Race, Class & Gender
SC038/BK138
Spring 2010
Tuesday/Thursday 12-1:15

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Overview:

The role of power and privilege within a society is a key underlying premise to sociological study. While race, class and gender form key points of identity upon which power and privilege is distributed and wielded within societies, our study will extend to look at the intersections of multiple identities and status positions within a United States social context. Our exploration of what sociologist Patricia Hill Collins terms “intersectionality” will include multiple perspectives through which power and inequality is understood and manifested along the lines of race, class, gender, sexuality and other social positions. We will employ the feminist premise of “the personal as political” in order to build from the multiplicity of experiences within our classroom and broader community to simultaneously build perspective, institutional and cultural understanding of social inequality within the United States.

In order to begin to establish these understandings this course will be explicitly guided by the premises of 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. One cannot talk about racial identity without considering class, gender and sexuality or 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.
University Requirements:

This course meets the following university course requirements: (1) Core Social Science, (2) Multicultural Requirement, (3) Poverty, Family & Social Policy series required course. As such this course will address the following issues:

1) Perennial Questions

Current social issues have brought to light serious questions related to power and inequality within our society. With the election of the United States’ first Black president, Americans have begun to ponder the question of whether racism has ended. With the country in economic recession, metaphors of “Wall Street” and “Main Street” have reinvoked social class into U.S. society which was long touted as “classless”. Do racism, classism and sexism still matter? Political hot-button issues such as gay-marriage, reproductive rights, and affirmative action have raised larger questions: what do equality, citizenship, or freedom actually mean? Who holds the power to shape and mold our society? Whose interests are being protected and whose are being trampled? How does personal injustice become political injustice? And how do institutions reproduce inequality? These questions will form a basis for our overarching course-long inquiry.

2) Personal Philosophy

In relation to the above questions, this course will challenge students to consider their own position within the social order. How do you benefit from the current status quo? And simultaneously, how might you be oppressed by it? In what ways do you actively or passively contribute to the maintenance of the status quo? What possibilities exist to challenge the current order? What aspects are we bound within versus what can we as individuals or groups make steps to change? Additionally, an important facet of this course will involve building increased empathy towards one another as humans and building a cultural competent standpoint from which to build understanding and insight into the diversities of human identities, positions and experiences.

3) Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity is at the heart of this course. We will discuss a range of racial/ethnic groups as well as their relationship to power and hear voices of diverse authors speak about their experiences of racism, class, sexism and heterosexism simultaneously. We will look at variations both between groups and within groups. For example, two individuals of the same racial group may have various racial experiences as marked by their gender, class or sexual statuses.

4) Historical Perspective
History is essential to sociology in that a historical perspective allows one to understand current social phenomena in terms of how such phenomena came to be. This course will consider the historic context of the United States as one built on the premises of slavery, genocide, indentured servitude, forced migration, and class and gender exploitation in order to establish and understand how current experiences of race, class, gender and sexuality have emerged out of such contexts and how we might use such historical perspectives to look into the social possibilities or outcomes of our current social practices for future generations.

5) Methodology

Methodologies are the procedures that are used to guide research. The course materials are purposely eclectic and interdisciplinary. Our readings draw from a wide range of sources, methods and presentation styles. The course project will additionally provide students with the opportunity to engage in research first hand in which you will select a research method, and approach to guide your overarching project.

6) Writing

Throughout the semester you will be engaged in an ongoing journal project involving both your own writing as well as providing feedback and input to your project partner on their written work. This project offers students the opportunity to use writing as a method of ongoing inquiry, interpretation and analysis to relate what you learn in the course to your own specific interests. While the final product of this project may take the form of a written paper or another creative format, ongoing written contemplations, thoughts and feedback will be a large component of each student’s course project.

Poverty Family & Social Policy

This course is one of the required introductory courses in the sociology department’s Poverty, Family & Social Policy series for majors. As such this course will:

1) address poverty related issues.
2) consider the intersections of race, class, gender, income level and other factors and how such intersectional identities yield distinct variations within the experience of poverty.
3) Give focus to how poverty impacts family relations for various family members (parents, children, others) throughout the course.
4) Finally this course will hold heavy emphasis on considerations of how social policy has worked in the past to help and/or harm marginalized individuals and families and we will consider social policies for contemporary times.

If you are interested in learning more about the Poverty, Family & Social Policy series please feel free to ask your instructor or the PFSP committee chair, Dr. Deborah Piatelli (millerdp@bc.edu).
Assignments/Expectations:

Participation

As a student in this course you are expected to *attend classes regularly and actively engage in class discussions*.

Class discussions, presentations and/or lectures are essential components of your learning in this course and should be considered required and important course materials.

Please come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material for the day and make connections between the readings and any additional materials presented in class. *Every student should come prepared to each class with something to say about the day’s topic and materials.* This could be a question, a passage you appreciated, something you found confusing, something you disagreed with or another type of comment.

In addition to in-class participation, credit towards participation can be earned through bringing in current events, coming to office hours, e-mailing questions or additional thoughts after the discussion.

Course Journal/Partnership

You will be expected to keep a *weekly* journal for the course. Journal responses may be formatted as written essays, personal reflections, poetry, imagery or art. However, these *should demonstrate a sound consideration of, and engagement with, the course materials*. Please note that this assignment takes the place of formal exams and it is therefore expected that your journal entries will demonstrate more than a cursory consideration of a topic. Use this opportunity to demonstrate what you learned in this class and how it applies to your outside life. Journal entries will be reviewed via both formal submission to the teachers, and by using peer-review by a classmate partner.

It is important to maintain your journal each week and respond *while* you are engaged with the material rather than retrospectively to prepare for a deadline. Therefore, while the journals will be formally collected 3 times during the term, you will be expected to share your journals with a partner weekly and you are also expected to engage with and provide feedback to your partner on their journal entries.

Course Project/Presentation

This assignment will provide a culminating project for the course. This will allow you to consider a topic related to the course for further inquiry and research. A handout will be provided with further information on this assignment.
Grading

Attendance/Participation  20%
Course Journal/Partnership  45%
Course Project/Presentation  35%

Extra Credit Opportunity:

If it is brought to my attention that there is a local event on-campus or off-campus that clearly relates to the study of race, class and gender, students can receive 2% extra credit for attending such an event, discussing it in class and writing a 2 page summary and reflection on the event in which you relate what you learned from to event to what you are learning in class. A maximum of 3 total events may be used toward extra credit for a total of 6% total possible extra credit points to be applied to your final course grade. **Students who do not personally attend an event will not receive any extra credit.** All extra credit papers must be submitted within two class periods after the event. **No extra credit papers will be accepted after April 29th.**

If you would like to propose an event to be considered for extra-credit you must bring it to my attention at least one week in advance of the event in order to review and approve the event and announce the opportunity to the entire class.

Alternate Proposals:

Grading procedures are implemented in order to provide a means for students to communicate and teachers to evaluate, how successfully a student has engaged the course material. If you find that the proposed means of assessment does not meet your needs or allow you to best demonstrate your engagement of the course materials **you are invited to propose an alternate means through which you will be evaluated.** If you are interested in an alternate grading structure please write an evaluation proposal and submit it no later than **February 4th.** I will work with you to ensure that your proposal mutually meets the needs of all parties including student, instructor and university.

Required Readings:

Margaret L. Anderson & Patricia Hill Collins (eds) 2010. *Race, Class & Gender: An Anthology.* Wadsworth Publishing. (RCG)

Additional readings to be provided via BC library online course reserves (indicated by an asterisk*) A hard copy of the textbook will also be on reserve in O’Neill Library.

To Access Online Course Reserves:

1) Visit the library homepage at: [www.bc.edu/libraries](http://www.bc.edu/libraries)
2) Click course reserves under the section entitled “Find Library Materials”
3) Enter your BC user name and password
4) Search for the course by the course number or instructor’s last name “Green”
SECTION I: POWER, PRIVILEGE AND “OTHERNESS”

January 19
First Day of Class – No Readings

Video: Pushing the Limits: Bringing Creativity to Sociological Discourse

January 21
Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins “Why Race, Class & Gender Still Matter” pp 1-16

AND

Maxine Baca Zinn, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo & Michael Messner. “Sex & Gender Through the Prism of Difference” pp 153-161

January 26
Julie Bettie “Chicas, Cholas, Trash and the Presence or Absence of Class Identity”*

Herbert Gans “Race as Class” pp 108-115

Elizabeth Krause “The Bead of Raw Sweat in a field of dainty perspirers”*

January 28
Gloria Anzaldua “The Homeland Aztland/El Otro Mexico” AND “Towards a New Consciousness” from Borderlands/La Frontera*

A note on this reading. This piece is written with both English & Spanish passages. Even if you cannot read Spanish I still ask you to try your best to read through the Spanish passages. If you do your learning experience will most certainly be different than if you skip them over.

Audre Lorde “Age, Race, Sex and Class: Women Redefining Difference” pp 505-511

February 2
Patricia Hill Collins “Prisons for Our Bodies Closets for Our Minds” pp 235-241

Chong-Suk Han “Darker Shades of Queer” pp 255-261

Michael S. Kimmel “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity”*
February 4
Paula Gunn Allen “Angry Women are Building”*
Haunam-Kaey Trask “From a Native Daughter” pp 28-35
C. Matthew Shipp “The First Americans” pp 463-469

February 9
Vivyan C. Adair “Discipline & Punish”*
Maria Rivera “Waiting”*

**Intersections of Privilege & Power**

February 11
Peggy McIntosh “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” pp 99-103
Kim Fellner “The Starbucks Paradox” pp 530-535
Michael Kimmel “With the Wind at My Back; Looking at (White, Male, Straight, Middle-Class) Privilege”

February 16
Mary C. Waters “Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?” 201-209
Tim Wise “Eracing Katrina: Historical Revisionism and the Denial of the Obvious”*

February 18
Karen Bettez Halnon “Poor Chic: The Rational Consumption of Poverty”*
bell hooks “Eating the Other”*

February 23
Neil Foley “Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and Whiteness”*
February 25
Lawrence Otis Graham “Our Kind of People”*
Elizabeth Martinez “Seeing More than Black & White” pp 87-92

March 1-March 5 Spring Vacation ~ Have Fun!

SECTION II: FROM INTERPERSONAL TO INSTITUTIONAL

In this section we will examine the interconnections in the relationships and dialectics of personal beliefs, stereotypes or prejudices, cultural representations & controlling images/stereotypes and institutionalized oppressions. This is essential in understanding the development of oppression within ourselves, our culture and our social institutions.

March 9
Patricia Hill Collins “Toward a new vision: race, class and gender as categories of analysis and connection”*

March 11
Systems of Power & Inequality pp 61-86

March 16
Gregory Mantsios “Media Magic” 386-393
Lucy Williams “Race, Rat Bites & Unfit Mothers”*

March 18
Patricia Hill Collins “The New Racism”*
Shani Jamila “Can I get a Witness?”*

Welfare & Work

March 23
March 25

Kenneth W. Brown “The Indignities of Unemployment” p 298

William Julius Wilson “The Meaning and Significance of Race: Employers and Inner-City Workers”*

Katherine Newman “The Invisible Poor” pp 308-316

March 30

Randy Albelda “Labor Market Inequality by the Numbers”*

Teresa Amott and Julie Matthaei “Race, Class and Women’s Works” pp 283-290

April 1st No Class Have a Great Weekend!

Families & Communities

April 6

Dierdre E. Davis “The Harm that Has No Name”*

Bruce Kokapelli & George Lakey “More Power Than We Want: Masculine Sexuality & Violence”*

Geoffrey Canada “Learning to Fight”*

April 8

Lisa Dodson “Daughter’s Work”*

April 13

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo “Doméstica” pp 352-359

Annette Laureau “Unequal Childhoods” pp 343-351

April 15

Kath Weston “Straight is Gay as Family is to No Family” pp 338-342

Kai Wright “To be Poor and Transgender”*

Sabine Lang “Various Kinds of Two-Spirit People”*
Government & Social Policy

April 20

Roslyn Arlin Mickelson & Stephen Samuel Smith “Can Education Eliminate Race, Class and Gender Inequality?” pp 407-415

Tanya Mitchell “If I survive it will be despite welfare reform”*

April 22

Jael Silliman “Policing the National Body: Sex, Race, and Criminalization” pp 470-479

Mary Patillo-McCoy “Neighborhood Networks and Crime”*

April 27

Kurt Mundorff “Children as Chattel: Invoking the 13th Amendment to Reform Child Welfare”*

April 29

Dorothy Roberts “The Meaning of Liberty”*

May 4th ROUNDTABLE PROJECT SHARING

May 6th ROUNDTABLE PROJECT SHARING