of differences in men's and women's work culture
- b. is related to the fact that men tend to work more hours than women
- c. has to do with the fact that men tend to have more education than women
- d. is a result of sexism

Question 5 

Marks: 1

Sociologists use the term *gender* to refer to

Choose one answer.

- a. an achieved status.
- b. expected behaviors associated with particular sex roles in society.
- c. the rationales used to legitimate distinguishing between men and women.
- d. biological sex.

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Please post your thoughts regarding one of the questions I posted below. Your comments need to reference at least 2 different readings (with proper APA citation), and should be between 300 and 500 words. Please feel free to also pose questions under that topic, or to start a new topic if you like. And for full points, please respond to or build on others' posts, or incorporate links to other resources on the web.

1. 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.

2. 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 these mass-media outlets portray in their constructions of femininity and masculinity? In their construction of race?

3. In *The Ethics of Living Jim Crowe*, Wright describes his life growing up black in rural Arkansas. How does Wright's experience illustrate what Omi and Winant are talking about in their essay on racial formations?

Add a new discussion topic

Discussion	Started by	Group	Replies	Last post
Gender	Susan Boser		0	Susan Boser Sun, 27 Dec 2009, 08:33 PM
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

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**Sociology 231—Syllabus of Record
Contemporary Social Problems**

I. Catalog Description

An exploration of some pressing problems currently endemic to western society. Problems are defined and solutions explored in light of historical, political, economic, and anthropological data.

Prerequisites: None

II. Course Outcomes

- To examine the social causes and consequences of contemporary social problems.
- To identify societal responses to social problems and ways that social change occurs.
- Engage in critical thinking and the use of analysis in examining contemporary social problems.

Conceptual Framework	INTASC Standards	NCSS Program Standards	Course Objectives	Course Assessment
1a	1	5 Individuals, Groups, & Institutions	To examine the social causes and consequences of contemporary social problems To identify societal responses to social problems and ways that social change occurs	Midterm Evaluation Final Evaluation

III. Evaluation

Midterm Assessment
Culminating Activity

IV. Course Outline

History and Theoretical Explanations of Social Problems
 Social Causes of Social Problems
 Stratification by Race, Gender, and Social Class
 Culture
 Social Consequences of Social Problems
 Discrimination in Social Institutions (Education, Health Care, Economy)
 Deviance and Crime
 Family Issues
 Societal Responses to Social Problems
 Social Policy
 Consumerism
 Non-Governmental Organizations
 Social Movements and Social Change