

Inequality and Social Protest Calderwood Seminar in Public Writing

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Sociology

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Office Hours Tuesdays 10-11, Thursdays 2-3 and by appointment

Have you ever struggled to explain inequality or student protest to a seat-mate on a plane or your well-meaning uncle? Sociology gives us a unique perspective on this moment of increasing inequality and mass protest on both the right and the left. Pull together what you have learned in your sociology classes and learn to communicate your knowledge about the inequalities and politics of race, class, and gender. Working collaboratively, students in this Calderwood Seminar will write a variety of pieces that bring sociological expertise to the public, such as summaries of research and data, book reviews, opinion pieces, blog posts, and magazine articles. This course is designed as a capstone course for sociology majors; students in related majors who have some coursework in sociology are also welcome.

Course objectives:

1. To enable students to synthesize prior coursework in sociology, identify key questions for the discipline, and expand their knowledge on those questions.
2. To consider how sociological perspectives on inequalities of gender, race, and class, and how intersectionality as an approach, can shed light on contemporary manifestations of these forms of inequality and on social and political upheaval and protest.
3. To develop the ability to communicate with general audiences about these issues in various genres.

Course organization:

The course is designed to allow students to engage in different forms of public writing that communicates sociological perspectives on diverse topics relating to gender, race, class, and social change. These will include writing published in newspapers, magazines, online, and in sociological outlets aimed at a general audience.

The bulk of the course will consist of a series of writing assignments in different genres. Students will be divided into two groups, which will alternate between writing and editing/commenting on different forms of public writing. Our practice of writing will mirror the way people write outside the academy; each piece of writing will be revised, in response to comments, at least twice. We will have some shared reading, and students are expected to do additional research as needed to write well-informed assignments. For some of the assignments, there is no shared reading and students can choose their own topics. Students should also plan to regularly read newspapers, sociological blogs, and other exemplars of public writing on sociological topics. The syllabus includes hyperlinks to some of these sources.

Readings

Jerry Flores, Caught Up: Girls, Surveillance, and Wraparound Incarceration. University of California, 2016

Jennifer Silva, Coming Up Short: Working-Class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty. Oxford University Press, 2015

Other readings are available through Moodle. Books are on reserve in the library and are available both new and used through the bookstore and online.

Assignments:

Factual article summarizing a research report (800 words)

Article summarizing a sociological journal article (800 words)

Book review (1000 words)

Sociological Images –style blog post, including visual images, data visualization, or photography (800 words plus images)

Op-ed including a policy recommendation (800 words)

Short, sociological and personal essay (“Sociological Imagination” essay, modeled on the back pages of *Contexts*) (800 words)

All assignments are equally weighted. I will read and comment on your revised and final drafts; I will grade final drafts. In addition to your own writing, your editing of others’ writing will be part of your grade. (Consistently exceptional editing will move your final grade up; consistently poor editing will move your final grade down.) Class participation includes class discussion of the reading materials and the writing being workshopped that week and regular attendance. Each week you should come prepared with notes or questions on the readings, as well as suggestions and reactions to writers’ drafts. Class participation is worth 15% of your overall grade; the writing assignments are worth the remaining 85%.

Writing and Editing Cycles:

Each piece of writing will go through a five-stage cycle:

1. First drafts by writers (to be read by paired editors)
2. Annotated drafts by editors (to be read and revised by writers) Each week writers and editors will establish mutually-agreeable deadlines for exchanging drafts. Edits should be returned to writers by email and copied to the professor to allow sufficient time for redrafting before the Monday deadline.
3. Revised drafts by writers (to be read by everyone) must be posted to the class [Google site](#) no later than 5 PM on Monday before class.
4. Revised drafts will be workshopped in class on Wednesday mornings. (Everyone should come

prepared to discuss all drafts written for each class.)

5. Final drafts by writers must be posted to the class [Google site](#) no later than class time one week after they are workshopped.

All writing should be done in Word or Google Docs, and editors should use the track changes and comment functions for their annotations. Editors should also write one or two paragraphs at the end of each piece with a general assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the draft and how it might be improved. All writing should be titled by the author (editors may comment on these), and word counts should be placed at the end of the piece. Use a 12-point font, double spacing, standard margins, and line and page numbers.

Please see Guidelines for Writing and Editing Assignments at the end of this document for detailed instructions.

Sample weekly schedule (week of 9/25-10/2):

- 1) Wednesday afternoon through Saturday (deadline negotiated by each editor/writer pair): Group A do reading (Pew Research Center, “On Gender”) and write first draft; Group B do reading (Pew Research Center, “On Gender”) and revise your draft from previous week’s workshop
 - 2) Weekend (as negotiated by each editor/writer pair): Group B edit A’s drafts
 - 3) Sunday and/or Monday: Group A revise draft and turn in by 5 PM Monday
 - 4) Tuesday to Wednesday morning: Groups A and B read Group A’s essays and prepare comments
 - 5) Wednesday morning: Class (discussion of reading listed for that week and workshopping of Group A’s revised drafts); Group B turn in final drafts that were workshopped the week before.
- Note: Specific deadlines for steps 1 and 2 to be negotiated by writers and editors.*

Punctuality and extensions:

The nature of the class, with weekly deadlines for everyone and writers’ reliance on deadlines, makes extensions especially difficult. If you have an accommodation permitting occasional extensions, please speak with me at the beginning of the course so that we can strategize. Other than accommodations and very unusual emergencies, I will not grant extensions.

Note: In case of Mountain Day, please turn in assignments as scheduled; we will modify the schedule as needed.

Detailed schedule, readings, and assignments

Date	Writing Group	Assignment
9/11		<p>View Prof. Whittier’s introductory video on Moodle</p> <p>Read syllabus closely</p> <p>Read Tressie McMillan Cottom, “The Poor Can’t Afford Not to Wear Nice Clothes”</p> <p>Victor Ray, “The Concerns of College Student Protesters and What Sociology Has to Offer”</p> <p>Browse examples of public writing about sociology and inequality at the following: <i>The Upshot</i>, <i>Grey Matter</i>, <i>Contexts Back Page</i>, <i>Op-Eds and articles at Medium’s Gen page</i>, <i>letters to the editor at the Washington Post</i>, <i>opinion columns at the Daily Hampshire Gazette</i>, and any other examples you find. Set up New York Times access through Smith libraries</p>
9/18		Introduction to the course, discussion of Cottom, Ray, and other examples.
9/25	A	Research report Pew Research Center, “Income inequality in the U.S. is rising most rapidly among Asians” (on Moodle)
10/2	B	Research report Pew Research Center, “On gender differences, no consensus on nature vs. nurture” (on Moodle)
10/9	A	Research article Elijah Anderson, “The White Space”
10/16		No class: Fall break (Start reading Caught Up)
10/23	B	Research article Heba Gowayed, “Diverging by Gender: Syrian Refugees’ Divisions of Labor and Formation of Human Capital in the United States”
10/30	A	Book review Caught Up
11/6	B	Sociological Images blog post (topic of your choice; no reading)
11/13	A	Sociological Images blog post (topic of your choice; no reading)
11/20	B	Book review Coming Up Short
11/27		No Class: Thanksgiving break
12/4	A/B	Op-ed with policy recommendation (joint bylines encouraged)
12/11	A/B	“Sociological imagination” essays
12/19	A/B	Final Portfolio and Reflection due

Guidelines for Writing and Editing Assignments

Writing

1. All assignments should be written in Word or Google Docs.
 2. Title each assignment.
 3. Use a 12-point font, double-spacing, standard margins, and page numbers.
 4. Spellcheck each assignment.
 - In Word: Review tab → Spelling and Grammar
 - In Docs: Tools → Spelling and Grammar
 5. Place the word count at the end of the piece.
 - In Word: Review tab → Word count
 - In Docs: Tools → Word count
 6. Use the following conventions for naming files:
 - **For first draft:** [first two words of common text title]_[Writer's first and last initials]_1
 - **Example:** Income Inequality_NW_1
 - **For edited draft:** [first two words of common text title]_[Writer's first and last initials]_[Editor's first and last initials]_2
 - **Example:** Income Inequality_NW_AT_2
 - **For revised draft to be workshopped in class:** [first two words of common text title]_[Writer's first and last initials]_[Editor's first and last initials]_Revision_3
 - **Example:** Income Inequality_NW_AT_Revision_3
 - **For final draft due one week later:** [first two words of common text title]_[Writer's first and last initials]_Final
 - **Example:** Income Inequality_NW_Final
- For op-eds, blog posts, and sociological imagination essays, the type of piece will replace the author of the common text. For co-authored drafts, list the writers' names in alphabetical order by last name.
7. First drafts, edited drafts and revised drafts should be uploaded to the appropriate folders in the "Assignments" page on the class Google site. Final drafts should be uploaded to your personal folder in the "Portfolios" page.

Editing

1. Use the track changes and comments functions to annotate the draft.

IN WORD:

Review tab→Track Changes and Review tab→New Comment

IN DOCS:

Editing Mode → Suggesting mode (Edits become suggestions)

This is on the far right of the toolbar; click the pencil icon and choose suggesting mode from the drop-down menu

Add comments by selecting “new comment” from the toolbar

This is a Small comment box image with + inside, between the insert attachment and insert images buttons.

2. Write one or two paragraphs at the end of each piece with a general assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the draft and how it might be improved.

3. When you revise your piece, do not leave comments/suggestions/track changes in the revised document. Produce a clean revision with only your text.