

Saint Leo University
SOC 343
The Social Ladder: Diversity and Inequality in America

Course Description:

This course examines how our social class, race, ethnicity, and gender all intersect to shape the challenges and opportunities we face. Students will learn to identify the types, causes, and consequences of social stratification and critically assess the role of inequality, especially privilege versus poverty and deprivation, in the United States and in their own lives.

Prerequisite:

SSC 101 and ENG122

Textbook:

Hurst, Charles E., Heather M. Fitz Gibbon, Anne M. Nurse. 2017. *Social Inequality: Forms, Causes, and Consequences*, 9th ed. New York: Routledge. ISBN-13: 9781138688544.

Note: Students will need to read at least one additional book as part of the Essay assignment. See the assignment details below for more information.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Apply the various theories of social stratification and social inequality.
2. Identify the types, causes, and consequences of social stratification in the United States.
3. Critically assess the role of structural inequality, especially as they relate to privilege versus poverty and deprivation, in the United States and in their own lives.
4. Interpret race, class, and gender as social constructs.

Core Value:

Community: Saint Leo University develops hospitable Christian learning communities everywhere we serve. We foster a spirit of belonging, unity, and interdependence based on mutual trust and respect to create socially responsible environments that challenge all of us to listen, to learn, to change, and to serve.

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated based on their successful completion of the following:

Assignment	% of Grade
Discussions (8)	10
Quizzes (4)	10
Exams (2)	40
Essay	40
Total	100%

Grading Scale:

Grade	Score (%)
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76

C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	60-66
F	0-59

Discussions

The purpose of these module exercises is to encourage students to examine the role of social stratification in their lives. Students will post an initial response and substantial responses to at least two classmates' posts.

Quizzes

The four multiple-choice quizzes are designed to ascertain how well students are engaged in the course.

Exams

The Midterm Exam (20%) covers the course content from Modules 1-4 and consists of multiple-choice, true-or-false, and essay questions. The Final Exam (20%) is cumulative and consists of essay questions only.

Essay

Students will write a paper approximately eight pages (3000-3200 words) in length based on one of the three research options below. **Note:** *In addition to the requirements for each option, students should specifically address how the issues of social inequality discovered through their research relate to the Saint Leo core value of community.*

The paper will include a title page and reference page (no abstract) and be formatted per ASA guidelines. Students are encouraged to check the papers with Grammarly.com before submitting the final version to the Dropbox. (See the course Resources area for more information regarding ASA formatting and Grammarly.com.) The essay is due by the conclusion Module 7.

Option 1: Read and analyze the *New York Times* daily. Choose one section to analyze every day for at least four weeks. Focus on one of the following groups: the wealthy, middle class, the working class, or the poor. Apply related concepts about your topic from Diana Kendall's *Framing Class*. You must provide specific examples from **at least ten articles** published during the term to support your conclusions. You should begin work on this assignment immediately by choosing the section of your interest, such as the front ("A") or Business Day section. Please contact the instructor if you want to analyze a different section. Save this section of the newspaper every day. (Note: The online version of the *New York Times* restricts access to portions of the site to online to online subscribers. You may access the complete *New York Times* using the Cannon Memorial Library online databases.)

Option 2: Read *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich (listed in the optional texts section). Discuss the obstacles faced by the working poor as illustrated in this book, and research the cost of living for a single parent of two children in your city while working a minimum wage job. For example, how much is an apartment? Utilities? Bus fare? Health care? Food? Clothes? Opening a bank account? Your essay should also address how being poor is paradoxically expensive for those struggling to get by.

Option 3: Read at least two books about how to get rich. Suggestions include Suze Orman's *The Courage to be Rich*, Robert T. Kiyosaki's *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, and David Bach's *The Automatic Millionaire*, though any other book written for a general audience on the subject is acceptable. What are some of the assumptions these books make about American society? What do these books overlook about the American class structure? How do they employ the Horatio Alger myth? Be sure to apply key ideas from class to critically analyze the idea that anyone who tries hard enough can be wealthy.

Course Schedule:

Module 1 Introduction to the Course

Objectives

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Define social class.
- Summarize the major arguments regarding whether inequality is inevitable.
- Summarize the major arguments regarding whether inequality is desirable.

Assignments

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Post introduction to the Discussion Board	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Read the assigned materials	
Post initial response the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Begin essay assignment	Module 7

Module 2 Economic, Status, and Political Inequality

Objectives

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Discuss the differences between income and wealth and summarize the distribution of each in the United States and the rest of the world.
- Describe social inequality in the forms of economic, status, and political inequality in the United States.
- Analyze the relationship between occupation and prestige.

Assignments

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read the assigned materials	
Post initial response the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete quiz	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Continue essay assignment	Module 7

Module 3 Sex, Gender, and Sexual Orientation Inequality and Gender Identity

Objectives

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Differentiate between sex and gender.
- Discuss some of the cultural and biological factors that impact the expression of gender.
- Assess some of the ways in which gender and heterosexual norms impact social inequality.

Assignments

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read the assigned materials	
Post initial response the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete quiz	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 4 Racial and Ethnic Inequality

Objectives

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast historical and current evidence of inequality between racial/ethnic groups in the United States.
- Compare theories of racial and ethnic inequality.
- Discuss the social construction of race.
- Describe the consequences of racial and ethnic inequality on income and wealth in the United States.
- Summarize how race, class, and gender intersect.

Assignments

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read the assigned materials	
Post initial response the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete Midterm Exam	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 5 Explanations of Inequality

Objectives

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Describe the viewpoints associated with classical and contemporary theoretical explanations of inequality.
- Compare theoretical explanations of social inequality.
- Explain the utility of theoretical explanations of inequality.

Assignments

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read the assigned materials	
Post initial response the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete quiz	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Continued working on the essay assignment	

Module 6**Consequences of Social Inequality****Objectives**

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Recognize how health outcomes form patterns along socioeconomic and racial lines, paralleling underlying inequities in social and economic conditions.
- Compare the different ways street crime, white-collar, and corporate crime are treated by the criminal justice system.
- Analyze the role of race and social class of both victims and perpetrators within the criminal justice system.
- Describe the Labor Movement, Civil Rights Movement, Women's Movement, Black Lives Matter/Student Activism and the cultural context and openings in the social structure that led to their development and prosperity.

Assignments

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read the assigned materials	
Post initial response the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete quiz	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Continue essay assignment	

Module 7 Social Mobility**Objectives**

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Describe and distinguish between the types of social mobility.
- Discuss the issues related to race and social mobility.
- Compare structural versus individual explanations of poverty in the United States.

Assignments

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read the assigned materials	
Post initial response the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit essay assignment	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 8 Poverty and Welfare**Objectives**

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Describe recent changes in welfare policy in the United States and the controversies associated with those changes.
- Summarize how the United States government defines poverty and discuss the implications of that definition.
- Identify the major characteristics of the poor in the United States.

Assignments

Items to be Completed:	Due No Later Than:
Read the assigned materials	
Post initial response the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete Final Exam	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT