

The University of Texas at El Paso
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Fall 2023

Social Inequality; Soci 3327-16060

Location: Old Main 214
TR 10:30-11:50 am

Professor: Aurelia Lorena Murga, Ph.D.

Email: almurga@utep.edu

Student hours: please email to schedule an appointment.

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.

*This course has a "Community Engagement & Leadership" (CEL) designation. It is part of a certificate program at the College of Liberal Arts. This CEL course aims to strengthen students' understanding of their role in society as engaged citizens and build the knowledge and competencies that will enable them to be socially responsible and participating community leaders. Accordingly, course assignments and assessments are developed in line with the CEL program mission in Liberal Arts and within the broader framework and mission of UTEP's "Edge Advantages" goals.

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.
- Develop and present “know your rights” presentations.

COURSE MATERIALS

Pdfs for the assigned readings will be made available via Bb.

Assessments

In-class participation 30%

Full credit for participation will be earned by coming to class prepared to discuss the readings and by fully engaging in-class assignments. We will have a series of assignments in-class that include creation and submission of discussion questions, short memos, and quizzes. Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge and critical thought of the course material.

Action plan 10%

Each group is required to develop an action plan for Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (TRLA) to create “know your rights” presentations and supporting materials (i.e., social media, infographics, etc.). I have set aside class time for you to work in your groups on this project, but you may also need to meet on your own time outside of class.

Project materials 15%

In your groups, you will create a community presentation with the guidance of TRLA that is meant to 1) engage community members on what they perceive are central issues in relation to employment & labor concerns (e.g., sexual harassment and discrimination), and 2) present the legal rights to address some of these issues. You will be graded on the accuracy and creativity of your presentation, the creation of supporting materials, and organizing & implementing 2 community “know your rights” events.

Community presentations 20%

Two community presentations completed before the end of the semester. In your groups, you will present 2 “know your rights” presentations in the locations secured by the team and pre-approved by the instructor (i.e. afterschool in a cafeteria, in a public library, at El Paso Community College, or some other community venue). The group will be evaluated on the content and creativity of the presentations and how your group addressed questions from the audience, etc.

Final reflection on CEL project 15%

A written 3-page reflection paper about your experience with the CEL project is due at the end of the semester. More information regarding the content of the paper will be provided later.

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 be awarded 0 points for this exercise.

Grading Scale

A	90-100%
B	89-80%
C	79-79%
D	60-69%
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 hours. If you email me over the weekend, I will respond on the next weekday.

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).

Copying and Plagiarism

The materials used in this course are copyrighted. Course materials include and are not limited to: syllabi, quizzes, exams, course assignments, review sheets, outlines, lecture notes, and power points. Since these materials are copywritten you do not have permission to copy them, unless I expressly grant you permission.

Plagiarism is commonly defined as passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., that belong to another. Therefore, you are committing plagiarism if you copy someone's work without attributing it to the original author, and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. Plagiarism is one of the most serious academic sins, because it destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated.

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, 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. CASS' Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

Please note: Instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus and/or schedule at any time during the semester—any modifications will be announced during class and/or through Bb.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Tuesday, 8/29

Introductions

Thursday, 8/31

Introductions

Meet Alan Dicker, Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, Inc. "La Nueva Fuerza" crash course on workplace discrimination and workers' rights.

TRLA handout: 20 things you should know as a Texas worker.

Project: Group formations

Week 2

Tuesday, 9/5

Framing the conversation

Desmond, Matthew. "In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation."

Project: Create and submit an action plan

Thursday, 9/7

On Capitalism

Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 2002. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. [New ed.]. London: Verso. Introduction: 1-8.

Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. London; New York, N.Y., USA: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review. Chapter 6: The Sale and Purchase of Labor Power.

Week 3

Tuesday, 9/12

Project: Work on project → begin presentations, games & quizzes, infographic, social media, scheduling with schools/orgs

Thursday, 9/14

On Capitalism

Miles, Robert. 1987. *Capitalism and Unfree Labour: Anomaly or Necessity?* London; New York: New York, NY: Tavistock Publications

Published in the USA by Tavistock Publications in association with Methuen: Chapter 1
"Capitalism as a mode of production."

Week 4

Tuesday, 9/19

Project: Work on project → presentations, games & quizzes, infographic, social media, scheduling with schools/orgs

Thursday, 9/21

Through the prism of slavery

Johnson, Walter. 2004. "The Pedestal and the Veil: Rethinking the Capitalism/Slavery Question." *Journal of the Early Republic* 24(2):299–308 (Read this one first!)

Tomich, Dale W. 2004. *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. Chapter 3.

Week 5

Tuesday, 9/26

The invention of free labor

Steinfeld, Robert J. 1991. *The Invention of Free Labor - The Employment Relation in English and American Law and Culture, 1350-1870*. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapter 3.

Project: Submit project information to Alan Dicker & instructor

Thursday, 9/28

The invention of free labor

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 2002. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Chapter 2.

Week 6

Tuesday, 10/3

Unequal freedom

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 2002. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Chapter 3

Project: First half of class students will meet with Alan Dicker to talk about revisions/feedback

Thursday, 10/5

Unequal freedom

Fraser, Nancy. 2018. "Roepke Lecture in Economic Geography—From Exploitation to Expropriation: Historic Geographies of Racialized Capitalism." *Economic Geography* 94(1):1–17.

Chari, Sharad (2018) Commentary on "From Exploitation to Expropriation: Geographies of Racialization in Historic Capitalism", *Economic Geography*, 94(1): 18- 22.

Project: First half of class students will meet with Alan Dicker to talk about revisions/feedback

Week 7

Tuesday, 10/10

Forced Labor: unpacking so-called 'modern slavery'

International Labor Organization. 2017. *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery Report*.

LeBaron, Genevieve, Neil Howard, Cameron Thibos, and Penelope Kyritsis. 2018. "Confronting Root Causes: Forced Labour in Global Supply Chains." Pp 9-19.

Thursday, 10/12

Forced Labor: unpacking so-called 'modern slavery'

Lebaron, G. 2015. "Unfree Labour Beyond Binaries INSECURITY, SOCIAL HIERARCHY AND LABOUR MARKET RESTRUCTURING." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 17(1):1–19.

Project: Submit revised presentations to Alan Dicker based on feedback.

Week 8

Project: First community presentations are due by 10/27

Tuesday, 10/17

Trafficking, sex work, and domestic labor

Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2010. "Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The Politics of Sex, Rights, and Freedom in Contemporary Antitrafficking Campaigns." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 36(1):45–71.

Anderson, Bridget Sociologist. 2000. *Doing the Dirty Work?: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour*. London; New York: New York: Zed Books; Distributed in the USA by St Martin's Press. Chapter 7 'Selling the self'

Thursday, 10/19: no class

Week 9

Tuesday, 10/24

Prison labor and the State

LeBaron, Genevieve. 2012. "Rethinking Prison Labor: Social Discipline and the State in Historical Perspective." *WorkingUSA* 15(3):327–51.

Convict leasing <https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/sugar-land-slave-convict-labor-history/>

Thursday, 10/26

Prison labor and the State

Hatton, Erin (2018) "Either You Do It or You're Going to the Box": Coerced Labor in Contemporary America, *Critical Sociology*.

Week 10

Tuesday, 10/31

Disposable workers

Holmes, Seth M. 2013. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction & Chapter 3.

Project: Reflections and any suggested modifications from presentations addressed in class

Thursday, 11/2

Disposable workers

Bernhardt, A., M. W. Spiller, and D. Polson. 2013. "All Work and No Pay: Violations of Employment and Labor Laws in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City." *Social Forces* 91(3):725–46.

Week 11

Project: The second presentations are due by 11/31

Thursday, 11/7

Disposable workers: Child labor

Florence Kelley's *Our Toiling Children*

Sherer, Jennifer and Nina Mast. 2023. "Child labor laws are under attack in states across the country." Economic Policy Institute, pages 1-17.

Thursday, 11/9

LGBTQ+

Tebele, S. M., & Odeku, K. O. (2014). An analysis of workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. *The Anthropologist*, 18(2), 609–617. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2014.11891579>.

Bielski Boris, M. (2010). Fighting for equal treatment: how the UAW won domestic partnership benefits and discrimination protection for lesbian, gay, and bisexual members. *Labor Studies Journal*, 35(2), 157–180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2F0160449X08325994>

Week 12

Tuesday, 11/14

LGBTQ+

Lloren, A., & Parini, L. (2017). How LGBT-supportive workplace policies shape the experience of lesbian, gay men, and bisexual employees. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 14(3), 289–299. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-016-0253-x>.

Mara, LC., Ginieis, M. & Brunet-Icart, I. (2021). Strategies for Coping with LGBT Discrimination at Work: a Systematic Literature Review. *Sex Res Soc Policy* 18, 339–354. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-020-00462-w>

Thursday, 11/16

Disabilities

Schur, L., Han, K., Kim, A. *et al.* Disability at Work: A Look Back and Forward. *J Occup Rehabil* 27, 482–497 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-017-9739-5>

Saunders, S.L., Nedelec, B. What Work Means to People with Work Disability: A Scoping Review. *J Occup Rehabil* 24, 100–110 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-013-9436-y>

Week 13

Tuesday, 11/21: no class

Thursday, 11/23: University closed.

Week 14

Tuesday, 11/28

Disabilities

Sally Lindsay (2011) Discrimination and other barriers to employment for teens and young adults with disabilities, *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 33:15-16, 1340-1350, DOI: [10.3109/09638288.2010.531372](https://doi.org/10.3109/09638288.2010.531372)

Brown, R. L., & Moloney, M. E. (2019). Intersectionality, Work, and Well-Being: The Effects of Gender and Disability. *Gender & Society*, 33(1), 94–122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243218800636>

Thursday, 11/30

Occupational health

Moyce, Sally C. and Marc Schenker. (2018) Migrant workers and their occupational health and safety. *Annual Review of Public Health* 39:1, 351-365.

Gleeson, Shannon. (December 2012). Leveraging health capital at the workplace: An examination of health reporting behavior among Latino immigrant restaurant workers in the United States. *Social Science & Medicine* 75(12): 2291-2298.

Week 15

Tuesday, 12/5

Occupational health

TBD

Thursday, 12/7

Claims making

Gleeson, S. 2010. Labor Rights for All? The Role of Undocumented Immigrant Status for Worker Claims Making. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 35(3), 561-602.

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, *Social Problems*, Volume 69, Issue 2, May 2022, Pages 356–379, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaa029>

Project: Final reflection on CEL project (Bb)

Class guidelines and ground rules

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 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.

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.