

**SOCIOLOGY 295**  
**Race, Poverty, and Hurricane Katrina**  
January 2009  
Loras College: Department of Sociology  
**Meets Monday-Friday 9:00-1:00, Movie Lab: 4:00-5:30**  
**Hennesy 180**

*This is not the final draft of this syllabus. Assignments and readings are subject to change!*

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The best way to reach me outside of class time is via my home phone number listed above and via email.

**A. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a three week intensive travel study course, which will introduce and challenge students to critically think about the situation in New Orleans before and after Hurricane Katrina, focusing particularly on racism and poverty. Through readings, class discussions, media presentations, and reflection assignments, students will gain knowledge on the history of race and poverty in New Orleans and how that history impacted responses to the storm. Additionally, students will get first-hand experience of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the tremendous devastation left in its wake by traveling to New Orleans. Students will build on the knowledge they have gained from the class materials through their interaction with local residents and by participating in service work in New Orleans and meeting local residents and community leaders. Themes to be studied include (1) brief history of racism and segregation in the South, specifically in New Orleans (2) the intersection of race and poverty, (3) media influence on racial stereotypes, (4) prevalence of racism and poverty in American cities.

**B. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The general objective of this course is to provide students with an opportunity to gain an insight into how racism and poverty are related and how this intersectionality impacted what happened in New Orleans before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina. Students will use critical thinking skills in order to analyze readings and connect them to their experiences in New Orleans while participating in service work and gathering information on the current situation in this area. Through experiential encounters, students will also gain knowledge about the culture of New Orleans, particularly African Americans in the Ninth Ward and other areas of poverty. They will analyze the impact of racism and discrimination on the response to Katrina, as well as the structure of the city before this disaster occurred. They will also make connections between this event and the situation in other American cities.

**C. CLASS MATERIALS**

You can expect to read about 35-50 pages per day while in Dubuque, with some reading also occurring during the trip.

### Texts (Subject to Change)

- *There is No Such Thing As a Natural Disaster*, edited by Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires
- *Come Hell or High Water*, Michael Dyson
- Selected Readings TBA

### D. ASSESSMENT

- **Class participation:** You will also be expected to participate in class discussions while at Loras and nightly in New Orleans. This will be an opportunity to process the material and your experiences in the field. While in New Orleans, students will participate in service learning work, visiting and assisting at multiple sites. Because discussion will often be based on the readings for a particular day, it is essential that you complete reading assignments *before* coming to class each day. Attendance and active engagement is crucial for this course to be a success. Class participation is worth 10% of your final grade.
- **Film Reaction papers:** Students will be asked to write two reaction papers to the films viewed in the movie lab. The paper will be the student's personal reaction to the film's material and should also indicate how the film relates to class readings. This paper should also indicate what the film adds to information already discussed in class lectures, in addition to the examples from the class texts. The papers should be 2-3 pages in length. The format of the paper should be double spaced, Times New Roman 12pt. font with 1 inch margins. Credit will be deducted for those who do not follow this format. Additionally, all sources (class texts & the film itself) should be cited. Film papers are worth 20% of your final grade.
- **Daily Trip Journal:** During our trip to New Orleans, you will complete a daily reflection journal entry. This is a way for you to think critically about what you have read, heard, or experienced in the course. Some days you will be given prompts for your writing. Other times, you will be on your own to process what you have learned, how it applies to the course material or objectives, and your thoughts and feelings about the material. More information to come on how to structure these assignments. This is worth 25% of your grade.
- **Research Project:** For this project, you will pick an aspect of the Hurricane Katrina tragedy that you would like to know more about. For example, maybe you'd like to know more about the mayor's role in the disaster? Or if the levees were really blown up as some people believe? Or what was the evacuation process? You will approve your topic with me early in the semester. You will spend some time before we leave researching the topic using texts, reliable internet sources, and other class materials. Then while in New Orleans, you will spend some time talking with the people you meet about your topic. You should try to talk to at least 3 different people about the topic. After the trip, you will combine what you found into a final paper. Papers should be 8-10 pages in length and should be double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font. This paper is worth 30% of your grade.
- **Presentation:** On the last day of class, each student will give a 10-15 minute presentation on their final research project. You are encouraged to be creative in how you present the material and can use video, power point, web, or other options for your presentation. This is worth 15% of your grade.

## Grading Scale

Daily journals	25%
Class discussion/participation	10%
Film papers	20%
Final paper	30%
Presentation	<u>15%</u>
	100%

**A=93%-100% A-=90%-92.99% B+=87%-89.99% B=83%-86.99% B-=80%-82.99% etc.**

## **F. COURSE POLICIES**

### *Expectations for Class Attendance*

Given the nature of the J-Term experience attendance at all class meetings is required. Only illness and family emergencies are acceptable excuses that will allow full make-up privileges. Missing class sessions, missed exams, and late assignments will result in reduction of grade. See College Policy on Absences Related to College Recognized Activity for more information.

### *Expectations for Student Conduct Off-Campus*

During the time that this class is away from campus, students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the policies and guidelines put forth in the student handbook. Though the area we are going to is still in the United States, there are major cultural differences that you should be aware of. Do not engage in any behavior which would be risky or misunderstood in the cultural context which we are entering. During our stay in New Orleans, we will stay together as group whenever we are away from the area surrounding our housing or service sites. You are not to travel to areas of New Orleans apart from the group. This will result in immediate failure from the class. More Guidelines about Behavior and Conduct will be forthcoming.

### **Other Considerations**

- Discussion is required. Many of the issues we will cover in this class are controversial. Remember to show respect for other students who come from different backgrounds and perspectives.
- Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.
- Keep a copy of all graded papers and assignments throughout the term (especially exams).
- Do not make requests for extra credit. If extra credit opportunities arise, they will be provided to the entire class and will be given at my discretion.
- I will not negotiate with you about your grade once final grades are posted at the end of the semester. Use eLearn to track your scores and if you ever have questions or concerns about your grades, come talk to me during the semester. I will work with you as much as feasible before final grades are posted, but I can't assist you if you don't come to me.
- Feel free to come and talk to me or email me if you have questions or concerns. Additionally, I check email frequently during the week day and will try to respond to you as soon as I can, most often the same day or the next day. However, I may not check my work email account after 5 p.m. during the week or on the weekend. Please do not count on an immediate response during that time.
- Check your Loras email and eLearn daily!

### **Laptop Policy**

Your notebook computers can be a tremendous asset to learning. However, computers can also be terribly troublesome. Please respect your classmates and me by using your computer **ONLY** for tasks DIRECTLY related to our classroom activities. What does DIRECTLY related mean: You have been asked to use your laptops from some activity or task that is being complete in class that day. It is incredibly rude and some would say unethical to e-mail, IM, play games, or do other things on your computer during class. You can trust that I will take it personally if you abuse your laptop privileges. I will ask you to close your laptop if I even suspect that you are doing things other than concentrating on learning. Our class time is valuable, so conversations with friends, facebook, MySpace, and email can wait. Please do not take this personally but recognize that your behavior is impacting all of us.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Anyone found copying answers from another on any individual assignment, doing another student's work, allowing their own work to be copied, or using another's work or words from the Internet, interviews, or "traditional" sources without appropriate, academic citations will earn an "F" for the assignment and may face additional consequences. Please see me if you have questions about plagiarism or other forms of cheating. If there is any reason for me to think that work you turn in is **not your own**, I will not grade it until we have met to discuss its content. I expect you to be familiar with any sources you cite when teaching class or writing reactions or answering questions. I also expect you to understand the vocabulary, concepts, and arguments you use.

### **Academic Success Support**

The Writing Center in the Headwaters area is now offering online scheduling for Loras students. Go to the portal page and find the web page listed under 'W' in the A-Z index on top. You can click on a link to register (first time) and make an appointment. You can also cancel that appointment the same way.

Use the Writing Center for all writing needs: cover letters and résumés, PowerPoint critiques, and of course, academic paper help, including brainstorming a structure for writing. Plan your writing needs for the semester and sign up early

### **Counseling: a statement from our Loras College Counseling Center**

Having problems with classes, life love or whatever? Call 588-7085 for an appointment or visit <http://inside.loras.edu/sites/counseling/default.aspx> for more information. When should you seek counseling? Often students enter the counseling process by saying, "I don't know if I really need to be here, but ..." Here are some of the reasons that people come to counseling:

We work with students who are having problems with school, from specific problems such as difficulty with certain types of classes to lack of motivation; insecurity about what to choose for a career; difficulties with college life, such as conflict with roommates, feeling lonely or having trouble "fitting in"; problems with romantic relationships or questions concerning sexuality; troubles at home that cause stress at school; as well as more common emotional issues like feeling tense, stressed, anxious, irritable, or depressed. We help students who are having current difficulties because of past problems like sexual or physical abuse or incest. We also help with students who are concerned about alcohol or drug use, dealing with eating problems, are experiencing difficulty grieving about a loss or are dealing with a crisis in their lives such as experiencing sexual harassment or other kinds of discrimination.

\*\* I reserve the right to revise this syllabus and course schedule at any time and in any way.

## F. TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that I will be contacting you early in the Fall semester about setting up a meeting prior to the beginning of January term. This will give you an opportunity to ask questions, prepare for the trip, and ask any questions that you might have.

- January 5** Course introduction, syllabus  
Brief history of racism and discrimination in the U.S.  
Defining and understanding key concepts: race, racism, discrimination, poverty  
(Movie lab 4:00-5:30 "When the Levees Broke" Act I)  
**Readings from texts TBA**
- January 6** Connection between race and poverty in the U.S.  
Demographics of New Orleans before the storm hit  
The Storm and the Aftermath  
(Movie lab 4:00-5:30 "When the Levees Broke" Act II)  
*Film Reaction 1 Due*  
**Readings from texts TBA**
- January 7** Understanding issues with evacuation  
Race, Class, Gender, and Evacuating  
Possible Guest Speaker  
(Movie lab 4:00-5:30 "When the Levees Broke" Act III)  
**Research topic/outline due!**  
**Readings from texts TBA**
- January 8** Media portrayals of race and poverty  
Comparing Iowa and New Orleans?  
(Movie lab 4:00-5:30 "When the Levees Broke" Act IV)  
**Readings from texts TBA**
- January 9:** Current state of New Orleans/What to Expect  
Prepare for the trip to New Orleans.  
*Film Reaction 2 Due*  
**Readings from texts TBA**
- January 9:** Travel to Memphis for overnight
- January 10:** Travel to New Orleans
- January 11:** Tour of New Orleans  
Meeting with site directors in New Orleans  
Discussion that evening

- January 12:** Daily Service work 8:00-3:00  
Nightly discussion sessions/presenters  
**Reading TBA**
- January 13:** Daily Service work 8:00-3:00  
Nightly discussion sessions/presenters  
**Reading TBA**
- January 14:** Daily Service work 8:00-3:00  
Nightly discussion sessions/presenters  
**Reading TBA**
- January 15:** Daily Service work 8:00-3:00  
Nightly discussion sessions/presenters  
**Reading TBA**
- January 16:** Daily Service work 8:00-3:00  
Nightly discussion sessions/presenters  
**Reading TBA**
- January 17:** Daily Service work 8:00-3:00  
Group Dinner at the French Quarter
- January 18:** Optional mass  
Travel back to Dubuque
- January 19:** Travel back to Dubuque  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- January 20** Social Problems facing New Orleans  
How the Storm Impacted Social Institutions  
**Readings from texts TBA**
- January 21:** Poverty in other cities: Could this happen elsewhere?  
*Journal Assignment Due*  
**Readings from texts TBA**
- January 22** The Shape of Rebuilding...what will the future hold?  
Who Will Return to the Crescent City?  
**Readings from texts TBA**
- January 23:** Student presentations  
*Final Paper Due*