

# SOCL250-970: SYSTEMS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY (OnDemand)

## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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<b>Instructor:</b>	Marcus Brooks, PhD (He/Him)
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<b>Office Hours:</b>	During Fall/Spring Semesters: Wednesday: 10:00-1:00 During Summer/Winter: By appointment - e-mail me with your availability. By appointment: <a href="https://calendly.com/marcus-brooks-1/30min">https://calendly.com/marcus-brooks-1/30min</a> <sup>1</sup>
<b>Office Location:</b>	Grise Hall, Room 114

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

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Why do some people have more than others? Who decided who has what? How does who we are and where we come from influence what we have? Whether you recognize it or not, these are all questions that impact your everyday lives. Everything from where you go to school, how you pay for college, or what resources you have access to in the case of an emergency. These are all questions about inequality. In this course we will answer these, and many more questions, about the causes and consequences of social, economic, and political inequalities – questions that you will come to recognize are just about everywhere in your daily life. You will leave this course empowered to be a critical consumer of information about these topics and with a deeper understanding about how these issues impact you, your life, and the lives of people around you.

In this course you will learn:

- 1) different theories and explanations for the cause of contemporary inequalities.
- 2) the processes that sustain and reproduce these systems of inequalities over time.
- 3) the myths that we tell ourselves about our role within systems in inequality.
- 4) how to identify yourself and others within these systems of stratification and oppression in your everyday lives.
- 5) the benefits and limitations of different approaches to solving issues of social inequality.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Describe the theoretical development of the sociological understandings of social inequality.
- 2) Compare the sociological approach to inequality to others.
- 3) Describe the tools and methods that sociologists use to analyze and understand inequality.
- 4) Describe how interlocking systems produce and reproduce systems of inequality.
- 5) Identify and analyze the workings of systems of inequality in your everyday lives.

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Technology

All course material (including readings, exams, assignments, and submissions) are housed on Blackboard. So, while this is an in-person class, you are required to have access to Blackboard, as this is where you will access readings and submit assignments. Note that this is a mostly paper-free course, so I will not be handing out physical copies of course materials (you are free to download

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<sup>1</sup> Please wait for personal confirmation from me before locking the meeting into your calendar.

materials and bring them with you to class) – if you have an accessibility need and require physical copies of course material please let me know and we can set up an accommodation.

If you do not have access to a personal computer, WKU Information Technology Services has computer labs on campus. [For information on lab location and hours, visit their page here.](#)

TopperTech offers computer repair and rental services. [Information about these services is available here.](#)

### **Limited Use of AI Permitted:**

You will get out of this class what you put into it. AI tools, like ChatGPT can be great resources for learning more about a topic, having complicated texts translated into legible language, or working through ideas. That being said, use of AI is strongly discouraged and USE OF AI TO COMPLETE ASSIGNMENT IN WHOLE IS PROHIBITED. Use the resources available to you. But don't use them so much that you rob yourself of your own education. Deeping knowledge comes deep learning – which requires that you engage with, struggle with, and work through complicated ideas and concepts.

### **Course Texts**

You are not required to purchase any texts or other media for this course. All material is available to you via PDF on Blackboard or I provide links them.

### **E-Mail/Contact**

All e-mail communication should go through the WKU domain (.edu). Don't e-mail me from your personal, i.e. non-university e-mails; I will not respond. I will never e-mail you from an address other than my university address: [marcus.brooks@wku.edu](mailto:marcus.brooks@wku.edu).

Since e-mail is my primary way of keeping in contact with you outside of class, please check your e-mail regularly. I check my e-mail often, so you should receive a timely response to any messages (I commit to responding to any messages within 24 hours, not counting weekends and holidays). I ask that you check yours often, so you do not miss any important class information or updates.

### **Assignments**

1) Reading Quizzes (17x20)	340 points
2) Inequality Presentation Project	100 points
3) Final Exam	30 points
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	470 possible points

**1) Reading Quizzes (20 points each, 340 total):** There is a short quiz for each of the class readings – there are 17 in total.

**2) Inequality Presentation Project (100 points):** You will create a PowerPoint presentation exploring a topic of social inequality.

**5) Final Exam (30 points):** Will be available once you've completed all other assignments.

## CLASSROOM CLIMATE

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### **Academic Honesty**

WKU takes a strong stance against academic misconduct. Academic Misconduct includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, and fabrication. Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or facilitating any such act. For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply: (1) Plagiarism: The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper acknowledgement. (2) Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours. (3) Fabrication: Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

To be clear: going online and using information without proper citations, copying parts of other student's work, creating information for the purposes of making your paper seem more official, or anything involving taking someone else's work without proper attribution is academic misconduct. If you have a question about an assignment, please contact me to clarify. All cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs for violating the academic honesty requirements in the student handbook. They may also result in failure for the course.

### **Grade Disputes**

All of your grades will be available on Blackboard. If you think there is a problem with one of your grades, please reach out and let me know. Depending on the nature of the dispute I may ask you for an in person meeting to discuss the situation.

### **Regular and Substantive Interaction**

The U.S. Department of Education requires that distance education courses must include regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty. For more information about Regular and Substantive Interaction at WKU, please visit the [Regular and Substantive Interaction in Online and Distance Learning webpage](#).

In this course, regular and substantive interaction will take place in the following ways:

- Welcome video and introduction assignment
- Office Hours - set hours and by appointment
- Each module contains an essay or short answer assignment with feedback from instructor
- Communication policy outlined in syllabus

## INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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### **ADA Accommodations**

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, Room 1074. The SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at [sarc.connect@wku.edu](mailto:sarc.connect@wku.edu). Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

### **Title IX/Discrimination & Harassment**

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding [WKU's Sex and Gender-Based Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation](#) (#0.070) and [Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#) (#0.2040). Under these policies, discrimination, harassment

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and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Executive Director, Office of Institutional Equity/Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir, 270-745-6867 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121. Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are “Responsible Employees” of the University and MUST report what you share to WKU’s Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU’s [Counseling and Testing Center](#) at 270-745-3159.

### **WKU Writing Center**

The Writing Center on the Bowling Green campus will have writing tutors available to offer advice to current WKU students on any stage of their writing projects. In-person tutoring is available in Cherry Hall 123 from 10-4 Monday through Friday and in the Cravens Commons (at the horseshoe-shaped reference desk) from 5-9 on Sunday through Thursday evenings. WKU students may also request feedback on their writing via email or arrange a real-time Zoom conference to discuss a paper. See instructions and how-to videos on the website (<http://www.wku.edu/writingcenter>) for making appointments. Walk-in feedback is available unless we are booked up. Students may also get short writing questions answered via email; just put “Quick question” in the subject line to ([writingcenter@wku.edu](mailto:writingcenter@wku.edu)).

### **Student Resources**

Support Resources:

[WKU Food Pantry](#)

[Emergency Student Assistance](#)

[Center for Literacy](#)

[Counseling Center](#)

Conflict Resolution Resources:

[Student Academic Complaint Procedure](#)

[Student Ombuds Officer](#)

[Student Legal Services](#)

[WKU Police Department](#)

Misc. Resources:

[WKU All Gender Bathroom Directory](#)

[Intercultural Student Engagement Center \(ISEC\)](#)

[Kentucky Museum](#)

[Full List of Student Resources](#)

# Course Calendar

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## MODULE #1: INTRODUCTION TO CORE CONCEPTS

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### How Sociologists See Society

Read: Mohan - "Basic Concepts in Sociology"

Quiz #1: Basic Concepts in Sociology

### How Sociologists See Inequality

Read: Hurst et al. - *Social Inequality: Forms, Causes, and Consequences* (Chapter 1: "An Introduction to the Study of Social Inequality")

Quiz #2: The Study of Social Inequality

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## MODULE #2: THEORIES OF STRATIFICATION AND INEQUALITY

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### Stratification as Natural

Read: Davis and Moore - "Some Principles of Stratification"

Quiz #3: Principles of Stratification

### Culture and Inequality

Read: Lewis – "Culture of Poverty"

Quiz #4: Culture of Poverty

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## MODULE #3: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF STRATIFICATION

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### Marx's Theory of Stratification

Read: Giddens - "Relations of Production and Class Structure" (Chapter 3)

Quiz #5: Marx's Theory of Stratification

### Weber's Theory of Stratification

Read: Turner – "Weber on Class, Status, and Party"

Quiz #6: Weber's Theory of Stratification

### Bourdieu's Theory of Stratification

Read: Allan – "Bourdieu on Forms of Capital"

Quiz #7: Bourdieu's Theory of Stratification

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## MODULE #4: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF INEQUALITY

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### Inequality as Social Phenomena

Read: Fischer et al. - *Inequality By Design* (Chapter 1: "Why Inequality")

Quiz#8: Inequality as Social Phenomena

### Hegemony and Social Control

Read: Stoddart - "Ideology, Hegemony, Discourse: A Critical Review of Theories of Knowledge and Power."

Quiz #9: Hegemony and Social Control

### Myths and Consenting to Inequality

Read: Fuhrer – "Introduction: Like Dives before Lazarus"

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Quiz #10: Myths that Made Us

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## **MODULE #5: INEQUALITIES IN SOCIETY**

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### **Social Structures and Gender**

Read: Lorber- "Social Construction of Gender"

Quiz #11: Social Construction of Gender

### **Gender as an Organizing Principle**

Read: hooks – "Understanding Patriarchy"

Quiz #12: Understanding Patriarchy

### **Social Construction of Race**

Read: Omi and Winant – "Racial Formation in the United States"

Quiz #13: Racial Formation in the United States

### **Structure of Racism**

Read: Bonilla-Silva – "Structure of Racism in Post-Racial America"

Quiz #14: The Structure of Racism

### **Sexuality as a System of Inequality**

Read: Robinson - "Heteronormativity and Homonormativity"

Quiz #15: Heteronormativity and Homonormativity

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## **MODULE #6: SOLUTIONS TO INEQUALITY?**

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### **Intersectional Problem Solving**

Read: Collins – "Toward a New Vision"

Quiz #16: Toward a New Visions

### **Policy Oriented Problem Solving**

Read: Hurst et al. - *Social Inequality: Forms, Causes, and Consequences* (Chapter 15: "Policy Alternatives")

Quiz #17: Policy Alternatives

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