

# **SYO 4530: Social Inequality**

Fall 2023

Monday, Wednesday & Friday at  
12:50 – 1:40 pm

Class Location:  
Turlington Hall 2322

Professor Edo Navot  
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Office hours:  
Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:45 – 2:45 pm  
or by appointment

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INCLUDE “SYO 4530” IN SUBJECT OF ALL EMAILS  
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## **Required Readings:**

Szelenyi, David B. and Grusky Szonja. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2011.

All other readings available on Canvas.

## **Course Description:**

There are many dimensions along which we can account for social inequality: by income, wealth, and other economic assets; between racial groups; by gender and sex; or by power, class, status, or other concepts. By most measures and few exceptions, social inequalities in the United States have been increasing along these dimensions for decades. This course will survey a wide variety of theoretical perspectives and empirical studies of inequality along multiple dimensions, including those listed above as well as others. While our focus will be on perspectives within the discipline of sociology, we will also survey and debate writings from other social sciences. We will address how race, class, gender, and the social institutions and policies of the United States contribute to, exacerbate, or ameliorate social inequalities in measurable outcomes such as income, wealth, health, employment, and incarceration. Each unit of a class will focus on one phenomenon and readings will show different views, which we will debate. Throughout this class we will emphasize critical engagement with the readings, asking questions and engaging in dialogue with a wide array of authors describing social inequality from many perspectives.

## Overview of the class:

Week	Day	Date	Class #	Topic	Unit	
1	Wednesday	08/23/2023	1	Intro to class	Education	
	Friday	08/25/2023	2	History of Education		
2	Monday	08/28/2023	3	Education and social mobility		
	Wednesday	08/30/2023	4	Meritocracy		
	Friday	09/01/2023	5	Meritocracy, opportunity, inequality		
3	Monday	09/04/2023	No Class			
	Wednesday	09/06/2023	6	Affirmative Action		
	Friday	09/08/2023	7	Contradictions of education		
4	Monday	09/11/2023	8	Measuring poverty		Poverty
	Wednesday	09/13/2023	9	Poverty and the underclass		
	Friday	09/15/2023	10	Sources of poverty		
5	Monday	09/18/2023	11	Poverty and social policy		
	Wednesday	09/20/2023	12	Employment relations		
	Friday	09/22/2023	13	Poverty and class		
6	Monday	09/25/2023	14	Racial formation	Race	
	Wednesday	09/27/2023	15	Social construction of race		
	Friday	09/29/2023	16	Racial discrimination		
7	Monday	10/02/2023	17	Racial disparities in health I		
	Wednesday	10/04/2023	18	Racial disparities in health II		
	Friday	10/06/2023	No Class			
8	Monday	10/09/2023	19	Markets and racial discrimination		
	Wednesday	10/11/2023	20	Colorblindness I		
	Friday	10/13/2023	21	Colorblindness II		
9	Monday	10/16/2023	22	Social construction of gender		Gender
	Wednesday	10/18/2023	23	Gender and employment		
	Friday	10/20/2023	24	Gender discrimination		
10	Monday	10/23/2023	25	The gender wage gap		
	Wednesday	10/25/2023	26	Abortion and gender inequality		
	Friday	10/27/2023	27	Overt and subtle power & gender		
11	Monday	10/30/2023	28	Wealth inequality	Wealth, income and Class	
	Wednesday	11/01/2023	29	Top incomes		
	Friday	11/03/2023	30	Economic inequality		
12	Monday	11/06/2023	31	Inequality and class		
	Wednesday	11/08/2023	32	Unions and income inequality		
	Friday	11/10/2023	No Class			
13	Monday	11/13/2023	33	Theories of elites	Elites	
	Wednesday	11/15/2023	34	Preferences of elites		
	Friday	11/17/2023	35	Political influence of elites		
14	Monday	11/20/2023	36	Discussion & review		
	Wednesday	11/22/2023	No Class			
	Friday	11/24/2023	No Class			
<i>Thanksgiving</i>						
15	Monday	11/27/2023	36	Incarceration and inequality	Incarceration	
	Wednesday	11/29/2023	38	Race and incarceration		
	Friday	12/01/2023	40	Class and incarceration		
16	Monday	12/04/2023	42	Intersectionality I	Intersectionality	
	Wednesday	12/06/2023	44	Intersectionality II		

**A full reading list for each class will be provided separately from the syllabus. Readings will either be in Grusky and Szelenyi’s “Inequality Reader” or in pdf format delivered through the class Canvas site.**

### **Class format**

This class will be conducted as a combination of lecture, discussion, and other in-class activities. We will mix these formats to keep classes lively and students engaged. Students are expected to fully complete all readings *BEFORE CLASS* and demonstrate understanding and engagement with the class topics. Class participation is essential for successfully completing this course (and for the learning process in general). This class covers a broad array of social issues revolving around inequality and critical assessment of scholarly perspectives, interrogation of the materials, and synthesis of various approaches will be highly encouraged.

### **Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this semester, students in this course will be able to:

- Understand the empirical trends of social inequalities in the United States in the last four decades; which types/measures of inequality are increasing, and which are decreasing,
- Be familiar with multiple theories and perspectives explaining *why* certain types of inequalities are increasing/decreasing,
- Understand which institutions, policies, and social arrangements contribute to growing inequality and which ones reduce social inequalities,
- Identify and comprehend different sociological perspectives on education, race, gender, class, and their intersections.
- *Most importantly:* critically think about and evaluate different perspectives, synthesize and compare these perspectives, and begin to judge their veracity.

### **Policy on AI writing aids: ChatGPT, Bard, and other LLMs**

Generative AI tools that utilize “Large Language Models” (LLMs) to produce coherent text output were made public last year. These tools include ChatGPT, Google’s Bard, Microsoft Bing, and others. These tools are powerful and I acknowledge that you will likely use them. Below I describe my view of LLMs as they pertain to learning and education so that you understand my perspective. I then describe things you should know about LLMs. Finally, taking everything into account, I describe the LLM/AI policy for this class.

#### *Generative AI in Education and Learning*

AI is a *tool* and, like all tools, has certain strengths and limitations, which I describe below. My primary concern with LLMs is how they will impact your ability to learn. It is very easy to lean on these tools as a crutch and allow them to do your thinking for you. The advent of pocket calculators meant that many people stopped doing simple math calculations in their heads. The advent of GPS-aided navigation meant that people stopped memorizing maps and roads. Our brains welcome most opportunities to offload and outsource tough cognitive tasks and we very

quickly become *reliant* on tools, reducing our brains' capacity to do certain tasks. In many cases, this is a bit of a shame but also not the end of the world; it's part of life and the human condition.

The most important goal in this class is to teach you to think critically. The study of inequality is inherently political and requires you to judge different perspectives. Almost all of these perspectives have some ideology; some are not made in good faith. Learning to think critically takes a long time, requires exposure to many facts and multiples views on a single subject. The writing process is also an essential part of the learnings process, and the process of learning to think critically. (That's why most of the class assignments are written essays, not tests.)

My view of LLMs is that if you use them to do ALL your writing and thinking you are robbing yourself of opportunities to build an enormously important life skill. I also think its possible to use LLMs in a thoughtful and conscientious way so that you are still learning to think critically. I will encourage you all to think about *how* you use LLMs. Whatever decision you make, I want it to be a conscientious and intentional decision, based on your own personal goals, ethics, and perspective.

### *Strengths and Limitations of LLMs*

LLMs can produce text output on an enormous variety of topics. The tool can help you find sources, give you helpful summaries on topics and theories. They can shorten the research cycle and help you discover new sources or perspectives.

However, LLMs can be overly confident while making mistakes and provides inaccurate information. The output produced by LLMs is probabilistically generated, not guaranteed to be correct. Recent changes in LLMs have also made it more difficult to get citations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, LLMs have been programmed to emphasize neutrality, presenting multiple sides of an argument as balanced, even when a preponderance of evidence supports certain positions. LLM's can't synthesize perspectives, will be unlikely to take a position on a debate, and can't produce new ideas.

### *Class Policy on AI/LLMs*

I expect that many of you will utilize an LLM when composing written assignments for this class. I strongly encourage you to use LLMs to spark your writing or help your research but NOT to actually produce the written material you hand in. First, you are responsible for the accuracy of your writing. If ChatGPT or another LLM produces incorrect information and you hand it in, you are responsible. Check what LLMs say, don't assume it is true or accurate.

I will be checking your assignments against software created to detect text written by LLMs.

### **Course assignments, requirements and grading**

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, four short essays over the course of the semester, and a final research paper.

### *Class participation & attendance (25% of overall grade)*

There are three components to class participation; you will be evaluated on each component separately.

1. Actual attendance of class (10%). Showing up is important and for this component, that's all you have to do! Physical presence in the classroom is necessary for success and a requirement of the university. If there are specific challenges for you in this regard, please see me immediately after the first class.
2. In-class participation (15%). In addition to attending class, you are expected to actively participate in class discussions. If this will pose a significant challenge or hardship for you, please discuss it with me immediately after the first class.

**If I have reason to suspect many students are not doing the readings and not prepared or informed for class discussions, I reserve the right to give you pop quizzes on the readings. If quizzes are given, they will count towards your class participation grade.**

### *Short Essays (15% each, 45% of overall grade)*

You will write three short essays over the course of the semester. These essays will summarize the perspectives and debates we review over a single unit. Essays will be 4-6 pages long, double-spaced, Times New Roman size 12 font, 1-inch margins – but I'll live with it if you fudge a *little tiny bit*). Additional details will be provided in class and on Canvas.

### *Final research paper (30% of final grade)*

Students must complete a research paper that demonstrates comprehension and critical engagement with the class materials. (Once again, standard formatting.) The general guideline for the research paper is that it must engage with topics from more than one unit from the semester. One feature of social inequalities is that they are all deeply intertwined. Your research paper should demonstrate comprehension of multiple types of social inequality and discuss how they are related. For instance, you may discuss intersectionalities of race and gender, race and class, incarceration, or poverty, as each relates to race and class, etc. Additional deadlines will be provided in class and on Canvas.

### **Grading Rubrics: How you will be evaluated**

Successful assignments will do two main things: First, you should demonstrate comprehension of the relevant materials, their main arguments and perspectives. Being able to clearly and concisely summarize the arguments of others is an important skill and you will be evaluated on your ability to demonstrate this skill.

Second, critical engagement with the literature. This is an opportunity to voice your perspective on a topic. What are the strengths and weaknesses of different arguments and perspectives we reviewed? Which author or perspective on the relevant topic is incorrect, how and why are they incorrect? Which authors/perspectives do you appreciate or agree with and *why*? When

evaluating this portion of your essays, I will be looking for demonstration of critical engagement, thoughtful discussion, and ability to synthesize complex issues clearly.

In all your written contributions to this class, you will be evaluated on 1. Demonstration of understanding the material by clearly and concisely being able to summarize it in your own words, 2. Demonstration of thoughtful engagement and evaluation of the material as shown by informed, critical views of the material, 3. Ability to synthesize disparate perspectives and topics, to bring them into discussion with each other, and 4. offer your own perspective as informed by facts and backed up with explanations of WHY you argue what you argue and on what basis you take your position.

**Due dates for all assignments will be posted on Canvas.**

### **Office Hours**

Office hours are your chance to speak to me individually and I strongly encourage you to take advantage of my office hours. If your schedule does not permit you to visit my office during the scheduled hours for this class, we can set another time for individual discussion. To ask for an appointment outside office hours, please email me!

### **Accommodation for students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Course Evaluations**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

### **Attendance**

Class attendance is required. Please be aware of the [university attendance policy](#) (link).

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit [one.ufl.edu](https://one.ufl.edu) for screening / testing and vaccination opportunities.
- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.
- As with any excused absence, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up missed work.

## **Grading**

The University of Florida has a set system of grading and which grades corresponding to the number of points you have (i.e. percentages of 100). Please familiarize yourself with the [University grading policy](#).

## **Academic Ethics**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Conduct Code](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor of this class.

## **Recording Class**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040.

## **Campus Resources**

### *Health and Wellness*

*U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

*Counseling and Wellness Center:* [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

*Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

*University Police Department:* [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

*UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

*GatorWell Health Promotion Services:* For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

### *Academic Resources*

*E-learning technical support:* Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or

via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

*Career Connections Center:* Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

*Library Support:* Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

*Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

*Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.



*Student Complaints On-Campus:* [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.](#)

*On-Line Students Complaints:* [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.](#)

## GENERAL EDUCATION POLICIES

This class may be taken to meet a part of your “general education” requirements. As such, it is subject to some additional policies, which are listed below.

First, a minimum grade of C is required for general education credit when taking this course.

The General Education Objectives can be found in [this link](#).

In addition to the course objectives specific to sociology, outlined above, this course addresses several areas of the General Education subject area objectives. The relevant subject areas for this course are:

Diversity: Students examine the historical processes and contemporary experiences characterizing social and cultural differences within the United States. Students engage with diversity as a dynamic concept related to human differences and their intersections, such as (but not limited to) race, gender identity, class, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and (dis)abilities. Students critically analyze and evaluate how social inequities are constructed and affect the opportunities and constraints across the US population. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultures and beliefs mediate their own and other people’s understandings of themselves and an increasingly diverse U.S. society.

Social and behavioral sciences: Social and behavioral science courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and underlying theory or methodologies used in the social and behavioral sciences. Students will learn to identify, describe and explain social institutions, structures or processes. These courses emphasize the effective application of accepted problem-solving techniques. Students will apply formal and informal qualitative or quantitative analysis to examine the processes and means by which individuals make personal and group decisions, as well as the evaluation of opinions, outcomes or human behavior. Students are expected to assess and analyze ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions.

General education classes also require specific student learning outcomes, or SLO, which can be found at [this link](#).

For this class, learning outcomes related to each subject area above are as follows:

Diversity: Students will identify, describe, and explain the historical processes and contemporary experiences characterizing diversity as a dynamic concept related to human differences and their intersections, such as (but not limited to) race, gender identity, class, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disability. Furthermore, students will analyze and evaluate how social

inequities are constructed and affect the opportunities and constraints of different groups in the United States. Analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultures and beliefs mediate understandings of an increasingly diverse U.S. society.

Social and behavioral sciences: Students will learn to identify, describe, and explain key themes, principles, and terminology in the sociology of social inequalities; the history, theory and/or methodologies used; and social institutions, structures and processes relevant to the generation of social inequalities. Furthermore, student will learn to apply formal and informal qualitative analysis effectively to examine the processes and means by which individuals make personal and group decisions. Assess and analyze ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions. Finally, student will Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively.