

Soc 345  
M/ W 11:00 PM – 12:20 PM  
Location: 555 Clark B01

Beth Redbird ([redbird@northwestern.edu](mailto:redbird@northwestern.edu))  
Office Hours: W 12:30-3:30, Appointment Required  
Office Location: 1808 Chicago Room 105

TA: Miri Eliyahu  
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## Class and Culture

Course covers economic, social, and political causes and consequence of class in America. Topics include: class culture, education, recent social protests, including Occupy and Tea Party, and the 2016 presidential election. Emphasizes ways that social class shapes the background and experiences of current Northwestern students and what their future will hold.

Required Readings: Readings may be found on the course website. In the course schedule they are listed the day they are due. Readings and schedule may change throughout the quarter.

### **My Co-Worker**

Mitaka Ki (Mita for short), is a licensed medical alert dog. She is trained to detect and alert to subtle changes in blood chemistry. She accompanies me everywhere, but when we are out she is frequently working, so please do not be offended if she doesn't visit you. If you would like to have Mita kept away from you, please let me know. Also, we all get distracted once in a while. Mita is just a dog, so I hope you will forgive her if she periodically gets distracted or forgets what she is doing.

## Requirements

|  |        |        |
|--|--------|--------|
| <i>1<sup>st</sup> Op-Ed Assignment</i> (500-1,000 words) |        |        |
| Draft 1  | Oct 10 | 5 pts  |
| Draft 2  | Oct 17 | 5 pts  |
| Draft 3  | Oct 24 | 5 pts  |
| <i>2<sup>nd</sup> Op-Ed Assignment</i> (500-1,000 words) |        |        |
| Draft 1  | Oct 31 | 5 pts  |
| Draft 2  | Nov 7  | 5 pts  |
| Draft 3  | Nov 14 | 5 pts  |
| <i>Take Home Final</i>                                   | Dec 5  | 20 pts |
| <i>Attendance and Participation</i> (Up to 2 Make-Ups)   | -----  | 25 pts |
| <i>Group Topic Discussion</i>                            | -----  | 25 pts |
| (Oct 3, Oct 19, Oct 26, Nov 2, Nov 9, Nov 16, Nov 21)    |        |        |

## ***Attendance and Participation***

Show up, be on time, participate.

Attendance Make-Up Points: Lectures will be recorded. If you miss a day, you may make up the lost points by watching the missed lecture and writing a paper that answers a specific question. The question may be obtained from the TA. Make-ups are due December 7<sup>th</sup>.

## ***Op-Ed Assignments***

Each student will write two Opinion-Editorial pieces of no more than 1,000 words. Each should state an opinion and support that opinion using well-reasoned logic and material presented in the class. Use what you learned in the logic and reasoning lecture. Specifically:

- State a current issue;
- Provide your opinion on the issue;
- Support your argument using well-reasoned class material and outside facts;
- Use concrete examples; and,
- The conclusion should demonstrate your grasp of materials presented in class.

In addition, your piece should be well-written, concise, interesting, and grammatically sound.

Some notes on writing a good op-ed: The issue you write on should be timely and thought-provoking. I also look for ingenuity, strength of argument, freshness of opinion, clear writing, and newsworthiness. Personal experiences and first-person narrative can be great, particularly when offered in service of a larger idea. So is humor, when it is funny and topical. Eschew . . . um, I mean . . . stay away from Olympian language and bureaucratic jargon (infrastructure, inputs, outlays). Write the article in a way you would like to read it. Make one argument (and only one) thoroughly, point by point; the more detail, the better. If you try to do too much, you can wind up with an article that, in striving to say everything, ends up saying nothing. Do not be afraid to stick your neck out. Remember it is difficult but possible to express complex ideas in clear, concise prose (I will never provide page minimums). Above all, put yourself in your readers' shoes. Learn from comments and feedback, but you do not have to accept all of them.

The goal of the op-eds is to form a well-reasoned opinion, express it effectively, and understand the limitations of your argument by responding to feedback.

## ***Group Topic Discussion***

Students will choose one of three topic areas. Readings will focus on your topic area. Once you commit, you cannot change. The goal is to read about current events and explain them using class materials. Your topic group will be responsible for educating your peers on how what we cover in class relates to your group's readings. You can do this however you want: lecture, group discussion, etc. You may take turns or do it all together, but you will be graded as a group either way. Each group will get about 20 minutes each. You are responsible for making sure your technology works! You may choose from the following topics:

- Millennials and College Students
- Race, Ethnicity and Citizenship
- American Politics, Political Opinion, and the 2016 Presidential Election

## ***Take Home Final***

Each student will pick two out of three questions and write no more than 500 words in response to each. Learn from your op-eds. Be well-reasoned, concrete, and concise.

# Policies

## ***Late Policy***

Life happens. Thus, you may be late on any one individual assignment (or combination of assignments), up to four days total (in 24-hour increments), with no penalty and no questions asked. Students will lose ten (10) percent of possible points for each 24-hour period the assignment is late beyond that. Keep in mind you receive collective feedback on your op-eds so being late on one may inhibit your ability to gain constructive feedback. Group discussion assignments are not subject to the late forgiveness policy. All assignments must be submitted no later than Thursday of finals week (by midnight) or no credit will be given.

## ***Academic Freedom***

This class will deal with subjects that are difficult, complex, and controversial. My goal as the instructor will be to introduce you to a diverse variety of theories and opinions about these topics. None of the topics we discuss have easy answers; if they did then they would not be controversial, nor a matter for public debate. You may have an opinion that differs from that of the material discussed, your fellow classmates, and even me. This is completely fine. Students are free to express their opinion, or not, depending entirely on their comfort level. Similarly, I expect students to respect the opinion and voice of others. At no time will your grade be based on your personal views. All views are welcome in my classroom, though we will be applying critical thinking to a diverse group of opinions and beliefs. Critical thinking means you will be challenged to explore new ways of looking at the world. Sometimes this is uncomfortable, but intellectual growth and exposure should be uncomfortable. Readings will be diverse. By no means should you believe, or even agree with, everything you read for class. Students are encouraged to think critically about the content, style and structure of materials.

## ***Accommodations***

Students with disabilities or other concerns should contact the Accessible NU office ([accessiblenu@northwestern.edu](mailto:accessiblenu@northwestern.edu)) for a student accommodation letter.

## ***Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct***

Northwestern's code of academic conduct applies. I am required to report incidents of academic misconduct. University policies may be found at <http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html>.

## Topics & Schedule

| Date  | Topic  | Assignment Due        |
|-------|--|-----------------------|
| 9/21  | <b>1 - Review Syllabus &amp; Academic Freedom Debate</b><br>Readings: Chicago's Safe Space Controversy (11pgs)<br>"I'm Northwestern's president. Here's why safe spaces for students are important." – Washington Post (2pgs)  |                       |
| 9/26  | <b>2 - A (Very) Brief History of Social Class</b><br>Readings: "Communism: Promise and Reality, pt.1" (60 min)<br><a href="https://youtu.be/4eJmgQISEyk">https://youtu.be/4eJmgQISEyk</a>  |                       |
| 9/28  | <b>3 - Marxism</b><br>Readings: Parable of Shmoo (3pg)   |                       |
| 10/3  | <b>4 - Topic Discussion</b><br><b>(a) Millennials:</b> "Raising Minimum Wage" (13pgs.); "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Fast Food Minimum Wage (8min)"; "30 days on the Minimum Wage" (45min)<br><b>(b) Race:</b> "High Cost of Cheap Goods" (21pgs.); "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Fashion" (17min); "BBC's Panorama – Dying for a Bargain" (30min)<br><b>(c) Politics:</b> "Exactly What Kind of Socialist Is Bernie Sanders?" – NPR (4min); "Bernie Sanders, Seattle, Aug 8, 2015" (58min) | Group Presentation 1  |
| 10/5  | <b>5 - Logic and Reasoning</b><br>Readings: Op-Ed Examples (16pgs)   |                       |
| 10/10 | <b>6 - A (Slightly) Brief History of Class in American: Roaring 20's and the Great Depression</b><br>Readings: Franklin D. Roosevelt - Annual Message to Congress (1934) (3pg)<br>"Children of the Great Depression" – Elder (1974) (24pg)   | Op-Ed 1: First Draft  |
| 10/12 | <b>7 - A (Slightly) Brief History of Class in American: Development of Modern America</b><br>Readings: "Fiscal Crisis Symptom of Detroit's Woes" - NY Times (2013) (3pgs)<br>"The Culture of Debt" - NY Times (2008) (3pgs)<br>"The Three Marketeers" - Time (1999) (9pgs)<br>"Two American Families" by PBS -AND / OR- "Inequality for All"   |                       |
| 10/17 | <b>8 - A (Slightly) Brief History of Class in American: Development of Modern America</b><br><b>Readings: "Fiscal Crisis Symptom of Detroit's Woes" - NY Times (2013) (3pgs)</b><br><b>"The Culture of Debt" - NY Times (2008) (3pgs)</b><br><b>"The Three Marketeers" - Time (1999) (9pgs)</b><br><b>"Two American Families" by PBS -AND / OR- "Inequality for All"</b>   | Op-Ed 1: Second Draft |

**10/19 9 - The Great Recession**

Readings: "How Did Economists Get it So Wrong" - Krugman NY Times (2009) (13pgs);

"The Jobless Trap" - Krugman NY Times (2013) (3pgs);

"The Story of Our Time" - Krugman NY Times (2013) (2pgs);

"Alan Greenspan explains the Fed" (Sept 18 2007)

(<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/cenrt5/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-alan-greenspan>) (9min);

"Alan Greenspan Testifies" (6min)

"Inside Job" - AND/OR - "Too Big to Fail"

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**10/24 10 - Topic Discussion: Consequences of the Great Recession**

**Millennials:** "Current Issues in Illinois Colleges" (50pgs)

**Race:** "Current Issues in Regulation and Taxes" (27pgs)

**Politics:** "Rise of Europe's Right" (37pgs)

Group  
Presentation  
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Op-Ed 1:  
Third Draft

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**10/26 11 - Social Status, Closure, and Stress**

Readings: None

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**10/31 12 - Topic Discussion: Closure**

**Millennials:** - "The Voting Rights Controversy" (40pgs); "President Obama's Letter to the Editor" - NY Times (2pgs); Be familiar with Shelby County v. Holder; Daily Show "Voter ID Laws" (4min)

**Race:** "Current Issues in Immigration" (40ish pgs)

**Politics:** "Gerrymandering"

(<http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/gerrymandering>) (77min);

"Gerrymandering and the Right" (21pgs)

Group  
Presentation  
3

Op-Ed 2:  
First Draft

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**11/2 13 - Class Politics**

Readings: None

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**11/7 14 - Topic Discussion: Class Politics**

**Millennials:** TBA

**Race:** "Birther' Boom"

(<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/07/22/birther-boom/>);

"Rick Perry and the 'Birther' Movement"

(<http://www.nytimes.com/video/us/politics/10000001132943/rick-perry-and-the-birther-movement.html>); "Donald Trump - Obama Birth Certificate - Greatest Scam"

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Blckpwk1voQ>); "Racial Resentment at Its Root"

(<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/04/21/barack-obama-and-the-psychology-of-the-birther-myth/racial-resentment-at-its-rootr>)

Group  
Presentation  
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Op-Ed 2:  
Second Draft

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**Politics:** Be familiar with Citizens United v. FEC.; Explore the Colbert Super PAC

(<http://www.cc.com/video-collections/8iug7x/the-colbert-report-colbert-super-pac/kj1cs9>); Souring on Donald Trump, Republicans Pour Money Into Senate Races -

The New York Times (4pgs); Explore OpenSecrets

(<http://www.opensecrets.org/bigpicture../>)

**11/9 15 - Culture and Lifestyle, Mobility, and Cultivation**

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**11/14 16 - Topic Discussion: Culture and Lifestyle**

**Millennials:** For-Profit Colleges (40pgs); “John Oliver Last Week Tonight: Trump University” (S3E14) (22min); “Lives on Hold” – Consumer Reports (21pgs); “Unconventional Wisdom on the Loan Crisis – CHE” (6pgs)

**Race:** “Linguistic Prejudice” (3pgs); “Use of black English and Racial discrimination in Urban housing markets: New methods and findings” - Douglas s. Massey & Garvey Lundy (2001) (18pgs); Listen to some of Rachel Jeantel’s testimony; “Here’s Why Smart and Black Go Together Well” - Huffington Post (5pgs); “From Upspeak To Vocal Fry: Are We ‘Policing’ Young Women’s Voices?” – NPR (36min)  
(<http://www.npr.org/2015/07/23/425608745/from-upspeak-to-vocal-fry-are-we-policing-young-womens-voices>)

**Politics:** “Educational Segregation and Tea Party” – McVeigh et al (2014) (23pgs)

Group  
Presentation  
5  
Op-Ed 2:  
Third Draft

**11/16 17 – No Class**

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**11/21 18 – Topic Discussion: Poverty & Affluence**

**Millennials:** “Homelessness” (21pgs);

**Race:** “Managing Elites” - Schleef (2005) (Ch. 1)

**Politics:** “Brexit and Austerity” (13pgs); “John Oliver: Brexit” pt. 1 (S3E16) (song contains foul language, feel free to skip) & pt.2 (S3E17)

Group  
Presentation  
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**11/23** *No Class – Thanksgiving Break*

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**11/28** *No Class – Reading Week*

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**12/5** *No Class – Finals Week*

Take Home  
Final Due