San José State University, Fall 2013
Sociology 80: Social Problems

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

Class Schedule: Tu. & Th. 10:30-11:45 am
Office Hours: Tu. and Th., 1-3 pm

Core General Education Social Sciences (D3)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Dr. Martin Luther King stated that the black revolution of the mid-1950s and 1960s was more than a civil rights movement, as it was “forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws—racism, poverty, militarism and materialism.” King called these social problems—i.e., racism, poverty, and militarism—the “giant triplets” and the “triple evils”, and he saw them related to one another. This class will examine Dr. King’s “giant triplets” (plus one) as a way to meet the Sociology 80 requirements spelled out in the course catalog and the General Education Area D guidelines.

According to the course catalog, Sociology 80 provides: “Sociological analysis of selected contemporary social problems such as housing and homelessness, economy and employment, environment and consumerism, family and divorce, crime and drugs, politics and media, race and gender, wealth and poverty, war and peace.” More specifically, this course will explore the following issues (and more):

- advertising and body image
- Afghanistan and Iraq wars
- domestic surveillance
- domestic violence
- Economic Bill of Rights
- empire
- excessive inequality
- unequal education
- houselessness
- housing discrimination
- immigration
- middle class squeeze
- militarism
- poverty
- racism
- school segregation
- sexism
- torture
- workplace discrimination
- who rules America

In addition, the last part of the class will focus on social solutions. 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.

One last thing: this is a Sociology course, so you should know something about one of the most famous American sociologists, C. Wright Mills. Mills once said that, “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 (like in the United States), 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.\(^1\)

**READING**

The reading for this class is a course reader, and it is available at San Jose Copy (408-297-6698), which is located on 11 South 3\(^{rd}\) Street (near the corner of Santa Clara and 3\(^{rd}\) Street).

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR D3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objective</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students shall be able:</td>
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<td>• place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts.</td>
<td>• readings and lectures</td>
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<td>• to identify and analyze the social dimension of society as a context for human life the processes of social change and social continuity, the role of human agency in those social processes, and the forces that engender social cohesion and fragmentation.</td>
<td>• readings, small group work, active-learning exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>• identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them.</td>
<td>• readings, lectures, classroom discussions</td>
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<td>• evaluate social science information, draw on discussions different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues.</td>
<td>• readings, essays, classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>• to apply multidisciplinary material to a topic relevant to policy and social action at the local, national, and/or international levels.</td>
<td>• readings, essay, and lectures</td>
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COURSE EVALUATION:

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

- **Five Very Short Quizzes (5% each / 25% of total grade)**
  The purpose of these very short quizzes (i.e., less than 5 minutes) is to encourage reading. In order to encourage you to read, you will be given short quizzes throughout the semester. If you do the readings, these short quizzes will be very easy.

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-97</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-87</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>78-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-77</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63-67</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 &amp; below</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
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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 advance of this resource. The Writing Center website is: [http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter](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](http://www.sjsu.edu/people/scott.myers-lipton). You can also get to my web page at the More Quick Links>Faculty Web Pages link on the SJSU home page.
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 80 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.