

Signature Assignment for ICS # 3 & 6

Course: 341 Theories of Society and Culture
Instructor: Mathew Kanjirathinkal
Assignment Title: Institutionalized Social Oppression and Intercultural Conflicts
Assignment ID (To be assigned)

Outcomes to be assessed: ICS/BA/3 - Compare and contrast socio-cultural perspectives for the purpose of differentiating sources of intercultural conflict.

ICS/BA/6 - Analyze the impact of global and local forces of social oppression on marginalized groups in order to promote justice, peace, and integrity of creation.

Assignment Description: Using the perspective of one of the oppression theories discussed in this course, write a paper to analyze and support a position on a social practice that systematically oppresses a specific group of people based on their social identity such as class, gender, race, national origin, language, culture, ethnicity, history, disability, geographical location, region, territory, political system, or religion. Oppression invariably involves abuse of power and mistreatment, even when the oppressors are unaware that their actions constitute oppressive practices. Many forms of oppression are socially or legally sanctioned, exonerating the oppressors from feelings of guilt or responsibility. Awareness of oppression often raises questions about the rightness of the cultural values, norms, beliefs, customs, and practices that legitimate oppression, eventually triggering conflicts among groups as cultures serve to protect the underlying economic and social interests and identities. As will be learned in this course, conflicts occur at the intersection of these identities and interests.

Oppression, broadly defined, extends to the mistreatment of non-human beings – animals, plants, or even non-living objects. Oppression of any kind is an affront to the integrity of creation. Examples of oppressive human practices are almost endless, ranging in scope and kind from intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional to local, national and global.

You may choose to write your paper on one of the topics given below or propose a topic of your own. Topics that are not included on the list require pre-approval. You should draw on the knowledge and skills you are gaining from this course and are gaining or have gained from related courses. The paper should be 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced, 12-point font, and formatted to conform to the Chicago Style.

Evaluation criteria: The paper will be evaluated based on the following criteria. See the attached rubrics for further details.

1. Ability to think theoretically. Show ability to select a theoretical position, after comparing alternatives, in order to explain the instance of oppression under scrutiny.
2. Ability to identify the social/political structure that generates oppression: Structure represents enduring patterns of social praxis and institutions, whether they occur at the micro, local, macro, or global levels.
3. Ability to differentiate and analyze the elements that constitute the oppressive structures, including cultural norms, laws, customs, traditions, and legitimizing ideologies or beliefs which contribute to and maintain the oppression and exploitation.
4. Relate the cultural elements to the economic and other underlying interests of the groups.
5. Show awareness of the intersectionality of oppression, i.e., how forms of oppression (institutional, ideological, political, cultural, etc.) are interrelated and interlocked.
6. Ability to reflect upon your own responsibly to act, individually or collectively. Do you participate in oppressive practices actively or passively, knowingly or unknowingly? This exercise requires personal reflection. You should also identify organizations, social movements, and media outlets, which you may consider supporting in order to address the oppression. If none exists, would you want to start one?

Formatting:

Use Chicago Style. Devote a minimum of one page per criterion.
Include an abstract on a separate page.
Use a separate page for references.
Use a minimum of six scholarly references.

Possible topics:

You can choose one of the topics given below or choose one of your own. The topic that you choose on your own requires pre-approval.

1. Medical experimentation on minorities
2. Environmental racism, story of a specific minority community that has been its victim
3. Sexism in the work place experienced by a specific profession, occupation, gender, race, etc.
4. Case study in the exploitation of Third-World labor or immigrant labor
5. Prison labor
6. Employment practices of a large company such as Wal-Mart or Amazon
7. Racism in law-enforcement
8. Racism in the judicial system leading to wrongful convictions
9. Racially motivated criminal laws
10. Discrimination in college admissions (analyze historical or current examples)
11. Use of college entrance exams and how they result in discrimination of minorities or first-generation students
12. IQ tests – their origin and uses

13. Treatment of minorities during war (e.g., internment of the Japanese during WW II or the detention of Muslims after the 9/11 attacks)
14. Discrimination against black soldiers during WWII
15. Mistreatment of asylum seekers
16. Persecution of a migrant or marginalized community globally
17. Corporate or governmental appropriation of native lands
18. The process of creating white privilege
19. Colonialism and the creation of social hierarchies, leading to the oppression of minorities
20. Treatment of Native Americans in boarding schools
21. Colonialism and the disruption and underdevelopment of many countries of the world (choose one country, territory, or colony to study)
22. Colonialism and the creation of arbitrary borders and conditions for chronic civil wars
23. Continuing colonization and oppression of territories and nations by global powers (Puerto Rico, Haiti, Cuba, countries in the Middle East, etc.)
24. Impact of economic sanctions in a selected country
25. Neoliberal economic system as a form of global oppression
26. Oppression in everyday life through acts of microaggression
27. The oppressive power of racial and ethnic jokes
28. Creation of food deserts in minority communities
29. Corporate takeover of agriculture and its effects on local people and the environment
30. Environmental degradation through industrial pollution (choose a specific example)
31. Overconsumption of nature's resources
32. Corporate meat production causing cruelty to animals
33. Use of technology as instrument of oppression (e.g., facial recognition software)