

ACS6760/HIST 6760 Fall 2017

Inequality in the United States

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Office Hours: Wed. 1:30-3:30 or by appt.

Course Goals

Questions of racial and economic inequality in the United States have come to the forefront of American culture and politics. In this course, we will survey recent popular and scholarly literature concerning inequality, its historical roots, and its contemporary consequences, ranging across topics as varied as income distribution, housing patterns, criminal policy, computer algorithms, obscure political maneuverings, and the ways that people navigate and make meaning of such trends in their everyday life. Together, we will consider how inequality should be defined, the comparative merits of various methods of measuring inequality, what historical and contemporary factors influence inequality, and how today's inequality is experienced and understood.

Learning goals

In this course, students will have the opportunity to:

1. Encounter and wrestle with ways of understanding, investigating, and articulating of contemporary and historical inequality in the United States, including from a variety of disciplines and a range of modes of non-fiction and fictional expression.
2. Improve your critical thinking about how to analyze inequality across disciplines.
3. Improve the quality of your oral and written communication.

Class participation

Meetings: Unless you are instructed otherwise in class or by email, we will meet in East Hall 103, 2:30-5:20 PM on Tuesdays. Class participation is required.

Goal: The classroom learning experience involves not only the flow of information from teacher to student but also the exchange of ideas between teachers and students and among the students. Each of us brings a unique background and viewpoint to class, and only by engaging in conversation will you be able to benefit from others in the class the way they may benefit from your presence and participation. Discussion not only requires the articulation of ideas, but also taking into account others' viewpoints.

Requirements: You must come to class prepared to discuss intelligently the relevant sources assigned for the class, and you must take part in class discussion on a regular basis in a civil way. Woody Allen once wrote that "eighty percent of success is showing up." Although the percentage is different for success in this class, attendance is mandatory.

Evaluation: Class participation will count for 30% of your grade. You will be evaluated as much on the quality of your participation—the relevance of your comments, your ability to engage other students, your exhibiting a grasp of the material, and the cogency of your remarks—as the quantity of your participation.

Discussion Leading

Goal: Leading discussions serves several purposes. First, in order to be able to lead discussion effectively, one must digest the material covered. Second, one must consider not only what the

authors argued, but also what they did not, as well as how the different works intersect. Third, one provides a service to one's peers by putting the works in a proper context and in considering what issues they bring up, on their own and together. Finally, this is good preparation for future teachers at all levels.

Requirements: Each student will lead discussion twice, usually in pairs, as there are more students than there are course days available for leading discussion. Students will be responsible for leading discussion for approximately the first roughly two-thirds of the class session. For the first hour, discussion leaders will ensure that all readings are discussed individually and in relation to each other, that all students participate, and that the classroom atmosphere is conducive to an open exchange of ideas. For the second hour, discussion leaders will lead the class in an exploration of material of their own choosing related to the reading(s) assigned for the day. The material can be of any type or media, as long as it is accessible, relevant, and evokes a fruitful discussion.

Evaluation: Your discussion will be evaluated on its coverage, its depth, its intellectual rigor, and the degree of substantive participation by all of your peers. Discussion leading will count for 10% of your grade.

Writing

All written work must be submitted electronically, by the assigned date, through the appropriate link in the "Assignments" area of Canvas. Note: you may *not* submit a book review or dual book review on the same week as you are leading discussion.

Book Reviews

Goal: In order to be able to discuss a book intelligently, you must first be able to grasp, evaluate, and articulate the book's scope (that is, what the book is about), its thesis (its essential argument), its methodology (how the author constructed the thesis, including choice and analysis of evidence and application of relevant theoretical constructs), and the book's place in a broader intellectual context. In this case, the context will be our reading and discussions concerning the study of inequality in the contemporary United States. Furthermore, learning to write book reviews is an essential part of your professional training.

Requirement: Each student will write three 500-750-word book reviews, based on professional models, of different course texts. The book reviews are due no later than the beginning of class on the day the book is due to be read, and must be done on a separate book from the one on which you will be leading class discussion.

Below are typical guidelines for reviews in scholarly historical journals:

- Provide a brief summary of the scope, purpose, thesis, and content of the book. Explain its significance and scholarly context. *For this class: your review must refer to some issue or debate (theoretical or methodological) concerning inequality.*
- Include an evaluation of the author's use of sources, organization and presentation of material, and achievement of overall purpose. Please note that this may vary according to the kind of book under review, as we will be reading scholarly work, journalistic work, autobiography, and fiction.
- Do not comment on typographical or other minor errors unless they significantly impair the value of the book.

Failure to meet the above requirements will result in my returning your review for revision.

Evaluation: Your book review will be evaluated in terms of the degree to which it captures and evaluates the book's scope, thesis, and methodology; how successful it is in placing the book in the broader intellectual themes of the class; and its organization and felicity of expression. The book reviews, taken together, will count for 20% of your grade.

Dual book review

Goal: This is the next step up from writing a single book review: writing a more extended consideration of two monographs that deal with similar subject matter, to think about what we can learn by reading them together. How do they shed light on each other? What questions does one raise that the other answers? To what extent do they agree and disagree, and why, and what does that say about the books, their interpretations, methodology, or the sources on which they rely? And what does that tell us about the time and place and people the books address?

Requirements: This 2,000-2,500 word paper still requires communicating the basic information and offering the analysis that a book review does, except of course for two books. Furthermore, they must include a discussion of the two books together and in the context of the consideration of inequality, as with the individual book reviews.

Evaluation: Your book review will be evaluated in terms of the degree to which it captures and evaluates the books' scope, thesis, and methodology; how successful it is in considering the two books in light of each other and in placing the books in the broader intellectual themes of the class; and its organization and felicity of expression. It will count for 15% of your grade.

Final Paper

Goal: Part of the academic conversation on a given topic necessarily involves considering its broader disciplinary and intellectual concerns. The purpose of this paper is to reflect upon what we have learned and to consider what the major trends are in the consideration of memory in contemporary America.

Requirement: You will write a 4,000-4,500 word paper to consider the question of what are the major trends in the consideration of inequality in the United States. It can and should address several of the books that we read as well as some of your findings from your individual project in light of the theoretical and methodological issues that we have read about and discussed over the course of the semester. It is due no later than Wednesday, December 16, at 5:00PM, that is, the end of the final exam period designated for this class.

Evaluation: Your paper will be evaluated according to how well and how clearly it achieves the above objectives. It will count for 25% of your grade.

Grades

Evaluations weighting

Participation	30%
Book reviews (combined)	20%
Dual book review	15%
Discussion leading	10%
Final paper	25%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

Grading scale

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

Passing

You must earn a passing grade in every portion of this course—participation, response papers, mashup, and lost track—to earn a passing grade for the course. Fail any of those categories, and you will not receive a passing grade for the course.

Miscellany

Cell Phone and other Device Usage: Please get in the habit of turning off your cell phones, tablets, and computers, and putting them away when you enter the classroom.

Recording Policy: Students are not authorized to make recordings during class without written permission from me.

Office Hours: Should you have any questions, comments, difficulties, or desire to discuss matters historical or otherwise, please do not hesitate to come to my office hours, make an appointment to see me, or email me.

Communication: I will check email and Canvas on at least a daily basis during weekdays. However, just because the intergooglewebs is available 24/7, do not expect me to be online 24/7. Read the syllabus and the assignments carefully, so that you can ask questions in advance, rather than waiting to the last minute in the vain hope that I will happen to be on-line at 3AM (I won't be). Also, when you send an email to a professor (me or any other), please be professional—identify who you are, the class you are in (name, time, day), spell out all words (no texting lingo), use complete sentences with proper punctuation and capitalization, use a proper greeting and a conclusion. Here's an example—

Dear Prof. Schocket,

I am a student in your Tuesday 2:30 Inequalities class. I learned a lot from our discussion last class, but I have a few questions to ask you about, before our next class meeting, if possible. I have another class during your office hours, but could meet tomorrow early morning or late afternoon. Would one of those times be convenient for you? Thanks in advance.

Sincerely, J. Doe

Late assignments policy: You will be penalized one letter grade for each day an assignment is due. The clock starts when the assignment is due.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is bad on many levels. You're stealing from others by taking their hard work and passing it off as your own. You're cheapening your degree, and worse yet, those of your peers by getting something (a passing grade) for nothing. You're cheating yourself the opportunity to learn and to develop your thinking and writing skills, presumably the reason you came to BGSU. You are also stealing from your classmates—and, indeed, yourself—by taking up a good deal of your instructor's time on detecting and dealing with plagiarism rather than evaluating other assignments and preparing for class. Last of all, you're insulting your instructors by assuming that we can't tell. You may get away with it this time, but sooner or later, you'll get caught (and you won't be the first student who has been so insolent in one of my classes). Cheating or plagiarism of any form is a serious offense, will not be tolerated, may result in a failing grade for the entire course and/or disciplinary action, and indeed, only my lawyer's vehement objections prevent me from inflicting 18th-century-style naval corporal

punishment (keelhauling) on academic honesty offenders. Accordingly, both students and instructor in this course will adhere to the University's general Codes of Conduct defined in the BGSU Student Handbook. The Code of Academic Conduct (Academic Honesty Policy) requires that students do not engage in academic dishonesty. For details, refer to the [BGSU Student Handbook](#).

Emergencies: John Milton praised the ability "to temper Justice with Mercy." Should there be some dire and urgent reason that you are unable to complete your responsibilities or turn in an assignment on time (family or medical emergency, for example, not "But Netflix just acquired streaming rights to the second season of *The Mod Squad!*"), contact me as soon as possible so that we may make alternate arrangements for the satisfactory and timely completion of the requirements of the assignment(s). Note that you will still be held responsible for any material read, due, or discussed in class.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: I will make strong efforts to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to learn, to participate, and to be evaluated fairly. In accordance with University policy, students who have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course should contact me at the beginning of the semester and make this need known. Students with disabilities must verify their eligibility through the [Office of Disability Services](#), 38 College Park Office Building, 419-372-8495.

Religious Holidays: It is the policy of the University to make every reasonable effort allowing students to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. In such cases, students are obligated to provide me with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve you of responsibility for completing required work missed. Following the necessary notification, consult with me to determine what appropriate alternative opportunity will be provided, allowing you to fully complete your academic responsibilities.

Student veteran-friendly campus: At BGSU, we recognize students' U.S. military obligations and veterans' rights when entering and exiting the university system. If you do have military obligations during the semester, please communicate with me so reasonable accommodations can be made for absence when drilling or being called to active duty (See <http://www.bgsu.edu/veteran/> for more information).

University Closure: In most cases, BGSU will not close for winter conditions unless the Wood County Sheriff's Department declares a Level 3 emergency. Information about University-wide closures is communicated by the Office of Marketing and Communications, which will notify the University Fact Line, local FM & AM radio stations and the four Toledo television stations. For changes in individual class meetings, please check the class Canvas site.

Course schedule, themes, and materials

Links to the materials for August 29, Colin Gordon's *Growing Apart* and two accompanying articles, are available on Canvas in the Syllabus area, as are the accompanying articles for other weeks. All other readings are books available through BGSU and many other outlets. Some of these can only be purchased in hardcover, because they were published too recently for a paperback edition. They are all also available through OhioLink. If you are requesting a book through OhioLink, please do so several weeks ahead, to make sure that you get a copy in time to read it.

Date	Theme	Primary author	Title
22-Aug	Intro		
29-Aug	Historical roots	Gordon	Growing Apart; Chetty, et.al. "Fading American Dream"; Bloome, "Racial Inequality"
5-Sep	Structural feedback loops	Roithmayr	Reproducing Racism; More Beautiful, More Terrible, Chap. 6
12-Sep	Perpetuation through schooling	Kahn	Privilege
19-Sep	Big data and its discontents	O'Neil	Weapons of Math Destruction; "Bias in Criminal Risk Scores"
26-Sep	Money and politics	Mayer	Dark Money
3-Oct	Detroit, I	Markovits	You Don't Have to Live Like This
10-Oct	<i>Fall break</i>		
17-Oct	Location, location, location	Sampson	Great American City (3-52, 97-328, 355-426)
24-Oct	Housing	Desmond	Evicted
31-Oct	Living the "dream"	Tirado	Hand to Mouth; \$2 a Day, Chapter 1
7-Nov	Criminal justice system	Alexander	The New Jim Crow; Forman, "Racial Critiques"
14-Nov	Inequalities within Inequalities	Moore	The Other Wes Moore
21-Nov	Eroding the middle class	Alexander	Glass House
28-Nov	Privilege without privileges	Vance	Hillbilly Elegy
5-Dec	Detroit, II	Flournoy	Turner House
12-Dec	<i>Exams: Final paper due</i>		