

**Social Inequality**  
**Sociology 165, Section 1001, Fall 2005**  
MW 2:25 - 3:40 p.m.      Room: 184 LL

Instructor: Roberta L. Coles

Office Room: 420 LL

Office Hours: By appointment

Office Phone: 288-3440

Email Address: "roberta.coles@marquette.edu"

Home Phone: 608-238-9180. Call during the hours of 9 am - 5 pm TTh or between 9-10 in the evening. Leave a voice-mail message, as I often screen calls when I am there.

**Class Philosophy and Pedagogy**

*Service is no substitute for action, though it might well be the prelude to action. It is right and good that we seek to help the less, but we must remember that assuaging the condition of the poor is not the same as working to remedy the root causes of poverty. We can contribute goods to food pantries, raise funds for worthy causes through bake sales and the like, but patriotism—to country and humankind—prompts us to undertake more radical action. "Charity is a matter of personal attributes; justice a matter of public policy. Charity seeks to alleviate the effects of injustice; justice seeks to eliminate the causes of it. Charity in no way affects the status quo, while justice leads inevitably to political confrontation."*  
*Wm Sloan Coffin*

This course is a Manresa course, which means it incorporates the theme of vocation. Vocation has a couple different meanings within this course. I want you to think pragmatically about what specific careers in social justice you might consider, as well as more generally of how—no matter what career or job you hold—you can incorporate your own social values into your life. In order to do this, in addition to studying various forms of social inequality--income and wealth, status, race, gender, and institutional—you will be reading about and talking with others who have chosen social justice occupations.

Generally, our objectives are to understand the meaning of equality and inequality and theories explaining inequality. We will identify some of the issues relevant to each social inequality, highlight some of the institutional and cultural processes that lead to inequality, and identify and assess some of the policies that have been tried or suggested to mitigate various forms of inequality. We will use a seminar-style learning methodology. That is, for most of our in-class time we will discuss the readings and/or assigned exercises. The class also has an optional, but highly recommended, service-learning component.

**Assignments and Grading**

**Exam & quizzes:** There is one midterm exam, which is a combination of multiple choice and short answer or essay questions. That will be worth 30% of your final grade. Then there will either be several quizzes after the midterm, which will be combined and weighted to be worth 25% of your grade, or a final exam worth 25% of your grade. A final exam is formatted similar to the midterm, though it may include an essay question instead of short answer questions. We'll decide this together.

**Written assignments:** You will write a paper (about 15 pgs) focusing on a solution to an aspect of social inequality. Some of you will use Service Learning for your information and others of you will research a policy. The due dates are designated in the schedule below. The paper has

several purposes. First, you are researching a program or policy that is addressing a social problem. So you need to find information about what the social problem is, describe the policy/program and how it is intended to work, and if possible assess how well it is working. Second, you should interview people related to this program/policy, either as staff or advocates, in order to assess their role in this social problem and solution. The third purpose is for you to put yourself into the picture, reflecting on what you think of this policy/program, whether social justice work is something you could do, and what you have learned about your role in the world. See p.5 for more specific guidelines.

Written assignments are always graded on form: writing style, grammar, spelling, organization).

**Discussion:** Your discussion grade is sectioned into two parts. One part is based on your facilitation of an in-class discussion for which you design and pose to the class questions based on the readings and exercises (if any) assigned for that day. You may use large and/or small group format to facilitate comprehension of and commentary on the issue. You will be graded on the quality of the questions (are they designed to clarify the ideas, elicit informed opinion, apply the ideas to real-life experience, etc.) and your ability to facilitate the in-class discussion (get most people involved, follow up on comments, keeping discussion on track, etc.).

The second section of your discussion grade will be based on the quantity and quality of your input in class (questions and comments in class, as well as outside of class).

### GRADE BREAKDOWN

Quizzes or Final:	25%
Midterm exam:	30%
Discussion:	10% from leading a discussion 15% from in class discussion (participation)
SL or paper:	20%
Attendance:	2 points subtracted for each absence after 3.

### Class Rules

1. *Attendance.* Because of the seminar nature of this course, I will be taking attendance. If you are going to miss class for an extended period (a week or more) or you are going to miss any assignments/quizzes, notify me and your group members beforehand that you will be absent. Marquette policy allows professors to lower the course grade one level after 4 absences and to drop a student from the class for excessive absences.

2. *Class Decorum.* If you need to come to class late or leave early, do so discreetly. It irks me when people are gathering up their belongings in anticipation of the close of class while others are trying to speak.

3. *Problems.* Try to address problems early and constructively. If you need help or don't understand class expectations, ask early. Everyone will get more out of the class if any problems can be resolved early in the semester.

### Assigned Reading

Daloz, et al. 1996. **Common Fire: Lives of commitment in a complex world.** Beacon Press.

Most other readings are on Electronic Reserve. Some additional handouts.

**Schedule of Lectures, Readings, and Assignments**  
(Subject to change)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
M, 8/29:	Introduction. Group Assignments. Class content/structure & SL explained. Possible paper topics. Plagiarism.
W, 8/31:	Group meetings, Interlocking Oppressions. Where do you fit in? Be prepared to discuss (BPTD) Women of the Klan (ER). Domination & Subordination (ER) Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism (ER)
M, 9/5:	LABOR DAY—no class
W, 9/7:	What is equality and inequality? Different types of equality? What is the goal? Distributive norms exercise.
M, 9/12:	Why is there inequality? Individual v. structural explanations. Positives and negatives of inequality? BPTD Blaming the Victim (ER) Positive Functions of the Undeserving Poor (ER) Some Principles of Stratification (ER)
W, 9/14:	Policies to Address Inequalities BPTD Making Ends Meet (ER) Executive Summary (ER) Introduction (to Take the Rich off Welfare) (ER)
M, 9/19:*	Status inequality. BPTD Peer Power (ER) and The New Tattoo Subculture (ER) Think of a social group that you are a part of (music, basketball, dancing, chess, race, feminist, religious, etc.) and be prepared to discuss how various statuses are reflected formally and informally in that group. For instance, there may be formal ranks or there may be an informal understanding that some people in the group are better than others in some way.
W, 9/21:	Income and Wealth Inequality BPTD Wealth in America (ER) and Black Wealth/White Wealth (ER) Handouts <b>Paper Topics due/ SL contracts due</b>
M, 9/26:*	Class: What is "class?" How are they defined and distinguishable? BPTD your own class status and how it has affected your life. BPTD Class in America (ER) and Weeding Out the Wealthy (ER)
W, 9/28:	Video: People Like Us

- M, 10/3:\* Poverty/Working/Middle/Wealthy  
BPTD Women, Income, and Poverty (ER) and When Work Disappears (ER)
- W, 10/5: MIDTERM EXAM
- M, 10/10:+ Speaker on Housing Discrimination (Milwaukee Fair Housing Council)
- W, 10/12:\* Race and Inequality  
BPTD Optional Ethnicities (ER)  
Racial Antagonisms and Race-based Social Policy (ER)
- M, 10/17:+ Speakers:  
Have read: pp. 9-16 and 63-79 in **Common Fire**. Bring at least one question derived from the points of the reading to ask of the speaker.
- W, 10/19:\* Gender and Meaning  
BPTD Gender as Structure (ER)  
Women, Men, and Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (ER)
- M, 10/24: Video: Still Killing Us Softly
- W, 10/26:+ Speakers: Carey Monreal (Women's Center) and Greg Williams (Wisconsin Community Services)  
Have read: pp. 26-54 and 107-124 in **Common Fire**. Bring at least one question derived from the points of the reading to ask of the speaker.
- M, 10/31:\* Inequality in Education  
BPTD Making It by Faking It (ER),  
Can Education Eliminate Race, Class & Gender Inequality (ER), and  
Where the Boys Are (ER)
- W, 11/2:\* Sexual Orientation  
BPTD Gay and Lesbian Families are Here (ER)  
Confronting Anti-Gay Violence (ER)
- M, 11/7:\* Disability and Age  
Bring in a birthday card for people over 25 years old  
BPTD We Are Who You Are (ER)  
Inequality Across Age Groups and Generations (ER)
- W, 11/9: Video: "India: the Little Serfs"
- M, 11/14: Global inequality (Handouts?)
- W, 11/16:\* Global inequality  
BPTD The Impact of Structural Adjustment Programs (ER)  
Stolen Harvest (ER)
- M, 11/21:+ Speakers:  
Have read: pp. 131-152 and 172-192, and 195-211 in **Common Fire**. Bring at least one

question derived from the points of the reading to ask of the speaker.

W, 11/23: Thanksgiving-no classes

M, 11/28:\* The Future  
BPTD: Combating Intentional Bigotry and Inadvertently Racist Acts (ER)  
Narrowing the Income Gap (ER)  
What Can We Do? (ER)

W, 11/30:+ Papers

M, 12/5:+ Papers

W, 12/7:+ " "

**Final Date: Wed, Dec 14<sup>th</sup> 8 a.m.**

**SL/Research Paper:** Over the course of the semester you will be researching and produce a 15-page paper focusing on some type of policy, program, or law (tried or suggested) related to reducing some type of inequality. If you choose to do this through Service Learning, the site (and your observations, questions, their data, etc.) will serve as your main resource. You may use outside written resources as well, but you are not required to. Possible sites are listed on SL's website for this class. If you choose to do SL, you must agree to complete your commitment to them.

If you choose a research paper, you must include at least 10 outside sources (of which 6 must be print articles, preferable academic journal articles). You can use the internet for some sources, but you need to be careful about the legitimacy of the source. Get the name of the website's sponsor, the author's name and article title, if there is one. You may use a class reading for one source. You must also interview someone who knows something about the inequality or solution (a local expert, politician, teacher, etc.).

You will be graded on your ability to locate appropriate resources, clearly outline the problem and the solution, synthesize the sources, and assess the solution. Possible topics include: progressive tax reform, welfare, comparable worth, living wage, marriage/adoption for gays/lesbians, educational programs, domestic abuse or homeless programs, etc.

The first purpose of all papers is to identify and describe a particular social problem and a solution (policy, program, or law), and try to assess how well the solution works. The second purpose of your paper is to interview people related to the solution. You are asking them about the problem and solution but also about the career they've chosen. Examples of people would include a minister of an interracial church, leader of women's or LGBT movement, advocate for poor, AA/EOP person, peace movement activist.

Ask them to define the problem.

What do they think of the solution? What changes would they make to it?

Why did they choose this work?

What skills, qualifications, and personal characteristics are needed in this work?

Would they do it again? Why?

What are the difficulties/rewards? How is their position changing the problem/solution?

How have they been changed? How have they changed the world?

Use the readings from **Common Fire** to generate more questions and to incorporate in your paper. Draw your findings together in an organized fashion and assess what you think of this policy. End with your personal assessment and how this might affect your life.

Websites/Books re: Social Justice careers

[www.idealists.org/resource\\_guides/index.html](http://www.idealists.org/resource_guides/index.html)

[www.eco.org/career](http://www.eco.org/career)

[www.newsociety.com](http://www.newsociety.com)

Melissa Everett. "Making a Living While Making a Difference"

Miriam Weinstein "Making a Difference-College & Graduate Guide

"Making a Difference-Scholarships Guide"

Jennifer Sage Willsea, ed. (2003). "Alternatives to the Peace Corps: A Directory of Global Volunteer Opportunities." 10<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Danny Seo. "Be the Difference"