

**SOCI 355:
Social Inequality
Fall 2021**

Professor Name: Dr. Deborah Kwak
Office Location: G668 @ Mason Korea
Class Time & Location: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12pm - 1.15pm @ G106
Email: hkwak4@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1.30pm - 3pm via Zoom; Please email me to schedule a meeting

COURSE FOCUS

This class will explore the nature and treatment of social problems that beset our society such as class, income inequality, gender, race, marriage, and social media. How should we think about these problems in ways that lead to helpful solutions? And in what ways does one's social position and role in society affect his/her views of these problems? Throughout the course, we will debate and vote on important questions.

Getting Specific: Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Become familiar with major, current social problems;
2. Listen to and consider the ideas of others about current social problems;
3. Critically analyze the causes and consequences of those social problems;
4. Reflect critically on our role and responsibility as members of civil society.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Putnam, Robert D. 2015. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

I will share other readings with you via Blackboard.

What can we expect from each other?

What you can expect from me, the instructor:

Every time I enter discussion, I will come prepared, which means that I will have read the assigned materials for the day and thought carefully about what we are trying to accomplish that day. I will be fully present during class and will treat each of you with respect and integrity. I am also available outside of our Zoom meetings and more than willing to discuss your concerns and any aspects of this course.

What I can expect from each student:

Because you have chosen to enroll in this course, you agree to have the same expectations as the instructor. In other words, you agree to come to each class (via Zoom) having read all assigned materials and thoughtfully prepared for class. You also agree to be fully present during class and to treat fellow students and the instructor with respect and integrity. Finally, as students in this course, you agree to thoughtfully engage in discussions and conversations in every class and make every effort to empathize with and respect the perspectives of others.

What we can expect to happen in class:

Every time we meet via Zoom, this class is an opportunity for us to become a learning community. This means that each student is required to be an active participant in this class—asking questions, contributing to discussion by sharing their perspectives, and critically thinking about the issues we address in this class. Half-baked ideas and thoughts are welcome; often times, just trying to say what you're thinking allows you to further develop your ideas and arguments.

What we can expect in regards to electronic devices:

As part of cultivating a space for discussion, please use your laptop *only* for the purpose of participating in our Zoom meeting. Obviously, I can't check if you're doing anything else on your laptop. But please note, the appearance of being distracted during our Zoom meeting will be enough to negatively affect your participation grade and attendance.



Overview of Course Grade

Your learning will be evaluated in the following ways:

10% Class Participation (Attendance, Large Group Discussion, in-class activities)

10% Class Participation (Small Group Discussion)

15% Journals

15% Debate preparation and participation

15% Research Paper

15% Mid-Term Exam

20% Cumulative Final Exam

1. Attendance & Class Participation

This course depends upon your attendance. Two or more absences of our Zoom meetings during the semester will *lower* the student's final grade by two thirds of a letter grade (e.g. a B+ will become a B-), and more than four absences will result in a failing grade. If a student joins the meeting after attendance is taken or leaves the meeting early, the student may be counted absent (unless student contacts the professor prior to class to make arrangements).

You will be granted an excused absence from class only in specific, unavoidable situations such as death in the family or health emergency.

In order to get a full participation grade, actively ask questions, share your perspectives, and engage in critical thinking about the material during *Large Group Discussions* and *Small Group Discussions*. Equally important, participate enthusiastically in class activities and writing assignments.

Note: If a student engages in actions which distract others and detract from the classroom's overall experience as a learning community, then his/her participation grade will be significantly reduced.

2. Small Group Discussion

We are a learning community and the success of this class depends on our active engagement with the class materials and with one another. Through the process of dialogue and discussion, we will gain a deeper and richer understanding of the issues discussed in this course. Difference in opinions, feelings and values are welcome and respected in this classroom.

I will remind you via email the reading schedule for the upcoming week every Friday. You should come prepared to discuss what you have read for every class. A specific type of discussion that we will have in each Zoom session is: *Small Group Discussion* (please see "Reading Roles & Journal Guidelines" which I will make available on our first day of class).

I will ask everyone to evaluate their fellow group members several times during the semester regarding their participation and contributions to group discussions and project. However, if you have a problem with a group member who is not keeping up

with the reading or not participating please notify me early in the semester so that I may discuss the issue with that individual.

3. Journals

Good writers are most often interested readers. For this class, please write a reflective journal responding to the day's readings prior to class. See the "Reading Roles & Journal Guidelines" handout for the requirements for journals. Students should post their journal entry on Blackboard by 10am the day of class. Late journals will not be accepted. Please have your journals with you for breakout rooms.

4. Debate Preparation and Participation

Before a debate day, we will assign sides in class. On the day of the debate, you will come prepared; this means that you will have done all the readings, ready to listen to the ideas of others, take positions and back them up with strong evidence, and ask good questions. We will go over the rules of debate in class.

5. Research Paper

You will prioritize two of the most pressing problems in our society and conduct research. The final outcome should be a high-quality, research-based, position paper that you will submit at the end of the semester. I will provide more details in class.

6. Mid-Term and Final Exam

The final exam in this course is cumulative.

Grading Scale

As instructor, I reserve the right to round up or down any course grade calculations at the end of the semester.

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D+	67-69
A-	90-93	C+	77-79	D	64-66
B+	87-89	C	74-76	D-	60-63
B	84-86	C-	70-73	F	0-59

Students should keep in mind that "A" level work should be outstanding and consistently exceed minimum requirements.

Answers to Other Important Questions

Turning in Late Work

All course work should be submitted by the assignment deadlines. There is no exception for group projects and presentations. Regarding individual papers, if you know that you will be unable to complete an assignment by the due date, you should make this clear to me by e-mail at least 24 hours before the deadline. A short extension without penalty is possible only if you notify me 24 hours in advance.

If not, assignments submitted *after* the deadline will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late: a B+ becomes a B, a B becomes a B-, and so on.

Academic Integrity

All of the work that you submit for this course must be your own. The university has a strict policy concerning academic integrity. The George Mason University Honor Code reads as follows: “To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this Honor Code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.” More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found on the Committee of Academic Integrity’s website at <https://masonkorea.gmu.edu/resources-and-services/cai/overview>.

Academic integrity is an essential part of personal integrity, and I expect you to demonstrate honorable behavior in all of your classes including mine. You should pledge to observe Mason’s Honor Code in all written and oral work including journals, papers, presentations and exams. Student who committed plagiarism in an assignment will at a minimum receive a failing grade for the assignment. As the instructor for this course, I will also report the student and instance of plagiarism to the Dean.

Ethical Discourse and Inclusivity

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

I share that commitment and strive to maintain a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. In this class we will not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, economic class, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration. Please see <http://ctfe.gmu.edu/professional-development/mason-diversity-statement/> for the full GMU diversity statement.

Disability Accommodations

If you are a student with a physical, learning, and/or psychological disability, I will gladly work with you to arrange academic accommodations for this class. Please note that reducing assignments or reducing the class attendance requirement are not permitted as accommodations for a disability at the college level.

Meeting with the Professor about Your Grades

I won’t discuss grades over email. This is to protect your privacy, so please do not make such requests. Instead, set up a meeting with me via Zoom.

Essay Formatting

I expect you to show that you take pride in every piece of written work that you submit. Always re-read your journals and essays (even if they are in draft form) for grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. You should also read your essay aloud to yourself or to a friend. In addition, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Essays must be in 12-point Times New Roman or similar font with 1.0 in/2.54 cm spacing around the margins.
- Essays must have page numbers and a header that includes your name, the assignment name, and date.
- All of the formal assignments must be submitted via paper copy.

Rules for Citation

You can use this useful online resource for rules on citation. *The American Sociological Association Style Guide*:

for in-text citation: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/formatting_in_sociology_asa_style/in_text_citation_references.html

for references: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/formatting_in_sociology_asa_style/references_page_formatting.html