

Sociology 130AC

Social Inequalities, American Cultures

UC Berkeley, Spring 2016
Tu./Th., 8-9:30 a.m., 160 Kroeber

Instructor: Joanna Reed, Ph.D. joannareed@berkeley.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-12 and by appointment, 479 Barrows. Sign up on the sheet outside the door.

Course Description:

This course explores the causes and consequences of social inequalities in the U.S., as understood by sociologists. We begin by discussing theories and concepts that scholars use to understand different forms of inequality. We then turn to the central institutions and mechanisms that sociologists argue are responsible for creating, reproducing, reducing and changing the structure of inequalities in the U.S. today, including education, labor markets, families, social policies, neighborhoods and the criminal justice system. Within each topic area, we will pay special attention to the significance of race and ethnicity, social class and gender and how they combine to produce different outcomes. We will focus on the present period but place each topic in a broader historical context.

Goals for the course are:

- To introduce students to theoretical and conceptual tools sociologists use for understanding and studying inequalities**
- To cultivate an understanding of the complexity of current inequalities in the U.S. through exposure to empirical research**
- For students to be able to apply sociological perspectives to current events and debates around topics related to social inequalities**
- To practice analytical and critical writing**

Why?

The ability to apply sociological concepts, theories and methods to contemporary social issues will help you make sense of the various inequalities in the U.S. today and identify how you are personally embedded in them. Exposure to empirical research about controversial issues is important because it builds deeper understandings of topics that are complex, yet may be presented as very simple in popular media and commentary. Empirical research is necessary for making reliable generalizations about social trends. Many of us have “beliefs” or perceptions about something that may be contradicted by sociological research. Our own “common sense” and experience may turn out to be atypical and biased by our class position, race, gender and other factors. Finally, the ability to build and support a clearly written argument is a skill that will distinguish you in the future—at work, at school and in life.

In the past, students have asked if this is a “liberal” course. Is it? It is true that most sociological research findings about social inequalities resonate more with policy positions on the left side of the U.S. political spectrum than with those on the right. I encourage students from all political persuasions to think critically about the course materials and the relationship between empirical research findings, policies and politics.

Required Readings:

The two books will be available at the campus bookstore, or can be ordered online where you might find a better price. Both books are also available as electronic resources online through the UCB library website. Most readings will be in a course reader. Others will be posted on bCourses (noted in the syllabus with a “bC”) and online (noted with a link in the syllabus). The reader can be purchased from the Copy Central Store on Bancroft St. and a copy will also be on 2 hr. reserve at Moffitt Library. The reader is like a textbook that I have designed specifically for our class, and I *strongly recommend* that you buy one.

Books:

1. Waldinger, R. & Lichter, M. (2003). *How the other half works: Immigration and the social organization of labor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
2. Western, B. (2006). *Punishment and Inequality in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Evaluation:

Midterm: 20% of grade (200 points), in class on Feb. 16

Paper 1: 20% of grade (200 points), due in class and online on Mar. 10

Paper 2: 25% of grade (250 points), due in class and online on Apr. 12

Take Home Final Exam: 25% of grade (250 points), due on May 12

Reading and Participation Quizzes: 10% of grade (100 points), ongoing

Exams: The midterm will be an in-class exam consisting of short answer and essay questions, based on course readings and lectures. The final will be a take-home essay exam focusing on material covered after the midterm. You may be asked to incorporate materials from the entire semester. You will be given the questions in advance. The deadline for turning in the exam is the day of our assigned final exam, May 12 (noon).

Papers: You are required to turn in two papers for this course. There are specific instructions for each paper. **See the document on bCourses called “papers” for complete instructions for these assignments.**

Reading and Participation quizzes: The purpose of these is twofold: to encourage you to keep up with the reading and check your understanding, as well as encourage consistent

attendance in lecture. Quizzes will be announced in lecture throughout the semester. After class, you will have 24 hours to complete the quiz on bCourses, with questions based on the lecture from that day and the week's reading. The quizzes will count for 10% (100 points) of your final grade. Each correct answer on a quiz will count toward the 100 point total. Quiz points will be capped at 100, although the total number of quizzes and questions will exceed 100 points. This is to allow you to make up for occasional mistakes and absences. You can expect 6 or 7 quizzes throughout the semester. There will be no opportunity to make up these quizzes.

Grading: There will be graduate student reader(s) for this course who will be responsible for most of the grading. The process for grading is as follows: I develop a rubric for the exams and papers and discuss it with the readers. We then grade several papers/exams together to make sure the grading is consistent. We will try to return exams and papers to you within two weeks. Readers may decide to hold regular office hours, or will meet with students by appointment after an assignment is handed back. Please understand that readers are not GSIs and do not have the same responsibilities toward students.

Grading Problems: I will handle all re-grade requests. If you would like to simply discuss the reasoning behind your grade, you can meet with the readers or me during office hours without any preparation. If you want to request a re-grade, you will need to write a paragraph or two explaining why you think your paper deserves a different grade and submit the original paper or exam (and attached rubric, if there is one) to me within two weeks after the assignment was handed back. I will then re-grade your paper and determine the final grade for the assignment. Please be aware that if I re-evaluate your work, it is possible that your grade could go down, so consider these requests carefully.

Course Policies:

Students are responsible for all material covered in lecture, including announcements. You will be expected to integrate materials from lecture and readings on exams and papers. Do not enroll in this class if you will not be able to (or do not plan to) attend the lectures regularly.

If you need **accommodations** for a disability, university athletics, or have a conflict due to the observance of religious holidays, please email or speak with me early in the semester to discuss appropriate arrangements.

Exams and assignments must be taken and turned in on time. If you have a personal emergency or are ill, contact me at the earliest opportunity to discuss alternative arrangements. Unexcused late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each day they are late (including weekends). The final must be taken at the assigned time.

Incomplete Grades: Incompletes are an option of last resort for students experiencing true medical or other emergencies that make it impossible for them to complete their coursework on time. To be considered for an incomplete grade, students need to speak with

me about it DURING the semester, have completed about half of the coursework, and provide documentation of the reason for the request.

Academic honesty is expected of all students. It is extremely important that everyone turn in their own work. Suspected violations relating to this course will be reported to the appropriate administrative department and dealt with according to university policies. *Be aware of plagiarism.* Word for word use of even a single sentence from any author (except yourself), publication or website without proper citation is plagiarism and is considered unethical. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade on the paper or exam with no opportunity to rewrite, as will any other kind of cheating. If you have questions about how to properly cite materials, or how to paraphrase appropriately, ask during office hours, or consult Ch. 6 of the writing guide “Writing for Sociology”, available on the Soc. department website. To discourage plagiarism, I require that students submit their papers and take home final exam to Turnitin (a plagiarism detection tool on bCourses) when turning in assignments online, in addition to any paper copies that may also be required.

Email: Email is a good way to get in touch with me, but keep in mind that I cannot always respond right away. Do not expect a response during evenings or weekends. It is best to ask questions about class materials and assignments before or after class or during office hours.

Office Hours: I urge students to talk with me sometime during the semester, just to say “hi” and especially if you are having trouble with the course. I can’t help you if you don’t communicate with me! Please sign up for office hours on the sign up sheet posted outside my office door at 479 Barrows. You are free to drop by, but I’ll give priority to people who have appointments.

Laptops, etc.: Did you know that taking handwritten notes may improve your grade in this class? If you want to use a laptop or tablet to take notes, please sit in the back of the classroom. Otherwise, please refrain from using electronic devices during class.

Circulation of Course Materials: DO NOT reproduce course materials or post them on-line or anywhere else. This includes the syllabus, lecture slides, notes, handouts, rubrics and exams. As a student in the course, you will have access to everything you need on bCourses.

Course Schedule*:

Part I

Week 1, Jan. 19, 21: ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN THE U.S., CLASSIC THEORIES OF INEQUALITY

Readings: Piketty, T. (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction

Week 2, Jan. 26, 28: THEORIES OF INEQUALITY: CLASS AND STRATIFICATION

Readings: Gilbert, D. (2011). "Social Class in America". In *The American Class Structure in an Age of Growing Inequality*. Pp. 1-19. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, Sage Publications

Primary sources for your reference (recommended but not required): Weber, M. in *The Essential Weber, a Reader*. Ed. Sam Whimster. (2004). "Status Groups and Classes" and "The distribution of power in society: classes, status groups and parties." Pp. 176-194 (bC)

Marx, K. (1968) (1848). "Manifesto of the Communist Party". In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition, Ed. Robert C. Tucker. Pp. 473-486 . New York: Norton

Beller, E. & Hout, M. (2006). "Intergenerational Social Mobility: The U.S. in Comparative Perspective." *The Future of Children* 16(2)19-36 (bC)

Week 3, Feb. 2,4: THEORIES OF INEQUALITY: SOCIAL CLASS AND STRATIFICATION

Readings: Bourdieu, P. (1986) "The Forms of Capital" in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Ed. J. Richardson, pp. 241-258. New York: Greenwood
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>

Neuman, S. & Celano, D. (2012). "Worlds Apart". *American Educator*, Fall 2012 (bC)

Week 4, Feb. 9, 12: THEORIES OF RACE AND RACISM

Readings: Omi, M. & Winant, H. (1994) "Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s", in Eds. Grusky, D. & Szelenyi, S. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class and Gender* (2007), pp. 197-203. Westview Press: Boulder, CO

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism Without Racists: Color Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the U.S.* Laham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Ch. 1, 2

Week 5, Feb. 16,18 : INEQUALITY IN PRACTICE: RACE & CLASS

Exam 1 in class on Feb. 16

Readings: Brodtkin, K. (1998). *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press. Ch. 1 "How Jews Became White Folks"

Conley, D. (2009). *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth and Social Policy in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 1 and 2

Week 6, Feb, 23, 25 : INEQUALITY IN PRACTICE: RACE & CLASS

Readings: Zhou, M. (2004). "Are Asian Americans Becoming "White"?". *Contexts*, 3: 29 (bC)

Massey, D. (2009). "Racial Formation in Theory and Practice: The Case of Mexicans in the U.S." *Race and Social Problems*, 1:12-26 (bC)

Week 7, Mar. 1, 3: PUBLIC POLICY, POWER AND INEQUALITY—what (and who) determines public policy? How does public policy influence inequalities?

Readings: Hacker, J. & Pierson, P. (2010). *Winner Take All Politics*. New York: Simon & Schuster. Ch. 2 “How the Winner Take All Economy Was Made” pp. 41-72

Folbre, N. (2001). *The Invisible Heart: Economics and Family Values*. Introduction and Ch. 7 “The Golden Eggs”. The New Press: New York

Part II

Week 8, Mar. 8, 10: FAMILIES, INEQUALITY AND POLICY—family structure changes, poverty and parenting

Paper 1 due in class Mar. 10

Readings: Carlson, M. & England, P. (2011). “Social Class and Family Patterns in the United States”. In Eds. Carlson, M. & England, P. *Social Class and Changing Families in an Unequal America*, pp. 1-9. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press

McLanahan, S. & Percheski, C. (2008). “Family Structure and the Reproduction of Inequalities”. *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 257-74 (bC)

Duncan, G. & Magnuson, K. (2011). “The Long Reach of Child Poverty”. *Pathways*, Winter 2011, The Stanford Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality (bC)

Week 9, Mar. 15, 17: NEIGHBORHOODS

Readings: Wilson, W.J. (2011). “Being Poor, Black and American: The Impact of Political, Economic and Cultural Forces”. *American Educator*, Spring 2011 (bC)

Fox, L. (2015) “Same Income, Different Neighborhood”. *Contexts*, (blog) June 28, 2015, <http://contexts.org/blog/same-income-different-neighborhood/>

Clampet-Lundquist, S., Edin, K., Kling, J., Duncan, G. (2011) “Moving Teenagers Out of High-Risk Neighborhoods: How Girls Fare Better than Boys”. *American Journal of Sociology*. 116(4):1154-89 (bC)

Briggs, X., Popkin, S. & Goering, J. (2010). *Moving To Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment to Fight Ghetto Poverty*. Oxford Univ. Press. Ch. 1 “Places and Lives” pp. 3-24

Chetty, R., Hendren, N. & Katz, L. (2015) *The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the MTO Experiment*. Manuscript, Harvard University, NBER (Recommended) (bC)

SPRING BREAK: Mar. 21-25

Week 10, Mar. 29, 31: EDUCATION

Readings: Reardon, S. (2011). "The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations". In *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools and Children's Life Chances*. Russell Sage Foundation: New York (bC)

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 1, 6

Lopez, N. (2004). "Unraveling the Race-Gender Gap in Education: Second-Generation Dominican Men's High School Experiences". In Kasinitz, P., Mollenkopf, J. & Waters, M. Eds. , *Becoming New Yorkers: Ethnographies of the New Second Generation*, pp. 28-56 . New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Week 11, Apr. 5, 7: EDUCATION

Readings: Hout, M. (2012) "The Social and Economic Returns to College Education in the United States". *Annual Review Of Sociology* 38:379-400 (bC)

Rosenbaum, J. (2001). *Beyond college for all: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 3

Armstrong, E. & Hamilton, L. (2013) *Paying For the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, Introduction, pp. 1-25

Week 12, Apr. 12, 14: LABOR MARKETS AND WORK

Paper 2 due in class Apr. 12

Readings: Reskin, B. & Padavic, I. 1994 (2002). *Women and Men at Work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, Sage. Ch. 9 "Women, Men and Work in the Twenty-First Century"

England, P. (2005) "Gender Inequality in Labor Markets: The Role of Motherhood and Segregation". *Social Politics* 12.2:264-288 (bC)

Waldinger, R. & Lichter, M.(2003). *How the other half works: Immigration and the social organization of labor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chs. 1, 2

Week 13, Apr. 19, 21: LABOR MARKETS AND WORK

Readings: Waldinger, R. & Lichter, M.(2003). *How the other half works: Immigration and the social organization of labor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chs. 6, 8, 9

Week 14, Apr. 26, 28 : MASS INCARCERATION

Readings: Western, B. (2006). *Punishment and inequality in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 1-4, 6

Week 15, May 3, 5: "RRR" week : Extra office hours, TBA

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM: Due Thurs. May 12 at noon. Questions will be released on bCourses in advance (date, TBA). You will turn in an online and paper copy of your exam. Instructions for turning in the paper copy of the exam will be on the exam prompt You will be required to run the online copy through "Turnitin".

*The course schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.