

Capstone in Inequality and Social Justice
Sociology 441w * Spring 2008

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Office Hours: MF 10:10-11; 12:20-1; M 2-3

Catalog Description: Research and writing on Inequality and Social Justice. Students bring together readings from other inequality content courses and/or independent readings, research methods training, and data and/or internship experience to write a final research paper on a topic of their choice within the ISJ area.

A “capstone” is the topmost stone in architecture, sometimes the keystone, sometimes the coping stone. In any event, it is always the last structural architectural element added to a building.

As an educational element, a capstone course is intended to allow you to bring together all the pertinent aspects of your education. According to Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives, the major categories of cognitive achievement are as follows:

Knowledge

- Exhibiting memory of previously-learned materials by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts and answers
- Knowledge of specifics - terminology, specific facts
- Knowledge of ways and means of dealing with specifics - conventions, trends and sequences, classifications and categories, criteria, methodology
- Knowledge of the universals and abstractions in a field - principles and generalizations, theories and structures

Comprehension

- Demonstrative understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas
- Translation
- Interpretation
- Extrapolation

Application

- Using new knowledge.
- Solving problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way

Analysis

- Examining and breaking information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations
- Analysis of elements
- Analysis of relationships
- Analysis of organizational principles

Synthesis

- Compiling information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions

- Production of a unique communication
- Production of a plan, or proposed set of operations
- Derivation of a set of abstract relations

Evaluation

- Presenting and defending opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria
- Judgments in terms of internal evidence
- Judgments in terms of external criteria

You will be expected to demonstrate your mastery of these elements as they refer to Inequality and Social Justice, bringing together past educational experiences in the area (coursework, research, internships) as well as current research (predominantly library-based). This mastery will be demonstrated in class discussions, class leadership, class presentation, and a final paper.

Class discussion: Everyone in the class will be expected to take part in class discussions. If you find this difficult, please talk with me and we will try to find an alternative means to meet this requirement. The purpose of class discussion is to practice listening, understanding, responding, and debating. This type of discussion, or “ideal speech” according to Jürgen Habermas, is both the outcome and the precondition of social justice. It involves the honest, active, and interactive participation of all members of a society, but it also requires sensitive listening and understanding.

Class presentation/discussion leadership: You will be required to present and lead a discussion on the topic of your final paper. You may do this in a team format, and you may also bring in media, but you may not rely entirely on a film as your presentation.

Final paper: This is the major portion of the course, and it is here where you will clearly demonstrate your mastery of the cognitive elements, in the context of a subject of Inequality and Social Justice. You may bring in everything that you have learned over your career as a graduate or undergraduate student (to date). You will present the paper to me in stages: the paper proposal; annotated reference list; rough draft; and final paper. You may choose any topic relevant to ISJ, so long as it allows you to demonstrate knowledge and comprehension, and apply, synthesize, and evaluate. The meaning of these tasks will become apparent in the course of the semester.

Your paper must use the ASA format (on reserve), and will be roughly 15 to 20 pages in length.

Required texts:

Hays, Sharon. 2004. *Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mishel, Lawrence, et al. 2006. *The State of Working America 2006/2007*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Graduate increment:

You must demonstrate your understanding of some of the more advanced theories in the area of inequality and social justice, both in your presentation and in your final paper. You must draw from two books in the recommended reading list specially designated for graduate students.

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Calendar Spring 2008 🌀 Subject to Change

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
1	1/23	Inequality, Social Justice, and Martin Luther King		
2	1/30	Inequality, Social Justice, and Climate Change	ERES: Freudenberg	
3	2/6	Marginalized in America: Women and Children	Hays: <i>Flat Broke with Children</i>	
4	2/13	Marginalized in America: Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality, Disability, Age	<i>State of Working America</i>	Present one "classification" of inequality
5	2/20	History of US Social Policy		Paper Proposal
6	2/27	History, continued		
7	3/5	History, continued		Annotated Bibliography
8	3/12	Global Inequalities, Global Social Justice		
9	3/19	Social Justice Theories: Distributive Justice, Citizenship, and Charity		
10	March 24-28 Spring Break 🌀 No Class!			
11	4/2	Student Presentations		Rough Draft I
12	4/9	Student Presentations		
13	4/16	Student Presentations		Rough Draft II
14	4/23	Student Presentations		
15	4/30	Student Presentations		
16	5/7	Final paper due in my office, SS 323, or in Sociology mailroom, no later than 5:00 pm, Wednesday, May 7		