

The University of Texas at El Paso  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Fall 2024

Soci 3327-14896: Social Inequality  
M/W 9:00 am-10:20 am; Old Main 205

**Professor:** Dr. Aurelia Lorena Murga (pronouns: she/ella)

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Office location: TBD

### **Course Description**

This course takes a sociological view on the development of the modern labor relation focusing on the tensions and connections between unfree labor and capitalism, both in the U.S. and globally, paying particular attention to the relation between labor, gender, race, and citizenship. The question of free and unfree labor is ultimately a question about difference, and its relation to capitalism. It is also a question about what capitalism is, and how to understand it in relation with past modes of social organization and production. Finally, it's a question about how to conceptualize freedom, in relation to production but also more broadly. This class will hopefully spark more questions than it will answer and show you more possible paths of inquiry that we will be able to pursue during the term. This course is meant to be a joint learning adventure, where we come to class to work together in breaking apart what others have said, analyze debates that are being had in academia and outside of it, and get new tools to argue about what's happening around us.

### **Course Objectives**

This course emphasizes research from sociology but also draws from other academic disciplines to meet the following objectives:

- To theoretically discuss economic structures that give rise to wage and labor inequality.
- Learn about economic and labor market disparities in class, race/ethnicity, sex, gender, nationality, citizenship, and disabilities.
- Develop skills to communicate complex social, economic, and legal issues in-person and/or online social media that develop community engagement & leadership.

During this semester, you will:

- Engage in supportive and critical peer learning.
- Connect contemporary events and discussions with academic arguments.
- Take an informed stance on the role of social and civic responsibility in society and how individuals can affect social change.

### **Course materials**

1. Pdfs for the assigned readings are available via Blackboard (Bb) or through the UTEP library (use search engines).
2. 5x8 notecards
3. 2 blue books

### **Assessments**

#### **In-class participation & “tickets to class” (notecards) 60%**

Full credit for participation will be earned by coming to class prepared to discuss the readings and by fully engaging in-class conversations. You will need to come to class prepared. You should come to class with the reading assignment(s) for the day already completed. On one side of your notecard, you will write a quote (make sure you cite it: Desmond 2019:3) from the reading that you’d like to discuss in class and on the other side of the card you will contextualize the quote. For example: Why did you pick this particular quote?; How does it connect with previous reading(s)?; What are some of the strengths or weaknesses of the issue at hand?; What questions did this quote raise and how would you go about answering these questions?; what current issues does it connect with?, etc.

#### **Exams 30%**

You will have two essay exams in-class this semester. Each exam is worth up to 15% of your final grade for the semester. The exams will require you to have read the course materials since you will have to support your responses with references from the class readings.

#### **Gains report 10%**

Students will be required to complete and submit a list of 10 “things I learned” in class. You will make a list of 10 bullet points with each including 4-5 sentences of writing. I am not asking you to simply list the topics covered, but to thoughtfully engage with what you have learned during the semester, so if you simply list topics covered in the class, you will earn 0 points for this exercise.

#### **Grading Scale**

A	90-100%
B	89-80%
C	79-70%
D	69-60%
F	59% and below

#### **Course Expectations**

Workload: Generally, in any 3-credit hour course, students are expected to spend 3 hours per week in the classroom and 6-9 additional hours per week doing coursework outside the classroom. The time commitment may vary from week to week, depending on the amount of reading and other assigned work. Some weeks may require significantly fewer hours, some may require more.

Active Participation: As a friendly reminder, you should log on to Bb on a regular basis (I suggest at least once a day) to check for any announcements or emails. If you encounter any problems with Bb, contact the UTEP Helpdesk (747-4357) for assistance.

You are highly encouraged to attend every class if you expect to do well in this course. I will NOT drop students from the course. If you choose to drop the course, it is your responsibility to do so. Keep in mind that failure to withdraw from the course will result in a grade of "F" for the course.

Friendly reminder: Problems with your computer are NOT an acceptable reason for deadline extensions. If you encounter computer problems that cannot be resolved in time, you should use another computer to complete the work prior to the deadlines. It's a good idea to have an alternative computer identified BEFORE you run into problems.

### **Email Policy**

Please feel free to reach out to me via email with any questions you may have regarding the class or assignments. During the week (Monday-Friday) you can expect a reply from me within 24-48 hours. If you email me over the weekend, I will respond on the next weekday. Before emailing make sure the answer(s) to your question(s) cannot be answered from reading this syllabus. I will not respond to questions that could be answered in this syllabus. Finally, please include **Soci 3327** in the subject line of all your correspondence.

### **Classroom Conduct**

You must demonstrate the highest level of respect for your peers and for the instructor. All points of view will be welcomed and respected; however, statements or behaviors that are disrespectful towards individuals or groups will not be tolerated. Behaviors that are distracting to your peers and to the instructor are not acceptable (e.g. coming in late, packing up or leaving early, using cell phones, and having side conversations).

### **Academic Integrity**

This course is based on the principle of academic integrity. Students are responsible for their own academic behavior, and for making themselves fully aware of UTEP's policies. Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion.

- Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student and possessing unauthorized materials during a test.
- Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as one's own.
- Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students' Office for disciplinary action. In addition to receiving a failing grade in the class, the student may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Further information can be gained from the UTEP Dean of Students' web page. Go to <http://www.utep.edu/dos>, then click the "Student Conduct" tab on the top.

### **AI and ChatGPT<sup>1</sup>**

The use of ChatGPT or any other AI platform or tool to generate either ideas or written content (not including spelling/grammar check such as Grammarly), or to produce any other material is prohibited in this course.

This policy is for a number of reasons:

- This class is designed to improve your writing skills; if you're not writing, you're not improving.

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<sup>1</sup> AI policy for syllabi from Olivia Stowell

- Using AI opens up academic honesty issues, both because it raises the question of whether the work is "your" work, and also because tools like ChatGPT rely on taking uncredited material from scholars and writers.
- Using AI does not produce reliably accurate results.
- ChatGPT has serious negative environmental impacts, particularly in relation to water usage.
- OpenAI has exploited workers from the global south, especially workers in prisons and refugee camps, and workers in Kenya, the Philippines, Colombia, and elsewhere.

### **ADA Policy**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at [www.sa.utep.edu/cass](http://www.sa.utep.edu/cass). CASS' Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

### **Texas Senate Bill 17**

[Texas Senate Bill 17](#), the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### **Class guidelines and ground rules<sup>2</sup>**

*Discussing to Learn:* Contribute ideas and views in the spirit of inquiring and learning together, rather than trying to debate or win arguments (unless the activity is designed as a debate or to assess best arguments).

*Mindful Listening:* Listen actively with attention and respect for what others are saying, without interrupting or tuning out to focus on preparing one's own contribution.

*Stepping Up/Stepping Back:* Pay attention to the voices in the room and be mindful of one's contributions. Are there patterns regarding which voices are being heard and which are not? How do I fit in these patterns? Is there need to step back and let others have opportunity to contribute? Is there need to step up and contribute more? Do we feel empowered to hold ourselves accountable for our class participation dynamics?

*Listening Lenience:* Remember that we are learning together and may not necessarily get something right the first or even second try. Practice being lenient with oneself and with others. Restating what someone

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<sup>2</sup> Written or compiled by Jason Schreiner, Teaching Engagement Program, University of Oregon 3 updated February 2017. Some portions of this syllabus were taken from Lola Loustaunau's course SOC 446. Issues in Sociology of Work.

just said can provide them an opportunity to clarify or revise their statement. Similarly, it is good practice to state when you say something not quite right and then try to state it again or ask for help in saying it. *Seek Clarification:* Seek clarification when you are confused or have doubts, and also before you pass judgment on what another is saying. Practice statements such as “Are you saying that...?” or “What I hear you saying is...” or “If I understand you correctly....”

*Ideas not Individuals:* Focus on engaging others’ ideas not judging or criticizing individuals. Asking for clarification can be helpful, and using language such as “The idea I hear you saying is...” (rather than “you said”) or “I don’t agree with that idea...” (rather than “I don’t agree with you”).

*Support Our Statements:* Offer supporting evidence of some kind to back up your contributions, such as data, clear reasoning or reference to a text, and be aware that your own experience or an anecdotal story may not fit a larger pattern. Remember that being an exception does not discredit a rule.

*Emotional Awareness:* Recognize that emotions are part of learning, and everyone can get emotionally worked up at any time. Remember that feelings are real and common yet are often temporal and will pass. Feelings also tend to be reactive and shaped by past experiences or other factors not necessarily present in the moment – this means reflecting more deeply about one’s own feelings and why they might be arising, and being compassionate about what may be happening for others who express strong emotions. Feelings are also not inferences, meaning that one’s feeling about something is a feeling, not an attribute about something else (e.g. feeling discomfort does not mean another person is trying to make me feel uncomfortable; or, feeling another person’s anger does not mean they are angry at me).

*A Part is Not the Whole:* Remember that your view or experience is your view or experience, a partial opening onto the whole, and not necessarily a general view or experience of everyone; nor are the views or experiences of others necessarily going to match your own. And, just as you cannot represent an entire group of people, nor can anyone else represent a group of people. It is quite okay for everyone to speak their truth and their experience, but working from individual views and experiences to more general ideas or conclusions often requires considerable work.

*Complex Issues are Not Simple:* There are no easy answers or simple solutions for complex issues. The goal is not for one view to prevail over others or to arrive at consensus but to find ways to inquire and work together to advance inquiry and understanding.

*Acknowledge Offense:* If you feel offended or sense others may be offended, speak up and acknowledge that you feel offended or sense that others might be. Agree as a group to pause so that everyone can consider their own feelings and consider what may or may not have been intended by a particular comment or moment.

**Please note: Instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus and/or schedule at any time during the semester. Any modifications to the syllabus and/or schedule will be announced during class and/or through Bb (check “announcements”).**

Done	Date	Topic: Reading(s) & assignments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 1: M, 8/26	First day INTRODUCTIONS.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 1: W, 8/28 Due: notecard on reading	<b>Framing the Conversation</b> Desmond, Matthew. 2019. "American Capitalism Is Brutal. You Can Trace That to the Plantation." <i>The New York Times</i> , August 14.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 2: M, 9/2	<b>No class: Labor Day</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 2: W, 9/4 Due: notecards on readings	<b>On Capitalism</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 2002. <i>The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View</i>. [New ed.]. London: Verso. Introduction (pages 1-8).</li> <li>2. Marx, Karl. 1990. <i>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</i>. London ; New York, N.Y., USA: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review. Chapter 6: The Sale and Purchase of Labor Power.</li> </ol>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 3, M, 9/9 Due: notecards on readings	<b>On Capital &amp; Capitalism – Through the Prism of Slavery</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Johnson, Walter. 2004. "The Pedestal and the Veil: Rethinking the Capitalism/Slavery Question." <i>Journal of the Early Republic</i> 24(2):299–308. (read this one first!)</li> <li>2. Tomich, Dale W. 2004. <i>Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy</i>. Lanham: Rowman &amp; Littlefield. Chapter 3.</li> </ol>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 3, W, 9/11 Due: notecard on reading	<b>On Capital &amp; Capitalism - Contradictions</b> Salleh, Ariel. "Nature, Woman, Labor, Capital: living the deepest contradiction."
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 4, M, 9/16 Due: notecard on reading	<b>Racial Capitalism</b> De Genova, Nicholas. A Racial Theory of Labour: Racial Capitalism from Colonial Slavery to Postcolonial Migration <a href="https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/articles/racial-theory-labour">https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/articles/racial-theory-labour</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 4, W, 9/18 Due: notecards on readings	<b>The invention of free labor</b> Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 2002. <i>Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor</i> . Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Chapters 2 & 3.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 5, M, 9/23 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Forced Labor</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. International Labor Organization. 2017. Global Estimates of Modern Slavery Report.</li> <li>2. LeBaron, Genevieve, Neil Howard, Cameron Thibos, and Penelope Kyritsis. 2018. "Confronting Root Causes: Forced Labour in Global Supply Chains." Pp 9-19.</li> </ol>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 5, W, 9/25	<b>Study day: Recap→What have we learned so far?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 6, M, 9/30	<b>Exam 1</b>

<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 6, W, 10/2 Due: notecard on reading	<b>Environment, health, and work</b> Clark, Brett, Daniel Auerbach & Karen Xuan Zhang. 2017. "The Du Bois nexus: intersectionality, political economy, and environmental injustice in the Peruvian Guano trade in the 1800s." <i>Environmental Sociology</i> 4(1):54-66.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 7, M, 10/7 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Occupational Health</b> 1. <u>John Bellamy Foster</u> , <u>Brett Clark</u> , and <u>Hannah Holleman</u> . (Jun 2021) "Capital and the Ecology of Disease." 2. Department of U.S. Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries in 2022."
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 7, W, 10/9 Due: notecard on reading	<b>Occupational Health</b> 1. World Health Organization (WHO). "Occupational Health." 2. Watch news report in-class "Blood Cobalt: The Congo's Dangerous and Deadly Green Energy Mines."
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 8, M, 10/14 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Working</b> Terkel, Studs. <i>Working: People talk about what they do all day and how they feel about what they do</i> (Introduction, Preface I, II, & II, & Book One)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 8, W, 10/16	<b>Working</b> Watch in-class <i>Working: What we do all day</i> (Netflix series)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 9, M, 10/21 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Prison Labor</b> 1. LeBaron, Genevieve. 2012. "Rethinking Prison Labor: Social Discipline and the State in Historical Perspective." <i>WorkingUSA</i> 15(3):327–51. 2. Hatton, Erin. 2018 "Either You Do It or You're Going to the Box": Coerced Labor in Contemporary America. <i>Critical Sociology</i> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 9, W, 10/23 Due: notecards on readings	<b>LGBTQ+</b> 1. Tebele, S. M., & Odeku, K. O. (2014). An analysis of workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. <i>The Anthropologist</i> , 18(2), 609–617. 2. Bielski Boris, M. (2010). Fighting for equal treatment: how the UAW won domestic partnership benefits and discrimination protection for lesbian, gay, and bisexual members. <i>Labor Studies Journal</i> , 35(2), 157–180.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 10, M, 10/28 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Domestic Labor</b> 1. Hondagneu-Sotelo. <i>Doméstica</i> (pages TBA) 2. Tsui, Emma K. et al. 2022. Expanding the Conceptualization of Support in Low-Wage Carework: The Case of Home Care Aides and Client Death. <i>Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health</i> 19, 367. <a href="https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19010367">https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19010367</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 10, W, 10/30 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Domestic Labor</b> 1. Anderson, Bridge. 2000. <i>Doing the Dirty Work?: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour</i> . London; New York: New York: Zed Books; Distributed in the USA by St Martin's Press. Chapter 7 'Selling the self' 2. Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar. 2015. <i>Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work</i> (2nd edition) (pages TBA).

<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 11, M, 11/4 Due: notecard on reading	<b>Child labor</b> 1. Florence Kelley's <i>Our Tiling Children</i> . 2. Watch in-class Vox's These photos ended child labor in the U.S.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 11, W, 11/6 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Child labor</b> 1. <i>Monthly Labor Review</i> "History of child labor in the United States." 2. Sherer, Jennifer and Nina Mast. 2023. "Child labor laws are under attack in states across the country." <i>Economic Policy Institute</i> , pages 1-17.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 12, M, 11/11 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Disability</b> 1. Matthews, David. Jan 01, 2021. "Disability and Welfare under Monopoly Capitalism." <i>Monthly Review</i> . 2. Ruppel, Emily H. 2023. "Disability and the State Production of Precarity." <i>Work and Occupations</i> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 12, W, 11/13 Due: notecards on readings	<b>(Im)migrant labor</b> Holmes, Seth M. 2013. <i>Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction & Chapter 3.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 13, M, 11/18 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Claims Making</b> Hatton, Erin. 2020. <i>Coerced: Work Under Threat of Punishment</i> . Berkeley. University of California Press. Chapter 4. "Stay Out They Way": Agency and Resistance & Chapter 5. "I'm Getting Ethiopia Pay for My Work": Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 13, W, 11/20 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Claims Making</b> Jayaraman, Saru and Kathryn De Master (editors). 2020. <i>Bite Back: People Taking on Corporate Food and Winning</i> . University of California Press. Chapters 1. Call to Action "Food Workers versus Food Giants" by Joann Lo and Jose Oliva & 2. Collective Response "Food Workers Taking On Goliath" by Saru Jayaraman
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 14, M, 11/25 Due: notecards on readings	<b>Claims Making</b> 1. Gleeson, S. 2010. Labor Rights for All? The Role of Undocumented Immigrant Status for Worker Claims Making. <i>Law &amp; Social Inquiry</i> , 35(3), 561-602. 2. Caitlin Patler and others, Contesting Inequality: The Impact of Immigrant Legal Status and Education on Legal Knowledge and Claims-Making in Low-Wage Labor Markets, <i>Social Problems</i> , Volume 69, Issue 2, May 2022, Pages 356–379.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 14, W, 11/27	<b>Holiday: No class</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 15, M, 12/2	<b>Study day: Recap → Where are we now?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 15, W, 12/4	<b>Exam 2</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Week 15, F, 12/6	<b>Dead day</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Finals Week	<b>Final Exam: Gains Report (see syllabus for more information)</b>