COURSE OVERVIEW

The American workplace has become much more diverse over the past 30 years, with women and minorities moving into greater positions of authority. But significant inequalities remain. Why? This course explores how sociologists go about analyzing the reasons for workplace inequalities using a variety of methods from ethnography to surveys to experiments. Through readings, discussions, and writing assignments, we will move beyond stale debates about whether and how much workplace discrimination exists, to a deeper consideration of the implications of sex and race as “categorical forms of inequality.” Using case studies, we will pay particular attention to how work can be restructured in ways that increase participation and equality.

The semester is organized around three major themes:

Social patterns: What do we mean by inequality at work? How do we measure inequality in the rewards women and men, blacks and whites, receive from work? How much change has there been in the U.S. over time?

Social processes in the workplace: Through what processes are some individuals and groups advantaged over others in the workplace? What does it mean to speak of sex and race as “primary” frames? What are the causes of discrimination? Do markets automatically eradicate discrimination and other processes that give advantages to members of some social groups over others? How are sex and race stereotypes enacted and/or broken down in the workplace?

Future prospects: What are the consequences of sex and race job segregation for individuals? For work organizations? How can managers and firms redesign work to maximize the contributions of all individuals?

REQUIREMENTS

This course is run in an “active lecture” style, meaning that every session is a combination of lecture and discussion. You are expected to do each session’s readings in advance, to attend each class, and to actively participate. Your attendance and participation will determine the quality of your experience in the course and your success on the midterm and in the research project you undertake. There are no section meetings for the course.
Your work in the course will consist of the following:

- Attendance: 10%
- Participation: 20%
- Short assignments: 20%
- Midterm exam: 30%
- Final research paper: 20%

As we move through the course, I will assign some short exercises and assignments to keep us tuned in to the research questions and methods used in the works we are reading. These will constitute your “short assignments” grade (above). I will distribute these by Thursday morning of the week preceding their due date (9 AM Monday of the following week).

You should feel free to come in during my office hours or to contact me at any time to make an appointment at a different time. It is especially important for you to come and talk with me if you are having any difficulties with the course material or expectations; we can head off problems together if I know about them as they are happening.

Readings:
- All of the course readings are available on the course i-site. You are required to do the readings carefully and come to class with notes that prepare you to discuss the major questions the authors are addressing, a summary of the answers they have come up with, and questions that you have about any aspect of the readings (why the authors chose these research questions, how they went about finding the answers, why they used the methods they did, etc.)
SEMESTER OUTLINE (TENTATIVE)

PART ONE  SOCIAL PATTERNS

Week 1  Women and African-Americans in the Workplace: A Historical View


Week 2  Measuring Inequality at Work: Jobs and $\$


→ Discuss figures on changes in sex and race segregation, 1960s-present (handout in class from Tomaskovic-Devey et al. 2006)

PART TWO  SOCIAL PROCESSES IN THE WORKPLACE

Week 4  Primary Frames: Sex and Race


**Week 5 Ethnographic Research on Tokenism**

Rosabeth Moss Kanter. 1977. Read Chapter 8 (“Numbers: Minorities and Majorities”).


→ Methods workshop: Studying inequality through ethnographic and field research

**Week 6 Does Market Competition Eradicate Discrimination?**


→ Peer review of research proposals

**Week 7 Ethnographic Research on Workplace Dynamics**


→ Midterm exam (in-class)
Week 8  Sex Segregation in Action


Week 9  Comparative-Historical Research into Job Segregation and Resegregation


Week 10  Experimental Research on Competition and Hiring


PART THREE  SOCIAL CHANGE AND CONSEQUENCES

Week 11  Walmart’s Fight Against Discrimination

Check-in and discussion of research design and paper progress

Week 12  Restructuring the American Workplace


Week 13  Paper presentations and peer/professor feedback