

POWER AND PRIVILEGE

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This course focuses on the issue of privilege and the intersections of race, class, gender and sexuality. (It is assumed that students have taken a prior course on race or gender inequality.) Too often when we think about these topics, we focus only on the victims of inequality, those who have been historically excluded, marginalized and oppressed as “others.” While this is an essential first step, we cannot understand inequality and oppression without also exploring the dimension of privilege. Everyone’s lives are shaped by their race, class, gender and sexuality. Oppression and privilege go hand in hand. Bringing privilege into the picture therefore provides us with a fuller understanding of oppression and the dynamics of inequality, as well as an opening into exploring the ways in which each of our lives and life opportunities are shaped by our social classifications. By exploring both privilege and oppression, we can explore the complicated ways in which race, gender class and sexuality interact and impinge upon each other in our own lives, the lives of others, and at every level and in every institution across society.

Warning: many of the readings may contain disturbing material. The subject we are dealing with in this class can be highly emotional as well as personal.

Course requirements:

1. **Participation:** Based on completion and quality of each unit’s assignments 30%
2. **Journal:** 35%
3. **Resisting racism** assignment (instructions posted under unit 7) 10%
4. **Research Paper:** 25%

Required Reading: (if you have already read any of these books, please consult with Professor to select an appropriate alternative. In addition, if there is a specific area of interest you would like to focus on, a book substitution may be made. Please consult with the instructor to discuss.)

1. *Undoing Privilege: Unearned Advantage in a Divided World*, Bob Pease, Zed Books, 2010.
2. *Privilege: A Reader* Michael Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber (eds) Westview, fourth edition.
3. *Choice of TWO of the following books:*
 - *Hegemonic Masculinity: Formulation, Reformulation and amplification* by James Messerschmidt. Rowman and Littlefield, 2018.
 - *A Disability History of the United States* by Kim E. Nielsen. Beacon Press, 2012
 - *Straight: The Surprisingly Short History of Heterosexuality* by Hanne Blank, Beacon Press, 2012.
 - Any book by Joe R. Feagin

4. *Additional articles posted on-line*

Book selection: Units 9-13 students will read their two selected texts from the four options provided under Required Readings. It is up to each individual student to divide the number of chapters among the five weeks, since each text varies in the number of chapters it contains. Make sure to specify chapters read in the journal entries.

Note: any act of plagiarism is grounds for failure. Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the college plagiarism policy and honor code

Journals:

Each journal entry should be approximately three pages long, typed, double spaced. At least one journal entry should be completed for each unit that there are readings assigned.

The focus of this class is relevant to all of our lives; your journal is your opportunity to relate what you are learning in class to your own life, and make it meaningful for you. You should use your entries to analyze some issue raised in the assigned readings and podcasts for that unit. Focus on some issues in the readings which interest you, either because they ring true, trouble, disturb or shock you, amaze or surprise you, or impress upon you in some way. Try to be narrow and specific, providing examples. You may include brief quotes, but this is not necessary.

Questions to think about while writing your journals: How do the readings and videos make me feel? Do I sometimes feel uncomfortable? Do the readings reflect my own experiences or the experiences of my friends or family in any way? Do they make me think about my experiences in a new light? Does the author raise issues I have never thought about before, or make me think about it in a new way? If I have not thought about these things before, why is that? Does this class make me reflect upon my learning in other classes in new ways? Is there something that has been bothering me but I have not wanted to bring it up in class discussion? Is this class raising issues I want to learn more about? Is this class making me think about myself in new ways?

Final Journal assignment: Personal assessment. Go back and reread your previous journal entries, and reflect upon them. What do you find most interesting or surprising? What kind of learning experience has this class been for you? Do you find that your views, beliefs, or knowledge on specific issues have changed at all? Have the issues been personally relevant for you? How has the class lead you to consider your own life experience and identity? What are the most significant things you have gotten out of this class? Was this class what you expected it would be?

Journals will be submitted to me weekly, and will remain confidential. However, you are free to draw from your journal entries in your participation in online discussions.

Research Paper:

Immediately think about this assignment as we move through each unit's readings and topics. Create an outline to help write the paper in a clear and concise manner, given the page length constraints.

Your paper should be 12-15 pages and should explore an issue through the lens of privilege. Think about a specific issue tied to race, gender, sexuality and/or class dynamics, and analyze the issue by bringing privilege into focus. How does focusing on privilege change our understanding of the issue? Has research in the field examined the dynamics of privilege? Choose an issue that interests you! Your bibliography should include both academic books and journal articles, and sources that are as recent and up to date as possible. Limit use of websites. Select one style format to follow- either MLA or APA, and make sure to follow it throughout.

The central purpose of this paper is to make a case for a particular point of view: this is your thesis. There may be no single correct answer to the issue you address. There are, however, better and worse answers. This is a function of how well you articulate and defend your position. You must, at every step, provide reasons for your position and for your particular interpretation, occasionally backing up your arguments with quotes. The following suggestions should help you produce a thoughtful and well-written paper.

1. Begin every paper with an introduction that includes your thesis and a careful exposition of the key points you will make.
 2. Make sure you support your points and arguments with sources, and you may also incorporate examples from class where relevant.
 3. Provide a conclusion summarizing your arguments.
 4. Provide page references or footnotes for quotes, and a bibliography with a complete list of sources. Your paper should include quotes from your sources, but you should not rely too heavily upon quotes.
 5. Be consistent in the format you use. You can use Chicago manual style, APA style, or MLA, but whatever style you choose, be consistent. Failure to properly cite sources is a form of plagiarism.
 6. Go through as many drafts as necessary: no one writes a perfect paper on the first try. Be sure to carefully proofread your paper!
- (adapted from guidelines created by Dorothea Olkwoski, UCCS)

Unit Schedule:

For each unit you will be required to complete the assigned readings and submit a journal entry, as well as completing assignments posted on black board, such as answering discussion questions, viewing videos, exploring websites, etc.

Unit 1: Introductions and overview

Unit 2: Read Pease, Ch. 1-4

Unit 3: Pease, Ch. 5-9

Unit 4: Kimmel and Ferber Introduction, and Part I (skip chapter 8)

Unit 5: Kimmel and Ferber Part II

Paper topics due

Unit 6: Kimmel and Ferber Part III

Unit 7: Readings posted on blackboard; Begin Resisting Isms log

Unit 8: Readings posted on blackboard

Paper outline and bibliography due

Unit 9: Selected text

Unit 10: Selected text

Unit 11: Selected text

Unit 12: Selected text

Unit 13: Selected text

Unit 14: Kimmel and Ferber Part IV

Last journal due, Resisting Isms Assignment due

Unit 15: Final journal reflection due; final research paper due.