

# SOC/GNDR 3381-001 Exploring Social Inequality through Music & Film

FALL 2012 – T/H 2:00-3:20am BEHS 112

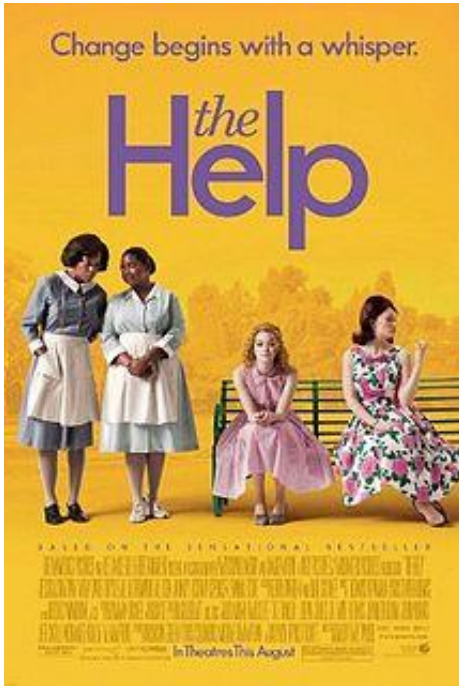
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## Course Description



*The Help* is a film set in Jackson, Mississippi during the 1960s. The film centers around two major characters and the strength of their relationship—Aibileen Clark and Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan.

Aibileen is a middle-aged Black maid who has spent her life serving White families in the Jackson community, and most importantly, raising White children who are seemingly out of sight and out of mind in these southern White households.

Skeeter is a young White woman from Jackson who defies the mandates of her time, first by pursuing college for its own sake as an aspiring writer and not to find a husband, and second by coming home to awareness of the brutal truths in her own backyard.

Aibileen is the lynchpin around which the plot pivots for it is her story and the stories of the other Black maids in the community upon which Skeeter fundamentally bases her newfound awareness.

Together, their relationship sets the stage for a telling expose of the complex exploitative and abusive relationship between southern White women and their Black maids—the help—and in so doing offers a scathing critique of White southern culture in the U.S. during the Civil Rights era.

It is just such material which most concerns this course. The wedding of issues of social inequality in U.S. society with popular culture media such as music and film is the central focus of this course.

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. In this way, the course provides a unique method of entering the “sociological imagination” within the social and behavioral sciences by engaging with social media—a most significant element within the social milieu so critical to global citizenry in this new century.

## Course Objectives

I would like you to leave this course with a broader understanding of critical media literacy, particularly as an

analytical tool for examining societal inequity; sociological theory significant to societal inequity in the U.S.; and race/class/gender relations in America through historical and empirical analyses as well as a music/film media lens on major societal spheres of influence such as the educational system, employment and housing, the

family, and the criminal justice system. Finally, I'd like you to leave with a basis for critical thinking about the matrix of race/class/gender relations in our country particularly in terms of 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.

## Class Work

The major tasks of the class include at least one exam, two papers, and reading assignments. In addition, **attendance and class participation** are also considered significant to your grade. Taking **notes** is important in this class and will be considered part of participation. Due dates and exam dates will be **written in stone** unless you have been informed otherwise by me. If I don't hear from you **before** these dates you will be out of luck. In the interest of clarity, let us further break down the components of class work.

### **Exam #1 (2 page Essay, Upload to Canvas, Single-spaced Word doc, Oct 29 at 9:00am)**

The first exam will be an **essay exam** made available on Canvas on a specified date and to be **uploaded into Canvas by the due date once completed as a single-spaced Word document**. No other formats will be accepted to make sure to save it as a Word doc. This exam will entail 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 material from lectures, readings, film clips, music clips, and theory, and you will only have **2** single-spaced pages in which to accomplish this.

### **Exam #2 (2 page Essay, Upload to Canvas, Single-spaced Word doc, Dec 18 at 9:00am)**

The final exam will be an **essay exam** much like the first exam only with questions that emerge from the last part of the semester. **The final is not cumulative and may or may not be optional** and will depend on class performance during the semester including the student's attendance and grade standing. For example, even a student with an "A" grade going into the final might have no option if their attendance is poor and the final is optional. **If an optional final is offered, and there is no guarantee that it will be, it will be announced at the end of the semester.** If it is offered, a student can opt to keep the grade they are getting so far in the class or choose to take the final. Taking the final will count toward the final grade—it can help or hurt the grade. All students should prepare to take a final exam, in any case.

**Note: There will be no review for the exams.** Your exam grades will stand or fall based on your notes and your reading. If you need class notes when you're absent, get to know another student and make a copy.

### **Sociobiography (3-5 pages, Upload to Canvas, Double-spaced Word doc, Sept 26<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am)**

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 nuanced or complex effects on you as an individual. You are part of a large and complex society that both influences and is influenced by your actions and how you are situated within a matrix of race, class, and gender in U.S. society has concrete ramifications. I especially want you to start thinking about privilege and access in our society with regard to your race, class, and gender.

**Critical Analysis Paper (5 pages, Upload to Canvas, Double-spaced Word doc, Nov 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:00am**

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** [one or two 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—multiple theories tend to weaken the strength of your argument. Keep in mind that in enhancing your theoretical argument, especially since we are analyzing media forms, you should use your critical 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/or 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 [one paragraph]--this section can be as dramatic as you choose to make it and must entail an **opinion** of the task.

PROOFREAD your paper!! Also watch font and margin space. Keep font to no more than 12pt (except for Courier New) and margins to 1 inch on each side. Then upload to Canvas as a double-spaced Word doc by November 21st at 9:00am

**Required Reading Assignments (1-2 pages each, Upload to Canvas on due dates)**

**All readings are required, but assignments work like this.** The readings have 10 corresponding assignments—some pair up two readings while others might have a single reading. The **Seiter-Harjo** and **Loewen-McIntosh** reading assignments are **REQUIRED** for the entire class. Beyond these two, you will **CHOOSE 3** other reading assignments to complete by the end of the semester for **a total of 5**. The remaining 5 will be considered **bonus assignments** so you have the potential to earn extra credit. All readings are accessible as **PDF files** through **Canvas** and will include a **description of the assignment** and **due dates** so that you can **upload them into Canvas**. For example, the Seiter – Harjo assignment is due Wednesday, Sept 3. **Don't wait until the last minute on these and follow the assignment instructions carefully.**

### 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.

### **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**

26 Sep: Sociobiography  
29 Oct: Exam #1  
21 Nov: Critical Analysis Paper  
18 Dec: Exam #2

### **Course Outline**

<b>AUG</b>	27	<b>Introduction</b>
	29	<b>Developing a Critical Media Literacy: <i>Let Knowledge Drop</i></b> <b>Ellen Seiter</b> "Different Children, Different Dreams: Racial Representation in Advertising" <b>Suzan Shown Harjo</b> "Redskins, Savages, and Other Indian Enemies: A Historical Overview of American Media Coverage of Native Peoples"
<b>SEPT</b>	2	<b>Labor Day Holiday</b>
	3	<b>Developing a Critical Media Literacy: <i>Let Knowledge Drop</i> continued</b>
	5-17	<b>Race/Ethnicity and Culture: Privilege, Power, and <i>Glory</i></b> <b>James Loewen</b> "Gone With the Wind: The Invisibility of Racism in American History Books" <b>Peggy McIntosh</b> "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies"
	19-24	<b>Social Class on the <i>Titanic</i> and other Stories</b> <b>Jason DeParle</b> "Learning Poverty Firsthand"
	26	<b>Doing Gender in the <i>Birdcage</i></b> <b>Marilyn Frye</b> "Oppression"
	26	<b>Sociobiography Due</b>
<b>OCT</b>	1-3	<b>Doing Gender in the <i>Birdcage</i> continued</b>

	8-10	<b>Theory Along the <i>Matrix</i> of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender</b> <b>Patricia Hill Collins</b> “Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment”
	13-20	<b>Fall Break</b>
	22	<b>Theory Along the <i>Matrix</i> of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender</b> <b>continued</b>
	22	<b>Exam #1 Up on Canvas</b>
	29	<b>Exam #1 uploaded into Canvas by 9:00am</b>
	24-31	<b><i>Bread and Roses: Living and Working in American Society</i></b> <b>William Julius Wilson</b> “From Institutional to Jobless Ghettos”
NOV	5-12	<b>The Urban Landscape and Criminal Justice: Buying the <i>Farm</i></b> <b>Luis J. Rodriguez</b> “The Color of Skin Is the Color of Crime”
	21	<b>Critical Analysis Paper</b>
	14-21	<b>The School Years: To <i>Stand and Deliver</i> in the Face of Inequity</b> <b>Jonathan Kozol</b> “Still Separate, Still Unequal: America’s Educational Apartheid”
	26	<b>Family, Relationships and <i>Daddy’s Little Girls</i></b> <b>Lois Weis, Michelle Fine, and Rukiyaa Morton-Christmas</b> “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”
	28-29	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday</b>
DEC	3-10	<b>Family, Relationships and <i>Daddy’s Little Girls</i> continued</b>
	12	<b>What’s in the Distance</b> <b>Cornel West</b> “Introduction.”
	18	<b>Exam #2</b>

## Required Reading List

### **Developing a Critical Media Literacy: *Let Knowledge Drop***

Ellen Seiter. 1995. "Different Children, Different Dreams: Racial Representation in Advertising." Pp. 99-108 in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*, edited by Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Suzan Shown Harjo. 2006. "Redskins, Savages, and Other Indian Enemies: A Historical Overview of American Media Coverage of Native Peoples." Pp. 62-77 in *Images of Color, Images of Crime Readings* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed) edited by Cormae Richey Mann, Marjorie S. Zatz, and Nancy Rodriguez. Roxbury Publishing Company.

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

James Loewen. 1995. "Gone With the Wind: The Invisibility of Racism in American History Books." Pp. 131-163 in *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. New York: The New Press.

Peggy McIntosh. 2001. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." Pp. 95-105 in *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), edited by Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins. Stamford, CT: Wadsworth.

### **Social Class on the *Titanic* and other Stories**

Jason DeParle. 1997. "Learning Poverty Firsthand." *The New York Times Magazine*. April 27.

### **Doing Gender in the *Birdcage***

Marilyn Frye. 1995. "Oppression." Pp. 37-41 in *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, edited by Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins. New York: Wadsworth.

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

Patricia Hill Collins. 1991. "Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment." Pp. 221-238 in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

### ***Bread and Roses: Living and Working in American Society***

William Julius Wilson. 1996. "From Institutional to Jobless Ghettos." Pp. 3-24 in *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Vantage Books.

### **The Urban Landscape and Criminal Justice: *Buying the Farm***

Luis J. Rodriguez. 2006. "The Color of Skin Is the Color of Crime." Pp. 36-41 in *Images of Color, Images of Crime: Readings* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed) edited by Cormae Richey Mann, Marjorie S. Zatz, and Nancy Rodriguez. Roxbury Publishing Company.

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

Jonathan Kozol. 2005. "Still Separate, Still Unequal: America's Educational Apartheid." *Harpers Magazine*, Vol. 311, No. 1864 (1 September): 41-54.

### **Relationships, Family, and *Daddy's Little Girls***

Lois Weis, Michelle Fine, and Rukiyya Morton-Christmas. 1999. "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." *Educational Foundations*, 13(2), Spring: 5-26.

### **What's in the Distance?**

Cornel West. 1993. "Introduction." Pp. 1-8 in *Race Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press.