

**Department:** Sociology

**Course No:** 125/W

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Race, Class, and Gender

**Contact:** Bradley Wright

**Content Area:** CA2-Social Sciences

**Diversity:** CA4 Non-International

**WQ:** Writing

**Catalog Copy:** Prerequisite: Engl 110 or 111 or 250.

**Course Information:** 1a. The goal of this course is to examine recent research about how the intersection of race, class, and gender affects the lives, identities, and social outcomes of Americans. It aims to help students understand how race, class, and gender are social constructions and how major institutions support these systems of inequality.

1b. The course typically requires a textbook and supplementary text, and students are expected to read chapters each week. A midterm and final examination are standard, though some sections also require papers, and some have more than two examinations. The examinations are usually a combination of objective (i.e., multiple choice) and essay questions.

1c. Major themes include: traditional sociological paradigms, the social construction of race, class, and gender, controversies about the declining significance of race, inequalities in education, gender segregation in educational settings, residential segregation, barriers to black middle-class advancement, poverty and inequality, recent theories and research on the intersection of race, class, and gender.

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed:** 1. Acquire critical judgment. It helps students acquire critical judgment by exposing them to varying interpretations of data and asking them to assess the merits of these interpretations. Additionally, since many students have not been exposed to people from a variety of race and class backgrounds, the course helps them to question their assumptions about social arrangements.

2. Acquire awareness of the era and society. It helps students acquire awareness of their society and era by showing how institutions and human interactions shape the opportunities and outcomes faced by people from different social classes and races and how, within groups, opportunities and outcomes also vary by gender. Since many of our students have not had extensive exposure to groups outside of their immediate residential communities, this course helps them to understand the complex nature of interaction of groups in the United States .

3 Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience. It helps students to acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience by exposing them to how institutions influence the identities, experiences, and opportunities of racial, ethnic, gender, and class groups and how members of groups respond to the possibilities before them. That response includes cultural factors.

**CA2 Criteria:** 1. The course examines issues of race, class, and gender from the perspective of classical theoretical issues of sociology, including stratification, socialization, individual agency, discrimination, and cultural norms. In addition, it uses theories of major writers in sociology (such as Durkheim and Weber) and the work of less discipline-bound writers, such as Marx.

2. The difficulties of acquiring unbiased information about race, gender, and class issues occupies a major place in the course. The primary methods of social science--field work and surveys--are examined for the types of information that they yield, and the types of biases that can distort them.

3. Interactions between among groups, classes, and institutions, both in conflict and cooperation, are the focus of this course. In particular, it examines society in terms of the nexus of race, class, and gender. While not a lot of focus is given the natural environment, it comes up in issues of

discrimination, such as the disproportionately poor environmental conditions sometimes faced by minorities.

4. This course provides various conceptual and methodological tools by which to analyze social group interactions as they revolve around issues of race, class, and gender. The analysis of these interactions take place at various levels of analysis, including the individual, the family, the group, and society as a whole.

**CA4 Criteria:** This course meets criterion 2 (social systems as cultural creations) and criterion 5 (awareness of the dynamics of social power on diverse groups). Current sociological theories emphasize how race, gender, and social class are social constructions; that is, their social meaning are created by the interactions of institutions and by the patterned interactions of individuals. Such interactions in turn create both the opportunities and hurdles faced by individuals with specific race, class, and gender characteristics. They offer people specific possibilities for the development of a social self, including its presentation to self and others. Because the distribution of power in society varies institutionally and varies also by ascribed (race, class, and gender) characteristics of individuals, members of some organizations have power to affect these hurdles. For instance, the unequal distribution of funding per student between school systems and tracking within schools affects individuals' educational opportunities, much as past and some present mortgage practices influence the accumulation of wealth by, say, white and black Americans. This course examines how differential social power contributes to the maintenance of such inequalities.

**W Criteria:** 1. There are three learning objectives in this course: (1) students should understand and be able to apply theoretical and empirical tools introduced in the course to understand and evaluate sociological study of the nexus of race, class, and gender; (2) students should gain substantive knowledge of predominant theories of race, class, and gender, and specifically should be able to critically analyze each theory's major concepts, assumptions, and claims about the social world; (3) students should gain a basic understanding of the race, class, and gender, and specifically should be able to critically analyze these. The writing component of this class is key in meeting these objectives as it requires students to explore and evaluate an aspect of sociology.

Students are required to write a paper (minimum 15 pages) analyzing a recent book presenting original research on the intersection of race, class, and gender [book selection varies by semester]. In the paper, students must explain the significance of the research for the field, summarize the author's arguments and research findings, and then critically analyze the content of the book by applying the theoretical perspectives, methodological principles, and empirical "facts" about race, class, and gender as learned in

class. The paper counts for 33% of the course grade and must be passed in order to pass the course (as stipulated in the syllabus).

Additional written work is required of students in the course, including approximately 15 short in-class essay quizzes that focus on comprehension of material in the readings (33% of course grade) and essay questions on the final exam (33% of course grade).

2. There are three modes of writing instruction employed in the course. First, early in the semester, the instructor provides formal instruction to the class regarding the requirements of the paper assignment, desired structure of the paper, and how to avoid common mistakes in academic writing (e.g., the use of passive voice, contractions, sentence structure). Second, students are required to turn in a complete, initial draft of their paper between weeks 8 and 10 of the semester. The instructor provides detailed written commentary on each student's initial draft focusing on mechanics (e.g., grammar, clarity, organization) and analytic quality (e.g., accurate comprehension of theory and research, creative application of theories from class). As well, the instructor provides in-class discussion of common problems evidenced in the students' initial drafts. Finally, the instructor actively encourages students to take advantage of one-on-one writing assistance during office hours, via email, and during appointments scheduled at the student's request.

3. All students must turn in a revised, final draft of their paper. For the revision, students are required to address all of the instructor's comments made on the initial draft (clearly stipulated in the syllabus as one criterion for grading). To ensure students fully address these comments in their revision, they are required to turn in a copy of the initial draft that includes the instructor's commentary along with their final draft. Students' grade on the final draft reflects the analytic and creative quality of the substance of the paper, writing mechanics (e.g., grammar, clarity, organization), and the extent to which students successfully addressed the instructor's comments on the initial draft.

**Role of Grad Students:** With suitable training and supervision, graduate students sometimes teach their own sections of this course. Graduate students are trained to teach in department's graduate teacher training program that is centered on classes such as Soc 107W. In Soc 107W, they serve as T.A.s who run once-per-week discussion sections. Each week they meet with their professor to debrief them on the previous week's discussion sections and examine how well the class responded to their presentation. They also discuss grading issues and examination construction. Finally, the professor observes them in their discussion sections and gives them written feedback for improvement.

Once the graduate student passes the training program and they have finished their master's degree, they can be assigned Sociology 125W. In teaching this course, they will be supervised by a faculty member who specializes in the study of social problems. This supervision takes various forms, including meeting to plan the syllabus, discussing how to structure exams and written requirements, and weekly problem-solving.