

Intersectionality
Sociology 4210, Spring 2023
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00pm to 3:20pm
Wooten Hall 216

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the theories, epistemologies, methods, and the general paradigm of intersectionality. The aim will be on applying intersectionality to better understand the processes contributing to patterns of inequality. Throughout the course we will discuss and interrogate contemporary social problems. We will engage with social theory in order to adopt lenses by which we can view social issues in useful ways. We will also conduct research, analyzing data to generate new knowledge on patterns of inequality and their determinants.

In the spirit of intersectionality, I also aim for the course to have social relevance and engage with pressing issues of inequality in our local community and society more generally. We will relate readings to contemporary issues. The course assignments are also designed to have practical relevance to students’ professional, personal, and/or academic goals. I hope that we can translate our academic study to positive social outcomes.

Much intersectional theorizing was inspired by the lived experience of individuals whose voices were not represented in predominant canons. With this wisdom in mind, I encourage students to draw from their lived experience in engaging with texts and theories we cover. In contradiction to the critique that these narratives are “anecdotal”, we will engage deeply with the structural conditions that contribute to our varying histories and standpoints. No student will be required to share anything from their personal lives. Those who do will be respected and encouraged to use their standpoint to build from the theories outlined in the course. At the same time, we must remember that our individual perspectives provide only partial vision, and a clearer view may emerge by engaging with others through text, conversation, and dialogue.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1) Students will gain an understanding of the complex and dynamic ways that systems of power interact and intersect to generate patterns of inequality across social categories such as race, gender, and class.
- 2) Students will apply intersectional theory to contemporary social problems facing society.
- 3) Students will gain skills in data analysis to uncover systems of power and patterns of inequality in society.
- 4) Students will envision a socially just society and the steps needed to achieve it.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In recognition of the history and ongoing processes of colonialism by which the land where our class and the University of North Texas exists, I would like to acknowledge that this space is the occupied/unceded/seized territory of the Wichita, Caddo, Commanche, and Cherokee tribes. These tribes have stewarded this land through several generations and we pay our respects to elders, both past and present.

Note: Land Acknowledgement Statement adapted from the UNT Division of Institutional Equity and Diversity

GUEST POLICY

Children and dependents are welcome in class. Please do not hesitate if you need to bring your loved ones to class.

SUGGESTED READINGS

All readings listed in the syllabus may be accessed through the UNT library website. All other materials will be posted online (on canvas) or distributed through e-mail.

Students are not required to purchase any books for this course. However, if you plan on attending graduate school in a social science field, or pursuing a career in fields related to social equality, the following books may serve as valuable references.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment 2nd Edition*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Moraga, Cherríe and Gloria Anzaldúa (editors). *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are four major assignments for the course.

1) Participation

This is a discussion-based course. It is designed so that we not only learn from the readings and instruction, but also from each other. Therefore, it is crucial that students participate in each class. **Students should make an effort to contribute their thoughts at least once every class.** If, for some reason, you are unable to participate in our class discussions, please let me know.

Each class will have an in-class assignment to be completed individually or in groups. These assignments will count for a substantial share of participation.

Throughout the semester, there will likely be instances where some students are unable to attend class for one reason or another. If this happens, you should e-mail me as soon as possible to let

me know. Ideally, you will e-mail me prior to class. While it is impossible to list all the potential reasons a student may have for missing class, some of the common ones include being sick (mental or physical health), having issues with transportation, and family responsibilities. There are probably other things that I have not listed or thought of that may be legitimate reasons for missing class. If you are unsure whether your reason for missing class is legitimate or not, please feel free to ask me. If it is a legitimate reason, your grade will not be penalized and we will make a plan to be sure you do not fall behind.

2) Discussion Leaders: Application of Course Readings to Contemporary Issues:

A major aim of this course is to apply sociological concepts and theories to contemporary social problems. In pursuit of this goal, **student groups of two or three** will sign up for a class session where they relate the readings for that class to a pressing social issue. Only one group will present each class. They will do their presentation as a group. Ideally, students will identify a video, newspaper article, blog post, poem, art piece, or some other expression that deals with the topics pertaining to that week's reading. In their presentation, students should give an overview of their application. Then, they should facilitate a class discussion. The discussion should cover how the application relates to course concepts, how it advances or challenges the theories or cover in the class, and/or how it provides new insight to our understanding of intersecting systems of inequality.

Discussion leaders will be graded on the following criteria:

- The application was clearly related to course material for that week
- The discussion expanded our understanding of course concepts by applying them to a contemporary social issue
- The presenter provided guiding discussion questions that engaged students in the class
- The presentation and discussion lasted between 15 and 20 minutes.

3) Course Papers

The course will have three papers with distinct aims.

- 1) ***Uncovering and analyzing patterns of inequality.*** In the first paper, students will document instances of inequality in local Texas communities and analyze their contributing factors through an intersectional lens.

The first step in this assignment is documenting instances of inequality. There will be two workshops to train students how to do this. First, students will learn how to use the *Portal to Texas History* (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/>), a digital repository for historical newspaper articles from communities across Texas spanning from the 1800s to today. Using this resource, we will learn how to do archival research; uncovering events that have been neglected but nonetheless have longstanding effects on communities and families. A workshop on how to use the Portal to Texas History will take place on Tuesday, February 7 in room 130 of the Willis Library.

The second resource we will use to document inequality is *Social Explorer* (<https://www.socialexplorer.com/>), a data analysis tool that allows users to easily examine federal data to identify contemporary forms of inequality in communities

across the U.S. This tool may be used, for example, to identify patterns of residential racial segregation, wage disparities, or group differences in occupational and educational advancement. A workshop on how to use Social Explorer will take place on Thursday, February 9 in room 130 of the Willis Library.

Using either the Portal to Texas History or Social Explorer, students will document one form of inequality in a Texas community. They will then theorize on the factors contributing to that form of inequality, drawing from readings and class discussions. Students should consider how institutional policies or interpersonal biases, for example, contribute to the inequalities they have observed.

The paper should be 3-5 pages, double-spaced and with at least 2 references from the course readings. It is due on **March 17** on Canvas.

- 2) ***In-Class Paper: Applying Racial Capitalism and Critical Race Theory.*** The class includes two weeks where we cover theories related to racial capitalism and critical race theory. At the conclusion of these lessons, I will provide an in-class and take-home (you may take it home if you don't finish in class) paper assignment. I will provide a list of four to six paper prompts. You will choose one and write a 3 to 5-page paper in response.

This paper is due on **April 7** on Canvas.

- 3) ***Abolitionist Futures: Imagining Something Different.*** Toward the end of the semester, we will discuss theories of prison abolition. After covering the main arguments of this approach, students will write a paper discussing whether they believe prison abolition is possible, why or why not, and what a society without prisons and/or police would look like. Regardless of students' responses on prison abolition, they will be asked to also write about how we can foster a more caring society. Papers should be 4 to 6 pages double-spaced.

This paper is due **May 4** on Canvas.

4) Presentations

Students will choose one of the papers they wrote in this course and present them to the class. Presentations may use one to five PowerPoint slides. They should last five minutes. The aim is to teach the class something new that we can learn from your paper.

Half of the class will present on April 27. The other half will present on May 2.

GRADES

The course grade will be weighted across the following assignment groups:

Participation and In-Class Activities: 20% of grade

Discussion Leader in Application of Course Materials: 15% of grade

Course Papers: 60% of grade, broken down as follows:

Paper 1: 20%

Paper 2: 20%

Paper 3: 20%

Presentation: 5%

LATE ASSIGNMENT AND GRADE POLICY

If there are extenuating circumstances preventing submission of assignments, please let me know. I will make every effort to accommodate students. Assignments submitted more than two weeks late or after May 11, whichever is earlier, will receive a zero unless specific accommodations have been arranged.

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades may only be assigned when the student is making satisfactory progress until the request for an incomplete is made. Incompletes will only be offered with medical documentation or other documentation that a highly unusual circumstance beyond the student's control (e.g. the death of a loved one) has made finishing the semester impossible. All requests for incompletes must be made prior to the final examination.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Visit the UNT Learning Center

The UNT Learning Center provides a variety of free academic support programs from tutoring and supplemental-instruction services to academic skills workshops and coaching. **Contact Information:** Phone: 940-369-7006 | Email: Learning.Center@unt.edu | In-person: Monday through Friday, from 8a - 5p, Sage Hall, Room 170. For more information about the services provided, visit the LC online: learningcenter.unt.edu.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences.

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Students who engage in academic dishonesty will receive a zero in the assignment and potentially a zero in the course and administrative action from the university.

ADA Accommodation Statement

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices

of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648.

Religious Holidays

If you wish to observe a religious holidays, notify me by the tenth day of the semester of the date when you will be absent unless the religious holiday is observed on or before the tenth day of the semester. In such cases, you should notify me at least five days in advance of the date when you will be absent. I will make every reasonable effort to honor the request, not penalize you for missing the class, and if an examination or project is due during the absence, give you an exam or assignment equivalent to the one completed by those students in attendance.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Readings are subject to change. All changes will be announced in class and through e-mail with advanced notice.

I. INTRODUCTION: DEFINING INTERSECTIONALITY

January 17, 2023: Introductions

January 19, 2023: Purpose and Vision

Malesic, Jonathan. 2023. "The Key to Success in College Is So Simple, It's Almost Never Mentioned." *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/03/opinion/college-learning-students-success.html?smid=url-share>

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. 2021. "The Emerging Movement for Police and Prison Abolition." *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-emerging-movement-for-police-and-prison-abolition>

January 24, 2023: Introduction to Intersectionality

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 2015. Why Intersectionality Can't Wait. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/09/24/why-intersectionality-cant-wait/>

Landry, Bart. 2007. "The Theory of Intersectional Analysis." Pgs. 1-15 in *Race, Gender, and Class: Theory and Methods of Analysis*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

January 26, 2023: Defining Intersectionality

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139-167.

II. INTERSECTING SYSTEMS OF POWER AND INEQUALITY

January 31, 2023: Legacy of Power & Inequality

Ida Wells-Barnett. 1895. *The Red Record*. Chapter 1: The Case Stated. Page 3-7.

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2019. "The Idea of America." *The 1619 Project*, New York Times.

February 2, 2023: Intersections of Power

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2012. "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection." Chapter 19 in *On Intellectual Activism* by Patricia Hill Collins. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

February 7, 2023: Portal to Texas History Workshop

Class meets in Willis Library, Room 130

February 9, 2023: Social Explorer Workshop

Class meets in Willis Library, Room 130

February 14, 2023: Intersections of Power

February 16, 2023: Intersections of Power

February 21, 2023: Lab

February 23, 2023: Lab

February 28, 2023: Institutional Dimension of Power

Lee, Trymaine. 2019. "The Wealth Gap." *The 1619 Project*, New York Times.

Kruse, Kevin M. 2019. "Traffic." *The 1619 Project*, New York Times.

Desmond, Matthew. 2019. "Capitalism." *The 1619 Project*, New York Times.

March 2, 2023: Symbolic Dimension of Power

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. "Chapter 4: Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images." Pgs. 69-96 in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment 2nd Edition*. New York, NY: Routledge.

March 7, 2023: Individual Dimension of Power

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. Chapter 7, "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness." Pgs. 77-91 in *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.

March 9, 2023: Lab time for Social Explorer Analysis

Class meets in Willis Library, Room 130

March 14, 2023: No Class, Spring Break

March 16, 2023: No Class, Spring Break

III. SUSTAINING FORCES OF POWER AND INEQUALITY: RACIAL CAPITALISM AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY

March 21, 2023: Racial Capitalism

Robinson, Cedric J. 2005. "Chapter 12: An Ending" in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition. Third Edition*. University of North Carolina Press.

March 23, 2023: Racial Capitalism

Gurusami, Susila. 2017. "Working for Redemption: Formerly Incarcerated Black Women and Punishment in the Labor Market." *Gender & Society* 31(3): 433-456.

March 28, 2023: Critical Race Theory

Bell, Derrick A. Jr. 1980. "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma." *Harvard Law Review* 93(3): 518-533.

March 30, 2023: Critical Race Theory

Bell, Derrick A. Jr. 2018. "Chapter 1: Racial Symbols: A Limited Legacy." Pgs. 19-38 in *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*. Basic Books.

April 4, 2023: In-Class Paper Assignment

April 6, 2023: In-Class Paper Assignment (continued)

FUTURITY

April 11, 2023: Social Movements

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. 2016. "From #Blacklivesmatter to Black Liberation." in *From #Blacklivesmatter to Black Liberation*. Haymarket Books.

April 13, 2023: Abolition

Kaba, Mariame. 2021. "Part I: So You're Thinking about Becoming an Abolitionist." Pgs. 2-28 in *We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*. Haymarket Books

April 18, 2023: Abolition Workshop

April 20, 2023: Abolition Paper Prompt

April 25, 2023: Looking Back and Looking Forward

Coates, Ta-Nahisi. Pgs. 1-71 in *Between the World and Me*. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau.

April 27, 2023: Presentations

May 2, 2023: Presentations

May 4, 2022: Conclusions