

**SC 038 – Race, Class, and Gender:  
Social Identities, Inequality, and Power in the U.S.  
Fall 2005**

C. Shawn McGuffey  
Office: McGuinn 519

mcguffey@bc.edu  
Office Hours: T, Th 2-3:00 p.m.

Teaching Assistant: Jared Del Rosso  
delrosso@bc.edu      Office: 410 C      Office Hours: TBA

Sociologist Max Weber asserted that in order to comprehend inequality we must understand class, status, and party (i.e., power). These distinctions shape our social reality(ies?) and allocates material, psychological, and social resources unequally among different groups throughout the world. This course will examine how race, class, and gender inequality is perpetuated and how/why social identities are constructed within the context of the United States. As a Core course, we will do so by addressing the following issues:

**Perennial Questions** : This course will interrogate some of the on-going debates within sociology as well as the larger scholarship on race, class, and gender. For instance, we will ask: What drives human behavior, biology or culture? Do people shape society or does society shape people? What is “freedom”? What are the limits of our ability to overcome oppression and inequality? What is the meaning of progress?

To help tackle these questions, this course will be explicitly guided by four central themes from critical race feminism (CRF). This perspective asserts that:

- 1) Social identities are historically and culturally specific and change over time.
- 2) Race, class, gender, and sexuality are not separate identities that are easily distinguishable from one another. These social identities intersect and reinforce each other. For example, one cannot talk about race without examining its implications for gender and vice versa.
- 3) CRF acknowledges the importance of laws, policies, and institutions in the perpetuation of inequalities.
- 4) Finally, CRF is skeptical of concepts such as objectivity, neutrality, and meritocracy. Therefore, ideas of equality must be critically examined.

**Cultural Diversity**: Cultural diversity is at the heart of this course. We will discuss a range of racial and ethnic groups and their relationships to power. For example, we will see that Native Americans and African-Americans have vastly dissimilar relationships to racism. However, we will not only look at distinctions *between* groups, but also *within* group variation. Black women and Black men, for example can experience racism very differently.

**Historical Perspective**: In the first assigned reading sociologist C. Wright Mills outlines the “sociological imagination,” which highlights the connections between history, social structure, and personal biography. This course nurtures the sociological imagination through its socio-historical foundation, its emphasis on multiple perspectives, and an examination of how history and social structure converge to impinge on the life chances of different types of people.

We begin by discussing the socio-historical construction of race, class, gender, and sexuality and how they are connected. We will then look at how these social identities shape – and are also

shaped by – four general subject areas: (1) wealth and poverty, (2) education, (3) families, children, and youth and (4) crime, law, and social policy. Although this course is separated into subject areas, we shall see that these areas greatly overlap and are mutually influenced by one other.

**Methodology:** Methodologies are the procedures that are used to guide research. The course materials are purposely eclectic and draw from a wide range of sources and methods. We will utilize the work of both “positivist” scholars who often obtain data from social surveys and controlled experiments as well as more “interpretative” researchers who frequently derive data from fieldwork and interviewing. We will also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of particular methodologies.

**Writing Component:** Throughout the semester you will be compelled to use your “sociological imagination” in essays for exams, in-class writing, and, if you choose, extra-credit assignments. The writing component will help you develop critical thinking skills and to engage the world sociologically.

**Creating A Personal Philosophy:** This course will challenge you to critically examine: yourself in the social order; how you benefit from and/or are oppressed by your social location; your ideas of freedom and social justice; your vision for yourself and society in the future; and the best ways to realize that vision considering the very real social constraints that bind us all. Hopefully, this will encourage working for the betterment of human kind from a culturally competent standpoint that is informed by the complex intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

**Course Expectations and Evaluation:**

1) This is a *reading* and *participation* intensive course. Readings are due *on the date they are listed*. Come to class ready to discuss them.

2) If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate.

3) There will be three exams. Exam One is worth 20%, Exam Two is 30%, and the Last Exam accounts for 35% of your final grade.

4) Fifteen percent of the final grade will consist of class participation. This includes contributing to class discussions, in-class writing assignments, and pop quizzes. You cannot make up in-class assignments or pop-quizzes if you are not present unless you have an excused absence.

5) A doctor, school administrator, or other certified official must verify an absence in order for it to be excused. Notes from parents or legal guardians will not be accepted.

6) Students will also be given the *option* to write up to five response statements for extra credit. These statements should be in response to readings. You should take the time to craft a thoughtful critique because there is no guarantee that you will receive credit. In order to get credit, statements will be evaluated based on the following criteria: (a) an introduction that distinctly states your topic and why it is important; (b) responses should have a logical flow with supporting evidence from the readings and lecture; (c) a succinct critique of the pertinent issues; (d) and all papers should be typed, double spaced, and **NO MORE** than two pages. Once we have finished discussing a particular reading, you *cannot* write a statement on it. Also, statements must be on different subject areas. For example, you cannot write two statements on education.

These statements may also be read allowed to the class to spark discussion (names, however, will be kept confidential). Each response statement is worth a one-percentage point increase to your final grade. For example, if you do (and receive credit for) all five statements a final grade of 85% will be bumped up to a 90%. There will be no other extra credit options.

**Required Readings:**

*Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* by Dorothy Roberts. Readings marked with an (\*) indicates that it is from this book.

*Course Packet for SC 038 (Race, Class, and Gender)*

**Reading Schedule:**

**Constructing Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Class**

**Sept. 6:** First Day of Class – No Readings

**Sept. 8:** Introductory Concepts – Mills, C. Wright. 1959. Ch. 1 “The Promise,” pp. 3-24, In *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

**Sept. 13:** Introductory Concepts – Harris, Cheryl I. 1995. “Whiteness as Property,” pp. 276-291. In *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, edited by K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, and K. Thomas. New York: New York Press.

**Sept. 15:** Cornell, Stephen. 1996. “American Indians and Political Protest: The ‘Red Power’ Years,” 138-149. In *Origins and Destinies*, edited by S. Pedraza and R. Rumbaut. Wadsworth.

**Sept. 20:** Andersen, Margaret. 1993. *Thinking About Women*, Ch.2 “The Social Construction of Gender,” pp.21-51. New York: Macmillan.

**AND**

\*Roberts, Dorothy. “Introduction” and Ch. 1, “Reproduction in Bondage,” in *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, pp.1-55

**Sept. 22:** Lang, Sabine. 1997. “Various Kinds of Two-Spirit People: Gender Variance and Homosexuality in Native American Communities,” pp. 100-117, In *Two Spirit People*, edited by S. Jacobs, W. Thomas, and S. Lang. University of Illinois Press.

**AND**

D’Emillio, John and Estelle B. Freedman. 1997. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, Ch.2 “Family Life and the Regulation of Deviance,” pp.15-38. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Sept. 27:** J. D’Emilio. “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in K. Hansen and A. Garey (eds), *Families in the U.S.: Kinship and Domestic Politics*, pp. 131-141. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

**AND**

hooks, bell. 2000. “Class Matters,” pp. 1-9, In *Where We Stand*. New York: Routledge.

**AND**

Mantsios, Gregory. “Class in America: Myths and Realities.” In *Race, Class, and Gender in the U.S.: An Integrated Study*, (Third Edition) ed., Rothenberg, pp.131-143. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

**Sept. 29: FIRST EXAM!!!**

### Wealth and Poverty

**Oct. 4:** Lipsitz, George. "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics." In *The Meaning of Difference*, pp. 351-360.

**AND**

Oliver, Melvin and Thomas Shapiro. *Black Wealth/White Wealth, Ch. 5 "A Story of Two Nations: Race and Wealth," pp.91-109*. New York: Routledge.

**Oct. 6:** Oliver, Melvin and Thomas Shapiro. *Black Wealth/White Wealth, Ch. 5 "A Story of Two Nations: Race and Wealth," pp.109-125*.

**Oct. 11:** Royster, Deirdre. 2003. "White Privilege and Black Accommodation," Ch. 8 in *Race and the Invisible Hand: How White Networks Exclude Black Men from Blue-Collar Jobs*. University of California Press.

**Oct. 13:** Hays, Sharon. 2003. "Pyramids of Inequality," Ch. 5 in *Flat Broke With Children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**AND**

\*Roberts, Dorothy. "The Welfare Debate," Chapter 5 in *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, pp.22-55

**Oct. 18:** Badgett, M.V. Lee. 2001. *Money, Myths, and Change: The Economic Lives of Lesbians and Gay Men*, Ch. 2. "The Economic Penalty for Being Gay." Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### Education

**Oct. 20:** Thorne, Barrie and Zella Luria. "Sexuality and Gender in Children's Daily Worlds," *Social Problems*, v.33 n3, pp176-189.

**AND**

Tanenbaum, Leora. 1999. *Slut!: Growing Up Female With a Bad Reputation*," Introduction and Ch.1 "Insult of Insults," pp. 1-43. Seven Stories Press.

**Oct. 25:** Carter, Prudence. " 'Black' Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and Schooling Conflicts for Low-Income African American Youth," *Social Problems*, v.50 n.1, pp. 136-155.

**Oct. 27:** Larew, John. "Why Are Doves of Unqualified, Unprepared Kids Getting into Our Top Colleges? Because Their Dads Are Alumni." In *The Meaning of Difference*, pp. 273-278.

**Nov. 1: SECOND EXAM!!!**

### Family, Children and Youth

**Nov. 3:** Historical Concepts – B. Thornton Dill. "Fictive Kin, Paper Sons, and Compadrazgo: Women of Color and the Struggle for Family Survival." In K. Hansen and A. Garey (eds), *Families in the U.S.* Temple University Press.

**Nov. 8:** Newman, Katherine. 1999. *No Shame in My Game*, Ch.7 "Family Values," pp.186-205. New York: Russell Sage.

**Nov. 10:** Stacey, Judith. 1996. *In the Name of the Family*, Ch. 5 “Gay and Lesbian Families Are Here; All Our Families Are Queer; Let’s Get Used to It!” pp. 105-144. Boston: Beacon Press.

**AND**

J. Wright. 2001. “ ‘Aside from One Little, Tiny Detail, We Are So Incredibly Normal:’ Perspectives of Children in Lesbian Step Families.” In M. Berstein and R. Reimann (eds), *Queer Families, Queer Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

**Nov. 15:** D. Van Ausdale and J. Feagin. “Using Racial and Ethnic Concepts: The Critical Case of Very Young Children.” *American Sociological Review*, v. 61 (October).

**AND**

Francis Windance Twine. 1997. “Brown-Skinned White Girls: Class, Culture, and the Construction of White Identity in Suburban Communities” in *Displacing Whiteness*.

**Nov. 17:** L. Phillips. 2000. “What’s A Young Woman (NOT) to Think?” In *Flirting with Danger*. New York: New York University Press.

**AND**

Amy C. Wilkins. “ ‘So Full of Myself as a Chick:’ Goth Women, Sexual Independence, and Gender Egalitarianism,” *Gender & Society* v.18(3), pp. 328-349.

### ***Crime, Law, and Social Policy***

**Nov. 22:** Beckett, Katherine and Theodore Sasson. *The Politics of Injustice: Crime and Punishment in America*, Ch. 5 “Crime in the News,” pp.75-99.

**AND**

\*Roberts, Dorothy. “Making Reproduction a Crime,” Chapter 4 in *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, pp.150-200.

### **Nov. 24: NO CLASS – Have A Good Break!**

**Nov. 29:** M. Pattillo-McCoy. “Neighborhood Networks and Crime,” Chapter 4 in *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class*, pp 91-116. University of Chicago Press.

**Dec. 1:** Harris, David A. 2002. Ch. 4 “The Hard Numbers: Why Racial Profiling Doesn’t Add Up,” pp.73-90 in *Profiles in Injustice: Why Racial Profiling Cannot Work*.

**AND**

Harris, David A. 2002. Ch. 6 “It’s Not Just Driving While Black: How Profiling Affects Latinos, Asians, and Arabs,” pp.129-144.

**Dec 6:** Guerrero, Maria Anna James. “Civil Rights versus Sovereignty: Native American Women in Life and Land Struggles.” In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, and Democratic Futures*, pp. 101-121.

**AND**

\*Roberts, Dorothy. “The Meaning of Liberty,” Chapter 7 in *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, pp.294-312.

**Dec. 8:** Wrap up and Review – No Readings (**Last day of regularly scheduled classes**)

**LAST EXAM will be given during finals week (TBA)**