



## COURSE: Equality and Inequality (2005) - Kevin Lanning and Christopher Strain

**egalitarianism** *n* (1905) **1:** a belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic rights and privileges **2:** a social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities among people

**elitism** *n* (1947) **1:** leadership or rule by an elite **2:** the selectivity of the elite; especially: **snobbery** <elitism in choosing new members> **3:** consciousness of being or belonging to an elite

**Course overview:** In this class, we'll consider the premise of human equality in light of the differences we see in contemporary America. We will examine statistical (Herrnstein, Phillips) and anecdotal (Frank, Epstein, and Henry) evidence for manifest differences, as well as explanations for these differences grounded in sociology (Shapiro), political economics, psychology, and history. Concepts such as "class," "elites," "snobbery," "stratification," and "human value" will be considered in depth.

Our treatment will largely focus on three parameters of difference:

We will examine the concept of **intelligence** – what it is, what it is not, and how it is related to socially valued concepts (e.g., *creativity* and *parenting skill*) and cultural constructs such as *merit*. In addition to intelligence, we'll briefly consider other forms of **psychological inequality**.

We will consider **wealth** and the growing gap between rich and poor as forms of **economic inequality**. We will come to understand these growing differences, and we will consider whether this is the way it should be in America.

Finally, we will consider moralism, snobbery, and resentment as manifestations of **cultural or social inequality**. America is a country characterized and divided not just by rich and poor, but also by religion, by region, and by values. Here, the gap is not between rich and poor or smart and dull, but between effete "latte-drinking, sushi-eating, Volvo-driving, New York Times-reading" snobs and authentic Folgers-drinking, burger-munching, pick-up driving, Fox-TV-watching Americans. Do these difference matter, and if so, why?

**Readings:** There are six books for the class. We anticipate assigning significant portions of the three required texts and smaller portions of the three recommended texts. In addition, you will be responsible for the hot-linked articles given on the syllabus below:

### Required

Herrnstein, R. J. and Murray, C. (1994). *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. NY: Free Press.

Shapiro, T. M. (Ed.) (2005). *Great Divides: Readings on Social Inequality in the United States*. NY: McGraw Hill.

Epstein, J. (2002). *Snobbery: The American Version*. NY: Mariner Books.

### Recommended

Henry, W. A. (1995). *In Defense of Elitism*. NY: Anchor.

Frank, T. (2004). *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. NY: Metropolitan.

Phillips, K. (2004). *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich*. NY: Broadway.

### **May 16 Equality and Inequality: An Introduction**

First day of class, in-class reading and discussion:

Group 1: Vonnegut, Kurt, "Harrison Bergeron" (1961) in *Welcome to the Monkey House*. NY: Dell.

Group 2: Geisel, T. (1961). *The Sneetches*.

Group 3: Cuomo, M. (1984). *A Tale of Two Cities*. (Keynote address, Democratic National Convention).

Group 4: Henry, p. 11-15.

### **May 18 Interpretations of IQ and intelligence**

Herrnstein, p. 1-50 and 553-567.

Gottfredson et al (1994). Mainstream science on intelligence: An editorial . . .

### **May 23 The "cognitive elite" and stratification in America**

Herrnstein, p. 51-125.

Scott, J., & Leonhardt, D. (2005). NY Times series on Class Matters Overview.

### **May 25 Intelligence, social behavior, longevity, and social class**

Herrnstein, p. 127-190.

Scott, J. (2005). NY Times series on Class Matters – Health.

Gottfredson, L. S., & Deary, I. J. (2004). Intelligence Predicts Health and Longevity, but Why? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13, 1-4.

### **June 1 Policy implications**

Herrnstein, p. 235-251, p. 447-477.

Neisser, U., et al., (1996). Intelligence: Knowns and Unknowns. *American Psychologist*, 51, 77-101.

### **June 6 Economic stratification in the United States**

Herrnstein, p. 509-552

Shapiro, Introduction

Lewin, T. (2005). NY Times series on Class Matters – Marriage

#### **June 8 Theories of stratification and class**

Shapiro, Readings 1-2, 6-7, 12, 17-18

#### **June 13 Education and class**

Phillips, Chapter 4 and Afterword

Shapiro, Readings 41-43

TBA (2005). NY Times series on Class Matters – Up from the projects.

#### **June 15 Elitism and egalitarianism**

Epstein, Chapt. 1-4

Henry, Chapt. 1

Steinhauer, J. NY Times series on Class Matters – Markers of status.

#### **June 20 Materialism and mobility**

Epstein, Chapt. 10-11

Henry, Chapt. 6-7

Kilborn, P. T. (2005). NY Times series on Class Matters – Rootlessness and relocation.

#### **June 22 Two Americas**

Henry, Chapt. 8

Frank, Chapt. 1-2

Goodstein, L., & Kirkpatrick, D. (2005). NY Times series on Class Matters – Religion.

#### **June 27 Group Discussion**

Review all.