



University of Pittsburgh

Wealth and Power (SOC 432)

Fall 2020

Course Syllabus

Meets:	Virtually/online via canvas, all pre-recorded
Instructor:	DaShanne Stokes, Ph.D.
Contact:	dps26 (at) pitt (dot) edu
Office Hours:	12:00 - 1:00 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays by appointment.

Welcome to Wealth and Power!

In an age of vested interests fighting for power and influence, the study of wealth and power has never been more timely. This interactive course is open to all undergraduates who wish to explore political issues in a dynamic and multicultural environment. I anticipate having a great time in class together, so I welcome you to the class!

Course Description and Structure

The interdependence of power and wealth is discussed in the context of American society. The role of the multi-national corporation and the global economy are examined. The pervasive power of some is contrasted with the generalized powerlessness of the majority.

In the beginning of our time together, we will examine central concepts and perspectives that most commonly come to mind when we think about wealth and power and examine major theorists like Marx, Weber, and others. We then will turn to G. William Domhoff's excellent text, *Who Rules America*, to examine some of the intricacies of how wealth and power operate in greater detail. Then, to cap off the course, we will turn our attention to more commonly overlooked aspects of wealth and power, such as their foundations in imperialism that have carried forward since the forming of America into non-class forms of inequality, such as race, gender, and class and where these forms of inequality overlap and intersect. This structure helps us to more critically appraise what we conceive of as wealth and power, to situate them historically, and to further reveal how wealth and power operate in sometimes hidden ways in our daily lives.

Course Goals

In addition to exposing you to a broad assortment of concepts, theories, and issues, this course is designed to sharpen your critical thinking and analytical abilities. Upon completing this course you will be able to:

Identify the meaning and significance of central concepts, debates, theories, and research in the sociological study of wealth and power.

Critically appreciate an array of complex processes involved in the accumulation and exercise of wealth and power.

Course Materials

Required:

Reading the course syllabus from beginning to end is required reading.

Domhoff, G. William. 2010. *Who Rules America? Challenges to Corporate and Class Dominance*, 6th Edition. McGraw-Hill Publishers: Boston, MA.

Levine, Rhonda F., Editor. 2006. *Social Class and Stratification: Classic Statements and Theoretical Debates*, 2nd edition. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.: New York, NY.

Additional readings as assigned, which will be posted

Optional, but highly recommended:

Adler, Mortimer J. and Charles Van Doren. 1972. *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*. New York, NY: Touchstone.

These books can be obtained through the university bookstore or online through websites like www.amazon.com, www.ebay.com, or www.barnesandnoble.com. Please be sure when ordering online to allow for shipping times, which may vary considerably and may pose unexpected delays (e.g., a shipping time of “standard” usually means it will be shipped “book rate,” which may take three to four weeks or more).

CLASS POLICIES

Our Class is a Safe Space

Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of disability, age, race, culture, gender, sex, social class, religion, politics, and sexual orientation. There will be “zero tolerance” for any form of prejudice, discrimination, or bigotry. Please respect each other accordingly.

Attendance and Participation

Following proven best practices, your lectures are not meant to provide exhaustive or complete coverage of every topic we explore together, but instead to cover key content and to provide a wider context in which to deepen your understanding and develop your ability to think with statistics to critically examine the world around you. As your required “attendance,” **you are**

expected and required to participate in discussion activities and to view and read all lecture materials and videos and complete all readings ahead of lectures. Just like working at a job, if you skip things that are required (i.e., attendance, participation, lectures, readings, assignments, graded materials, etc.) you should expect a negative result. You will only get out of this class as much as you put in; I therefore encourage you to participate because active participation is one of the best ways to help you learn the material and generate the kind of grades you may desire.

As you would for a regular job, you should schedule your personal and professional activities around your required exams, quizzes, and course work.

Readings

You are expected to read the week's lecture readings before lecture that week. I strongly recommend you take notes on the readings. All content from readings and lectures and course materials may appear on your quizzes and exams even they are not lectured about during lectures. As with most courses, the majority of your learning will take place *outside* the classroom as you study, complete assignments, work with your peers, and critically engage the activities, assigned readings, and lecture materials. Readings will be posted on Blackboard.

You can reasonably expect to spend about 2-2.5 hours per week outside of class for each credit hour on the required readings and assignments. This is only a guide; you may need to spend more time during some weeks when working on assignments, preparing for exams, or digesting particularly taxing or mind-expanding readings. Be sure to allot enough time to go through each reading BEFORE class and to take notes.

Notes

I encourage you to take notes not just for general content, but to guide your thinking. A good method is called "double-entry" note taking. For this, you divide each notebook page in half with a vertical line (if you are working on a laptop or PDA, create a table with two columns). In the left column, summarize or give the main argument or point. Always include a reference to a page or range of pages as this will help you with studying and any follow-up you may need later. In the right-hand column, respond with your questions, problems, comments, etc. This will help you learn the material more effectively and make your notes much more meaningful and useful to you.

Office Hours and Open-Door Policy

My goal as is to help you; therefore I maintain an open door policy. I encourage and welcome you to email me to say hello, to ask questions, to make comments or suggestions, learn about research opportunities, or to discuss your work, general direction, or plan of study. I enjoy getting to know students of all backgrounds and look at visits as an opportunity to learn, have fun, and be of service. If you are unable to attend my regular virtual office hours, please email me to make arrangements. Note that, due to the pandemic, all office hours will be held virtually, such as by Skype or by telephone only and require at least 24 hours advance notice for scheduling.

Workload

Many universities view 2-3 hours of study time for every hour of lecture time as a good rule of thumb in determining how much time to invest in studying. This does not include time you need to complete readings, activities, discussions, graded work, exams, etc. This is a guide; you may need to spend more time during some weeks when working on assignments, preparing for exams, or digesting particularly taxing or mind-expanding readings. Be sure to allot enough time to go through each reading BEFORE class and to take notes.

Preparation

Preparation in this class is critically important. To meet the learning goals of this course, and to participate at the level required and get the most out of the time and money you're investing in this course, you will need to read the materials for every class session carefully, thoughtfully, and critically. As you may be exposed to new concepts, new ideas, and new ways of thinking and seeing the world, it can take some practice to digest the assigned readings and their main points and arguments. This is a natural part of learning in sociology, and even the most talented sociologists need time to digest and make sense of new ideas and concepts. Additionally, if there are words whose definitions you don't know, this should not be a roadblock or cause of frustration as it happens to us all. In the event you don't understand a word's meaning, you should make use of a dictionary and look it up (Merriam Webster has a great online dictionary at www.merriam-webster.com). Looking things up, taking time to digest, etc., are all necessary steps in the learning and empowerment process that you're here for.

Academic Integrity

Cheating, plagiarism, etc. will not be tolerated and infractions will be coordinated with the academic honesty office. Students are expected to comply with the policy on academic honesty.

Students with Disabilities and Students in Need of Academic Assistance

If there are ways I can support your learning, please contact me, the sooner the better. Disability Services also offers additional resources. If you have a disability and would be helped with certain accommodations, please register with Disability Services (412-648-7890, 140 William Pitt Union, <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drs/>). If you need a special accommodation, you should let me know immediately so that we can make any necessary arrangements ahead of time during the first week of class (or during the first week you are enrolled, if you enroll after class has already begun).

Communication and Email

This is an online class, but you shouldn't feel nameless or anonymous. Please communicate with me via email and with your class colleagues. I am here to help you any way I can. I will send class announcements via email.

Each student has a University e-mail address. This e-mail address may be used by your instructors and the University for official communication. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a timely and regular daily basis. Failure to read and react to these University communications does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of communications. It is your responsibility to set up e-mail forwarding to access your email via other services if you choose, though forwarding is at your own risk. If e-mail is lost as

a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address.

I will do my very best to reply to emails as quickly as possible. Please understand, however, that teaching is only one portion of my job requirements and I am required to spend a large amount of time on research and administrative activities. Please also be aware that there is only one of me and I am unable to work twenty-four hours a day or seven days a week. Quality instruction and giving you my very best requires a reasonable work-life balance; therefore my response to emails will be very limited and sporadic on evenings, weekends, breaks, and holidays. Please be sure to take this into consideration when planning your schedule and activities or contacting me with questions (e.g., start early and work to finish ahead of time to manage unforeseeable delays life may throw at you). Please also contact me with any questions you have well before due dates, exams, quizzes, etc. (especially not the night before) so that I can best help you.

Please be sure to add my email address to your “safe” list so that it is not lost. Please also be sure to regularly check your “junk” folder as emails can sometimes get routed to such folders and students are not exempt from the content of emails due to their being routed to junk folders.

Many, if not most, questions that require explanation will generally necessitate us to speak by phone or Zoom rather than email, which in turn will require some time to plan and arrange. Please take this into consideration when approaching me with questions so that we can speak during my office hours or by phone or Zoom as needed.

Late Work, Extensions, and Make-Up Policy

FULL CREDIT: Late work, extensions, and make-up work, including but not limited to any exams, papers, essays, quizzes, discussion posts, or other assignments or graded work will not be accepted for grading for consideration for *possible* full credit unless there are university approved, documented, verifiable, and extenuating circumstances. Late work, extensions, and make-up work with extenuating circumstances will be accepted and graded for full credit as if the work were submitted on time. Work will only be accepted, however, **if it has been discussed with me ahead of time**, in a timely fashion, and a timetable for completion and submission has been negotiated and explicitly approved ahead of time. Work not falling under these guidelines will not be accepted.

PARTIAL CREDIT: Late work, extensions, and make-up work, including but not limited to any exams, papers, essays, quizzes, discussion posts, or other assignments or graded work will be accepted for grading for *possible* partial credit if submitted late with a penalty. The penalty for approved late work is discussed below. Late work, extensions, and make-up work will not be accepted unless it has been **discussed with me ahead of time**, in a timely fashion, and a timetable for completion and submission has been negotiated and explicitly approved ahead of time. Work not falling under these guidelines will not be accepted.

For those approved for possible partial credit evaluation, described above, a two-letter grade penalty rounded to the nearest whole point (not percentage) will be assessed for each twenty-four-hour time increment by which the work is late, beginning one minute after the

posted/announced due date and time. Example: If a student submits something that is between one minute to up to twenty-four hours late, the work will receive a one-day penalty amounting to a two-letter grade reduction. If, for example, the work is worth 100 points, the maximum score possible for the student would be 80 points. If the work is worth 25 points, then the maximum score the student could earn would be 20 points. If the work is worth 10 points, the maximum possible for the student is 8 points. If the work is submitted between 24 hours and one minute up to 48 hours late, the work will be treated as two days late and assessed a two-day penalty, and the corresponding maximum points possible for the student would be 60 points (out of 100), 15 points (out of 25), and 6 points (out of 10), respectively, following the pattern above. The same progression of additional penalties per twenty-four hours will follow this same pattern for each additional 24-hour time increment late. Note that at five days late, following this pattern, no credit will be given.

DUTY TO NOTIFY: If you encounter any problems or extenuating circumstances, it is your duty to notify me of this immediately so that I can evaluate your situation and work with you to determine the best course of action and to determine a timetable to complete any graded work that may be affected. Work will not be accepted unless it has been discussed with me and a timetable for completion has been negotiated ahead of time.

You should contact me ahead of time, or as soon as possible, if you encounter or foresee encountering circumstances that would prevent you from completing required work, exams, quizzes, etc., by the posted due dates and times. This includes unforeseeable events as well as ongoing or short, medium and long-term circumstances.

It is your responsibility to pay close attention to due dates and times, such as to not confuse a.m. times with p.m. times.

For students who face extenuating university approved circumstances that cannot be foreseen ahead of time, it is the student's responsibility to contact me to request and make special arrangements for any needed makeups within four calendar days after the student returns. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Any and all makeups or extensions or late work must be completed and submitted no more than seven (7) calendar days from the date the work/exam/etc. was originally administered or due or from the date when a student returns from a university approved extenuating circumstance. Students failing to meet this requirement will receive a score of zero. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** If you have ongoing special needs or extenuating circumstances, whether short-term, medium-term, or long-term, you should notify me immediately so that I can work with you and determine any extensions, adjustments, etc., that may be needed to best help you.

Generally speaking, it is always best to notify me and work with me from the moment a problem arises--and ideally before something has the chance to become a problem--so that I can work with you and help you. I am happy to help you however I can.

No Extra Credit, No Curves

I find that my students generally do very well in my courses and that extra credit or curving grades is not necessary. I make it a point to closely monitor class performance, and I will not

consider curving any graded work for the class unless the class average is below 70%. I also do not give extra credit or extra work, so please don't ask.

Your Duty to Monitor Grades

It is your responsibility to closely monitor your grades and your responsibility to immediately notify me of any questions, concerns, or problems you have with your grades or if you believe your work has been missed or entered incorrectly. Students may challenge or request a re-grade of written graded work only with a documented, compelling, and valid reason and must make their request within seven calendar days of class work/exams/assignments/etc. originally being graded. NOTE: A request for a re-grade of written work is not guaranteed, and if I find something was missed that should have resulted in a lower grade, the lower grade will be issued and no further regrades will be considered. Requesting a regrade also requires much more than a "feeling" (or hope) that you "should" have done better (or wanted to have done better) and it also requires more than coming to me near or at the end of the semester in a last-minute attempt to boost your grade. This applies to all students, including those with extenuating circumstances and disabilities. After seven calendar days have passed since grades for a quiz/assignment/exam/etc. have been posted, any challenges and requests for a re-grade or claims that work somehow went "missing" will not be considered. Your request for a regrade of written work indicates an explicit understanding of an agreement to these terms. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Class Meeting Time and Location

The university has scheduled a hybrid in-person and online mode of delivery for the course, with a classroom and meeting time on Mon/Wed/Fri 12:10PM - 1:00PM in G20 William Pitt Union. You are welcome to use this classroom during this time and location, but be aware that, due to the pandemic, **all course content will be delivered and administered online only**. This means you may use the classroom to view online lectures during the assigned times if you have a reliable computer with internet access with which to view online course content, but the class and all content will be presented online only and I will not be in the classroom in person and there will be no in person discussions, activities, exams, etc. This means all lectures, activities, exams, discussion posts, etc., are presented, administered, graded, etc. entirely online.

Computer and Internet Access is Required

Because this is an online course, and all course materials, activities, exams, quizzes etc., are administered and delivered online, it is expected and required that you maintain a good working computer and uninterrupted internet service and a good working internet connection throughout the duration of the course. This means, for example, that you maintain subscription or enrollment with an internet service provider and take action to ensure your bills are kept up to date or, if you rely on someone else for internet, to make sure they keep bills up to date and help them if needed. An online course simply can't be completed without reliable internet service. If you foresee or encounter any problems with your internet service or computer or other hardware or software issues, such as but not limited to difficulty of access due to financial concerns, internet or hardware or computer issues, etc., it is your responsibility to remedy the problem or find workable alternatives in a timely fashion to ensure as best as possible your uninterrupted internet service and to ensure your ability to complete assignments, quizzes, exams, etc., as scheduled. There are many options if you only look. You may, for example, visit a library, visit a friend,

relative, coffee house, or other location with internet access, use your cell phone internet service, seek technical support, borrow a laptop or computer or cell phone with internet access, sit in your car or otherwise outside the house of someone who has wifi that you are allowed to use if the pandemic is an issue, etc. Please note that I am not able to provide any technical support. Those in need of technical support should consult the IT or technical support staff at their respective universities. I have created built-in accommodations in part to assist those who encounter unforeseeable internet or technical problems and additional accommodations will not be granted except under verifiable extenuating circumstances.

A Note About COVID-19

These are uncertain times, but we will get through them together! We are all still very new and charting new, unprecedented ground in teaching and learning during a pandemic. There will no doubt be things that come up that none of us can anticipate and for which I will not have all the answers immediately. Also, there are necessarily some things about learning remotely and online, and especially during a pandemic, that will be unavoidably different than any classes you may have taken in the past. As such, some things we will have to learn together and invent together as things come. I ask for your patience and understanding during these very uncertain times and ask that you be kind and gentle with yourselves and your colleagues.

I am very aware of the myriad ways in which the pandemic is affecting people, having had to deal with many unforeseeable events and worries and consequences myself. Simply told, there is no one in our country who the pandemic is not affecting. But, rest assured! In my classes taught during the sudden and unanticipated outbreak earlier this year, my students nonetheless did very well in our courses together. My students in a subsequent course I taught over the summer also did very well despite the pandemic. As a result, I am very confident in our abilities to get through this together. It will require flexibility and understanding. It will also require more advance planning and taking more preventative action to avoid procrastinating and to handle unforeseeable events than would normally be expected of you in being a student. It will also require us to be kind and gentle with each other and with ourselves. Self-care will be critical. I will do everything I can within reason to help you get through the course and to enjoy the course as much as possible. There will be challenges for us all, but we will get through this!

CLASS CONTACTS (REQUIRED)

The space below is provided for you to write down the contact information of two fellow classmates. If you are unsure whom to ask, simply check the class roster or discussion boards. These are people to whom you may turn for help, such as to ask questions about textbook materials, to obtain lecture notes or announcements, to form study groups, etc. The names you place below do not have to be friends or people you already know (though you may well find in them a new friend or study partner). Please obtain names and e-mail addresses for *at least two* fellow classmates by the end of the first week of class.

Name

E-mail address

Classmate One: _____

Classmate Two: _____

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Discussion Board Activities

With this class being online, participation in discussion boards will be a critical way of interacting and engaging with the material. All students will need to take an active role in this form of participation. There are required and graded discussion board activities corresponding to each week's classes and lecture material.

Each week, I will post some material, such as a link or article, along with one or more questions or prompts drawing on the content I post. Every week, you will then be required to compose and post one original reply to either a) my original post OR b) an original reply to the post of one of your classmates.

Posts are worth 10 points and are graded pass (10 points) or fail (5 points) based on the criteria below. Those students who fail to post a discussion post on time or who fail to post a response post at all will receive zero points, as appropriate.

Your discussion posts should extend, critically evaluate, or question the content posted. Be sure that your posts are informed by the readings and lecture notes and that you support your arguments with examples. Your responses and posts should go beyond summary, giving opinion, or simply saying you agree or disagree or like something is not enough. Support and elaborate on your points or argument. Your posts should demonstrate critical thinking and be no less than 200 words in length.

Your posts are **DUE no later than noon (11:59 a.m.)** for that week's readings and lectures. Consult the syllabus for the relevant readings and lecture materials that week. See schedule below. **Late posts will not be accepted and will receive no credit.**

Short Reflective Essays

You will write two one-page, single-spaced (500 – 600 words) short essays. These will challenge you to apply course materials to make sense of a real-world problem in relation to your own personal experiences tied into race, gender, class, and sexuality. Further details will be posted.

Exams

There will be a midterm and final exam. These exams will be multiple-choice or true/false and are closed-book. You may not use notes. You are required to take the exams when they are scheduled. I will not give make-up exams for reasons other than those outlined in the official University policy. No exceptions. Specific dates and points possible for each exam are provided for the exams in the schedule below.

Grading

Each graded item is worth a set number of points that count towards your final grade.

Item	Points Possible
Discussion Posts	100 points, ten points each
Reflective Essay 1	50 points
Reflective Essay 2	50 points
Midterm	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
<i>Total</i>	400 points

Based on the above point system, your grade will be determined by the total points you earn as follows:

<i>Total Points</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Total Points</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>
372-400	A	292-311	C
360-371	A-	280-291	C-
352-359	B+	272-279	D+
332-351	B	252-271	D
320-331	B-	240-251	D-
312-319	C+	0-239	F

Please be sure to note that grades in the course are not determined by percentages, as is the case in some courses, but rather by total points. This is to add clarity and remove the need for rounding. If you want to know your grade, add up your total points.

Students sometimes inquire about the possibility of earning extra points or credit by taking on additional work, projects, or assignments in order to raise their individual grades. Please note that extra credit will not be permitted because it would not be fair to the rest of the class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF LECTURE TOPICS AND READINGS

Readings should be completed BEFORE the week they will be discussed in class lecture.

NOTE: “Domhoff” refers to *Who Rules America*. “Levine” refers to *Social Class and Stratification* and corresponding pages, not to the individual authors. These form our main required readings, though there are a couple of weeks, shown below, in which we will have readings outside of these two main texts. These other readings will be posted.

Week One (8/19 – 8/21)

Course introduction, review of syllabus

Read Levine p. 1-15

Week Two (8/24 – 8/28)

Read Levine p. 17-49

Week Three (8/31 – 9/4)

Read Levine p. 49-92

Week Four (9/7 – 9/11)

Read Levine p. 105-115 and 143-167

Week Five (9/14 – 9/18)

Read Domhoff p. 1-55

Week Six (9/21 – 9/25)

Read Domhoff p. 55-119

Week Seven (9/28 – 10/2)

Read Domhoff p. 119-173

Week Eight (10/5 – 10/9)

Read Domhoff p. 173-229

Week Nine (10/12 – 10/16)

Read Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Introduction – p. 31

Week Ten (10/19 – 10/23)

Read Levine p. 171-203

Week Eleven (10/26 – 10/30)

Read Levine p. 203-215 and 233-259

Week Twelve (11/2 – 11/6)

Read Katz (89-97), Rahman (p. 141-148), Anthias (p. 570-582)

Week Thirteen (11/9 – 11/13)

Read: Julian Go, *For a Postcolonial Sociology*

Read: John Trudell: speeches at Black Hills Survival Gathering and American Indian Community House New York

Week Fourteen (11/16 – 11/20)

Catch up and review

Date of midterm and final exam to be announced.