

Mark Killingsworth
Patricia A. Roos (Draft, 1/16/08)

090:101:42 First Year Seminar: That's Not Fair: How Economists and Sociologists Study Inequality

Spring, 2008

Tuesdays 9:50 to 11:10, January 22nd through April 1st (10 weeks)
Brett Hall Seminar Room, CAC

Contact information:

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I. Course Description:

Why do women typically earn less than men? Are differences in educational attainment the result of race or class? Do Whites earn more because of the color of their skin? This seminar explores the theories and methods used by economists and sociologists to examine issues of inequality, including race, gender, and class differences in education, occupation, and earnings. Students will be introduced to research from both fields and learn about the logic of social inquiry, crosstabular and regression methods, and how to answer substantive questions using empirical analysis.

II. Readings:

There is one required book available at the Rutgers College bookstore. Other readings will be available through Sakai, as noted on the course outline below. The required book is:

Dalton Conley. 1999. *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

III. Expectations:

Our biggest expectation is that you attend and participate in each and every class during these next 10 weeks. The course will be a mixture of lecture (to get course materials across) and seminar (to discuss the material presented). The success of the course depends on your active participation, and the small class size should facilitate this goal. Please complete assigned readings prior to class, and come prepared to ask questions. If you absolutely must miss class, you need a *very good* excuse. Unexcused absences will result in a no-credit grade.

This class is a pass/no credit course. Your final grade will depend on:

1) ***Class participation/attendance, including written memos***

For each class period (beginning class #2), write one paragraph about your reactions to the readings. Post it to Sakai by 5 p.m. the day before class (i.e., Monday). Was there something in the readings that you found particularly intriguing? Or, is there something that puzzled you that you think merits class discussion? Or, is there something with which you disagree? Which issue, for example, might you want to talk about further with your parents, siblings, or friends?

No written memos are due on days you have written assignments (see below for summary of due dates).

Read everyone's memo before class. We'll use them to structure the seminar portion of the class discussion. Each of you should be prepared to participate in the class discussion.

Please be considerate of us and your fellow students: don't be late! Make sure you post to Sakai no later than 5 p.m. the day before class.

2) ***Final oral presentation***

We will break the course into four or five groups. Each group will work together to prepare a final presentation (with power point slides) on the last day of class (April 1st). We will present more details in class about our expectations regarding these presentations as the course progresses. We will provide some time in class to organize yourself as groups, but you will likely have to meet occasionally outside of class with your group members. Suffice it to say, we require each student to participate fully in his or her group. *Do not be a free rider!* That's not fair to your fellow students and it's not intellectually honest.

To move you along on your final presentation, there are several steps along the way. Here is a ***summary of your due dates:***

Feb. 5th: Written summary (max. 2 pages) of your group presentation topics (with GSS variables chosen)

Feb. 26th: Written group summary of 3 to 4 *academic* references on your topic (max. 2 pages)

March 11th: Preliminary tables due

April 1st: Final group presentations (with power point slides)

3) ***Recommended, but not required:***

Once you start to look for it, inequality is everywhere in the news. If you find articles that examine the issues we're discussing, please post them to Sakai so that they are available to everyone. What kind of assumptions underlie the authors' arguments? How would an economist respond? A sociologist?

IV. Academic Integrity:

This course will be conducted in full accordance with the university's "Policy on Academic Integrity." Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) quoting or paraphrasing without attribution; submitting work for more than one course without the instructor's permission; copying from, or assisting, other students on exams; plagiarizing major portions of assignments; using a purchased paper; presenting other's work as your own; altering a graded exam; theft of exams. [For the complete policy, click [here](#). Watch this humorous video, click [here](#).]

V. Classroom Atmosphere:

We encourage the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Thus, behavior that distracts students and faculty is not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, discourteous remarks, and other behaviors specified by individual instructors. Courteous and lawful expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is, of course, permitted (and indeed encouraged!).

VI. Course Outline:

Week 1: Introduction and Course Overview: Intro to the General Social Survey (GSS)

Jan. 22: Play around on this web page (look for variables of interest):
http://sda.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin32/hsda?harc_sda+gss06

Week 2: Research Design: Causality and Crosstabs

Jan. 29: Conley, Ch. 1

Week 3: Regression Analysis

Feb. 5: Killingsworth, "A Simple Introduction to Econometrics" (Sakai)

Week 4: Does Education Pay?

Feb. 12: Mincer, "Schooling, Experience and Earnings" (Sakai)

Week 5: Intergenerational Transmission of Wealth

Feb. 19: Conley, Ch. 2

Week 6: Access to Higher Education: Education as a Dependent Variable

Feb. 26: Conley, Ch. 3

Mitchell L. Stevens, "An Admissions Race That's Already Won" (op-ed, Sakai)

U.S. Census Bureau News, "One-Third of Young Women Have Bachelor's Degrees" (news release, Sakai)

Special opportunity: Today, Dalton Conley will be speaking at the Institute for Health brown bag, at 12 noon today. The title of his talk: "The Long-Term Mortality Effects of Vietnam Era Military Service: Evidence from the Draft Lottery" [bring your book to be autographed!]

Week 7: Poverty and inequality

March 4: Conley, Chs. 4 & 5

Week 8: Discrimination, Race, and Sex Differences in Pay

March 11: Malkiel & Malkiel, "Sex Differences in Pay in Professional Employment" (Sakai)

RU Gender Equity Report (Sakai)

Leonhardt, "Gender Pay Gap, Once Narrowing, Is Stuck in Place" (oped, Sakai)

March 17-21st: Spring Break!

Week 9: Public Policy, Remedies

March 25: Conley, Ch. 6

Week 10:

April 1: Group presentations