Sociology 65: The Social Psychology of Inequality

Winter 2018, Dartmouth College
Tuesday/Thursday, 2:25-4:15
X-hour: Wednesday 4:35-5:25
Classroom: TBA

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Course Description. Sociological social psychology examines the relationship between individuals and the larger social systems in which they are embedded, such as interactions, groups, institutions, and cultures. This course will introduce key social psychological concepts (e.g., status, power, justice, stigma, identity, cultural meanings, socialization) and use them to explore how inequality is created, reproduced, and resisted. We will study how inequality operates in different social and institutional contexts (e.g., work, family, schools, neighborhoods) for members of different social groups (e.g., race, class, gender, age, nationality, health), and consider how inequalities can be intersectional. Students who wish to enroll in this course should have previously completed an introductory course in sociology – either Socy 1 (Introduction to Sociology) or Socy 2 (Social Problems). This requirement may be waived for students who have taken certain other sociology courses; contact the instructor to find out if you are eligible.

Course Format. This course involves experiential learning. Dartmouth has community partners throughout the Upper Valley that work to offset different forms of social inequality. With support from the Dartmouth Center for Service, students in the course will apply the concepts learned in class to real issues faced by a chosen community partner, completing a research portfolio that includes a literature review and field research on a matter of concern for the organization. Students will also complete weekly written reflections on the material throughout the term, in lieu of quizzes or exams. This will include reflections on specific course readings prior to class, free reflections during class time, and longer weekly reflections that draw linkages between concepts and readings. We will not meet during X-hour unless it is necessary to reschedule a regular class meeting for this time.

Learning Objectives. By the end of the course, you will: (1) become familiar with social psychological concepts and their relevance to inequality; (2) understand how these concepts operate across different social and institutional contexts, and for members of different social groups; (3) independently read and critique the academic literature, producing thoughtful weekly reflections; (4) construct a literature review that applies a core concept introduced in the course to a social problem addressed by one of Dartmouth’s community partners in the Upper Valley; (5) carry out field research on behalf of this community partner, observing social psychological concepts in action; (6) produce a final report that speaks across your literature review and field research, reflecting on what you have learned about the problem of inequality and its possible solutions from a social psychological perspective.

There are no required textbooks for this course, but you may find the optional book below helpful. It is available for purchase at Wheelock Books and on reserve at Baker-Berry. All required readings are available on our course Canvas site: http://canvas.dartmouth.edu.

Optional textbook:
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Research Portfolio (50%)

This course involves a social impact practicum, in conjunction with the Dartmouth Center for Service. Dartmouth has community partners throughout the Upper Valley that work to offset different forms of social inequality. You will apply the concepts learned in class to real issues faced by a chosen community partner (e.g., housing security, healthcare access, violence prevention), completing a research portfolio that includes a literature review and field research on a matter of concern for the organization. Community partners will vary from year to year, but will include organizations like: Dismas House, The Haven, LISTEN Community Services, COVER Home Repair, Drugs Over Dinner, WISE, Twin Pines Housing, Child and Family Services, the Aging Resource Center (DHMC), and Good Neighbor Health Clinic. The specifics of your field research experience will also vary by year and depend on the goals of your chosen community partner.

You will choose a community partner in Week 1, and complete background research on the organization in Week 2 (5% of your final grade). In Week 4, you will submit a literature review that applies concepts from class and presents knowledge from the academic literature to offer insights about the issue faced by your chosen partner (10%). Before Week 6, you will complete field research on the matter of concern to your community partner. This will require site visits during which you will make observations, take field notes, and perhaps even conduct qualitative interviews. You will submit the notes from your site visit in Week 6 (5%). In Week 8, you will submit a formal report on your field research (10%). Your final project for the course, due during finals week, will be a research portfolio that includes your literature review and the formal report on your field research, but also a written reflection that speaks across the two, reflecting on what you have learned about the problem of inequality and its possible solutions from a social psychological perspective (20%).

Reflection Journal (50%)

You will complete weekly written reflections on the material throughout the term, in lieu of quizzes or exams (worth 5% of your grade per week). This will include three different types of writing: reflections on specific course readings prior to class, free reflections during class time, and longer weekly reflections that draw linkages between concepts and readings. Your reflections on course readings will take a form known as QCCQ – quotation, concept, comparison, question (Rusche and Jason 2011). You will select a (2-4 sentence) quotation from each reading that captures one of its main arguments; summarize, in your own words, the concept or idea the quotation captures; make a comparison between this reading and another reading from the unit; and pose a critical thinking question to that can be used in class to generate discussion. These are due before the start of Tuesday’s class each week. Free reflections will take place during class; I will ask you to reflect on an idea or discussion and free write in your journal for a set period of time. Longer weekly reflections will be due on Sunday each week in the term. These reflections should be approximately 1,000 words in length, and consider the relationship of between what you read that week and the topics discussed in class, as well as how the concepts covered that week apply to the issue of concern for your community partner.

Final Grade

Your final numeric grade in the course will be determined by the components of your research portfolio (50%) and reflection journal (50%) submitted throughout the term. Your numeric grade will be
converted into a letter grade using the scale below. A description of the quality of work necessary to receive a certain letter grade in the course is available here.

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COURSE POLICIES

Academic Responsibility

Dartmouth College is a community of scholars and learners committed to the principles of academic and personal honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. Students share with faculty and staff the responsibility for promoting a climate of integrity. As citizens of the Dartmouth community, students are expected to adhere to these principles at all times, in both their academic and non-academic endeavors. All students should conduct themselves in accordance with the regulations set forth in the student handbook, particularly those relating to the academic honor principle. Cheating, plagiarism, use of the same work in multiple courses, and unauthorized collaboration will not be tolerated. Minor violations of the academic regulations may result in loss of credit or failure for a given piece of work or in the course. Major violations of these regulations may result in suspension or expulsion from the College.

Class Conduct

Class participation is about thinking carefully, listening, and posing questions to others as much as it is about sharing your ideas. This requires us to be present, set aside distractions, and focus our attention on engaging with one another. With this goal in mind, you are welcome to use laptops and tablets in class, but only for note-taking or other class-related activities. No cell phones may be used in class. Violations of this policy will impact your participation grade. The tone with which we engage one another is also extremely important; your comments in class should come from a place of mutual respect and understanding. Disrespectful behavior such as talking while others are talking, dominating the floor, or engaging in personal attacks will not be tolerated. You are expected to treat one another and me with respect at all times.

Absences

Attendance and participation are essential components of this course. Chronic absences will cause a significant loss of points from your grade, as will routinely showing up to class late or leaving early. You can miss up to three of our regular Tuesday/Thursday class meetings without penalty, no questions asked. Any more than three absences over the course of the semester will cause you to lose a third of a letter grade from your final grade for each class missed (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+...). It is your responsibility to keep up with any material that you miss because of an absence and come to class prepared. Class policies on late and missed work are outlined in more detail below. If you anticipate having to miss class meetings (e.g., due to athletic participation, college-excused events, religious observances), please arrange a meeting with me at the start of the semester and bring documentation of the expected conflicts.
Late Work Policy

Lots of unexpected things will come up over the course of the term. To make sure you don’t wind up in a difficult position, plan ahead: start your assignments early and finish them in advance of the deadline. Speak with me early in the term if you anticipate any circumstances that might affect your ability to get your work in on time. Reflection journal entries of all types will receive a zero if they come in after the deadline. Assignments related to your research portfolio will lose one letter grade for each day they are late; those that are 5 or more days late will receive a zero. If the deadline has arrived and your work isn’t complete, it’s best to turn in whatever you have finished.

Extensions will only be given on graded assignments if they are missed because of extreme circumstances beyond your control, such as severe illness requiring a doctor’s visit or hospitalization, death in the family, or college-excused events (which must be approved ahead of time). Generally not feeling well, oversleeping, forgetting about the deadline, having computer problems, or needing to help your friend or family member with something will not be considered extreme circumstances. If you believe you are eligible for an extension, it is your responsibility to notify me before missing the deadline. Students who have been granted accommodations by Student Accessibility Services should arrange to meet with me early in the semester so we can plan ahead.

Canvas and Course Assignments

Canvas and email are important forms of communication for this class; be sure to check both regularly to stay informed. Course readings and assignments will be posted on Canvas. Canvas is also the main forum by which most of your assignments will be submitted. If you have difficulties accessing the site, or are unsure of how to use its necessary features, please contact me as soon as possible. Confusion about the use of Canvas is not a valid excuse for late submission of assignments.

Re-Grading of Assignments

If you believe there has been an error in the grading of an assignment, please provide me with a written explanation of why your grade should be changed, not to exceed one page. Based on your rationale and my careful examination of your work, your grade may go either up or down. You have one week from the date the assignment is returned to you to request that it be re-graded.

Accommodations

Students desiring academic accommodations, modifications, or auxiliary aids should contact Student Accessibility Services at Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu or 603-646-9900. Once you’ve established your accommodations with SAS, we should arrange a private meeting early in the semester to discuss how I can best support you in the course.
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1: Introduction
1/4  Anderson and Snow, “Inequality and the Self”
     QCCQ #1
1/7  Choose a Community Partner
     Reflection Journal Entry #1

Week 2: Status, Power, and Resources
1/9  Ridgeway, “Why Status Matters for Inequality”
     Hallett, “Between Deference and Distinction”
     QCCQ #2
1/11 Molm et al., “Conflict and Fairness in Social Exchange”
     Background Research on Community Partner
1/14 Reflection Journal Entry #2

Week 3: Culture, Stigma, and Justice
1/16 Kay et al., “Inequality, Discrimination, and the Power of the Status Quo”
     QCCQ #3
1/18 Link and Phelan, “Stigma Power”
     Hegtvedt and Johnson, “Justice Beyond the Individual”
1/21 Reflection Journal Entry #3

Week 4: Self, Identity, and Emotions
1/23 Schwalbe et al., “Generic Processes in the Reproduction of Inequality”
     Hunt, “Identities and Inequalities”
     QCCQ #4
     Literature Review
1/28 Reflection Journal Entry #4

Week 5: Socialization, Family, and Schools
1/30 One reading from Socialization list
     QCCQ #5
2/1  One reading each from Family and Schools lists
2/4  Reflection Journal Entry #5

Week 6: Work, Neighborhoods, and Crime
2/6  One reading from Work list
     QCCQ #6
2/8  One reading each from Neighborhoods and Crime lists
     Documentation of Field Research
2/11 Reflection Journal Entry #6
Week 7: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality
2/13 Two readings from Sex and Gender list
QCCQ #7
2/15 One reading from Sexuality list
2/18 Reflection Journal Entry #7

Week 8: Race, Class, and Immigration
2/20 One reading each from Race and Class lists
QCCQ #8
2/22 One reading from Immigration list
Formal Report on Field Research
2/25 Reflection Journal Entry #8

Week 9: Health, Age, and the Life Course
2/27 Two readings from Health list
QCCQ #9
3/1 One reading from Life Course list
3/4 Reflection Journal Entry #9

Week 10: Resisting Inequality
3/6 Two readings from Resistance list
QCCQ #10
Reflection Journal Entry #10

**Final Research Portfolio due Monday, March 12 at 3:00 pm**
COURSE READINGS

Assigned Readings, Weeks 1-4


Kay, Aaron C., Danielle Gaucher, Jennifer M. Peach, Kristin Laurin, Justin Friesen, Mark P. Zanna, and Steven J. Spencer. 2009. “Inequality, discrimination, and the power of the status quo: Direct evidence for a motivation to see the way things are as the way they should be.” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 97: 421-34.

Link, Bruce G. and Jo Phelan. 2014. “Stigma power.” Social Science and Medicine 103: 24-32.


Socialization


Families


Schools


Work


Neighborhoods


Crime


Sex and Gender


Kane, Emily W. 2006. “‘No way my boys are going to be like that!’: Parents’ responses to children’s gender nonconformity.” Gender and Society 20: 149-76.


**Sexuality**


Pfeffer, Carla A. 2014. “‘I don’t like passing as a straight woman’: Queer negotiations of identity and social group membership.” American Journal of Sociology 120: 1-44.


**Race/Ethnicity**


Immigration


Health


Life Course


Resistance


