

**SOC. 122GI: GLOBAL INEQUALITIES**  
**SPRING 2008, M. 6:45- 9:20 PM, VENTURA EXTENSION CENTER**  
**PROFESSOR: WILLIAM I. ROBINSON**  
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**OFFICE HOURS ON MAIN CAMPUS:**  
**TH, 3:30 – 5:30 PM, ELLISON 2706, OR BY APPOINTMENT**

**Introduction**

This course offers a broad introduction to the topic of global inequalities. We will explore critical issues in the sociology of development and underdevelopment, poverty and inequality around the world. We will examine how the current global system emerged over the past 500 years and where it is headed. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, 20 percent of the world's people monopolized 85 percent of the world's wealth. In the United States, two out of every ten people have grown richer every year since 1974, while the relative income of eight out of every ten has declined, and continues to decline. This inequality in wealth and power around the globe is deepening dramatically in the new century. The following table shows one aspect of this sharp rise in global inequalities (world income distribution):

**Table 4.1: Shares of World Income 1965-1990**

Population	Percent of Total World Income			
	1965	1970	1980	1990
Poorest 20%	2.3	2.2	1.7	1.4
Second 20%	2.9	2.8	2.2	1.8
Third 20%	4.2	3.9	3.5	2.1
Fourth 20%	21.2	21.3	18.3	11.3
Richest 20%	69.5	70.0	75.4	83.4

This course will address several questions: What are the main sociological concepts, approaches, and insights that help us explore the topic of global inequalities? How do we account for the vast disparities in wealth, living standards, and levels of social and economic development among nations and among social groups in global society? How did this state of affairs come about, and what can we do about global inequalities in the distribution of wealth and power? Some of the specific topics we will examine include: current trends in global inequalities; competing sociological explanations for poverty and inequality in global society; the world in the year 1400; Latin America, Africa, and Asia in the global system; globalization and the global economy, myths of world hunger and overpopulation, racial/ethnic and gender dimensions of global inequality; the transnational corporation, transnational migration and transnational borders. We will also see a number of videos and powerpoints.

This course will require hard work, and will also be an eye-opener for those willing to work hard and to **think critically**. I will challenge you at all times to engage in critical and

creative thinking, to question everything (including my lectures), and to be open to new ideas. The course attempts to help students develop the critical thinking analytical skills, and the historical perspective necessary, to examine your own deeply held assumptions regarding poverty, development, and inequality, and to apply sociological inquiry in an attempt to provide explanations for these phenomena.

### Required Readings

- 1) Jerry Kloby, *Inequality, Power, and Development*
- 2) Reading packet of selected articles
- 3) Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*

### Grading and Course Requirements

There will be three take home assignments, each of which will count for 20 points. There will be two in class group assignments for 5 points each, and six in class quizzes for 5 points each. Details of all these assignments are contained in this syllabus and/or will be announced in class. There will be at least one opportunity for extra credit.

Three take home	3 x 20: 60
Two in class:	2 x 5: 10
Six quizzes:	6 x 5: 30
TOTAL	100

You are expected to do ALL the assigned readings and to come to class prepared to discuss these readings. Please bring each week's reading to class with you. You are encouraged to ask questions, debate, and provide critical commentary on the readings and the lectures.

I do *not* accept assignments that are turned in late unless some prior arrangement has been made with me. I do not accept assignment turned in by e-mail; *hard copies only*.

Students are expected to arrive on time to class and to not leave early unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. I also ask that you *turn off* cell phones and beepers while in class.

***Also, I consider it extremely rude for students to use their lap tops and cell phones to send text messages and e-mails during class. If I see you doing this I will ask you to leave class. If it becomes a regular pattern I will prohibit the use of laptops during class. Please be mature and courteous in this regard.***

***Please note that attendance is not voluntary; it is required. I may take spot attendance checks at any time. You will lose two points for each absence. I may take attendance***

*at any time....first five minutes, last five minutes, etc. Even if you are present for most of the class you will be counted as absent if you are not present when I take role. The only excused absences are medical and family emergencies, with proper documentation.*

### **Take Home Assignment on Films:**

For this assignment you should view outside of class any *two* of the following films, and then write up a 3-4 page (approximately) double spaced brief, focusing on how they are related to what we have been covering in the course. Your brief should *not be merely a description* of the films; you should *analyze them* in relation to the historical and analytical themes of the course and the course readings and lectures. I expect you to employ in your essay the terms, concepts, theories, and insights garnered from the course. *This should be a sociological paper not a film review.* You may also make reference, with appropriate citations, in the brief to class lectures and readings.

- The Last Emperor
- Lumumba;
- Central Station;
- Real Women Have Curves;
- Bread and Roses (the one that deals with the struggle of janitors to unionize);
- Roger and Me;
- Maria Full of Grace;
- Children of Heaven
- Khandahar
- Rabbit Proof Fence
- Salan Bombay
- Hotel Rwanda
- The Agronomist
- El Norte
- Darwin's Nightmare
- The Day I Became a Woman
- Taste of Cherry
- The Circle
- Quinceneira
- Sicko
- Others (to be announced)

### **Take Home Assignment on Internet**

For this assignment you will explore the websites for various organizations that deal with

issues of this course - development and underdevelopment, global inequalities, and the struggle for social justice. You should explore *at least five* websites. At least one of these sites should be considered “pro” global capitalism/conservative. Below are some suggestions, but you are not limited to these suggestions. Those considered “PRO” are indicated as well:

World Development Movement: <http://www.wdm.org.uk/>  
“50 Years is Enough! Campaign, <http://www.50years.org/>  
The Global Exchange, <http://www.globalexchange.org/>  
The Maquila Solidarity Network, <http://www.maquilasolidarity.org/>  
Zianet, <http://www.zmag.org/ZNETTOPnoanimation.html>  
International Forum on Globalization, <http://www.ifg.org/>,  
Focus on the Global South: <http://www.focusweb.org/>  
Third World Network: <http://www.twinside.org.sg/>  
Transnational Institute: <http://www.tni.org/>  
Institute for Policy Studies: <http://www.ips-dc.org/>  
World Trade Organization: <http://www.wto.org/> (PRO)  
Open Society Institute (George Soro’s website) [http://www.soros.org/about/bios/a\\_soros](http://www.soros.org/about/bios/a_soros)  
(PRO)  
Globalization Research Center: <http://www.cio.com/research/global/> (PRO)  
World Bank homepage: <http://www.worldbank.org/> (PRO)  
The Globalist: <http://www.theglobalist.com/> (PRO)  
World Economic Forum: <http://www.weforum.org/> (PRO)  
International Monetary Fund: <http://www.imf.org> (PRO)  
International Relations Center: <http://www.irc-online.org/>  
Food First: <http://www.foodfirst.org/>  
MADRE: <http://www.madre.org/>  
AllAfrica: <http://allafrica.com/>  
Center for Civil Society (South Africa): <http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs/>  
Green Left: <http://www.greenleft.org.au/>  
Toward Freedom: <http://www.towardfreedom.com/home/>

You will need to spend a number of hours on the web exploring these websites, reading some of the articles and commentaries, and gaining an understanding of some of the popular literature and features on the web that have to do with the theme of development and global inequalities. Then you will write up a report, between 4-8 pages approximately (double spaced), on your experience and your analysis of the exercise. At the top of your report you should list the websites that you visited. Please be prepared as well to discuss in class your experience on the web.

### **Course Overview**

Each class will include a lecture and time set aside for class discussion on the lectures and the readings. You will find in the reading packet the majority of my lecture notes:

this, together with powerpoints, will serve as a guide to the lectures. There are four parts to the course:

- 1) **Social Inequality, Poverty, Development, and Underdevelopment in the Global System**  
The first part will include a conceptual discussion of social inequalities and an empirical overview of global inequalities currently and historically. We will also look at the concepts of poverty, development and underdevelopment, power and social change.
- 2) **Theories of Development and Global Inequalities**  
The second part will examine competing theoretical explanations for social inequalities worldwide. We will examine in some details two theoretical approaches to understanding global inequality: modernization theories and underdevelopment theories, and look briefly at more recent theoretical approaches.
- 3) **The World from the Year 1400 to the Year 2005**  
This third part will take a fresh look at humankind's history over the past 500 years. We will examine how Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe and North America have become incorporated into the current global system, and then look more specifically at the current epoch of globalization.
- 4) **Contemporary Topics in the Global System**  
The fourth part will examine different themes related to the current global order. Themes include transnational corporations, world hunger, population control, global gender and race/ethnic inequalities, transnational migration/borders and the “new untouchables,” and current events of struggles for social justice around the world. We will do a case study of Mike Davis’ book, *Planet of Slums*. How many themes we cover in this section will depend on available time.

### **Tentative Week-by-Week Course Outline and Schedule of Readings (subject to change)**

- March 31: Topics: Introduction to course: What is Inequality? Empirical Overview of Inequalities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- April 7: Topics: The Nature of Power and Inequality; Classifying Inequalities; Inequality, Production, and the World Economy;
- Read: “Before Class”, “The Neolithic ‘Revolution’”, “The First Civilizations”, “The First Class Divisions”, “Women’s Oppression” (in reading packet)  
“Poverty and Inequality in the Global Economy” (in reading packet)

“What are ‘Class’ and ‘Inequality’” (in reading packet)  
Kloby, chapters 1-3

April 14: Topics: Conclusion of introductory lecture: The State, Corporate Power, etc. Open Discussion; Start of lecture on Theories of Development and Global Inequalities.

Read: Kloby, chapters 4-6

**Possible film screening:** “Boom: The Sound of Eviction”

April 21: Topics: Conclusion of lecture on Theories of Development and Global Inequalities.

IF TIME ALOTS: The World from the Year 1400 to the Year 2004, Part I, The World Before European Expansion, Part I.

Read: Kloby, chapter 7  
Brewer, “Imperialism, Dependency, and World Capitalism” (in reading packet).  
Amin, World Poverty, Pauperization, and Capital Accumulation (in reading packet)

**Possible Film Screening:** Dolls and Dust.

April 28: IN ADVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY, INTERNATIONAL IMMIGRANT RIGHTS DAY (May 1), mini-topic: global capitalism and the struggle for immigrant rights

Read: “Aqui Estamos y No Nos Vamos” (in reading packet)

Topics: The World from the Year 1400 to the Year 2004, Part I, The World Before European Expansion, Part II, The Creation of the World Capitalist System.

Read: “Africa a Peripheral Area”  
“Beginning of the Third World in Latin America”  
“Asia an External Area” (all in reading packet).

**First take-home assignment due today: Film Essay (see above in this syllabus).**

May 5: Topics: The World from the Year 1400 to the Year 2004, continuation of Part II, The Creation of the World Capitalist System, Beginning of Part III, The Current Era of Globalization, Regional Experiences in the Global Economy.

Read: “Class and Globalization” (in reading packet)  
“A Precarious Existence: The Face of Billions?”  
Africa and the Middle East: Fractured Nations in the Global Economy (in reading packet)

May 12: Topics: The World from the Year 1400 to the Year 2004, Part III, The Current Era of Globalization, Regional Experiences in the Global Economy  
Critical Dimensions of Global Inequalities, Part I, U.S. Intervention

Read: “Transnational Corporations and Capitalist Globalization” (in packet)  
Kloby, chapters 8-9

Possible Video Screening: Delta Force or another video.

**Second Take Home Assignment Due – brief on internet exploration – see above for details.**

May 19: Topics for this and next class meeting: Critical Dimensions of Global Inequalities: Part II, Corporations (TNCs), Food and Hunger; Population and Population Control; Women, Gender and Global Inequalities; Race and Ethnicity and Globalization.

Film: Excerpts from *The Corporation*

Read: “Politics, Population, and the Pathways to Poverty”  
“Why Can’t People Feed Themselves?”  
“Introduction” to *Global Woman* (in reading packet)  
“Kipling, the ‘White Man’s Burden,’ and U.S. Imperialism”  
(all readings in reading packet)

May 26: Topics: Critical Dimensions of Global Inequalities, Continuation: Case Study: Planet of Slums; Global Conflict and Global Inequality, Course Conclusions.

Read: Davis, “Planet of Slums”

**Third and final take home assignment due today – NOT DUE NEXT WEEK**

**– DON'T TURN IT IN LATE NEXT WEEK, I WILL NOT ACCEPT IT!**

Write a 3-5 page essay that analyzes Davis' book. This should not be a book review that merely describes the book. You must first identify the main themes the book raises. Then you should analyze how these themes are related to the distinct topics we have covered in this course. You should relate the book to other course readings. You should use the sociological concepts and terms we have acquired in the course. I will look for a serious sociological analysis of this book that demonstrates the general knowledge you have acquired in this course. If you turn in a mere book report you will get a very low score.

June 2: Course conclusions, evaluations, open discussion, second and final in-class assignment.

Film: The Fourth World War

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