Dr. Laurie Wermuth, Department of Sociology (lwermuth@csuchico.edu)
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Phone: (530) 898-5691
Class meets: Monday–Friday 8:30 – 11:55 Butte 329 and in BSS Labs, Butte Hall 2nd floor
My Office: Butte 613, inside of the Sociology Department office, Butte 615
Office Hours: Monday – Thursday 12:00-1:00 and by appointment during Intersession

**Sociology of Wealth and Inequality SOCI 340 – Section 99** (Intersession 2009)

Catalog Description
We consider the unequal distribution of wealth, prestige, knowledge, and power in the United States, and make comparisons to other societies. How does inequality get reproduced from one generation to the next? How does inequality affect students today? We examine the role of social networks, as well as the interconnections between class, race/ethnicity, and gender. This is an approved General Education Upper-Division Theme S course.

This course includes an active learning component, with part of our time spent in the BSS labs on the 2nd floor of Butte Hall. We aim to become more knowledgeable and thoughtful about what is going on in our world, socially and economically. We will strive together to make thoughtful interpretations and judgments, being mindful that we will have a variety of ideas and opinions.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. To learn sociological concepts related to wealth and inequality in the U.S. and globally.
2. To be knowledgeable about theoretical explanations concerning people’s experiences of wealth and inequality.
3. To understand race/ethnicity, gender, and class as socially-constructed categories that influence the distribution of wealth and the degree of inequality in societies.
4. To practice skills in researching, interpreting, and evaluating qualitative and quantitative evidence, including consideration of policies and issues of fairness and distributional justice.
5. To practice verbal and written communication skills, especially in thinking critically about social inequalities.

**General Educational Status:** Sociology 340 is part of General Education Theme S, *Wealth, Power and Inequality*. Inequalities in wealth and status are universal social phenomena and give rise in all societies to important issues regarding the distribution of income, wealth, and opportunities for mobility. The discussion requires empirically identifying the extent of inequality as well as identifying the causal structural mechanisms in society that give rise to inequality. Finally, there is the normative issue of fairness, of distributional justice. This theme integrates these three areas to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the nature of inequality, and to prepare them to contribute thoughtfully to the ongoing public dialog over issues of wealth, power, and inequality. As a GE course, students write a minimum of 2,500 words (equivalent of 10 typed pages). In this course, writing will be completed through papers, essay questions on exams, and questions in lab exercises.

**Assessment of Learning**

*Learning objective # 1.* Question sets on assigned reading must be completed for class
discussion and exams. Essay questions on exams will reveal whether students understand the causal structural mechanisms in society that create and maintain inequalities.

**Learning objective # 2.** Reading responses and exam questions based on assigned readings will also demonstrate an understanding of trends and historical developments.

**Learning objective # 3.** Lab research, exercises, and write-ups will provide practice and demonstration of skills in finding and evaluating qualitative and quantitative evidence from a variety of sources.

**Learning objective # 4.** Lab research, write-ups, and presentations will demonstrate students’ learning about patterns of inequality within the US and globally.

**Learning objective # 5.** Discussions and presentations will occur in daily discussion of readings, lectures, guest presenters, and media presentations. In addition, students will give formal presentations during week 3 on policies and programs that address the harmful effects of social inequalities.

**Required Texts and Materials**


*The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker* (2008) by Steven Greenhouse

*The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization* by Wayne Ellwood (New Internationalist publisher)

A few readings on the Vista site

Articles researched during Lab sessions and for the final Position Paper

Blue books for exams

**Course Requirements**

1. **Attendance and Participation**
   This course includes interactive lecture, discussion, media, laboratory research, and exercises. Your attendance, attention, and participation are required. Attendance will be taken at various times. We strive for both individual and collaborative learning and analysis. For each session, have the assignment read and be prepared with your responses. Have the readings, lab research, and your written assignments with you in class. This will make it possible for all of us to engage in *informed* discussions.

2. As you read, use the Question Sets on the books by Massey, Greenhouse, and Ellwood. These will guide your reading and prepare you for discussions, exams, and their application to exercises and papers.

3. **In-class Lab Research Exercises and Write-ups (5)**
   These are designed for you to explore evidence and case studies in the Labs, applying questions and concepts from the course, and learning new information about current developments and policies. You will exercise critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills. You will cite the sources you use for evidence, theory, and analysis. Write up your answers in complete sentences and essay format.

4. **Exams (3)**
   These will focus on your comprehension and analysis of course readings, lectures, media and exercises. They will generally be short and medium-length essay questions. Bring blue books.

5. **Papers (2)**
   One 3-page paper focuses on your plans for finding your way following graduation from college. The second is the major paper of the course and is a position paper on proposed and enacted policies and programs aimed at reducing social inequalities and their harmful effects in the context of the current financial downturn.
6. Presentations
Students will present on selected answers from the question sets. Also, students will present at the end of our term in teams on assigned topics related to the major paper described in #5. Each individual will report on an aspect of the group’s topic.

Writing Guidelines:
Assignments must be in a conventional-size 12-point font (e.g., New Times Roman), double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, follow APA citation style, and provide complete references as found on the website: http://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/APA_Style_Basics.html, or other source for APA style. Number and staple together pages, with your name, date, and assignment title in the upper-right hand corner. Written work will be evaluated based on fulfilling the requirements of the assignment, depth of analysis, clarity, quality of writing, and following guidelines.

Assignments, Exceptions, Academic Honesty:
It is in your interest to complete and submit hard copies of your assignments on time, following the directions provided. In addition to the points system below, all assignments are required for completion of this course at the level of C- and above. Late assignments will be read and graded at my discretion, and will receive reduced credit. Always keep back-up copies of your work. Generally speaking, there will be no make-ups or early exams. If you think you have a compelling case, please discuss it with me ahead of time.

There will be zero tolerance for academic dishonesty in this course. Plagiarism is the use of the written work of others (either direct copies or close paraphrases) as one’s own original work. If you use another person’s work without attribution, copy another student’s work (including lab work), or share your test answers or papers with another student, you will receive an “F” for the course and be referred to CSUC’s office of Student Judicial Affairs. When in doubt, please ask me for clarification.

If you have a documented disability that may require reasonable accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. DSS is located in the University Center (UC) 100. The DSS phone number is 898-5959 V/TTY or FAX 898-4411. Visit the DSS web site at http://www.csuchico.edu/dss/.

Course Evaluation and Weighting of Assignments
(subject to adjustment, keeping you informed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Components</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations/discussions on question sets</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labs (1/100; 2/150; 3/200; 4/100; 5/150)</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Tests</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper: “Making Your Way…”</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Position Paper (and portfolio)</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Policy Position Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,750</td>
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5 or more absences (recorded at random during class or labs) will result in lowered grades. Students with 7 or more unexcused absences will receive a D or F, depending on their performance in other aspects of the course. Students texting, emailing, or using cell phones during class time (including lab time) will be asked to leave and will be counted as absent.
Grading System
100 - 91% of points = A range; 90 - 80% = B; 79 - 70% = C; 69 - 65% = D; 64% and below = F (Plusses and minuses assigned with final grades.)

Students’ Rights and Responsibilities
• The class follows the standards set in the Code of Students Rights and Responsibilities (EM 96-38) and students are subject to disciplinary action for violation of that code.
• Students are expected to turn off all cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices (including tape recorders) during class time (including labs).
• Students are expected to pay attention and participate in class meetings.
• Students may not read non-class materials during class.
• Students are not allowed to come and go during the class session.
• All class participants are expected to exhibit respectful behavior to other students and the instructor regardless of how different the others’ views are from their own.
• All students have the right and privilege to learn in the class, free from harassment and disruption.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Module 1: US Income Inequalities
Read: Douglas Massey, Categorically Unequal. The following are on the website: Max Weber, “Class, Status, Party”; Karl Marx, “Ideology and Class” (2 pages); abstract and final page of “Socioeconomic disparities affect prefrontal function in children”
Activities: Categorically Unequal question sets: prepare & discuss
Lectures and discussions (PowerPoint slides on Vista)
Groups pick Policy Paper topics
Wednesday 8:30: Guest lecture by Tom Reed on the movement for a Single-Payer Health Care System
Media (“Henry Kravis”, “Larry the Loophole”)
Labs # 1 and 2
Student Teams report on lab work
Monday of Week 2: Test on Categorically Unequal

Module 2: US Upper Class
Activities:
Lectures and discussions
Media: “The American Ruling Class”
Lab #3

Module 3: US Labor Trends & Theory of Class Relations
Read: The Big Squeeze; on website: Table: “Ownership and Class Relations”; Marx, “Value and Surplus Value”
Activities:
The Big Squeeze question sets, report & discuss
Theory lecture
Media (Bill Moyers’ Journal, “Middle Class Squeeze”; “The Corporation” (if time allows)
Test on The Big Squeeze
Friday 11:00 1/16: Guest lecture by Meka Klungvet-Morano, MSW on difficulties among Butte County’s low-income and poor families

Module 4: Tax Policies and Class Relations
Lecture
Lab #4
Bill Moyers’ Journal, “The Business of Poverty” and “Facing up to the Economy”)

Read over the weekend: Ellwood, The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization

Module 5: Global Inequalities, Dynamics of Global Capitalism, Health Inequalities
Read: finish The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization; Wallerstein, “Class Conflict in the Global Capitalist Economy” (on website)
Lecture and discussion
Lab #5

Module 6: Current Financial Crisis, Politics, and Policies
Read: articles: by Stiglitz and Klein (on website), others from electronic library research for your project; optional
Preparation of position papers on the financial crisis and proposed remedies
Student teams present their Position Papers to the class
Thursday and Friday: Presentations, Review, and Final Exam
Papers are due Monday, January 26, to the Sociology Department in Butte 615 before 5:00pm

Reading Schedule

Week 1:
Mon 1/5 Massey, Preface, Chs 1 and 2; “Ideology and Class” (website)
Tues 1/6 Massey, Preface, Chs 3 and 4
Wed 1/7 Massey, Preface, Chs 5 and 6
Thurs 1/8 Massey, Preface, Chs 7 and “Class, Status, Party”; final page of “Socioeconomic disparities...prefrontal function in children” (website)

Weekend: Start The Big Squeeze, by Greenhouse

Week 2:
Mon 1/12 Greenhouse, Introduction, Chapters 1-5
Tues 1/13 Greenhouse, Chapters 6-10, “Ownership and class relations” (website)
Wed 1/14 Greenhouse, Chapters 11-14 “Value and Surplus value” (website)
Thurs 1/15 Greenhouse, Chapters 15-16

Weekend: Read as much of the No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization as you can!

Week 3:
Finish No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization
You will re-read assigned readings related to your policy topic.
You will do research and read articles related to your policy topic.