Sociology 195/295
Comparative Social Inequality: Cuba & the U.S.
Fall 2018

Textbooks:
All readings will be available on Blackboard. For those who like to read actual books, you can buy online:
Aviva Chomsky (Editor), The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AND WILL BE UPDATED ON BLACKBOARD PERIODICALLY

This course will examine social stratification in Cuba and the United States, focusing on the role of culture and social structure in creating and restricting opportunities for social groups. We will orient ourselves to the current situation by looking at theoretical frameworks for understanding social inequality, the role of the state in mediating inequality, and some historical background on Cuba. Next we will look at the situation of vulnerable groups in Cuba and the United States, specifically the poor, women, and disadvantaged racial groups. Finally we will compare the structure of three social institutions that influence social inequality: the labor market, education, and health care. We will spend 10 days traveling in Cuba during spring break which will allow students to learn about Cuban society first-hand. Spanish language skills are not required, but may enrich the travel experience.

Assignments will be a combination of exams, presentations, and a research paper. Students registering for SOC295 will write a substantial term paper, while the writing assignment will be shorter and with less outside research for students taking SOC195.

Course Objectives:
By the end of the semester, you should be able to
• Describe several theories about why societies have differing levels of inequality in access to resources
• Understand the historical forces that led to the Cuban revolution
• Describe basic differences between U.S. and Cuban social institutions
• Distinguish between Cuban and U.S. approaches to production and employment
• Describe the differences in race relations between the U.S. and Cuba
• Distinguish between scholarly and political writings about Cuba

Grading Standards:
A= Truly Excellent
B= basically solid, no major weaknesses
C= gets the main point, but has problems
D= severely flawed
F= very little effort

Course Requirements:
Weekly summaries of readings 20%
Research paper 20 %
Presentation of research 10%
Travel journal 10%
Two exams 20% each

Schedule of topics

Week 1: January 14-18
Sociological Perspectives on Social Inequality

Week 2: January 21-25
The Role of the State in Regulating Inequality

Week 3: January 28 – Feb. 1
Cuban History and Cuba-US relations, pre-Revolution

Week 4: Feb 4-8
The Cuban Revolution

Weeks 5/6: Feb 11-22
Wealth and Poverty in Cuba & U.S.

Weeks 7/8: Feb 25 – March 8
Gender Inequality in Cuba & U.S.

SPRING BREAK MARCH 11-15 – Travel to Cuba!

Week 9: March 18-22
Racial Inequality in Cuba & U.S.

Week 10: March 25-29
GLBTQ in Cuba & U.S.

Week 11: April 1-5
Social Institutions: Economy

Week 12: April 8-12
Social Institutions: Health Care

Week 13: April 15-19
Social Institutions: Education

Week 14: April 22-26
Student Research Presentations

Week 15: April 29 – May 3
Student Research Presentations