

# CONTROVERSIES ABOUT INEQUALITY

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SOC 2220, AMST 2225, DSOC 2220, GOVT 2225, ILROB 2220, PAM 2220, PHIL 1950

Fall 2016, 4 credits

**Professor:** Anna R. Haskins, Department of Sociology  
[arh96@cornell.edu](mailto:arh96@cornell.edu)

**Lectures:** Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:25-2:40pm, G01 Uris Hall

**Office Hours:** Professor Haskins: Thursdays 2:55-4:30pm, 354 Uris Hall

**Teaching Assistants:**

Theresa Rocha Beardall

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S 205: Fri 11:15-12:05 (207 Malott)

S 206: Fri 12:20-1:10 (207 Malott)

Yunsub Lee

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S 202: Fri 12:20-1:10 (204 Uris)

S 208: Fri 11:15-12:05 (128 Rockefeller)

Xinwei Xu

xx239@cornell.edu

S 203: Fri 1:25-2:15 (204 Uris)

S 204: Fri 2:30-3:20 (204 Uris)

Maria Flores

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S 201: Fri 1:25-2:15 (142 Goldwin Smith)

S 207: Fri 2:30-3:20 (262 Uris)

**Course Website:** search for “Soc 2220” in Blackboard ([www.blackboard.cornell.edu](http://www.blackboard.cornell.edu))

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND UNIVERSITY COURSE DISTINCTION

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Evidence of inequality is everywhere. The amount, its causes and the proposed solutions to inequality are often the subject of fierce political, academic, and public debate as Americans attempt to come to terms with growing domestic and global poverty, the persistence of racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination and the increasing visibility of inter and intra-country differences in wealth and income. This course introduces students to ongoing social scientific debates about the sources and consequences of inequality, while also exploring how social inequality is enacted and reinforced in everyday life. The course also hosts guest lectures by renowned faculty from around the country, further exposing students to recent social scientific scholarship in the area of inequality.

University Courses at Cornell are designed to teach students to think from the perspectives of multiple disciplines, across departments, and among diverse fields of study. Through this course students will foster intellectual discovery, promote debate, and address complex issues as they engage with students from across the university to examine social issues through new and different lenses.

## COURSE WEBSITE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

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Most of the **assigned readings** are available on the course website, in which you should be automatically enrolled after registering for the course. Please come to lecture having read the listed assigned readings for that day. The **four required books** are not on the course website but are available for purchase at The Cornell Store, Kraftees, Amazon.com or are on 4-hour reserve at Uris Library:

Cohen, G. A. 2009. *Why Not Socialism?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Edin, Kathryn and H. Luke Shaefer. 2015. *\$2.00 a Day*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Lewis-McCoy, R. L'Heureux. 2014. *Inequality in the Promised Land*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

## EXAMS, DISCUSSION SECTIONS AND GRADING

The majority of your course grade [80%] will be based on **two in-class prelims** (25% each) on October 6<sup>th</sup> and November 3<sup>rd</sup>, and **one comprehensive take-home final exam** (30%) due before midnight on Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup> (available on the course website at 2:40pm on Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup>). I do not give make-up exams except in the case of a dire emergency (e.g., long-term hospitalization, death in the family). If you need a make-up exam, you must notify me *and* get my approval at least 12 hours in advance of the scheduled exam time.

Attendance at and active participation in **discussion sections** will count for the remaining 20% of your course grade. Sections meet on Fridays and provide a more intimate classroom context in which you can discuss the week's lecture content and reading materials with your TA (a PhD student in the Sociology Department). *Attendance is mandatory and you must attend the section in which you are officially enrolled.* You are expected to contribute to discussions, participate in any group activities, and complete in-class exercises. If there is a (RR) next to the discussion section date in the syllabus, please read the brief media piece assigned prior to attending.

A few thoughts on discussion sections. Participation extends beyond mere talking. Participation is evidence of critical engagement with the subject material and quality participation constitutes being prepared, being an attentive listener, involvement in class activities, asking insightful questions, paying attention, and not hindering anyone's learning. By nature, much of the material covered in this class will be controversial. Thus, the goal of discussions sections is to create an environment where open, respectful, and informed discussions can occur. In order for this to happen there must be respect on all levels and from all participants. If discussions get intense (and they may), I ask that the following guidelines be kept in mind: **a)** Be open-minded and remember that you are in a class with people from a variety of backgrounds so be cognizant of that; **b)** Think about what you want to say first and have a reasonable justification for any stance you take; **c)** Wait to speak until the person currently speaking has finished. We can agree to disagree about ideas and theories, but personal attacks will not be tolerated.

**Final course grades** will be assigned on the basis of the following distribution:

100%+ = A+	87-89% = B+	77-79% = C+	67-69% = D+
93-99% = A	83-86% = B	73-76% = C	63-66% = D
90-92% = A-	80-82% = B-	70-72% = C-	60-62% = D-
			Below 60% = F

## ATTENDANCE AT LECTURES

I know this is a large lecture class, but attendance at all sessions is important. If attendance begins to fall to unacceptable levels in lecture, unannounced but trivially easy quizzes will be introduced as a mechanism to verify attendance. These quizzes will count for up to 10% of your final grade (and will therefore reduce the weighting given to other course requirements; i.e., the final exam would then count for  $.9 \cdot .30 = .27$ ). Also, please note, no video, audio, or unauthorized photographing of lecture content or materials is permitted.

## GENERAL CLASS EXPECTATIONS AND WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME

Outside of the formal course requirements described above, there are a few expectations I have for you this semester. I expect you to do all the required readings on-time, attend lecture, and be actively involved in the guest lectures and your discussions sections. I expect you to learn from and teach each other (including me). **I expect you to be respectful of your peers, TAs and myself by not engaging in activities or conversations not pertaining to class activities (e.g. texting or inappropriate laptop/tablet use) during lecture or section.** I expect you to let me or your TA know when you need help or do not understand something, and I expect you to communicate with us about how we can help you best learn the material.

You can expect me to work to help you understand the material covered in lecture and the texts. I will take your questions seriously, learn from the things you all may teach me and learn from the mistakes I may make. *This course is a work in progress*, and I put great effort into making lecture as interesting, engaging, and informative as I can. Lastly, you can expect me to be respectful of you, honoring the fact that we are all diverse with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, age, political orientation, dis/ability, place of origin, religion and so on. Many of these expectations are also courtesies I hope you extend to each other as well as myself and the course teaching assistants.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, PLAGIARISM AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

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All students are expected to adhere to the university's Code of Academic Integrity (found here: <http://www.theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/AcadInteg/code.html>) and be aware of the related consequences. Your work is expected to be your own, and cheating, in any form, is truly not worth it. You are welcome to study in groups for the exams, but you are not permitted to buy or sell notes to or from on-line sources, such as NoteHall.com, Chegg, their current incarnations, or any other such service. This is not strictly illegal (as long as copyright law is obeyed), but *it is my strong belief that such pay-for-notes services undermine the culture of learning at Cornell. I therefore have a class rule that such activity is prohibited. Violators will be subject to an academic penalty in their final grade.* As of Fall 2013, the Dean of the Faculty has recommended that all instructors include the following language in their syllabi: "Unless you have the express permission of the instructor, you should not buy or sell course materials. Such unauthorized behavior constitutes academic misconduct."

Additionally, your take-home final exam will be submitted through the *Turnitin* tool on the Blackboard course website. *Turnitin* is a form of anti-plagiarism software that allows student work to be compared to a database of previously submitted work, on-line sources, and published academic materials. As of Fall 2013, the Dean of the Faculty has required that all instructors who use *Turnitin* include the following language in their syllabi: "Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site." If you find yourself in a bind, come talk to me. It is better to be honest and accept some minor consequences than permanently tarnish your academic record. A clear definition of plagiarism as well as information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct may be found at: <http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm>.

I am happy to make academic accommodations to students in need. As stated on the Student Disability Services (SDS) website (<http://sds.cornell.edu/>), "Students requesting academic accommodations are required to provide an accommodation letter from SDS to the professor within the first two weeks of classes, or at least 2 weeks before accommodations are expected to begin if accommodations are granted or modified further into the semester. This letter verifies that the student is registered with SDS and specifies accommodations. Accommodations will not be provided retroactively. Early notification and active communication with instructors is the best way to ensure that your accommodations are handled smoothly."

### **INEQUALITY MINOR**

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Controversies about Inequality serves as the required capstone course within the cross-college Inequality Minor. For further information on the Inequality Minor, please consult the website for the [Center for the Study of Inequality](#) (CSI), or contact Clara Elpi the CSI administrator (office: 363 Uris Hall; email: [inequality@cornell.edu](mailto:inequality@cornell.edu); phone: 607-254-8674).

## **CONTACTING ME**

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The best way to reach me is to come talk to me during office hours. However, since this is a large lecture class and my office hours are limited, **I encourage you to first consult the syllabus, Blackboard, a classmate, or contact your TA with any questions.**

This syllabus can be understood as a contract between us. I do, however, reserve the right to make minor changes in the course as I see necessary for the good of the class. If I do, I will make sure everyone is made aware of these changes in a timely and appropriate matter.

**COURSE SCHEDULE  
FALL 2016**

INEQUALITY BASICS

**Week 1**

8/23: **Introduction and Course Overview**

8/25: **What is Inequality? Does it Serve a Purpose?**

*Assigned readings:* Davis & Moore 1945; Tumin 1953; Krueger 2003; Grusky & Wimer 2010; Norton & Ariely 2011

8/26: **Discussion sections** (introductions and activity)

**Week 2**

8/30: **Measurement, Sources, Structure and Growth of Inequality**

*Assigned readings:* Acs 2014; Iceland 2013; Gilbert 2015; Edin & Shaefer (pp. xi-xxiv)

9/1: **Inequalities by Race, Class and Gender: Nature? Nurture? Or Both?**

*Assigned readings:* Sernau 2016; Anderson & Collins 2015; Boyce 2012; Conley 2015; Edin & Shaefer (pp. 1-33)

9/2: **Discussion sections** (activity)

CONTROVERSY 1— WEALTH, POVERTY, AND THE AMERICAN CLASS SYSTEM

**Week 3**

9/6: **Mobility and the American Dream**

*Assigned readings:* Hochschild 2005; Sawhill & Morton 2008; Davidai & Gilovich 2015; Edin & Shaefer (pp. 34-63)

9/8: **The American Social Welfare System – Past and Present**

*Assigned readings:* Spar 2011 (pp. 1-7, 12-32); Waldfogel 2013; Soss & Schram 2008; Edin & Shaefer (pp. 64-91)

9/9: **Discussion sections** (RR)

**Week 4**

9/13: **The Underclass, the Working Poor, and Fragile Families**

*Assigned readings:* Jencks 1992; Blank 2009; Cancian & Reed 2009; Edin & Shaefer (pp. 93-128)

9/15: **Wealth and the 1%**

*Assigned readings:* Keister 2005; Piketty & Saez 2006; Asante-Muhammad et al. 2016; Edin & Shaefer (pp. 129-155)

9/16: **Discussion sections** (discussion of *\$2 a Day*)

CONTROVERSY 2—EDUCATION, SCHOOLS AND ACHIEVEMENT

**Week 5**

9/20: **School Funding and Resources**

*Assigned readings:* Coleman 1990; Hanushek 1996; Kozol 2005; Murnane & Levy 1996; Lewis-McCoy (pp. ix-xi)

9/22: **Guest Lecture – Professors Edin (Johns Hopkins) and Shaefer (Michigan)**

*Assigned readings:* finish Edin & Shaefer (pp. 157-174)

9/23: **Discussion sections (RR)**

**Week 6**

9/27: **Public, Private and Charter Schools**

*Assigned readings:* Conley 2013; Finn et al. 2000; Thernstrom & Thernstrom 2002; Lewis-McCoy (pp. 1-18)

9/29: **Within-School Structures of Inequality**

*Assigned readings:* Lareau 1987; Dufur et al. 2016; Hallinan & Oakes 1994; Lewis-McCoy (pp.19-44)

9/30: **Discussion sections (exam review)**

**Week 7**

10/4: **Race and Achievement Gaps**

*Assigned readings:* Farkas 2008; Fordham & Ogbu 2011; Tyson et al. 2011; Carter 2011; Jencks & Phillips 2011; Ferguson 2008; Lewis-McCoy (pp. 45-65)

10/6: **In Class Exam 1**

10/7: **Discussion sections (cancelled)**

**Week 8**

10/11: **No Class (Fall Break)**

*Assigned readings:* Lewis-McCoy (pp. 66-116)

10/13: **Educational Achievement, Pay and the Gender Gap across the Life course**

*Assigned readings:* Owens 2016; DiPrete & Buchmann 2013; Blau & Kahn 2006; Lewis-McCoy (pp. 117-138)

10/14: **Discussion sections (discussion of *Inequality in the Promised Land*)**

**Week 9**

10/18: **College Entry and Persistence**

*Assigned readings:* Bailey & Dynarski 2011; Klugman 2011; Jack 2014; Lewis-McCoy (pp. 139-157)

10/20: **Guest Lecture—Professor Lewis-McCoy (City College of New York—CUNY)**

*Assigned readings:* finish Lewis-McCoy (pp. 158-187)

10/21: **Discussion sections (RR)**

CONTROVERSY 3— RACE, DISCRIMINATION, AND PUNISHMENT

**Week 10**

10/25: **Racial Disparities across Outcomes, the Life Course, and Time**

*Assigned readings:* Williams et al. 2016; Krieger et al. 2015; ASA 2005; Desmond (pp. 1-52)

10/27: **Discrimination, Culture and Individual Responsibility**

*Assigned readings:* Pager 2008; Anderson 2001; Wilson 2010; Desmond (pp. 53-107)

10/28: **Discussion sections** (exam review)

**Week 11**

11/1: **Policing and Punishment in America**

*Assigned readings:* Goffman 2009; Brayne 2014; Wakefield & Uggen 2010; Desmond (pp. 111-166)

11/3: **In Class Exam 2**

11/4: **Discussion sections** (cancelled)

CONTROVERSY 4— SPATIAL INEQUALITY, HOUSING AND SEGREGATION

**Week 12**

11/8: **Residential Segregation and Urban Inequality**

*Assigned readings:* Stoll 2008; Charles 2003; Sharkey 2009 (skim); Logan & Stults 2011 (skim); Desmond (pp. 167-203)

11/10: **The Suburbs, Spatial Isolation and Rural Poverty**

*Assigned readings:* Murphy & Allard 2015; Lichter & Schafft 2014; Allard 2008 (pp. 247-255); Desmond (pp. 206-254)

11/11: **Discussion sections** (discussion of *Evicted*)

**Week 13**

11/15: **Neighborhood and School Contexts**

*Assigned readings:* Evans et al. 2011; Schwartz 2013; Jargowsky & El Komi 2011; Desmond (pp. 255-292)

11/17: **Guest Lecture—Professor Desmond (Harvard)**

*Assigned readings:* finish Desmond (pp. 293-336)

11/18: **Discussion sections** (field trip)

CONTROVERSY 5—MORAL OBLIGATIONS, GLOBAL INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

**Week 14**

11/22: **Globalization and Economic Development**

*Assigned readings:* Stiglitz 2000; Sachs 2005

11/24: **No Class (Thanksgiving Break)**

11/25: **Discussion sections** (cancelled)

**Week 15**

11/29: **Moral Obligations in an Era of Global Poverty**

*Assigned readings:* Singer 1972; Singer 2004; Miller 2004

12/1: **Justice, Equality, Politics and Change**

*Assigned readings:* Cohen 2009; Desmond & Emirbayer 2011; Cannon 2009

12/2: **Discussion sections** (exam review)

**Final Exam Due: December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016 before midnight!**

\*\*Note, this syllabus is subject to change, if changes occur you will be notified in lecture.