INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY:
THE SUPER RICH, THE WORKING POOR,
AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Spring 2017 21.920.201.04, #16229
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Office Hours: Immediately before and after class, but be sure to email me ahead of time to let me know.

Description
The rich get richer, while everyone else stagnates and goes nowhere. The United States is stratified by sharp social class divisions that segment the population into distinct groups, with separate neighborhoods, occupations, and access to education. This course takes a deep look at these dynamics. In the process, we also look at the position of students in today’s society. What will the future be like? What does it mean to say that parts of the middle class are downwardly mobile, that the working class faces a dreary future, and that the poor live in rapidly deteriorating conditions because of cutbacks in government spending. In the meantime, the rich are richer than ever.

This is a discussion class, not a lecture (despite its size). If you haven’t read the material, you won’t be able to participate in discussions. Therefore, … and bring the relevant books to class.

Books (available at New Jersey Books on University and Bleeker, Rutgers Bookstore, and online vendors)
• *Chuck Collins, Jennifer Ladd, Maynard Seider, and Felice Yeskel, Class Lives: Stories From Across Our Economic Divide (Cornell University Press, 978-0-8014-7965-6)
• John Marsh, Class Dismissed: Why We Cannot Teach or Learn Our Way Out of Inequality (Monthly Review Books, 978-1-583-67243-3)
• Sarah Halpern-Meekin, Kathryn Edin, Laura Tach, and Jennifer Sykes, It’s Not Like I’m Poor: How Working Families Make Ends Meet in a Post-Welfare World (University of California Press, 978-0-520-27535-5)
*Books are also on Reserve at Dana Library.

Evaluations
Quizzes: Every class begins with a 20-minute graded writing assignment based on the reading for that day. While everyone takes the quiz, only some students will have them graded (for instance, one class it might be everyone whose last name begins with A-D; the next class it might be M-S). The system is random.
--Until February 13, quizzes count as a single grade. After then, all quizzes count as two grades.
--All quizzes are judged according to their organization, command of themes and details, and length. Your final grade is an average of your quiz grades, plus participation and attendance.
Participation: Grades default down, except if participation is used to round your grade up. The discussions, of course, presuppose that you have read the assigned material already. You will not be penalized if you do not participate, but regular and active participation will count in your favor.
Attendance: Everyone is allowed two absences, no justifications necessary. Three or more absences and your final grade may be reduced one or more levels.

Electronics: You are welcome to use electronic devices for class-related purposes. Please turn off your cell phone and refrain from texting and emailing during class. These activities are very distracting.

Skills: This class places heavy emphasis on developing the following skills: close reading, speed writing, persuasive conversation. You are not expected to be a master of these skills at the start of the class, but we will work systematically at developing these skills over the course of the semester.

Cheating: What is true for this class is true for every class that you take – cheating of any sort is VERBOTEN and will result in an F grade on an exam, possibly an F grade for the course, and possible further sanctions by the Dean’s Office. In other words, don’t cheat.