Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Scott Myers-Lipton
Office Location: DMH 210
Telephone: 408-924-5761
Email: smlipton@sjsu.edu
Office Hours: Tu. & Th., 12 pm-1 pm
Class Days/Time: Tu. & Th., 10:30-11:45 am
Classroom: DMH 358
Prerequisites: SOCI 1 or equivalent

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.” In light of the catalog description, this class will explore what are the implications of the top 0.1% controlling as much wealth as the bottom 90% in the USA, why is inequality increasing between the wealthy and the poor, what is the relationship between the USA’s high poverty rate and it being the wealthiest nation in the world, and what are various solutions to our excessive inequality and poverty.

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 43 million people in poverty (15% of the population), 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, which we will use throughout this course.1

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the various components of social class.
2. Analyze data on stratification using quintiles and the gini co-efficient.
3. Explain why income and wealth inequality has increased in the USA.
4. Evaluate various solutions to income and wealth inequality.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook
The textbook is by Scott Myers-Lipton, and is entitled *Ending Extreme Inequality: An Economic Bill of Rights to End Poverty* (ISBN: 10: 9781612057279). It is available at Spartan Bookstore or on-line.

Other Readings
There is a reader for this course. The reader is available at San Jose Copies (408-297-6698), which is located on 109 E. Santa Clara Street, two stores down from the Chevron gas station.

Course Requirements and Assignments
Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

This course has four course requirements: quizzes, exams, a creative project, and participation.

8 Very Short Quizzes (20% of total grade)
The purpose of these very short quizzes (i.e., less than 5 minutes) is to encourage reading. In order to encourage the reading process, you will be given short quizzes throughout the semester. If you do the reading for each class, these short quizzes will be very easy to answer.

Two Exams in Class (20% each, 40% of total grade)
The exams are your opportunity to demonstrate that you have done the reading, thought about it deeply, and can explain it.

Creative Project (20%)
The creative project provides an opportunity to explore an issue from the course through a video, drawing, poster board, poetry, photography, or music. You will also write a 1-page overview of your creative project.

Participation (20%)
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. This leadership role includes reading and thoughtfully considering the text, discussing points articulately and responding intelligently to other's views, asking insightful questions, and taking responsibility for the overall quality of the conversation.

Above average (B) requires that you participate regularly in the classroom discussions, demonstrate good knowledge of the text, discuss points articulately and respond intelligently to other's views; work to achieve understanding, listen to other viewpoints, ask sound questions, but you do not take a strong leadership role in the overall class discussion.

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.

Final Examination or Evaluation

In this class, the final will be a final exam.

Grading Information

Since the various parts of the course add up to 100%, each percent equals a point. For example, your participation is 20% of your grade; thus, this assignment is worth 20 points. The scale that I use to measure your work is the following:

98-100=A+  88-89=B+  78-79=C+  68-69=D+  59 & below =F
93-97=A  83-87=B  73-77=C  63-67=D
90-92=A-  80-82=B-  70-72=C-  60-62=D-

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 log. In addition, you will be required to write 3-4 paragraphs about what you are learning in your project, to be turned in on the first of each month. 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 your 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 campus event, and then write 3-4 paragraphs reflection paper: (1) describing what you saw and heard (i.e., the major points and key lessons of the event), and (2) integrating your insights with the reading in Wealth, Poverty, and Privilege. If you do this, you will receive +2 on a quiz score and if you don’t, you will receive +1.5 or less. They must be turned in 1 week after the event. If not, they will receive +1 on a quiz score (or less). You can go to a total of 5 extra credit events

Classroom Protocol

1. Cell Phones and Computers: Please do NOT use your cell phone once the class starts. If you need to answer a text, step outside and do so. In addition, any type of social networking on your computer is NOT allowed. If you use your computer to take notes or do the reading, do not have it also open to Facebook, gmail, etc. This makes me very unhappy, as it is a block to your participation, as well as the group process.

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.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9 (http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf), relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ Syllabus Information web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/
Course Schedule

WEEK 1:
8/22 DISCUSS SYLLABUS AND CLASS

WEEK 2:
8/27 NO CLASS
8/29 SOCIAL CLASS

Reader:
Alhanati, “Which Income Class…?”, p. 4-6
Frankenfield, “Which Income Class…?”, p. 7-15

WEEK 3:
9/3 QUINTILES AND THE TOP 1% & .1%

Reader:
Investopedia, “Quintiles”, p. 16
Ginsburgh, “Incomes & Inequality: Executive Summary”, p. 17-21
Politics That Work: Graph, “Percentage Change in…”, p. 22
Advisor Perspective: Graph, “Real (Inflation-Adjusted) Average Household Income”, p. 23
Statista: Graph, “Shares of Household Income of Quintiles in the United States…”, p. 24
EPI: Graph, “Cumulative Percent Change in Real Annual Wages, by Wage Group…”, p. 25
Thomas, “How Do We Know Income Inequality is Getting Worse?”, p. 26-28

Video: Capitalism: A Love Story

9/5 USA INCOME INEQUALITY: WE ARE #1

Reader:
Leonard, “Our Broken Economy, in One Simple Chart”, p. 29-31
Stewart, “One Chart that Shows How Much Worse Income Inequality is in America…”, p. 32-33
Gongloff, “U.S. Has the Worst Income Inequality in the Developed World…”, p. 34-35
Peterson, “McDonald’s & Starbucks CEOs Make More than $9,200…”, p. 36
Washington Center, “Gender Wage Inequality in the United States”, p. 37-40
Margolis, “California Ranks as Poorest State, One of the Worst for Income Inequality”, p. 41-42
Kendall, “Income Inequality in the Bay Area is Among Nation’s Highest”, p. 43-44
Ingraham, “How Rising Inequality Hurts Everyone, Even the Rich”, p. 45-47

Video: We are #1, Jon Stewart
WEEK 4:

9/10 USA WEALTH INCOME INEQUALITY: WE ARE #1

Reader:
- Sherman, “America is the Richest, and Most Unequal, Country”, p. 48-49
- Bruenig, “Top 1% Up $21 Trillion. Bottom 50% Down $900 Billion”, p. 50-51
- Amadeo, “What is Average American Net Worth?”, p. 52-55
- Thompson, “How You, I, and Everyone Got the Top 1 Percent All Wrong”, p. 63-66
- Kirsch, “The 3 Richest Americans Hold More Wealth Than Bottom 50%…” p. 67-68
- Hjelmgaard, “Vast Majority of New Wealth Last Year Went to Top 1%”, p. 69

9/12 USA POVERTY: The History, Native American Contributions to Egalitarianism; Early Republic & Pre-Civil War America; After the Civil War

Reader: Myers-Lipton, p. 70-90

Video: ABC Diane Sawyer

WEEK 5:

9/17 USA POVERTY: The History, The (Un) Progressive Era; Great Depression & New Deal

Reader: Myers-Lipton, p. 90-109

9/19 USA POVERTY: The History, War on Poverty; Dismantling New Deal & War on Poverty

Reader: Myers-Lipton, p. 109-130

WEEK 6:

9/24 TODAY’S POOR (BOTTOM 20%): U.S. is ‘World Leader’ in Child Poverty

Reader:
- Sauter, “Faces of Poverty”, p. 137-143
- UC Davis, “How is Poverty Measured in the United States?”, p. 144-145
- Census Bureau: Four Graphs, “Poverty Rates”, p. 146-149
- Semuels, “Poor at 20, Poor for Life”, p. 157-158

Video: 60 minutes
9/26 HOUSELESS: People Without Homes

Reader:
National Law Center, “Homelessness in America: Overview of Data and Causes”, p. 159-161
Cohen, “4 Homelessness Trends from 2018 and What They Could Mean for 2019”, p. 165-167
Deruy, “Shocking Number of Homeless Students in San Jose Sparks Outrage”, p. 170-172

Video: SHA

WEEK 7:

10/1 BOTTOM 60%: Working and Middle Classes (4th and 3rd Quintiles)

Reader:
Arends, “Why the Middle Class is Shrinking”, p. 173-174
White, “So Long, Middle Class: Middle-Income Jobs are Disappearing the Fastest”, p. 175-176
Tavernise, With His Jobs Gone, an Autoworker Wonders, “What Am I as a Man?”, p. 177-182
Census Bureau: 3 Graphs, “Median Household Income”, p. 183-185
Kochhar, “The American Middle is Stable in Size, but Losing Ground…”, p. 186-190

Video: A Divided Class

10/3 CAPITALISM: Changes in Past 40 years

Reader:
Johnson, “Forest and the Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise”, p. 191-194
Svat, “Capitalism Isn’t Broken”, It’s Working All Too Well”, p. 198-199
Buchwald, “China’s Entrance into WTO Costs US 3.4 Million Jobs, New Study Finds”, p. 204-205

Video: Frontline: Left Behind / Life and Debt

WEEK 8:

10/8 .01 (and .1) PLAN

Reader:
Fortune 500 Graphs, p. 210-212
CBS News, “These Companies Ranked in the Top 15 on the Fortune 500 List”, p. 213-214
Gilson, “It’s Not the 1 Percent Controlling Politics. It’s the .01 Percent”, p. 215-216
McKibben, The Koch Brothers New Brand”, p. 217-224

Video: Born Rich
10/10 TAX POLICY

Reader:
NY Times: Graph, “Effective Income Tax Rates”, p. 232
Senate Joint Comm., “A Millionaire’s Tax Rate, Now and Then”, p. 233
Salisbury, “What Really Happened to Your Taxes While Obama Was President”, p. 234-235
EPI: “The US Economy is Not Suffering From “Too High” Corporate Taxes”, p. 236

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

WEEK 9

10/15 MINIMUM WAGE

Reader:
Adone & Capisi, “There’s Not a Single US State Where a Minimum Wage Worker…”, p. 240-241
Cooper, “Congress Has Never Let the Federal Minimum Wage Erode For This Long”, p. 242
Zipperer: “The Erosion of the Federal Minimum Wage Has Increase Poverty…”, p. 243-244
Noguchi, “Measure Set Sights on Wage Increase”, p. 245
Dean, “Student Activism as the Tip of the Spear”, p. 246-248
Cooper, “Raising Federal Wage to $15 by 2025 Would Lift Wages for Over 33…”, p. 258-260

Video: Walk the Walk

10/16: Smith & Carlos Day

Reader: Myers-Lipton, “Tommie Smith, John Carlos & the Statues”, p. 261-261-1

10/17 UNIONS

Reader:
Semuels, “Fewer Unions, Lower Pay For Everyone”, p. 262-264
Schmitt and Zipperer, “Union Busting is Big Business,” p. 265-266
Graph: Public vs Private Sector Union Rate…”, p. 267
Fairchild, “Middle Class Decline Mirrors the Fall of Unions in One Chart”, p. 268-268-1
EPI, “When Workers Have More Leverage, Income Growth is More Equal”, p. 269-270

Video: The High Price of Low Prices

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Week 10:

10/22 EXAM 1 (In-Class)
10/24 SOLUTIONS TO “AMERICAN CARNAGE” and “IT’s A MESS”: Trump’s response

Reader:
- Reuters, “I Will Be the Greatest Jobs President that God has Ever Created’: Trump”, p. 276-277
- O’Neil, “Here’s Trump Hating on America. Is it Time for Him to Leave?”, p. 278-280
- Amadeo, “President Donald Trump’s Economic Plan”, p. 281-288
- Gillon, “Why Are So Many White Men So Angry”, p. 289-292

Week 11:

10/29 SOLUTIONS TO “AMERICAN CARNAGE” and “IT’s A MESS”: Trump’s response

Reader:
- Patterson, “Coal Comeback? Coal at New Low After 2 Years Under Trump”, p. 300-303
- Scott, “GOP Tax Law’s Lopsided Giveaway to Corps, Explained in 1 Sentence”, p. 304-305

10/31 SOLUTION TO WEALTH AND INCOME INEQUALITY: Tax Reform

Reader:
- Saez & Zucman, “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Tax Hike Idea is Not About Soaking…”, p. 312-314
- Chapman, “AOC Wants to Soak the Rich.”, p. 315-315i
- Stein and Ingraham, “Elizabeth Warren to Propose New ‘Wealth Tax’ on Very…”, p. 316-319

Video: AOC and Warren

Week 12:

11/5 SOLUTION TO WEALTH INEQUALITY: Reparations

Reader:
- Syndicated, “As a Nation Built on Slave Labor, it is Time to Finally Talk about…”, p. 320-322
- Malveaux, “HR-40 and the Promise of Reparations for African Americans”, p. 323-325
- Coates, “Ta-Nehisi Coate’s Testimony on Reparations”, p. 326-327

11/7 SOLUTION TO INCOME INEQUALITY: Federal Job Guarantee (Right to a Job)

Reader:
- Kopf, “Trump’s New Chief Economist is Known for Arguing that US Inequality…”, p. 332-333

Book:
Week 13

11/12 SOLUTION TO INCOME INEQUALITY: A Green New Deal

Reader:
Hess, AOC’s Green New Deal Includes a Federal Jobs Guarantee…”, p. 334-335
Witt, “The Optimistic Activists for a Green New Deal”, p. 336-341
Irfan, “The Green New Deal is Fracturing a Critical Base for Democrats: Unions”, p. 342-346
Haskins, “Green New Deal would destroy American Dream, Create…”, p. 347-349

Video: AOC on the Green New Deal

11/14 SOLUTION TO INCOME INEQUALITY: A Living Wage (students choose campaign)

Book:
Myers-Lipton, Ch. 2, p. 23-25, 32-41

Week 14:

11/19 SOLUTION TO INEQUALITY: Right to Decent Housing (students choose)

Reader:
Alcindor, “Don’t Make Housing For the Poor Too Cozy, Carson Warns”, p. 350-352

Book:
Myers-Lipton, Chapter 3, p. 43-46, 55-64

11/21 SOLUTION TO INEQUALITY: Right to a Good Education (students choose)

Reader:
Nazaryan, “DeVos Is Coming for Your Public Schools”, p. 353-359

Book:
Myers-Lipton, Chapter 4, p. 65-72, 83-93 Problem & History

Video: From First to Worst

Week 15:

11/26 DUE: Creative Project
11/28  Day of Thanks (Alcatraz Sunrise Ceremony)

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Week 16:

12/3 SOLUTIONS TO INEQUALITY: Right to Adequate Medical Care

Reader:
Scott, “The Trump Administration Latest Steps to Undermine the ACA, Explained”, p. 360-362

Book:
Myers-Lipton, p, 95-98, 109-119

12/5 EPILOGUE

Reader:
Myers-Lipton, “Dr. King’s Legacy For Today”, p. 363-365
Barber and Theoharis, “Poverty in America is a Moral Outrage”, p. 366-367

Book:
Myers-Lipton, Epilogue

Video: The Matrix

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

12/12 FINAL: EXAM 2 (In-Class)
Thursday
9:45 AM-noon