Social Inequality
Soc221/AmCult221
Winter 2017

CHOICE ASSIGNMENTS

Updated: March 23, 2017

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OVERVIEW

"Choice assignments" are designed to provide you with different types of learning opportunities that we cannot cover in lecture or section: learning through collaboration, learning through experience, or learning from media. You will choose as many assignments as you like and need to accomplish your learning and grade goals, but at least two (one collaboration and one experiential assignment). To predict how different choices will lead you towards your goals, you will use the GradePredictor feature on GradeCraft. You should do so to plan your initial choices and return to it throughout the semester as your assignments are completed to confirm that you are on track or to adjust course as needed.

As summarized in the table below (and described in more detail further below), choice assignment have particular time frames since most of them are tied to content we cover in lecture and section. Due dates are noted in parentheses and always end at 11.59pm of the day noted without exceptions.

Below, we provide detailed descriptions on the aims, measures of success, time line, and measures of success for each assignment. Further questions can be discussed during section or in office hours with you GSI.

Course Schedule		Assignment Schedule		
			Learning through	
Week Days	Collaboration		Experience	Media
	Round 1	Round 2		
1 Jan 2-Jan 8				
2 Jan 9-Jan 15				
3 Jan 16-Jan 22				
4 Jan 23-Jan 29				
5 Jan 30-Feb 5				
6 Feb 6-Feb 12	Week 1		Busride	Documentary: Poor Kids (Feb12)
7 Feb 13-Feb 19	Week 2		(Feb19 or	Documentary: People Like Us (Feb19)
8 Feb 20-Feb 26	Week 3		Apr2)	
Winter Break				
9 Mar 6-Mar 12	Week 4	Week 1		Documentary: Dream On (Mar12)
10 Mar 13-Mar 19	Week 5	Week 2		Talk: Family Change (Mar19)
11 Mar 20-Mar 26	Week 6	Week 3	Poverty	Podcast: The Problem We Live With (Mar26)
12 Mar 27-Apr 2	Week 7	Week 4	(Apr2)	
13 Apr 3-Apr 9	Week 8 (Apr9)	Week 5		Talk&Blogpost: Harmful Inequality? (Apr9)
14 Apr 10-Apr 16		Week 6		Talk: Mass Equality (Apr 16)
15 Apr 17-Apr 23		Week 7 (Apr23)		

COLLABORATION: WIKIPEDIA

By creating a new Wikipedia entry or editing an existing one on a topic of inequality of your choice, you will learn to apply and synthesize your new knowledge on social inequality, generate new insights, and communicate both to a larger audience.

Since contributing to Wikipedia may at first sight seem like a big and advanced task, the Wikipedia Foundation has prepared great training materials and tools to help students for the this type of assignment. To complete this assignment, you will need to participate in the Wikipedia training module for editors, available at: https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/training/students (further details below). Furthermore, you will likely consult the Wikipedia Guide to editing for a general overview (available on Canvas) as well as more focused handouts (also on Canvas), including on the topics of
- "Choosing an Article"
- "Editing Wikipedia Articles on Sociology"
- "Citing Sources"
- "Avoiding Plagiarism"

This group project lasts for a total of seven weeks and there will be goal posts for each week to guide your group through the process. As a general overview, progress should look like this:

Week 1:	- Form groups (round 1: during section; round 2: online)
	- Discuss mutual interests
	- Agree on a meeting schedule for the 7-week period
	- Review document: "Editing Wikipedia Articles on Sociology"
Week 2:	- Create Wikipedia account (username: Soc221_LASTNAME)
	- Complete Wikipedia training (3 modules under "basic")
	- Review document: "Choosing an article"
	- Begin research on feasible Wikipedia topics/pages to edit
Week 3:	- Submit your individual suggestion of a Wikipedia page to group
	- Settle on top 3 choices in group and **submit to your GSI**
Week 4:	- After confirmation of topic from your GSI
	- Divide work on different sections / topics within group
	- Begin research on topic by consulting library resources / librarian
Week 5:	- Review document: "Citing Sources" and "Avoiding Plagiarism"
	- Enter your individual contribution to the Wikipedia page
Week 6:	- Review and edit contributions by other group members
	- Revise your own contribution as needed
Week 7:	- Collaborative revision of final page
	- Submit
	- Final page (instructions below)
	- Feedback on peer engagement (form will be provided)
	- Individual Reflection (~1 page; form will be provided)

We encourage you to sign up for the first scheduled round of group projects, which will be formed by 4-5 students within each section during week 6. For the second round, groups will be formed by 4-5 students across sections and based on proposed projects, though it is not guaranteed that you will always find a fitting group. For this second round, we will use a few minutes of lecture time after winter break to help you find a group.

Points and grading criteria

High Pass (200 points)	Your edited Wikipedia page reflects both a critical and creative application of the course material and goes beyond it by consulting adequate, new literature. Based on your own research, you significantly improved an existing Wikipedia page or created a new page of obvious importance. The writing is precise and accessible.
Pass (125 points)	Your edited Wikipedia page reflects both an adequate application of the course material and uses those materials to improve an article or create a new one. The writing is good and accessible.
Fail (0 points)	Your new Wikipedia page is limited in scope and depth or the edits to an existing Wikipedia page are minor. You failed to check in with your GSI about your plans.

Summary

Learning goal	Apply and synthesize your new knowledge on social inequality, generate new insights, and communicate them to a larger audience.
Points & criteria	200 High Pass 125 Pass 0 Fail Peer review will inform our grading and peer feedback will be used to decide whether your individual grade needs to diverge from the group's final grade

Time frame & due date
  First Round
  Second Round
	
	Feb.6 - Apr.9 (weeks 6 - 13); due: **April 9, 11.59pm**
	Feb.20 - Apr.23 (weeks 9 - 15); due: **April 23, 11.59pm**

Submission	Through GradeCraft; you need to submit the live link to your Wikipedia page and attach a screenshot/printout of the article as a pdf. The submission system closes at 11.59pm.

COLLABORATION: ETHNOGRAPHY

By providing a first-hand documentation of a selected aspect of inequality, you will learn to apply and synthesize your newly acquired knowledge, generate new insights, and communicate both to a larger audience. Since we want you to interpret aspects of the social world related to themes covered in class, we ask that you pick one or at most two central themes from the course to guide your search for a question, subject, activity, or place.

Ethnography is a sociological method that explores how people live and make sense of their lives and relies on a variety of approaches to data collection, from direct interviews to observations of public spaces. While an actual ethnography tends to be a long and involved process, this assignment will provide you with an opportunity for a taste of collecting information on the social world that elucidates an aspect of social inequality. We allow and, in fact, encourage a great deal of creativity in choosing your question, your method, and your final product. Examples may include but are in no way limited to: Audio recordings of interviews with different individuals on or off campus, video documentaries of a phenomenon, place, or activity; photo documentation with exhibit notes of the social realities experienced by different groups; etc.

We strongly encourage you to make use of the university's ample resources to support you in documenting your work by drawing on a variety of media. In particular, you should be aware of the resources available through the Instructional Support Services Media Center on Central Campus (https://lsa.umich.edu/iss/media-center-and-loan.html). It offers "the tools necessary to produce a wide variety of digital media-based projects from narrative, documentary, experimental video, animation, audio design and recording, web-based podcasts and videos, website design, digital photography, image creation and much more" and is equipped with collaboration rooms and collaborative lobby space, video editing suites, and the like. You can reserve rooms, equipment, and draw on the assistance from advisors in the media center. Furthermore, once we have a sense of the spread of projects that you are engaging in, we may also ask media center staff to set up dedicated orientation workshops for you.

We encourage you to be creative and take risks. But to make sure that your plans are realistic and appropriate we will require a check-in about your plans early on. Furthermore, to help you stay on track in this 7-week assignment, we suggest a rough draft of goalposts (though, the time dedicated to data collection versus preparation of your final product depends on your method of data collection):

Week 1:　　　　- Form groups (1st round: during section; 2nd round: online)
　　　　　　　　- Discuss question, theme, data collection strategy, final product
　　　　　　　　- Agree on a meeting schedule for the 7-week period
Week 2:　　　　- Prepare a 1-page description (**& submit to your GSI**) containing
　　　　　　　　　- a list of people/locations/activities you seek to interview/observe
　　　　　　　　　- the question you seek to address
　　　　　　　　　- the course theme it relates to
　　　　　　　　　- an interview/observation schedule

Week 3:   - If required, based on instructor feedback, adjust plans
                 - Begin ethnographic data collection
Week 4:   - Continue ethnographic data collection
Week 5:   - Prepare final product
Week 6:   - Prepare final product
                 - Seek feedback from and provide feedback to other student groups
Week 7:   - Revise final product based on peer feedback
                 - Submit
                   - Final product
                   - Feedback on peer engagement (form will be provided)
                   - Individual Reflection (~1 page; form will be provided))

We encourage you to sign up for the first scheduled round of group projects, which will be formed by 4-5 students within each section during week 6. For the second round, groups will be formed by 4-5 students across sections and based on proposed projects, though it is not guaranteed that you will always find a fitting group. For this second round, we will use a few minutes of lecture time after winter break to help you find a group.

Points and grading criteria

High Pass   Your end product reflects both a critical and creative application of
(200 points)   the course material. You generate some new insight, hypothesis, or
                 critique related to inequality.

Pass   Your end product reflects adequate understanding and application of
(125 points)   the course material but lacks a substantive new insight, hypothesis, or
                 critique related to inequality.

Fail   Your project is only marginally related to inequality and the content
(0 points)   covered in the course, it generates no new insights, or follows a
                 structure or format that is not accessible or cohesive. You failed to
                 check in with your GSI about your plans.

Summary

Learning goal   Apply and synthesize your new knowledge on social
                       inequality, generate new insights, and communicate them to a
                       larger audience.

Points & criteria   200   High Pass
                       125   Pass
                       0   Fail
                       Peer review will inform our grading and peer feedback will be

used to decide whether your individual grade needs to diverge
from the group's final grade

Time frame & due date
  First Round   Feb.6 - Apr.9 (weeks 6 - 13); due: **April 9, 11.59pm**
  Second Round   Feb.20 - Apr.23 (weeks 9 - 15); due: **April 23, 11.59pm**

Submission   Through GradeCraft; you need to submit an electronic file of
your final product (audio recording, video file, etc.) or, if it
exceeds the storage capacities of GradeCraft, provide a link to
an externally stored version (e.g. youtube or other platform)
with a screenshot. The submission system closes at 11.59pm.

EXPERIENCE: BUS RIDE

Description

By observing differences between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti on a public bus ride, you will be able to compare and enhance your academic understanding with an experience of an aspect of "everyday life". You will reflect on this experience in a *reflection paper (3-5 pages, double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman).* You will take the #4 or #5 bus between the Ann Arbor Blake Transit Center (S Fourth Ave & E William Street) and the Ypsilanti Transit Center (220 Pearl Street) and back. It does not matter whether you begin and end your journey in Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti, but you have to complete a round trip. During the trip, you should observe your surrounding – inside and outside of the bus – closely and take detailed notes, which will help you report on your experiences in the paper. We ask you to attach a scan or photo of those notes to your final paper.

Formulating and thinking about questions in advance will also be very helpful. For instance: What kind of people (in terms of age, sex, social class, ethnicity) get on and off the bus at various places? Are they going home, going to work, going shopping, or what? What do your observations tell you about the ethnic and class diversity of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti? What do the buildings, green space, businesses, etc look like in each place? Where, if anywhere, do you first observe a difference between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti? Do your observations depend on the time of day and the day of the week in which you take your ride? The return trip may be particularly helpful to compare your thoughts and expectations before the trip to your experience on the first leg of the trip.

Please apply the same safety precautions that you would in any travelling you do. If you feel uncomfortable riding the bus alone, we encourage you to go with another student. The paper, however, has to be written independently based on your individual observations.

Points and grading criteria

High pass (100 points)	-	Writing provides a rich description of the experience of your trip (in the best case, the reader will feel like s/he was on the bus)
	-	Observations are clearly connected to multiple readings or lecture content in the course (potentially including instances where your experience challenges course content)
Pass (50 points)	-	Writing provides an adequate description of the bus trip, but observations lack substantial detail (the reader does not get a good sense of what your experience felt like)
	-	Some discussion of relevant course themes, but lacking or inaccurate connection to your observations
Fail (0 points)	-	Description of experience is generic, notes do not show that you have made a significant effort in observing your surroundings
	-	You do not identify themes or concepts from class that your observations connect to

| | - Page length is less than required |
| High pass after resubmission (75 points) | If your paper has been graded as a "pass" but your GSI feels that a revised version has the potential to get to a high pass, you will receive an invitation to resubmit a revised version within a week. If the revised version meets the criteria for a high pass given above, you will earn a total of 75 points. |

Plagiarism automatically triggers a fail but also carries further academic consequences, so please review plagiarism guidelines carefully at www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity

Summary

Learning goal	Enhance your understanding of social inequality by comparing what you learn in the classroom to an experience of "everyday life"
Points & criteria	100 High pass 75 High pass after invited resubmission 50 Pass 0 Fail
Time frame & due date	Feb.6 – Feb.19 (weeks 6-7); due: **February 19, 11.59pm** **NOTE: While we encourage you to stick to this due date, we will also allow submissions until April 2, 11.59pm** (this is meant to take into account that some of you were interested in the "Poverty Simulation", which has a due date of April 2, but were not able to get in due to limited seating) Resubmission: 7 days after receipt of "pass" (midnight)
Submission	Through GradeCraft; the submission system closes at 11.59pm

EXPERIENCE: POVERTY SIMULATION

Description

By participating in a workshop that simulates the experience of poverty, you will be able to compare and enhance your academic understanding of poverty with your own experiences during the simulation. You will reflect on this experience in a *reflection paper (3-5 pages, double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman).* The workshop will take place on *Wednesday, March 22 2017, from 7pm-10pm at the Michigan Union, Rogel Ballroom*.

During the simulation, you will be given scripted role assignments and structured situations to resemble those that welfare recipients face daily. You will experience specific realistic challenges based on your assigned role as an individual with low income from a specific background and family structure. At the start of the simulation, each "family" is given information about itself: some are newly unemployed or have been deserted by the family "breadwinner;" others have been receiving welfare benefits either with or without additional earned income; others receive disability income, some are elderly, and some include small children. You will interact with volunteer staff who create a simulated community with stores and agencies in their roles as welfare office workers, grocers, pawnbrokers, food pantry personnel, bill collectors, police, employment interviewers, and others.

Participation is limited to 57 students, so *we encourage you to sign up immediately using this link*: https://umich.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_4TuLTie0flPWwTP. We will let you know if you made the cut. But if the workshop is full and you are not among the first 57 students, we will put you on a waiting list and notify you of any potential cancelations.

Points and grading criteria

High pass (100 points)	-	Writing provides a rich description of the experience (in the best case, the reader will feel like s/he was present at the simulation)
	-	Observations are clearly connected to multiple readings or lecture content in the course (potentially including instances where your experience challenges course content)
Pass (50 points)	-	Writing provides an adequate description of the experience, but observations lack substantial detail (the reader does not get a good sense of what your experience felt like)
	-	Some discussion of relevant course themes, but lacking or inaccurate connection to your observations
Fail (0 points)	-	Description of experience is generic, you do not seem to have actively engaged in are reflected about the exercise
	-	You do not identify themes or concepts from class that your observations connect to
	-	Page length is less than required

High pass after resubmission (75 points)	If your paper has been graded as a "pass" but your GSI feels that a revised version has the potential to get to a high pass, you will receive an invitation to resubmit a revised version within a week. If the revised version meets the criteria for a high pass given above, you will earn a total of 75 points.

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Summary

Learning goal	Enhance your understanding of social inequality by comparing what you learn in the classroom to an experience of "everyday life"
Points & criteria	100 High pass 75 High pass after invited resubmission 50 Pass 0 Fail
Time frame & due date	Mar.22 – Apr.2 (weeks 6-7); due: **April 2, 11.59pm** Resubmission: 7 days after receipt of "pass" (midnight)
Submission	Through GradeCraft; the submission system closes at 11.59pm

MEDIA: DOCUMENTARIES / TALKS / PODCASTS

Description

Different media – TV documentaries, podcasts, and recordings of academic talks – are available to expand your knowledge of a particular topic of social inequality. By engaging with these media in writing, you will use what you learn in the course to become a critical consumer of new information. For each documentary/podcast/talk that you decide to watch/listen to, you will write *a response paper (1-2 pages, double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman)* in which you will discuss how the media content relates to the content covered in class.

You should not provide a summary or overview of the entire documentary/talk/podcast, but rather discuss a particular piece of information, claim, or idea that was brought up and that you found particularly intriguing / surprising / doubtful. You should connect this point to content covered in lecture or section and critically assess their relationship. For instance, how did a particular point made in a documentary serve to illustrate a concept from class? Is a fact stated in a podcast in line with what you have learned in class, why not? How did an academic talk expand on a perspective covered in class? Etc.

These are the available media:

   (A)   Documentary   **Poor Kids**
                       "PBS Frontline spent months following three young girls who are growing up against the backdrop of their families' struggles against financial ruin. At a time when one in five American kids lives below the poverty line, Poor Kids is an is an intimate portrait of the economic crisis as it's rarely seen, through the eyes of children."
                       Access: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/poor-kids/

   (B)   Documentary   **People Like Us**
                       "It's the 800-pound gorilla in American life that most Americans don't think about: how do income, family background, education, attitudes, aspirations and even appearance mark someone as a member of a particular social class? Class can be harder to spot than racial or ethnic differences, yet in many ways it's the most important predictor of what kind of financial and educational opportunities someone will have in life."
                       Access: https://umich.kanopystreaming.com/video/people-us-0

   (C)   Documentary   **Dream On**
                       "In an epic road trip, political comedian John Fugelsang retraces the nearly two-hundred-year-old journey of Alexis de Tocqueville. Along the way he explores whether the

optimistic spirit of the American Dream that Tocqueville popularized is alive and well in the twenty-first century."
Access here:
https://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/Record/014670546

(C)   Talk   **Family Change (Judith Seltzer; start at minute 28:45)**
Judith Seltzer is a Professor of Sociolog at the University of California-Los Angeles who studies social inequality within and between families. She was the 2016 President of the Population Association of America (PAA), where she gave her presidential address on the topic of "Family Change and Changing Family Demography".
Access: Media Gallery on Canvas

(E)   Podcast   **The Problem We Live With (two episodes)**
Two episodes of the podcast series "This American Life" (episodes 562-563) deal with racial inequality in education and the role of and resistance to desegregation efforts.
Access: https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with AND https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/563/the-problem-we-all-live-with-part-two

(F)   Talk&Blog   **Harmful Inequality?**
This assignment is slightly different from the other media assignments since we ask you to watch a talk and read a blogpost and relate the two to each other (you may, for instance, want to use the blogpost to criticize, add to, or illustrate some of the points made in the talk). Both the talk and the blogpost focus on the question of whether inequality harms our society.
Access: Media Gallery on Canvas AND https://lanekenworthy.net/is-income-inequality-harmful/

(G)   Talk   **Mass Equality (Rucker Johnson; start at minute 5:05)**
Rucker Johnson is an Associate Professor at the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California-Berkeley (and UM graduate!) and his research focuses on the role of poverty and inequality in affecting life chances, in particular in the long-run effects of large-scale policy changes. Based on this research, he delivered the 2016 AERA Spencer Lecture with the title "Winning with the Power of Mass Equality. School Funding, Integration, and Access for Later-Life Success"
Access: Media Gallery on Canvas

Points and grading criteria

Pass (40 points)	You correctly summarize an important piece of information / claim / idea contained in the media and you put it into a clear and sensible relationship with the course content covered in lecture or section.
Fail (0 points)	You describe a minor aspect of the story described in the media. You summarize an argument but do not successfully connect it to topics covered in lecture.

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Summary

Learning goal　　　　　　Expand your knowledge of a particular topic of social inequality and become a critical consumer of new information from media

Points & criteria　　　　40　　　Pass
　　　　　　　　　　　　0　　　Fail

Time frame & due date
 - (A) Poor Kids　　　　Feb.2 - Feb.12 (weeks 5-6); due: **February 12, 11.59pm**
 - (B) People Like Us　　Feb.13 - Feb.19 (week 7); due: **February 19, 11.59pm**
 - (C) Dream On　　　　Mar.6 - Mar.12 (week 9); due: **March 12, 11.59pm**
 - (D) Family Change　　Mar.13 - Mar.19 (week 10); due: **March 19, 11.59pm**
 - (E) The Problem...　　Mar.20 - Mar.26 (week 11); due: **March 26, 11.59pm**
 - (F) Harmful Ineq...　　Apr.3 - Apr.9 (week 13); due: **April 9, 11.59pm**
 - (G) Mass Equality　　Apr.10 - Apr.16 (week 14); due: **April 16, 11.59pm**

Submission　　　　　　Through GradeCraft; the submission system closes at 11.59pm.