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.
Grading:

Your grade will be based on a sociobiography, a critical analysis paper, at least one exam, and any assignments that are 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. Late assignments will not be accepted, nor can exams be rescheduled unless you inform me before the dates in question. 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.

Exam Format

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. If an optional final is offered, qualifying students can opt to take the final or remain for a discussion; they cannot simply leave. All students should, of course, prepare to take a final exam in any case.

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 how you are or are not privileged in this society with regard to your race, class, and gender.

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

The critical analysis paper consists of a theoretical analysis which covers 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 films or songs 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. I would suggest using no 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.

**Remember that everyone is writing under the same analytical framework; creativity and the use of intersections will be the key to the best papers. Please DO NOT use plastic folders, cover pages, or bibliography pages unless you are citing sources other than your book(s) and lectures. PROOFREAD!! 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.**

**Quizzes**

A series of 5 randomly scheduled quizzes will be given during the course of the semester which will count toward your final grade. Quizzes will given promptly at 9:10am and will be brief, ranging from 3-5 questions. Quizzes are not meant to be demanding, but just give me a sense of whether you’re keeping up with reading. **Students will be allowed to drop one quiz grade**—the lowest grade, a no-show, or a late show.

**Assignments and Miscellaneous Information...**

I reserve the right to give assignments as needed. For example, students who don’t complete readings may be asked to turn in an essay assignment. Since there are no other texts in the class but the readings, they become even that much more important in terms of your work. If assignments are given, they will count toward your final grade. **Attendance** will be taken regularly and class **participation** is also considered significant to your grade.

**Required Reading:**

Reserve readings can be found using the Marriott Library website which is [http://www.lib.utah.edu/](http://www.lib.utah.edu/). When you get to this site, look to the right hand side on the bottom and you will find the My.Utah.edu Student Portal. Login using your uNID and your password. Once you are logged in, on the left hand menu, click on the Academics option that has a little symbol of a graduation cap. Then, in the middle column under My Courses, you should see all the courses for which you have registered for the current semester. You should find Sociology 3381-001. Underneath that you should find Course Reserves. You can click on Course Reserves and it will bring up all the readings for the course.

**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, 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
28 Oct: Exam #1
18 Nov: Critical Analysis Paper due
14 Dec: Final Exam

Course Outline and Reading List:

AUG
24
Introduction

26-31
Developing a Critical Media Literacy: Let Knowledge Drop
*Reserve Reading: bell hooks, Ellen Seiter, Jackson Katz*

SEPT
2-9
Race/Ethnicity and Culture: Privilege, Power, and *Glory*
*Reserve Reading: James Loewen, Peggy McIntosh*

6
Labor Day Holiday

14-21
Social Class on the *Titanic* and other Stories
*Reserve Reading: Jason DeParle*

23-28
Doing Gender in the *Birdcage*
*Reserve Reading: Marilyn Frye*

28
Sociobiography Due

30
Theory Along the *Matrix* of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender
*Reserve Reading: Patricia Hill Collins, Gloria Anzaldúa*

OCT
5-7
Theory Along the Matrix continued

11-16
Fall Break

19-26
*Bread and Roses*: Living and Working in American Society
*Reserve Reading: William Julius Wilson, Barbara Ehrenreich*

28
Exam #1

NOV
2-9
The Urban Landscape and Criminal Justice: Buying the *Farm*
*Reserve Reading: Dennis Rome*

11-23
The School Years: To *Stand and Deliver* in the Face of Inequity
*Reserve Readings: Jonathan Kozol*

18
Critical Analysis Paper Due

25-26
Thanksgiving Holiday

30
Relationships, Family, and *Daddy's Little Girls*
*Reserve Reading: Lois Weis et al*

DEC
2-7
Relationships, Family continued

9
What’s in the Distance
*Reserve Reading: Cornell West*

14
Final Exam – 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: 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?