CAS CC204 Spring 2010
Core Social Sciences II: The Problem of Inequality

Faculty
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Section
A1 - Thurs. 2-3:30, CAS 522
B1 - MWF 10-11 CAS 223
B2 - MWF 11-12 CAS 322
B4 - MWF 12-1 CAS 227
B5 - TH 12:30-2, CAS 220
B3 - TH 11-12:30, CAS 227
B6 - TH 3:30-5, CAS 220

Main Lecture: Thursday 2-3:30, CAS 522

Core Social Sciences II will study contemporary approaches to the problem of inequality in American society and around the globe. Beginning with anthropological and historical perspectives, lectures and readings will bring insights, statistical data, and modes of analysis from sociology, psychology, political science, economics, international relations, and environmental science. The goal of this course is to use exemplary research in the Social Sciences to grapple with a problem that has implications for almost every aspect of our social, political, and economic life today.

Grades will be determined by your discussion section professor. They will be based on a combination of written work and class participation, and will likely follow these proportions:

- Seminar papers - 40%
- Research paper - 45%
- Seminar participation - 15%

Research Paper - The principal assignment of the semester will be a research paper of approximately 12-15 pages in length on a topic related to one or more of the themes of the course. Students will develop paper topics in consultation with the leaders of their discussion sections and will be expected to begin independent secondary research and writing already by mid-semester, though the final version is due at the end of the semester. Seminar leaders will outline specific steps, such as topic selection, rough outline, annotated bibliography, detailed outline and/or rough draft), and their specific due dates for preparation of the research paper.

Seminar Papers - Seminar leaders will assign a few shorter papers on various topics and you should consult your section syllabus for specifics.

Class Participation - A significant portion of your final grade will be based on class participation. Regular attendance at both Thursday lectures and individual section meetings is of course key. Good participation goes beyond attendance, however; any form of positive, active and reflective involvement in the course, such as asking or responding to questions, participating in class discussions, sending emails with substantive queries, and attending office hours to discuss class material, could enhance your final grade. Your discussion section professor will indicate how participation will be evaluated in your particular section and the forms of participation that he particularly values.

The Thursday lectures are an integral part of the course - not an optional component - and they will be discussed in the sections. A portion of your participation grade will measure your attendance and understanding of the lectures. Take good lecture notes and bring them to the sections for discussion. Discuss them with fellow students and your professors. Avoid any commercial use of lecture and section materials, such as buying or selling notes, summaries, handouts, and other course materials. Buying such materials is a waste of your money. There is no substitute for being there yourself and engaging the assigned materials directly. To rely on a commercial substitute would be like pontificating on a text that you have never read! And selling your class notes would be tantamount to what one of our thinkers from the first semester called “estranged labor,” giving away your “species-being” for a price!
The Core Writing Center is available for help throughout the semester. The Core faculty encourage you to make good use of it. Writing Tutors are graduate and undergraduate students who have been trained in grammar and compositional skills and are familiar with the works read in the Core. To make an appointment with a tutor, stop by CAS 119 or call 353-5404. Tutors’ offices are in CAS 129.

Academic Conduct - We expect the work you perform in this course to be your own. Presenting the work of someone else as your own, in any way, shape, or form, is plagiarism, and it will be punished by an F for the assignment and possibly for the course as well; more severe sanctions by the University Academic Conduct Committee are possible. The Boston University Academic Conduct Code describes plagiarism as including each of the following: “copying the answers of another student on an examination, copying or substantially restating the work of another person or persons in any oral or written work without citing the appropriate source, and collaboration with someone else in an academic endeavor without acknowledging his or her contribution” (p. 2). A more detailed discussion with examples appears on pp. 9-14 of the Code. It is your responsibility to read these pages carefully and know exactly what constitutes plagiarism.

Required Texts
- Lawrence Kotlikoff and Scott Burns, 2004. The Coming Generational Storm. MIT Press. 9780262612081

Much of the reading for this course will consist of articles from professional journals or book chapters in the social sciences. These readings will all be posted at http://bu.edu/core/courses/cc204.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Schedule of Lectures and Reading Assignments

Week 1, January 14: “Inequality: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives”
Organizer: Prof. Tom Barfield, Anthropology  Lecturer: Prof. Tom Barfield  
Reading: Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus (pp. 1-78, 184-200, 217-246)

Week 2, January 21: “Global Welfare: a Historical and Contemporary Survey”
Organizer: Prof. John Gerring, Political Science  Lecturer: Prof. John Gerring
- This week will include an assignment to interpret and analyze the data on two websites: Gapminder (www.gapminder.org) and CIA Worldfact (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook)

Week 3, January 28: “Long-Term Economic Development: Main Lines of Explanation”
Organizer: Prof. John Gerring, Political Science  Lecturer: Prof. John Gerring
Reading:  

Week 4, February 4: “The Increase in Economic Inequality in the U.S. since WWII”
Organizer: Prof. Louis Ferleger, History  Lecturer: Prof. Louis Ferleger

Reading:

Week 5, February 11: “Social Organization: Unequal Power, Unequal Resources”
Organizer: Prof. David Swartz, Sociology   Lecturer: Prof. David Swartz
Reading:
- Du Bois, W. E. B. “From The Souls of Black Folks.” (1903)
- Marx, Karl. “Classes.” (1867)

Week 6, February 18: “Intersecting Inequalities: Contemporary Social Research”
Organizer: Prof. David Swartz, Sociology   Lecturer: Prof. Ashley Mears, Sociology
Reading:

Week 7, February 25: “Generational Inequalities”
Organizer: Prof. Christophe Chamley, Economics   Lecturer: Prof. Lawrence Kotlikoff, Economics
Reading: Laurence Kotlikoff and Scott Burns, The Coming Generational Storm. (Prologue plus chaps. 1, 2, 5, 6)

Week 8, March 4: “The Psychological Costs of Inequality”
Organizer: Prof. Deborah Belle, Psychology   Lecturer: Dr. Ichiro Kawachi, Harvard School of Public Health
Readings:

Spring Break
Week 9, March 18: “Stereotype Threat”
Organizer: Prof. Deborah Belle, Psychology  Lecturer: Prof. Deborah Belle
Readings:

Organizer: Prof. David Swartz  Lecturer: Prof. Michael Corgan
Readings:

Week 11, April 1: “Continuing Impact of Racial Inequalities”
Organizer: Prof. Christophe Chamley, Economics  Lecturer: Prof. Glenn Loury (Economics), Brown University
Reading:

Week 12, April 8: “Inequality from the service worker’s view”
Organizer: Prof. David Swartz, Sociology
Viewing (in lecture):
The Philosopher Kings (documentary)
Readings:
- Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America by Barbara Ehrenreich, 2008

Week 13, April 15: “Inequality and the Environment”
Organizer: Prof. Robert Kaufman  Lecturer: Prof. Robert Kaufman, Environmental Science
Readings:
- Kaufmann et al., Regional and national contributions to radiative forcing due to CO2 emissions.

Week 14, April 22: No Thursday lecture – substitute Monday’s schedule of classes

Week 15, April 29: Concluding Discussion