Comprehensive Exam in Inequalities, Fall, 2018

The questions below constitute the qualifying exam for **inequalities**. To complete the exam, you must answer one question from each of the three sections below in an essay format. Each answer should be a self-contained essay approximately 8-10 pages long (i.e., 2,000-2,500 words).

Although you must cite to referenced work in each essay, one comprehensive bibliography for all three questions will be sufficient. You may consult materials from the reading list you've been provided, as well as any other scholarly sources you've read during the exam period. This qualifying exam is to be completed in two weeks. The evaluation of the exam will take two weeks. You will be notified of your performance by email. Make sure that the office has your up-to-date contact information. Please use the identifying student number that you have been assigned at the top of your exam. The exams are graded confidentially and numbers only will be used to identify the author of the exam. See the *Graduate Handbook* for any further details.

Answer one of the following:

1. Describe the tenets of intersectionality theory and describe what is meant by interlocking oppressions using three case studies of three interlocking social identifies (e.g., one case study may be of a low-income American Indian female). Discuss how intersectionality theory has expanded how we traditionally think about the three classical dimensions of inequality: race, class and gender.

2. Massey and Denton described racially segregated neighborhoods as a form of apartheid in America society. Describe the ways that racially segregated neighborhoods reproduce social inequality and include a discussion of key social institutions. Also discuss how this dimension of inequality has changed or stayed the same since the Jim Crow era.

Answer one of the following:

3. One of the aspirations of inequality researchers is to develop theories that explain and interpret inequality across large social spaces, like entire societies or the entire world. Scholars seeking to explain large scale inequality usually take one of two approaches. One approach is to develop big, integrative theories that focus on a few

factors that are presented as explaining almost everything of importance. Another approach is to eschew big, comprehensive stories in favor of focusing on mechanisms and contingency. Which approach is better? In your answer, describe the theories of at least two different authors to illustrate each type of approach (so, you'll be discussing at least four total authors). Then, using these authors as examples, explain the relative strengths and weaknesses of big, integrative theories versus a focus on mechanisms and contingency.

4. Education is often touted as a means of social mobility, but it also is a source of inequality. What are the principal theories of the role of education in social mobility? Review each of these and the evidence in support. What is the relationship between education's role in social mobility and its role in creating or solidifying inequality?

Answer one of the following:

5. The United States and the English speaking countries have some of the highest income and wealth inequality
In the OECD. Other OECD nations generally have less income and wealth inequality. Using the literature, what reasons
Are given for these differences and what consequences do these cross-national inequalities produce?

6. many of the readings discuss or refer to the "middle class."
How do different authors define the middle class, and
What do your authors say is happening to this class of people?
What are the implications of these changes for the future
Of inequalities in the United States and elsewhere?