San José State University, Fall 2013
Sociology 165: Wealth, Poverty, and Privilege

Professor Scott Myers-Lipton  
Office: DMH 210  
Email Address: smlipton@sjsu.edu

Class Schedule: Tu. & Th., 3-4:15 pm  
Office Hours: Tu. & Th., 1-3 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION
According to the course catalog, Sociology 165 is “[A]n examination of the causes and consequences of inequality along the dimensions of social class, race/ethnicity, gender, citizenship status, and/or sexualities. The approach will be local, national, and international.”

This class will explore why the USA has such a high level of poverty (46 million people or 15% of the U.S. population), what is the relationship between its high poverty rate and it being the wealthiest nation in the world, why is inequality increasing between the wealthy and the poor, and what are various solutions to this poverty and inequality. I have (almost) completed my 3rd book, which is entitled Solving Poverty and Economic Inequality: An Economic Bill of Rights Approach, and we will read it to conclude the course.

Note that Sociologists are interested in examining social or public problems and solutions. As the renowned sociologist C. Wright Mills stated, “personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues - and in terms of the problems of history making.” For example, if in a nation, there is just a small minority of the population in poverty, then it is the individual’s personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the person and her or his skills. But if in that nation, there are 46 million people in poverty, then that is a social problem, and relief must come from a change in social structure (i.e., the arrangement of society). Mills called this approach to understanding reality the sociological imagination. Get ready—we will be using our sociological imagination throughout this course.¹

BOOKS AND READER
There is a book and a reader for the course. The book is Inequality: Social Class and Its Consequences by Stanley Eitzen and Janis Johnson, and it is available at the Spartan Bookstore. The reader is available at San Jose Copy (408-297-6698), which is located on 11 South 3rd Street (near the corner of Santa Clara and 3rd Street).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Two, Short Essay Exams in Class (25% each, 50% of total grade)

Final Exam Essay (25%)
The final exam will consist of an in-class, critical reflection essay exploring the last section of the class.

Participation (25%)
The purpose of evaluating your participation is to encourage and reward students who come to class prepared to discuss and engage with the reading. Your participation grade will be based on the following criteria:

Excellence (A) requires that you play a leadership role in the classroom discussion of the reading (particularly in the large group), and by demonstrating that you have read and thoughtfully considered the text; by discussing points articulately and responding intelligently to other's views; by asking insightful questions and taking responsibility for the overall quality of the conversation.

Above average (B) requires that you participate actively in the classroom discussions, demonstrate good knowledge of the text, work to achieve understanding, listen to other viewpoints, and ask sound questions.

Average (C) requires that you follow the discussion actively in the classroom, make occasional comments, have a basic knowledge of the text, and sometimes ask questions.

Below average (D) requires that you occupy a seat and occasionally show signs of life.

Failure (F) requires that you occupy a seat but show no signs of life.

At the end of the course, you will be asked to evaluate your level of participation. This evaluation will be taken seriously when participation grades are determined.

**GRADING SCALE**
Since the various parts of the course add up to 100%, each percent equals a point. For example, your participation is 25% of your grade; thus, this assignment is worth 25 points. The scale that I use to measure your work is the following:

- 98-100=A+
- 93-97=A
- 90-92=A-
- 88-89=B+
- 83-87=B
- 80-82=B-
- 78-79=C+
- 73-77=C
- 70-72=C-
- 68-69=D+
- 63-67=D
- 59 & below =F

**EXTRA CREDIT: SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT**
Students who want to receive extra credit can be involved in a service-learning project focused on poverty and income inequality, and requires a 1-2 hour commitment per week throughout the semester. Students will be required to keep track of your hours in a service-learning log. In addition, you will be required to write 3-4 paragraphs about what you are learning in your project, to be turned each month on the 15th. If the service-learning hours and reflection papers are completed, students will receive a minimum of a 1/3rd to a full grade increase on their final grade, depending on the quality of the work.

There will also be other extra credit opportunities throughout the semester. To receive the extra credit, you need to go to the event highlighted in the reading schedule, and then write 3-4 paragraphs reflection paper on how the event is connected to this course. Generally, 1-3 points are added to the first and/or second essays.
SJSU WRITING CENTER
The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall in Room 126. Please take advantage of this resource. The Writing Center website is: http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter.

FACULTY WEB PAGE
You can download a copy of the syllabus at my faculty web page, which is at: http://www.sjsu.edu/people/scott.myers-lipton. You can also get to my web page at the SJSU home page and go to More Quick Links>Faculty Pages link.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY
According to the University’s Academic Integrity Policy, “cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means (see Section 1.1.1 through 1.1.7), while plagiarism is “the act of representing the work of another as one’s own without giving appropriate credit, regardless of how that work was obtained, and/or submitting it to fulfill academic requirements (see Section 1.2.1 and 1.2.2). The university’s Academic Integrity Policy is available at: http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf.

If I determine there has been a violation of this policy, students will receive an automatic zero for the paper. In addition, I will file a report with the Academic Affairs Judicial Officer regarding the violation of the academic integrity policy. (Please note: I often checks papers on the web!) To learn more about student conduct and ethical development, go to http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html.

CAMPUS POLICY IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT
Sociology 165 complies with campus policy regarding the American Disabilities Act. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability (e.g., if you need a note taker, you need to view the course readings on a screen, or you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated), please contact me as soon as possible. In addition, if your disability Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that a student with a disability register at SJSU’s Disability Resource Center (DRC, Admin 110, 924-6000) to establish a record of that disability.

OTHER INFORMATION
1. **Cell Phones and Computers:** All cell phones are BANNED from this classroom. Please do not have them out. If you have a cell phone out during class, I will give you a warning, and then the next time it is out, I will ask you to leave the class for the day. You are free to return the following class, of course, without the cell phone. In addition, any type of networking on the computer is banned. If you use your computer, and it is open to Facebook, gmail, etc, I will give you one warning, and then ask you to leave the class if it occurs again.

2. **Office Hours:** My office hours are on Tuesday and Thursdays. Office hours are generally used to help clarify information from lectures, discussions, group activities, readings, essays, or social action projects. However, at least **once this semester,** I would appreciate it if you stopped by my office so that I can get to know you better on a personal basis.