"Trying to put oneself in the place of the other lies at the heart of the social contract and of social life itself."

"The simple story of America is this: the rich are getting richer, the richest of the rich are getting still richer, the poor are becoming poorer and more numerous and the middle class is being hollowed out."

COURSE DESCRIPTION: There could hardly be a more relevant time to study income inequality in the United States. News stories and events from the last several years include a tax reform bill that many experts agree especially benefits upper-class individuals, cover the Occupy Wall Street Movement’s cry of justice for the 99% and worker movements for a $15 minimum wage, chronicle rising poverty and food pantry use in suburbs, describe lower social mobility for Americans than for many of our Western European counterparts and discover that the share of Americans in severe poverty has reached its highest level in 20 years.

This class describes, analyzes and morally evaluates issues surrounding economic privilege and disadvantage in the contemporary United States. Aided by sociological theories and concepts, we attempt to objectively analyze empirical data so as to more accurately understand one of the central issues facing our country today.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES: My learning objectives for you span the levels of Bloom et al’s categories of cognitive processing. These categories are Remember, Comprehend, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate and Create (see table at end of syllabus).

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Recall selected statistics on the American income distribution, the poverty rate and poverty thresholds for families of different sizes (exams);
2. Summarize and critique major theoretical perspectives on income inequality and poverty (exams);
3. Interpret tables, figures and charts depicting inequality intersections (in-class discussions, exams);
4. Objectively describe, analytically interpret, and morally evaluate activities you observe at your food pantry service learning site (paper);
5. Analyze how the U.S. educational system both perpetuates inequality and offers social mobility (exams);
6. Summarize how economic hardship and environmental pollution are understood by those experiencing these conditions (Hillbilly Elegy reading; Hochschild book);
7. Articulate and critically evaluate debates around the impact of income inequality (debate);
8. Describe and evaluate the impact of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act (debate);
9. Articulate your own perspective on the morality of income inequality (in-class reflections, morality “thinking assignment”);
10. Summarize and evaluate social policies on income inequality and create your own alternatives (policies “thinking assignment”).

This course fulfills the IP requirement in Social Thought and Tradition. It is also an elective credit for Sociology, Criminal Justice Studies and Child and Family Studies majors and minors and a general college elective. We will focus especially on the skills of “practicing and improving collaborative skills” as well as “demonstrating problem-solving and critical thinking skills” and “developing effective written and oral communication skills.”

COURSE REQUIREMENTS are weighted as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food pantry service learning notes and analysis</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Hochschild book essay</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debate participation and notes 2 debates, 7% each</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mini-assignments</strong></td>
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<td>“My social class” reflection</td>
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<td>A Place at the Table reaction paper</td>
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<td>Monopoly participation and assignment</td>
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<td>Hochschild discussant</td>
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<td>Political position research</td>
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**Additional mini-assignment options, to substitute for #2 or #5 above, may become available and will be announced during the semester. If you have had experience working intensively with poor or advantaged individuals, you are invited to give a brief presentation to the class on your experience, to substitute as one of the mini-assignments noted above.**

**“Thinking” assignments:**
- Morality of inequality 10%
- Poverty and inequality policies 10%

There will be two exams with a mixed format of essay, short answer and objective questions. Each exam includes an out-of-class take home essay option.

**In-class exam policy:** I require that students leave their bags (containing all turned-off or silenced digital devices) at the front of the classroom while taking exams. Students who are found to be possessing digital devices (including cell phones) during the exam will receive a zero for the exam.

You are asked to do one session (of three to five hours) of service learning during the semester, at a food pantry in the area. Options will be presented early in the class and are noted in the syllabus. You are encouraged to carpool together to your site. You will objectively observe and write about the setting, analyze the experience using course concepts and add personal and moral reflections on your experience.

You will write an essay that summarizes, analyzes and critiques one of the main texts for the class, with the author’s also presenting a public lecture on campus (Hochschild’s *Strangers in their Own Land*).

For the debates you will use course readings to argue one position on the relative harm and benefits of current levels of U.S. income inequality, and of the accomplishments or obstacles of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act in diminishing poverty.

You will complete two “thinking assignments” that ask you to do higher-order evaluation, problem-solving and reflection related to course content. You will submit your written work and present your thoughts during the final exam period.

You will complete several short in-class or take-home mini-assignments that will be graded on a S/U basis and together constitute 6% of your grade. These assignments are noted on the syllabus and your grade on them derives from how many you complete in a satisfactory manner. **No make-ups are allowed for these assignments except for documented, excused absences. Otherwise if you miss the class period in which the assignment is given or due you will not receive credit for it. Authorized make-ups must be completed no later than the following class period.**
At the end of the course I rank students on a **class participation** scale. Your grade will either stay the same or be raised from 1 to 3 total points depending on your amount and quality of class participation (e.g. 75 or C becoming a 78 or C+). Participation includes active engagement in small group work and discussion that you have with me outside of the class period about course topics.

**Bring the readings, or your detailed notes on the readings, to class for your own reference.** It is very important that you bring the books or readings accessed from D2L to class in a format in which you can review them. Please share suggestions for topics to cover or information about course-related events in which the class may participate. The more actively you get involved, the more rewarding this course should be.

*I reserve the right to give unannounced in-class quizzes if I perceive problems with students coming unprepared to class, or so as to better stimulate productive in-class discussions.*

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** Regular attendance is necessary for the course to have a sense of continuity and integration across class periods. **After three unexcused course absences your grade will be negatively affected.** If you miss more than SIX classes for any reason you will not pass the class. Also, attendance is required on days that we have guest speakers, unless you contact me in advance with an excused absence. Chronic lateness counts as missed classes. Please do not wander out of the classroom while it is in session, unless you have a true emergency! Do see me early on if you have exceptional circumstances related to family issues, medical problems, or personal difficulties that are affecting your class attendance and course work.

**CLASS CANCELLATION POLICY:** If I must unexpectedly cancel class, due to illness of myself or a family member, bad weather or another emergency, please check your email for announcements for the next class period. Sometimes you will be given an assignment to complete using the D2L course page.

**GRADE CALCULATION:** I will use the D2L gradebook for the class. To compute your grade simply multiply the grade that you earned on a particular requirement by the percentage of the grade that it is worth. For example, if you earned an 80 on the first exam you multiply it by .15 which becomes a 12. A 75 on your morality of inequality paper, which is worth .07, equals 5.25, plus 12 equals 17.25. Do the same for all your other course requirements and add them up and you will have a number that is a percentage of 100. Put in hypothetical (possible) values for remaining requirements to reach the 100 total possible points to get a sense of where you stand. I do not give extra credit opportunities.
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN WORK: You are required to type, print and bring to class ALL written assignments, which are due at the beginning of the class period. Your service learning paper, debate papers and “thinking” papers should be submitted as hard copy in class but ALSO electronically to the designated D2L folder. You are allowed to submit ONE mini-assignment electronically but there will be penalties for additional electronic submissions. All assignments should use size 12 font, have numbered pages and be stapled. Assignments should generally have a professional presentation. Points may be deducted for not meeting these criteria.

POLICY ON LATE OR MAKE-UP WORK: Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the due date. Assignments submitted before 4:00 on that day will receive a 5-point deduction with 10 points subtracted for each day late thereafter. Normally the only acceptable excuses for turning assignments in late, or for taking a make-up exam, are medical excuses and family emergencies, for which you need to provide documentation. See the Undergraduate Catalog for further discussion of academic policies on these matters.

JUDICIOUS USE OF EMAIL: Many of us, myself included, can feel swamped by the barrage of email in our mailboxes. Sifting through messages takes up my time that is better spent preparing for classes and meeting with students. When possible, please talk with me (instead of email!) about issues before or after class or during my office hours. Use professional language in writing your emails. Also, I only read and respond to email during regular work hours on weekdays.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY: I expect you to come to class with the intention of learning. This means that distracting activities including text messaging, replying to email and listening to music should be put aside at the classroom door. All digital devices must be completely switched off once class begins and remain off for the entire period. If you are found using a digital device for purposes not related to class (e.g. taking class notes or pulling up the day’s reading on a tablet is allowed) you will be penalized by that class period’s being designated as an unexcused absence for you. Repeated violations of this policy will lower your course grade.

Audio or video recording of class sessions is prohibited.

INCLUSION POLICY: Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all our students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for environmental or curricular barriers should contact Ms. Faith Craig, Director of Disability Support Services, in 209 Thompson Clark Hall or at 724-946-7192 or at craigfa@westminster.edu.
RESPECT: As in most academic settings, the expression of informed opinions is welcomed throughout course discussions and activities. Notwithstanding, I will not tolerate intentionally offensive or aggressive behavior from any member of the class towards another person. Your remarks should be directed to the content of the comment, not the individual. Put simply: be respectful to both yourself and those around you, treating others as you would like to be treated (statement modified from that of Professor Joe Ritchie).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: There are few greater rewards in life than being a person of good character. Possessing such a character means that you can look yourself in the eye in the mirror every morning and smile back at the face that greets you, regardless of other problems or challenges that you may be facing.

Part of a good character and central to the purpose and pursuit of any academic community is academic integrity. All members of the Westminster community, including students, faculty, staff and administrators, are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity, in keeping with the philosophy and mission of the College. You are expected to be familiar with and to abide by the College policy and procedures described in the Undergraduate Catalog. Academic dishonesty is a profound violation of this code of behavior. It can take several forms, including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, misconduct, and providing false information.

Academic dishonesty breaks the sense of trust that is central to a vital, educational community like Westminster. Dishonesty in any of these forms will not be tolerated. Students who engage in academic dishonesty face the penalties outlined in the College policy. In addition, work that you submit in this class may be submitted to Turnitin.com, a plagiarism prevention service that also provides educational information on how to practice honesty in the conduct of research and writing of papers.

For the purposes of this course, I expect you to do your own work unless collaboration with others is required, allowed or encouraged for a particular assignment. I also expect you to do original work for this course. This means that you may not read texts or submit papers used for another course for the purpose of fulfilling requirements in this course, unless specific arrangements are made with me and you also have the permission of the other instructor. Behaving with academic integrity also means that you put forth your fair share of effort into group discussions and projects undertaken in the course.
GRADING SCALE:

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<td>Below 60</td>
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READINGS: Available at the College bookstore:


**Additional readings** are available at the course D2L page.

**You are responsible for the information in handouts that you receive during class periods**

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

*Readings are due for the day on which they are listed. D2L= available at the course’s D2L page.*

**W Jan 17** Introduction to course
The Sociological Perspective and Ways of Knowing

**F 19** Studying Social Inequality
Reading: Marger, Ch. 1

**M 22** Bloom’s Taxonomy and Kolb’s Learning Styles
Preliminary reflections: The Morality of Inequality

Reading: Bloom and Kolb (end of syllabus). Olin Wright and Rogers, “Thinking about Fairness and Inequality” (D2L; also see study questions); Ornstein, pp.141-44 (class handout). Marger: review pp. 23-4
W 24  
Classical Theories of Stratification: Marx, Weber  
**Reading:** Marger Ch. 2 to p. 44

F 26  
Contemporary Theories of Stratification: Bourdieu; Functionalist and Conflict Theories.  
**Reading:** Marger, pp. 44-53. **Begin reading for Monday**

M 29  
Legitimating Inequality through Ideology  
**Reading:** Marger, Ch. 8 to p. 242.

W 31  
Conceptualizing Social Class  
**Reading:** Marger Ch. 3 to p. 63. Olin Wright and Rogers, “Class” (D2L; see study questions)  
**Mini-assignment:** 1-2 page typed, double-spaced essay on “How my class position has affected my life.” Bring to class 1 named and 1 anonymous copy

F Feb 2  
Buenos dias, Phil!

How Class Matters: Class and Childrearing  
In-Class Exercise: Stratification Profile Poster  
**Reading:** Lareau, “Unequal Childhoods” (D2L)

M 5  
How Class Matters: Corporate and Political Influence

W 7  
How Class Matters: Hunger  
**Video:** *A Place at the Table*

F 9  
How Class Matters: Hunger  
Continuation and discussion of video

M 12  
How Class Matters: Hunger

**Guest speaker:** From Southwestern PA Food Security Partnership, on regional and national hunger (to be confirmed)

W 14  
Income versus Wealth  
Life at the Top: The Upper Classes  
**Reading:** Marger pp. 63-71, Ch. 4 to p. 95. Kilborn, “The Five Bedroom, Six-Figure Rootless Life” (D2L)

**Video segment** from *People Like Us: Social Class in America*
SERVICE LEARNING OPTION: Prince of Peace Center, Thurs Feb 15, 9:30-12:30 or 4-6

F 16 A profile of, and reasons for, growing income inequality
The Middle Classes
**Reading:** Marger Ch. 5, pp. 116-145

SERVICE LEARNING OPTION: New Life Bread Basket, Sat. Feb. 17, 7:45-12:30 or so

M 19 **EXAM 1**

W 21 **Required In-Class Exercise:** Social Inequality Monopoly

F 23 **Discussion of Monopoly exercise/submit mini-assignment in class period**
Catch-up

**Video segments** from *People Like Us: Social Class in America*

M 26 Reasons for growing income inequality
Comparisons with other high-income nations
**Reading:** Marger pp. 71-77; 260-66.

*Submit take home essay during class period today, and to D2L folder*

W 28 The Working Classes/Working Poor
**Reading:** Marger, pp. 156-160. Read two reviews (URL links) of *Hillbilly Elegy* at D2L

F Mar 2 **In-class Debate:** *Is Increasing Economic Inequality a Serious Problem?*
Submit your debate notes in class

NO CLASSES SAT MAR 3 THROUGH SUN MAR 11… ENJOY YOUR SPRING BREAK!

M 12 Anger, mourning and politics among Tea Party Southerners
**Reading:** Hochschild, pages TBA
Student discussants
Student consultancies on political party platforms
W 14  The world of southern Tea Partiers  
**Reading:** Hochschild, pages TBA  
Student discussants.  
Student consultations on political party platforms

**SERVICE LEARNING OPTION:** Prince of Peace Center, Thurs Mar. 15, 9:30-12:30 or 4-6

F 16  The world of southern Tea Partiers  
**Reading:** Hochschild, pages TBA  
Student discussants.

**SERVICE LEARNING OPTION:** New Life Bread Basket, Sat. Mar. 17, 8 am to 2:30 or so

M 19  The Deep Story of Louisiana Tea Partiers  
**Reading:** Hochschild, pages TBA  
Student discussants.

W 21  Tea Party Deep Story  
**Reading:** Hochschild, pages TBA  
Student discussants.

F 23  **Video:** 30 Days: Living on Minimum Wage  
Discussion of video

M 26  Tea Party Deep Story  
**Reading:** Hochschild, pages TBA  
Student discussants.

W 28  Tea Party Deep Story  
**Reading:** Hochschild, pages TBA  
Student discussants.

**NO CLASS THURS MAR 29 through Mon Apr 2… ENJOY YOUR BREAK!!!**

T Apr 3  **Monday classes meet**

Tea Party Deep Story  
**Reading:** Hochschild, pages TBA  
Student discussants.
W 4   Minimum wage and living wage issues
       Catch-up, or class determined by student interests

R April 5: REQUIRED attendance at public lecture by Dr. Arlie Russell Hochschild
on *Strangers in their Own Land*, 7 pm, Wallace Memorial Chapel at WC

F 6   No class

M 9   Social Mobility
       **Reading:** Marger Ch. 7, pp. 197-212
       **Video clip** from *People Like Us*

*Submit Hochschild essay in class*

W 11   Poverty
       Your images of poverty
       Defining poverty
       Who is poor in America?
       Poverty in international perspective
       **Reading:** Marger, Ch. 6 to p. 156, pp. 160-163. Hull, “In Rust Belt, a
       teenager’s climb from poverty” (D2L). Also read assigned entries on
       poverty at [http://www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

F 13   Be Afraid!

Why Poverty?
       **Reading:** Marger, pp. 163-171
       Gans, “The Uses of the Underclass” (D2L)

M 16   Housing and Homelessness
       The private housing market

       **Reading:** National Coalition on Homeless fact sheets: Who is
       homeless, why homelessness, how many…. (D2L)

       Excerpt from Matthew Desmond’s *Evicted:*
       [https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/02/08/forced-out](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/02/08/forced-out)

W 18   Undergraduate Research and Arts Celebration. No class. Support
       your fellow students and complete mini-assignment!

SERVICE LEARNING OPTION: Prince of Peace Center, Thurs Apr. 19, 9:30-12:30
       or 4-6
Public assistance programs

**Guest speaker:** Nicole Mazzocco, Lawrence County Dept. of Public Welfare (to be confirmed)

**Reading:** Handout on “The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act” (D2L). Marger pp. 172-78; pp. 266-72

**SERVICE LEARNING OPTION:** New Life Bread Basket, Sat. Apr. 21, 8 am to 12:30 or so

Welfare across the class system

**Inequality Policies**

**Reading:** Olin Wright and Rogers, “Solutions to Poverty and Excessive Inequality” (D2L)

Continuing discussion: the morality of inequality

***Submit your URAC assignment in class***

**W 25**

**In-class Debate:** Has Welfare Reform Alleviated Poverty?

Submit your debate notes in class

**F 27**

Educational Inequality

**Reading:** Marger, pp. 212-218, 242-245. Perrucci, Wysong and Wright on education for privilege (D2L)

**M 30**

Educational Inequality

**Reading:** Larew on the Legacy Advantage; King on negotiating working class roots in graduate school (both at D2L)

**W May 2**

**EXAM 2**

**F 4**

Making sense of it all

Student evaluations

**FINAL EXAM PERIOD IS Tuesday, May 8 from 8-10:30. You will submit and present on your two “Thinking Papers” on inequality policies and the morality of inequality at this time.**

Your Exam 2 take-home essay is due to the designated D2L folder by 3 pm on Thurs., May 10.
Revised Version of Bloom’s Taxonomy

### THE COGNITIVE PROCESS DIMENSION

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<tr>
<th>THE KNOWLEDGE DIMENSION</th>
<th>Remember</th>
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| FACTUAL                 |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| Terminology,            |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| specific details        |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| and elements            |          |            |       |         |          |        |

| CONCEPTUAL              |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| Classifications,        |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| principles,             |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| generalizations,        |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| theories,               |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| models                  |          |            |       |         |          |        |

| PROCEDURAL              |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| Methods of              |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| inquiry, criteria       |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| for using              |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| techniques             |          |            |       |         |          |        |

| META-COGNITIVE         |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| Knowledge of cognition,|          |            |       |         |          |        |
| including one’s         |          |            |       |         |          |        |
| own                    |          |            |       |         |          |        |