Course Description:

Mickey: Think her family's gonna be okay that you're a white guy?
Cliff: They think any woman over 30 who isn't married is a lesbian. She figures, they'll be so relieved that I'm a man...
Mickey: Yeah, it's always heartwarming to see a prejudice defeated by a deeper prejudice.

Movie dialogue from *Lonestar*

Yo it's 6 Million Ways to Die, from the seven deadly thrills
Eight year olds gettin found with 9 mils…
When the average minimum wage is $5.15
You best believe you gotta find a new grind to get cream
The white unemployment rate, is nearly more than triple for black
so frontliners got they gun in your back
Bubblin crack, jewel theft and robbery to combat poverty
and end up in the global jail economy

Lyrics from “Mathematics” by Mos Def

You think you know who you are. You have no idea.
Moving at the speed of life, we are bound to collide with each other.

*Crash* taglines

During the election campaign for President Barack Obama, our forty fourth President and our first African American President, one of candidate Obama’s famous campaign mantras was “Yes We Can!” Soon the catch-phrase, reminiscent of other calls to action and calls for social justice such as “we shall overcome” and “*si se puede*” for underserved populations and populations of color in U.S. history facing issues of social inequality, became a popular music video released by hip-hop musician and rapper Will.i.am. This wedding of issues of social inequality in U.S. politics and society with popular culture media such as music and film is the central focus of this course. It seems fitting, then, to begin this course with a movie dialogue, song lyrics, and a few taglines from two films and a song that resonate with issues of social inequality in U.S. society.

Fundamentally, this course is an historical, theoretical, and ultimately, sociological exploration of race, ethnicity, class, and gender as axes of inequality in the United States, through the lens of music and film media. Materials examine the interaction between personal experiences and social structures as students explore how individuals carry varying degrees of penalty and privilege depending on their position within a complex matrix along axes of race, ethnicity, class, and gender that affects everyone in society. Students will be invited to explore the ways that people experience and respond to the matrix, that is, structures of racial/ethnic, class, and gender inequality, through the lens of various media, and the ways that people help to reinforce and reshape those structures.

I would like you to leave this course with 1) an understanding of sociological theory as it pertains to race/ethnicity/class/gender relations in the United States; 2) an expanded knowledge of the issues of race/ethnicity, class, and gender in America particularly through the lens of music and film; 3) an expanded knowledge of the effect of the intersection of race/ethnicity, class, and gender on real human lives through historical, empirical, and music and film media analysis of issues such as education, employment, family, the urban landscape, and the criminal justice system; and 4) a basis for critical thinking through a social justice lens about the matrix of race/ethnicity/class/gender relations in our country largely in terms of its future ramifications.
CANVAS:
This course requires use of Canvas. You will be expected to retrieve and upload assignments and readings through Canvas throughout the course of the semester. It would be wise to sign into Canvas through the Campus Information System (CIS) as soon as you can so that you can see all required assignments and readings for the class.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on a sociobiography, at least one exam, one paper, and any other assignments given in class. The due dates for the sociobiography and paper and the dates for any exam will be "written in stone" unless you have been informed otherwise by me. If I don’t hear from you before the due dates of the sociobiography, the paper, or before the dates of the exams you will be out of luck. In the interest of clarity, let us further break down the components of the grade.

Sociobiography (3-5 pages, TYPED Double-spaced)

Writing a sociobiography entails writing about your life from a specific perspective. This course is focused on issues of social inequality, particularly issues of race, class, and gender and the complexity of their intersection. In this assignment you will write a brief biography focused on how your race, class, and gender have affected your life. Remember that each of us has a race, class, and gender even though we might not consciously realize their effects and **you are required to write about all three**. For example, African Americans may be more conscious of their racial status than White individuals. A woman may be more conscious of her gender than a man. A man who was raised in poverty may be more conscious of his class status than a woman from the middle class. You all experience these aspects of your life sometimes invisibly. If you focus, you will be able to see their effects whether positive or negative. Remember, they can have positive, negative, and otherwise very complex effects on you as an individual. In addition, it is important to start thinking about yourself as a part of a large and complex society that both influences and is influenced by your actions and about how you are situated within a matrix of race, class, and gender in U.S. society and what that really means in concrete terms. I especially want you to start thinking about privilege and access in our society with regard to your race, class, and gender.

Exam

Any exams given in class will consist of a choice of **one essay question out of three or four**. This may sound fairly easy on its face. However, you will need to incorporate in this one essay quite a bit of material from lectures, readings, theory, and media examples, and you will only have one blank sheet front and back to do this. You absolutely need to write legibly, so make sure that others can read your writing—print if necessary. The final exam is **NOT** cumulative. There will be **no review for either exam**; your exam grades will stand or fall based on your notes, your reading, and in class media discussions. This means you had better take thorough notes on class lectures and discussions. If you cannot attend class, get to know one of the other students. TAs do not give out notes except in emergencies or for students with special circumstances. **An optional final may be offered.** This means a student can opt to keep the grade they are getting so far in the class or choose to take the final to better their grade. If they take the final, it will count toward their final grade. If an optional final is offered, and there is no guarantee that it will be, it will be announced near the end of the semester and the criteria used to determine whether or not a student has an option will include the student’s **attendance** and the student’s **grade standing** going into the final exam period. This means that even a student with an “A” grade going into the final might have no option if their attendance is poor. All students should, of course, prepare to take a final exam in any case.

Critical Analysis Paper (4-5 pages, TYPED Double-spaced)

The critical analysis paper consists of an analysis of either four song lyrics OR two films (or if you want to use both music and film, it would be two songs and one film). The paper should cover three things:

1. a **thesis section** [a couple of paragraphs at most]—introducing me to the songs or films you have chosen for your paper as well as the theory(ies) you will use to analyze them. This section can be as dramatic as you’d like or include personal insight;
2. an analysis section [three to four pages]—an analysis entails a one-to-one correspondence between the theory(ies) and the films or song lyrics, starting with a brief definition of the theory in your own words, followed by your choice of a corresponding aspect, character, or scene from the films or lyrics (or films+lyrics) that serves as a clear illustration of the theory (you may find more than one). You may use quotes/lyrics to enhance your point but make them very brief, indented, and single-spaced. We will focus on Patricia Hill Collins' Theory of the Matrix of Domination, but there are other theories which will be covered including Critical Race Theory. Do not use more than two theories in your analysis since multiple theories tend to weaken the strength of your arguments. Keep in mind that in enhancing your theoretical argument, especially since we are analyzing media forms, you should use your media literacy skills which will be covered in the first days of the semester. Examples include looking at the films and song lyrics through the lens of political economy, textual analysis, and audience reception. These should be helpful and work well with whatever theory you choose. The analysis will basically look like this:

Definition (of a theory in your own words)
Proof (illustration from the films/song lyrics as good examples of the theory—this can be elaborate and descriptive)
The optional tie back (you might want to add a brief sentence at the end of the proof, noting why the illustrations are good examples of the theory and coming full circle in your analysis but this is not required)

This sequence should happen at least two to three times in the space of 3-4 pages.

3. a critique or evaluation section [a few paragraphs]--this section can be as dramatic as you choose to make it and must entail an opinion of the task.

Please DO NOT use a cover page or bibliography (unless you use sources outside the class material). Simply type your name and class information in the upper left hand corner of the first page. Please DO NOT use any kind of folder. PROOFREAD!! Poor grammar, spelling, etc... will suffer grade reduction. Also watch font and margin space. Keep font to no more than 12pt (as long as it is not Courier New) and margins to no more than 1 inch on each side. Your grade will be reduced for large font and margins.

Bonus Reading Assignments (1-2 pages)
Each of the required readings will have a bonus assignment associated with it so that students can choose to demonstrate that they completed readings and receive extra credit points. All bonus reading assignments are listed on Canvas, and will include due dates so that you can upload them into Canvas.

Other Assignments and Miscellaneous Information...
I reserve the right to give assignments as needed. For example, students who aren’t prepared to discuss readings may be asked to turn in an extra essay assignment. If assignments are given, they will count toward your final grade. Attendance will be taken regularly and both attendance and class participation are also considered significant to your grade. Taking notes is a must in this class and will be considered part of participation. One other thing… if laptops are becoming a nuisance in the class, I will ban them, so don’t let them become a distraction.

Required Reading
There are no required textbooks or required books of any kind for the class. Instead, you are required to read articles all of which are accessible as PDF files or links through Canvas. I would suggest also jotting down notes on what you read so that you are prepared to discuss the articles. You are expected to read articles by the dates noted in the course outline.

Information about the Center for Disability Services:
The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. All printed information for this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.
Dates You Should Know:
28 Sep: Sociobiography due
19 Oct: Exam #1
14 Nov: Critical Analysis Paper due
11 Dec: Final Exam

Course Outline and Readings:

AUG

20 Introduction
22-29 Developing a Critical Media Literacy: Let Knowledge Drop
Ellen Seiter “Different Children, Different Dreams: Racial Representation in Advertising”
Suzan Shown Harjo “Redskins, Savages, and Other Indian Enemies: A Historical Overview of American Media Coverage of Native Peoples”
31 Race/Ethnicity and Culture: Privilege, Power, and Glory
James Loewen “Gone With the Wind: The Invisibility of Racism in American History Books”
Peggy McIntosh “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies”

SEPT

5-12 Race/Ethnicity and Culture: Privilege, Power, and Glory continued
3 Labor Day Holiday
14-19 Social Class on the Titanic and other Stories
Jason DeParle “Learning Poverty Firsthand”
21-28 Doing Gender in the Birdcage
Marilyn Frye “Oppression”
28 Sociobiography Due

OCT

1-17 Theory Along the Matrix of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender
Patricia Hill Collins “Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment”
7-14 Fall Break
19 Exam #1
22-26 Bread and Roses: Living and Working in American Society
William Julius Wilson “From Institutional to Jobless Ghettos”
Barbara Ehrenreich “Evaluation”
29-31 The Urban Landscape and Criminal Justice: Buying the Farm
Luis J. Rodriguez “The Color of Skin Is the Color of Crime”

NOV

2-9 The Urban Landscape and Criminal Justice: Buying the Farm continued
14 Critical Analysis Paper Due
The School Years: To *Stand and Deliver* in the Face of Inequity
Jonathan Kozol “Savage Inequalities”
Jonathan Kozol “Still Separate, Still Unequal: America’s Educational Apartheid”

Thanksgiving Holiday

Family, Relationships and *Daddy’s Little Girls*
Lois Weis, Michelle Fine, and Rukiyya Morton-Christmas “I Was Going Up for Assistant Manager [at McDonalds], but I Had to Quit Because I didn’t Have a Babysitter and Welfare Wouldn’t Pay for One’: African-American Women Crossing Borders”

DEC 3-5 Family, Relationships continued

7 What’s in the Distance
Cornel West “Introduction.”

11 Final Exam – Tuesday, December 11 - 8:00-10:00am
RESERVE READING LIST

Developing a Critical Media Literacy: Let Knowledge Drop

Race, Ethnicity, and Culture: Privilege Power, and Glory

Social Class on the Titanic and other Stories

Doing Gender in the Birdcage

Theory Along the Matrix of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender

Bread and Roses: Living and Working in American Society

The Urban Landscape and Criminal Justice: Buying the Farm

The School Years: To Stand and Deliver in the Face of Inequity

Relationships, Family, and Daddy’s Little Girls

What’s in the Distance?