SOC 309L SOCIAL INEQUALITY
Experiential Learning Lab

Dr. Jason Eastman
jeastman@coastal.edu
Coastal Science Center 170

Spring 2013 Office Hours
Mon/Wed/Fri: 12:30 – 2:30 PM
Tues/Thurs: 1:00 – 3:00 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Qualified students taking Social Inequality (SOC 309) may make the course an experiential learning experience (Q) by incorporating weekly participation with an established organization or program that serves socio-economically disadvantaged individuals.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
This course option enables students to learn firsthand how social change involves knowledgeable leadership, engaged civic commitment and informed decision-making by connecting classroom knowledge with hands-on experiences. Specifically, this course option enables students to:

(1) Apply the basic sociology learned via a traditional course in a real world setting
(2) Experience social justice work firsthand by helping someone overcome their struggles with poverty
(3) Gain formal experience with applied sociology that will benefit students’ future educational or career opportunities
(4) Link student’s scholarly and personal interests by working collaboratively with others in the community for social justice

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
(1) Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills obtained through participation in experiential learning activities that are relevant/pertinent to their academic programs and/or career goals.
(2) Students will compare and contrast their expected learning to their actual learning derived from experiential learning activities.
(3) Students will sociologically study and personally experience how socio-economic status affects the life course while providing assistance and resources by working collaboratively with a community program or organization toward social justice.

COURSE FORMAT & GRADING
As an additional one credit option, your grade in this Q section is completely independent from your grade in SOC 309. Grades in
the 1 credit Q section are based on Reflective Journals (50%), along with the draft and final version of a research paper (50%).

**Participation**

You must qualify and complete a service learning experience offered by a local organization or outreach program that assists those suffering from socio-economic disadvantage. This means to take SOC 309L, you must meet the basic requirements of the service program—including a background check.

The semester is 16 weeks long. The first few weeks of the semester you will apply for a service learning program, complete the Pre-Activity Questionnaire administered by the Experiential Learning office, and secure a written contract between you and your service program that adheres to all university polices and procedures. Next, you will be trained by your host program/organization, and then during the rest of the semester you will devote at least one hour a week to your service learning experience. To receive a passing grade in the course, you must log the minimum number of 15 training and contact hours with your host organization. You are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records with your host organization/program that will provide the instructor with these records at the end of the semester.

**Reflective journals (50%)**

Half of your grade is based on a reflective journal you will write weekly that documents your efforts and takes the initial steps toward sociologically assessing your experiences with your program or organization, including your thoughts and self-assessments of your participation. While you will journal during your training, journals become especially important during the execution of your service work as you will not only use your journal as the data for your final paper (see below), but you will also self-assess your mentoring so you can adjust your approaches and techniques to make yourself a better volunteer. Journals should be written immediately after your weekly visit; and must be completed every Sunday at midnight. Journals are turned in via Blackboard; at the end of the semester I will drop your lowest journal score. More information about what is expected on journal assignments is posted on Blackboard.

**Final Paper (50%)**

During the semester, you will draw upon your experiences and write a 2,400 word case study on your organization (or a person you worked with closely) that is due by Friday of exam week (paper is due at noon and turned in via email) and will constitute 50% of your final grade. This paper will sociologically explore how the different aspects of inequality we covered in this class affect the life and life course of the person or people you
worked with throughout the semester. More detailed instructions specific to your specific service learning option are posted on Blackboard.

**GRADING**

To grade your reflective journals and the final paper, I will engage the same matrix used for your class *Write-ups* scored across the categories of unacceptable, developing, acceptable, excellent and exemplary:

- **20%** Clarity and organization of your ideas
- **20%** Display knowledge and mastery of course materials, your program, and the people it serves
- **20%** Point out the connections and contradictions between the materials we cover in class and what you uncovered about your program and the people it serves
- **20%** Use factual and theoretical evidence from both the course materials the research conducted on your program and the people it serves to support your conclusions
- **20%** Engage in critical, creative, sociological thought to reveal how inequality has, does, and will affect the program you worked with and the people it serves

A standard, 10 point grading scale is used for this course (Above 90 is an A, 80 to 89 is a B, 70 to 79 is a C, 60 to 69 is a D, and a below 59 is a F). When final grades are calculated, after rounding to the nearest whole number the top 2 points of each final letter grade (e.g. 88, 89) will receive a (+). At no point in the semester will there be any re-dos, mulligans, do-overs, individual extra credit assignments, etc... Asking for such considerations or leniency on a due date without a legitimate, documented excuse (illness, injury, court, death in the immediate family) will result in a 1% grade penalty.

You are also expected to follow the academic honor code outlined in the student handbook ([www.coastal.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.coastal.edu/deanofstudents)). Any violation will result in both a zero in the course and referral to the university’s judicial process.