

Poverty, Wealth and Privilege SOCI 165

Fall 2025 Section 01 Hybrid 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/06/2025

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30-10:15 a.m. DMH 224; by appointment on Zoom @
<https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/92544100827>

Course Information

Wednesdays 12-1:15 PM DMH 353

Course Description and Requisites

An examination of the causes and consequences of inequality along the dimensions of social class, race/ethnicity, gender, citizenship status, and/or sexualities. Approach may be local, national or global.

Prerequisite: SOCI 1 or equivalent.

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

Classroom AI Policy: It is expected that AI will not be a substitute for doing the expected work in this class including the assigned readings, videos and other course material. It is also expected that you first try assignments on your own, without AI. Finally, it is expected that if you use AI for assignments, that you let me, the instructor, know that it was used, how it was used and the extent to which it was used. You can do that in the assignment submission, discussion post, etc. or in the comment box on Canvas for the assignment submission.

Program Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to think sociologically about the relationship between social structure, interaction, identities, and inequalities.
2. Students will be able to identify and explain major sociological theories and apply them to everyday life.
3. Students will be proficient in qualitative and quantitative research design, data collection and data analysis.
4. Students will be proficient in oral and written communication skills appropriate to the discipline.
5. Students will be able to practice sociology as educated and civically engaged persons.

Course Goals

"The opposite of poverty is not wealth. The opposite of poverty is justice."

-Bryan Stevenson, Death Row Lawyer and Advocate for Equity

According to the course catalog, Sociology 165 is "[A]n examination of the causes and consequences of inequality along the dimensions of social class, race/ethnicity, gender, citizenship status, and/or sexualities. The approach will be local, national, and international." In light of the catalog description, this class will explore what the implications are of the top 0.1% controlling as much wealth as the bottom 90% in the USA, why inequality is increasing between the wealthy and the poor, what is the relationship between the USA's high poverty rate and it being the wealthiest nation in the world, and what are various solutions and obstacles to solutions to our excessive inequity. As the renowned sociologist C. Wright Mills stated, "personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues - and in terms of the problems of history making."

In this class, we will explore the poverty, wealth and privilege through sociological lenses. This course will analyze how human beings interact with these phenomena from both macro and micro perspectives. To this end, material will be based on both qualitative descriptions and quantitative trends of contemporary poverty, wealth and privilege. This course will challenge the myth of meritocracy and will answer the following questions: How do personal issues and social problems overlap? Which of the three dimensions, poverty, wealth and privilege garner the most attention? And, How? And, Why? What role does activism play in social change? When does inequity become a concern for masses of people? How and when do people commit to change for equity? In the process of examining the social construction and destructive forces of poverty, wealth and privilege, the course will address a number of other relevant topics, including: social inequity, classism, racism, feminism, sexism, political responses to poverty and the wealth gap, and consequences of/for policy.

Institutional Outcomes	Student Learning Outcomes	Assessment Method
Critical Thinking	Students will be able to define the core terms and the major theoretical approaches of Poverty, Wealth and Privilege and apply these concepts to various social manifestations.	Class Discussion, Open-ended questions on assignments and reflections
Communication	Students will be able to articulate insights generated from core terms and major theoretical approaches and discuss how these concepts inform the study of present day Poverty, Wealth and Privilege .	Class discussion, assignments and reflections
Evaluate Empirical Sociological Research	Students will read and evaluate empirical sociological research.	Class discussion, assignments and reflections
Valuing Diversity and Global Awareness	Students will understand how identities such as race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, and nationality contribute to a range of social experiences and social perspectives regarding Poverty, Wealth and Privilege.	Class discussion, Group work (including group assignments)
Self-Awareness	Students will be able to discuss their interpretations of Poverty, Wealth and Privilege as they relate to their lived experiences by evaluating the impact their structural position has on their lives, as well as the lives of others.	Class discussion, assignments and reflections

Course Materials

All course readings are available through the class resources on Canvas and/or online. You may have to purchase a couple of films online for this course.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Reading. I expect all of the material to be read with a critical eye. Give yourself adequate time after each reading to reflect on the author's central argument(s) and take notes.

Dialoguing. I expect you to show up to the class meetings prepared to discuss course material.

Participation. Active participation in class discussion and classroom activities is expected.

Assignments. There will be both in-class and outside of class assignments, sometimes more than one per module throughout the semester.

Quizzes. There will be quizzes assigned throughout the semester.

Facilitation. Please expect to facilitate an informed conversation amongst your peers.

Final Project. An individual final project will be due during finals week.

✓ Grading Information

In-class dialoguing and discussion, participation and activities	40 pts
In-Class and outside class module Assignments, discussion boards and in-class only quizzes	250 pts.
Group Facilitation	25 pts.
Final Project	35 pts.
TOTAL	350 pts.

*Students must be present during classes to receive credit for dialogue participation and in-class activities including quizzes.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

331-350+ = A

315 - 330 = A-
303 - 314 = B +
293 - 302 = B
280 - 292 = B -
268 - 279 = C +
258 - 267 = C
245 - 257 = C -
233 - 244 = D +
223 - 232 = D
209 - 222 = D -
000 - 208 = F

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Reading. I expect all of the material to be read with a critical eye. Give yourself adequate time after each reading to reflect on the author's central argument(s) and take notes.

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Below is the course outline. This schedule is subject to change with fair notice. Changes will be made via Canvas. Readings and other course material should be completed for the week before the class meetings.

Date(s)	Topics and some films we will be viewing. Additional Associated Readings and media listed on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 1	Introduction to the Course Introduction to the Course, Adobe Express Learning Pages <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn How to Make an Adobe Express Page• In-Class Assignment: Introductions	
MODULE 2	Introduction to Poverty, Wealth and Privilege <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning Page: Introduction to Social Stratification• Schwable "The Roots of Inequality" Chapters 1 and 2 in <i>Rigging the Game</i>• Racist Housing Appraisals• Schwable Quiz (Open Book Assignment)• In-Class Assignment: Social Problems	

Date(s)	Topics and some films we will be viewing. Additional Associated Readings and media listed on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 3	<p>Intersectionality: The Roots of Inequity, Power, Poverty, Wealth and Privilege</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Page: Intersectionality • Intersectionality Reading • Corporate Interlocks • Political Revolving Doors • Instructor Video: "Social Problems and the Intersectionality Wheel" • Instructor Video: Intersectionality, Schwable and Inequity • Listen: This American Life: Take the Money and Run for Office • Do: "Social Problems and the Intersectionality Wheel" 	<p>Check: Last Day to Add Courses and Register Late</p>
MODULE 4	<p>Theory, Class and Class Inequity</p> <p>How do major sociological theories and theorists understand and/or address stratification?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Page: Social class • Sociological Theories • Wealth and Pie_CBSThisMorning • Professor Video: Social Class • Defining the middle class: Cash, Credentials or Culture • Listen: Why Billionaires Pay so Little in Taxes • Hidden Rules Among Classes • Wealth to Scale • Do: In-Class Assignment: The Wealth Pie and Social Class • Do: ACE Quiz Scores and Reflections 	

Date(s)	Topics and some films we will be viewing. Additional Associated Readings and media listed on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 5	Power and poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Page: Poverty and Power • Poor at 20, Poor for Life • Poverty Apple Pie.pdf • Faces of poverty.docx • Professor's Video: Power and poverty.mp4 • Watch: Gini Coefficient • Listen: Fresh Air "Poverty By America" • Play the Simulation of Poverty Game: Spent • In-Class Assignment: Reflections on Power and poverty. 	
MODULE 6	Power, Capital and Alienation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Page: Alienation • Domhoff: Studying Power • pdf • Professor's Video: Alienation • More CEOs named John and David than Female CEOs • More CEOs named Michael and James than Female CEOs • In-Class Assignment: Alienation, Capital and Power • Host a Watch Party: The Corporation available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHrhqtY2khc 	

Date(s)	Topics and some films we will be viewing. Additional Associated Readings and media listed on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 7	<p>Billionaires and a Deep Look at Wealth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Page: Neo-Liberalism • Animated Chart of Billionaires • Listen: Why Billionaires Pay so Little in Taxes • Flipgrid: Born Rich and/or The 1% • Host a Watch Party: Born Rich and/or The 1% <p>We will watch either <i>The One Percent</i> or <i>Born Rich</i>.</p> <p>Watch <i>The One Percent</i> if your last name begins with A-M. Watch <i>Born Rich</i> if your last name begins with N-Z.</p> <p>Links to the films are available here:</p> <p><i>The One Percent</i></p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK35cxb3rkA</p> <p><i>Born Rich</i></p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maWdDI_OjIQ</p>	
MODULE 8	<p>White Supremacy, the Racial Caste System, Critical Race Theory and the Racial Wealth Gap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Page: The Racial Caste System • <i>The New Jim Crow</i> Michelle Alexander, selections • “The Racial Wealth Gap: Addressing America’s Most Pressing Epidemic” • Illinois Poised to Become the first state to end wealth-based pre-trial detention • Watch: DiAngelo Debunking the Most Common Myths White People Tell about Race • <i>In the Wake: On Blackness and Being</i> Christina Sharpe • In-Class Assignment: Racism and white supremacy 	

Date(s)	Topics and some films we will be viewing. Additional Associated Readings and media listed on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 9	<p>FBI and State Sanctioned Racially Based Murder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch Democracy Now Fred Hampton <i>The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police</i> • Tamika Mallory: State of Emergency Speech • Selma and John Lewis • John Lewis and Sit ins • <i>Imprisoned Intellectuals</i> James, choose a chapter • Host a Watch Party: Democracy Now Fred Hampton • In-Class Assignment: Fred Hampton/Political Prisoner Letter 	
Module 10	<p>Residential Segregation and Environmental Injustice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Red-lining and environmental racism ◦ “Past racist redlining practices increased climate burden on Minority Neighborhoods” ◦ The segregation of pollution ◦ Hyper segregation defined ◦ Watch: Kelo and Eminent Domain ◦ Watch: Shannon Waite on Hypersegregation ◦ Watch: the Guardian: the food deserts of Memphis: inside America’s hunger capital ◦ A sociological view of food deserts 	

Date(s)	Topics and some films we will be viewing. Additional Associated Readings and media listed on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 11	<p>Citizenship, Undocumented Status, Immigration and Obstacles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Learning to Be Illegal” Gonzales • Abrego Mixed Status Immigrant Families • Brown Collar Jobs Cantanzarite • Watch: Dating While Undocumented • Watch: What its like Growing up Undocumented <p>In-Class Assignment: Immigrant Status, Obstacles and Marginalization</p>	
MODULE 12	<p>Work and our Factory Farming System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploitation and Abuse at the Chicken Plant • The Most Dangerous Job in America • Watch: Factory Farming Awareness Coalition • In the News: Minors Working for Tyson • In Class Activity: Food and Work in Factory Farming <p>Host a Watch Party “Factory Farming Awareness Coalition”</p>	

Date(s)	Topics and some films we will be viewing. Additional Associated Readings and media listed on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 13	Gender Inequity and Feminism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argument from nature • Oppression Marilyn Frye • If men could Menstrate Gloria Steinem • Defininition of Feminism • Watch: The Story of Cosmetics • Watch: Feminism Survey • In-class Activity: Gender Inequity and Feminism 	
MODULE 14	Schooling and -Isms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Anyon ◦ Washington Post: Teacher shortage ◦ Missouri: 4 day school week ◦ Read One chapter of the book <i>Lies my teacher told me</i> ◦ Explore: economic diversity and student outcomes at America's colleges and universities ◦ In-Class Activity: Our Schooling System 	

Date(s)	Topics and some films we will be viewing. Additional Associated Readings and media listed on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 15	<p>THANKSGIVING</p> <p>Invoking the Imagination within Neoliberalism, Overcoming Oppression and Building a Better Future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture jamming • Neoliberalism: the ideology of the root of all of our problems. • <i>Shock Doctrine</i> Naomi Klein choose a chapter • Schwable Chapter 4 • Watch: Culture Jamming • Watch: The story of electronics • Forget Shorter Showers • In-Class Activity: Invoking the Imagination within Neoliberalism and Culture Jamming 	
MODULE 16	FINAL PROJECTS	