COURSE: The Psychology of Poverty and Economic Justice – Heather Bullock

Course Description
As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest.
- Nelson Mandela (2005)

This course examines social psychological dimensions of economic (in)justice and the correlates and consequences of class-based inequities in the United States. Emphasis is placed on understanding intersections of class, ethnicity/race, and gender. The impact of social class on both the individual (e.g., identity) and group levels (e.g., differential access to health care, employment opportunities) is examined.

Much of the quarter is dedicated to understanding classism, particularly how classist attitudes and beliefs influence support for various welfare policies and “safety net” programs. Institutional and interpersonal forms of classism are reviewed and strategies for reducing classist discrimination and improving interclass relations are considered.

Course Learning Objectives
At the end of this course, you should:
1. have a better understanding of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of poverty
2. understand how social class influences attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors
3. be able to analyze how classist, racist, and sexist stereotypes shape social policy
4. be able to identify factors that would improve life circumstances and opportunities for low-income families

Required Readings

Supplemental Readings
Supplemental readings are provided for students who want to read more about a particular topic. They are offered to enrich your course experience but are not required. These materials will be accessible electronically.

Course Requirements and Evaluation of Course Performance
The focus of this class is on critical analysis, synthesizing diverse perspectives and concepts, and developing the ability to discuss and evaluate relevant research findings and theoretical arguments. This class is not about memorizing facts or statistics. As we move through the quarter, please focus on what you are learning and how your skills are developing.

You should expect to spend an average of 15 hours per week on this course. Attending two weekly lectures and your discussion section will take 4 hours and 45 minutes per week. This course involves a significant amount of reading, and you should plan to read all required course materials. Most readings are straightforward, but others may be challenging, and the amount of time you spend reading may fluctuate from week to week. Please budget approximately 8-9 hours per week for reading course material but some students may require less and others may require more. One of the best ways to...
prepare for our exams is to keep up with the reading. You can consider time spent reading as part of exam preparation, however, you will likely need to spend several additional hours prior to exams reviewing notes and course material. Three brief analysis papers require you to draw on concepts and theories from class and apply them to “real world” events. Writing speed varies from student to student; you may wish to budget up to 3 hours to complete each of these assignments, but more time may be necessary.

Performance is Based on the Following Criteria:

1. **Discussion Section Participation** (10 points): Discussion section attendance is required. We expect you to come to discussion section prepared to discuss the readings and engage in lively analysis of the material. Missing more than three meetings will result in a failing grade for the course.

2. **Brief Analysis Papers** (3 @ 14 points each = 42 points): During the quarter you will be asked to complete three brief analysis papers that focus on integration and application of course information. Prompts for these papers will be discussed in class. Papers must be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of the class meeting at which it is due (Paper 1 due 1/31; Paper 2 due 2/14; Paper 3 due 11/29). All papers must use APA style (6th edition).

3. **Midterm Exam** (23 points): An in-class essay exam will be completed on Tuesday, Feb. 21st.

4. **Final Exam** (25 points): The final exam will be held on Thursday March 23rd from 12:00-3:00 p.m. Please plan to attend the final; alternative arrangements for travel cannot be made.

**Getting the Most Out of this Class:**

Keep up with the course readings. You should read the assigned readings during the scheduled time period (reading ahead is even better!). Keeping up with the readings will allow you to get more out of lecture meetings and will help stimulate lively discussions. You may find it helpful to take notes on each of the readings (e.g., brief summaries, main points, and questions). Some of the readings may be difficult to follow – do the best you can to make sense of the main points and research findings. As we move through the course, we will give you tips regarding which readings to emphasize.

Think about how the course material relates to your own experiences. Draw connections between personal experience and observations, theory, and research.

Speak-up, share your ideas, and listen to your colleagues. We hope that everyone will participate in class discussions! Also, listen to your peers during class meetings and respect opinions/experiences that differ from your own. Talk to and learn from each other!

Bring outside materials (e.g., newspaper articles, public opinion polls, advertisements, music, anecdotes) related to course material to share with the class.

**Course Summary with Key Dates**

I. **Social Class, Poverty, and Stratification**
Welcome! Tu. 1/10

Defining Social Class, Poverty, and Stratification Th 1/12; Tu 1/17

Class Status: Identity, Privilege, and Stigma Th 1/19

Justifying Class Inequality: Stereotypes, Beliefs, Tu 1/24; Th 1/26; Tu 1/31** and Attributions

**Due Tu 1/31: Brief Analysis Paper 1 - Interviews about Attributions for Poverty and Wealth

II. Structured Inequality and Life Chances

Children/Youth, Development, and Education Th. 2/2; Tu. 2/7

Adolescent Parenting Th. 2/9

Health and Well-Being Tu 2/14**; Th 2/16

**Due Tu 2/14: Brief Analysis Paper 2 - Observational Analysis of School/Neighborhood Resources

** Exam on Tu 2/21** on Material from 1/10 – 2/16**

III. Families Living in Poverty

Low-Income Women and the Welfare System Th 2/23; Tu 2/28; Th 3/2; Tu 3/7

IV. Strategies for Improving Interclass Relation and Promoting Economic Justice

Toward A More Equitable Society Th 3/9; Tu 3/14**; Th 3/16

**Due 3/14: Brief Analysis Paper 3 – Social Psychological Policy Analysis of Your Choosing**

Final In-Class Exam on Thursday 3/23 from 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tu 1/10 WELCOME!

I. SOCIAL CLASS, POVERTY, AND STRATIFICATION

Th 1/12; Tu 1/17 Defining Social Class, Poverty, and Stratification

Required readings:

Download from the internet or from Canvas (these are too long to include in the hard copy reader):


Th 1/19  
Class Status: Identity, Privilege, and Stigma  
Required readings:

Tu 1/24; Th 1/26; Tu 1/31**  
Justifying Class Inequality: Stereotypes, Beliefs, and Attributions  
Response Paper #1 Due Tuesday 1/31: Interviews about Attributions for Poverty and Wealth  
Required readings:

This syllabus has been contributed to APA for the Resources for the Inclusion of Social Class in Psychology Curricula. It may have been edited for length. For additional resources, visit apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/social-class-curricula.aspx

Supplemental readings:

II. STRUCTURED INEQUALITY AND LIFE CHANCES

Th 2/2; Tu 2/7 Children/Youth, Development, and Education

Required readings:

Supplemental readings:

Th 2/9 Adolescent Parenting

Required readings:


Supplemental readings:


Tu 2/14**; Th 2/16 Health and Well-Being

Response Paper #2 Due Tuesday 2/14: Observational Analysis of School/Neighborhood Resources

Required readings:


Supplemental readings:


** Exam on Tuesday 2/21** on Material from 1/10 – 2/16**

III. FAMILIES LIVING IN POVERTY

Th 2/23; Tu 2/28; Th 3/2; Tu 3/7 Low-Income Women and the Welfare System
Required readings:

- So you think I drive a cadillac?

Supplemental readings:


Read online:


IV. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING INTERCLASS RELATIONS AND PROMOTING ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Th 3/9; Tu 3/14**; Th 3/16 Toward A More Equitable Society

Response Paper #3 Due Tuesday 3/14: Free Write

Required readings:

Supplemental readings: