

# HTS 8803 Syllabus

Power, Politics, and Inequality HTS 8803, Section A, 3 Credits

Fall 2026

## Instructor Information

### Instructor

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## General Course Information

### Description

Explores different approaches to the study of politics, power, and inequality in history, sociology, and allied fields. This version of the course will place emphasis on social class and economic inequality, as well as sociological texts.

### Course Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to critically evaluate and synthesize competing theories of power to explain the persistence of economic disparities in various historical and geographic contexts.
- Students will be able to analyze how organizational structures and state policies produce and maintain hierarchies.
- Students will be able to explain the relationship between "place" and "power," specifically how the physical environment and social infrastructure (housing, schools, parks) serve as sites of both marginalization and political mobilization.
- Students will demonstrate professional proficiency in reading and distilling complex historical and sociological monographs into concise, accessible summaries and lead seminar discussions that engage peers in high-level theoretical debate.
- Students will be able to design a rigorous research paper, proposal, or literature review that identifies a gap in the literature on politics and inequality, selects an appropriate methodological framework, and formulates a testable historical or sociological argument.

### Required Course Materials

#### Books:

*(note, if you are not presenting on the week of each book, it is okay to find summaries of the readings or book reviews if you are short on time that week)*

- Du Bois. 1935. *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880*. New York: The Free Press.
- Mills. 1956. *The Power Elite*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Gaventa. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Gordan, Edwards, and Reich. 1982. *Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States*. Cambridge University Press.
- Oliver and Shapiro. 2006. *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. Routledge.
- Logan and Molotch. 2007. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place. 20th anniversary ed.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Ray. 2018. *The Making of the Teenage Service Class: Poverty and Mobility in an American City*. University of California Press.

- Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt. 2019. *Relational Inequalities: An Organizational Approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Drake Rodriguez. 2021. *Diverging Spaces for Deviants: The Politics of Atlanta's Public Housing*. The University of Georgia Press.
- Lei. 2023. *The Gilded Cage: Technology, Development, and State Capitalism in China*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bradlow 2024: *Urban Power: Democracy and Inequality in São Paulo and Johannesburg*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Teeger. 2024. *Distancing the Past: South Africa's Education after Apartheid*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

### Articles/excerpts/book chapters:

- 1) Excerpt from Davis and Moore. 1945. "Some Principles of Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 10(2):242–49.
- 2) Excerpt from Fischer, Claude S., Michael Hout, Martin Sánchez Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss. 1996. *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- 3) Excerpt from Krueger. 2004. "Inequality, Too Much of a Good Thing." Pp. 1–75 in *Inequality in America: What Role for Human Capital Policies?*, edited by J. J. Heckman and A. B. Krueger. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

### Grading Policy:

Final Grades Rubric out of 1000 points possible (what appears on your transcript)

- 900 and above = A
- 800-899 = B
- 700-799 = C
- 600-699 = D
- Less than 600 points = F

#### Assessments:

- Syllabus quiz (5% of grade)
- Attendance and Participation (15% of grade)
- Reading reflections (15% of grade)
- Book summaries and presentations (30% of grade)
- Research Paper/Proposal (35% of grade)

### Description of Graded Components

- 50 points (5% of grade): There will be a syllabus quiz to evaluate students' understandings of the expectations for the course in the first week
- Attendance and Participation (150 points or 15% of grade): Students are expected to be in class whenever possible and participate in discussion of the readings and assignments. Discussing the readings and your work will help to improve your writing, your grades for the assignments, and most importantly your learning. 40 points of this part of your grade will be from a syllabus quiz at the beginning of the semester.
- Reading reflections (150 points or 15% of grade): In five of the weeks where students are not presenting, students will write a key point (5 or more sentences) summarizing a main point from the week's readings and then pose a potential discussion question related to the summary. Each post is worth 30 points and five posts must be completed over the semester. For example, a good question would be: "In the Some Principles of Stratification by Davis and Moore, the authors outline several logical premises that

ultimately lead one to believe that inequality is functional, necessary, and inevitable. In what ways is their logic flawed? Are rewards always distributed by their 'functional importance'?" An example of a poor question would be "What is the functional importance according to Davis and Moore?" (Note: You are welcome to ask clarifying questions during class or by email. They just will not work for the weekly questions portion of your grade.) If students are not reading, I reserve the right to change this portion of the grade to random pop quizzes on the readings.

- Book summaries and presentations (300 points or 30% of grade): This multi-stage assignment will require you to write summaries of and do presentations on 2 of the books assigned in the course calendar over the semester. On the first day of class, we will have students take turns signing up to select the books they will summarize and review for the semester. For each book selected, students will be required to a) develop a 30-minute or so presentation for the class to discuss the main arguments and key points of the book (2 presentations over the semester worth 75 points each), and b) write a 2-3 summary of the book focusing on the main contributions and arguments of the book, as well as 4-6 discussion questions that the class will discuss, led by the student (2 summaries over the semester worth 75 points each). The presentations will be due by 12pm on the day that we discuss the book in class, and the reports will be due the following Thursday. At the end of the semester, the summaries will be collected and distributed in one document as a class, which can be used for literature review purposes for the future or for studying for Comprehensive Exams for the field of study. More information on this multi-stage assignment will be provided as the semester progresses.
- Research Paper/Proposal (350 points or 35% of grade): Students will also write a final project with several options: a) a research proposal related to inequality, b) a literature review of a field of inequality, or c) an empirical paper related to inequality. This is up to the student to decide; however, the paper must be between 15-20 pages and use literature from the course and using outside materials. A proposal detailing the main plan for the paper is required as part of this assignment (100 points). And the final paper (250 points) will be submitted via Canvas. More information on this multi-stage assignment will be provided as the semester progresses.

## USG Required Course Policies

### Attendance and/or Participation

Students are expected to be in class whenever possible and participate in discussion of the readings and assignments. Students can miss 2 classes throughout the semester, no questions asked, without affecting your grade. If you miss more than 2 classes, you will need a documented excuse (medical, work, funeral, etc.), or this may severely affect your participation and attendance grade. Discussing the readings and your work will help to improve your writing, your grades for the assignments, and most importantly your learning.

### Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

## Core IMPACTS

Not applicable

## Additional Georgia Tech Required Policies

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

### Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

## Course Expectations, Policies, and Resources

### Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

Not applicable

### Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

For assignments, you are expected to write using your own words and ideas; however, you can use AI to help brainstorm or outline your papers, which should be properly cited using the questions that you asked ChatGPT and the answers that you received. Using AI like ChatGPT to completely write your papers will result in an automatic zero (0). Do not copy and paste answers from AI generated content into your paper. I will provide more guidance on using AI as a handout during the second week of classes.

If more than one student is assigned for a week's presentations and reports, then students can collaborate and submit their presentation and report together; however, it should be clear where and how each particular student contributed to each element.

### Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Late assignments: Normally, the policy for late assignments is that you will need a documented health, funeral, or university sponsored excuse for completing late assignments at full credit. Assignments completed after their due dates without an excuse will receive up to a drop in letter grade (10% of total score) for every two days beyond their due date and receive a 0 if turned in over 7 days late. Even if you have accommodations for a disability, you should still work with me in advance of deadlines to set up appropriate due dates. Any late assignments must be turned in by the last day of class to be graded.

### Recordings of Class Sessions and Required Permissions:

Classes and class recordings may not be recorded or distributed by students without the express consent of the instructor unless it is according to accommodations granted by the Office of Disability Services.

Class recordings, lectures, presentations, and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students currently enrolled in the course.

Students may not record or share the materials or recordings, including screen capturing or automated bots, unless the instructor gives permission. Digitally proctored exams may require students to engage the video camera, but those recordings will not be shared with or disclosed to others without consent unless legally permitted.

## Course Expectations for Students

- Students are expected to keep up with readings from week to week, which are tentatively listed in the course outline. Skimming readings is justifiable when necessary.
- Students attend lectures and participate in discussions when possible. I would expect, on average, between 6-10 hours of work per week (including watching the video lectures). Most importantly, I expect students to put high-quality work into their assignments.

## Course Expectations for the Instructor

- I will foster an environment of mutual respect, fairness, and kindness, regardless of the students' identity and ideological perspective.
- I will do my best to respond to emails from students within 48 hours during Monday to Friday and 72 hours on weekends, except under extenuating circumstances or if I am out of the office.
- I will be prepared for class and typically grade assignments within a 7-10 days of receiving them, except under extenuating circumstances.