

Soc. 130 AC—Social Inequalities, American Cultures U.C. Berkeley, Spring 2013

Tues./ Thurs. 2-3:30, 2060 Valley Life Sciences Building

Instructor: Joanna Reed, Ph.D

Office Hours: Tues. 3:45- 5:45 and by appointment, 434 Barrows

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Course Description:

This course explores the causes and consequences of current inequalities in the U.S. We will begin by discussing theories and concepts that scholars use to understand different forms of inequality and explain its persistence. We will 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 and social policies, neighborhoods and segregation 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—the most important stratifiers today—and how they combine. We will focus on the present period but place each topic in a broader historical context.

Inequality is an immense subject, and we are just scratching the surface of the sociological literature on inequality in this course. Invariably, instructors must act like editors—picking and choosing between topics to cover, and then what to present. In this course, I have chosen to focus most of our time on institutions and mechanisms so we can learn about the processes of inequalities—that is, how they happen. I have also chosen to focus on the present period – understanding inequalities in the U.S., right now. As a result, we spend much less time on “grand” theories of inequality, and much more on “middle range” theories that try to explain how empirical phenomena (like race, public education and families) work to influence inequalities in different contexts.

Goals for the course are:

- **To expose 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**
- **To improve your writing skills**

Why?

The ability to apply sociological concepts, theories and methods to contemporary social issues will help you make sense for yourself of various inequalities in the U.S. today and identify those you are embedded in. Exposure to empirical research about controversial issues is important because it builds deeper understandings of topics that are complex, yet may be presented as black and white in popular media and commentary. In addition, 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 a clear and well supported written argument is a skill that will distinguish you in the future—at work and in graduate studies.

A second issue I’d like to quickly address is that of politics. Is this a “liberal” course? It *is* true that most sociological research findings about various inequalities resonate more with policy positions on the left side of the U.S. political spectrum than with those on the right. But I encourage students from all political persuasions to think critically about the course materials and the relationship between empirical findings, policies and politics. If this class gets you thinking about that, then I will count it as a success.

Required Readings:

Books will be available at the campus bookstore and Neds, or can be ordered online. Other readings will be in a course reader, on Bspace and online. The reader can be purchased from Copy Central on Bancroft and a copy will be on reserve at Moffitt Library. Most of the readings marked “online” in the syllabus will be posted on Bspace; a few you will need to look up on the internet yourself.

Required 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 (also available for rent at the bookstore)
2. Western, B. 2006. *Punishment and inequality in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
3. DeParle, J. (2004) *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation’s Drive to End Welfare*. New York: Penguin

Recommended reading: The recommended reading list is intended for students interested in delving more deeply into a topic, and consists of a mix of academic books and articles and commentary and articles from the popular media.

Evaluation:

50% short papers—Due in class **Feb. 14, Mar. 21 and Apr. 25** (papers 1 & 2, each 15%, paper 3, 20%)

20% in-class midterm— **March 7**

30% take home final exam— Distributed on Bspace on **Friday May 10** by 9 am. **Due by 3 pm to box in 410 Barrows Hall on Monday 5/13.**

Exams: The midterm will be an in-class exam consisting of short answer questions. The final will be a take-home essay exam. It will focus on material covered after the midterm, but may ask you to incorporate materials from the entire semester.

Papers: You are required to turn in three short papers, each between 5-7 pages in length. In the first and second papers you will synthesize and analyze assigned readings from one topic area of the course. The third paper will be based on your chosen field trip. You will write up your experience and analyze it by linking your observations to readings from class to contextualize and analyze what you saw. **See the document on Bspace called "papers" for complete instructions for these assignments.**

Field Trip Possibilities: Detailed information on the field trip options is in the document called "field trips" on Bspace. Students may choose a different field trip, but make sure to check with me first.

The Immigration Station at Angel Island State Park

Neighborhood tour on AC Transit

GLBT History Museum

West Oakland food stores

Eastmont Town Center

Reading Tutor Volunteer Option

Grading: There will be two graduate student Readers 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. I am always happy to discuss the reasons for a grade with a student. If you have a problem with a grade, however, you should *first* discuss it with the reader who assigned the grade. If that does not resolve the problem, then I will discuss it with the Reader and meet with you. Please know that if we agree to re-evaluate your work, it will be under closer scrutiny and your grade could possibly go down as a result. If you ask us to consider raising your score, be prepared to make an argument as to why you think you deserve more points, being sure to reference the rubric for the assignment in question. We will use the gradebook function on Bspace to post grades, but be sure to make sure the grade on the hard copy of your paper or exam matches the one online! The typical cutoff for an "A" grade in this course is 940/1000 points, or 94%.

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. Please do not enroll in this class if you will not be able to attend the lectures regularly.

If you need **accommodations** for a disability 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, contact me at the earliest opportunity to discuss alternative arrangements. Late papers will be penalized one third of a grade for each day they are late (including weekends).

Academic honesty is expected of all students. While I encourage students to discuss the readings and study together, everyone must do 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 another author, publication or website without citation is plagiarism and is considered unethical. Plagiarism will result in a zero on the paper with no opportunity to rewrite. If you have questions about how to properly cite materials, or how to paraphrase appropriately, I am happy to address this during office hours.

Email: Email should not be used for questions about class materials—these questions should be asked in class or during office hours. I don't check email more than once per day, and cannot always respond right away, so talk to me before or after class, or during office hours if you have an important issue.

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 want you to do well. Either come to my office hours, or schedule a meeting. 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 434 Barrows. You are free to drop by, but I'll give priority to people who have appointments.

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

Course Schedule*:

Week 1: Jan. 22, 24 INEQUALITY FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE-- a portrait of economic inequality in the U.S., classic theories of inequality

Readings: Reich, R. (2011) "Why Inequality is the Real Cause of Our Ongoing Terrible Economy" ,Sept. 4, 2011 <http://robertreich.org/post/9789891366>

Murray, C. (2012) "The New American Divide". *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 21, 2012
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204301404577170733817181646.html>

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

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

Recommended: Neckerman, K. & Torche, F. 2007. "Inequality: Causes and Consequences". *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33:335-57 (Bspace)

Week 2: Jan. 29, Feb. 1 INEQUALITY FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE—theories of class and stratification

Blau, P. & Duncan, D. 2001(1967) "The Process of Stratification" pp. 390-403 in *Social Stratification in Sociological Perspective*, 2nd Edition. Ed. Grusky, D. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Harding, D. 2007. "Cultural Context, Sexual Behavior and Romantic Relationships in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods". *American Sociological Review* 72: 341-64. (Bspace Read pp. 341-345

Entries for "Cultural Capital" and "Social Capital" in the Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology, eds. George Ritzer, J. Michael Ryan, 2011 (Bspace) pp. 104-105 in "C" and 554-555 in "S"

Skim: Portes, A. (2000) "The Two Meanings of Social Capital". *Sociological Forum* 15, 1:1-12 (Bspace)

Skim: DiMaggio, P. (1982)"Cultural Capital and School Success: The Impact of Status Culture Participation on the Grades of U.S. High School Students". *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 47 (2): 189-201 (Bspace)

Recommended: Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Week 3: Jan. 5, 7 CLASS, RACE & GENDER—race as a social construct; history of race in the U.S.

Readings: 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. 1,3,4

Bodkin, 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"

Recommended: Omi, M. & Winant, H. 1994. *Racial Formation in the U.S.: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge

Week 4: Feb. 12, 14 CLASS, RACE & GENDER—U.S. social classes; relationships between race and class; gender stratification

Paper 1 Due Feb. 14 in class.

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

Crittenden, A. 2001. "The Mommy Tax" Ch. 5 (and a few pages of Ch.6), pp. 87-115 in *The Price of Motherhood*. New York: Owl Books

Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R. 2001. *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkeley, CA : University of California Press. Ch. 3

Recommended:Steinhauer, J. 2005. "When the Joneses Wear Jeans." *New York Times*, May 29, 2005 (ONLINE, Class Matters Series)

Wood, G. 2011 "The Secret Fears of the Super Rich" *The Atlantic*, April 2011 (online)

Week 5: Feb. 19, 21 PUBLIC POLICY, POWER AND INEQUALITY—what(and who) determines public policy? How does public policy influence inequalities?

Readings: Fischer, C. et al. 1996. *Inequality by design: Cracking the Bell Curve myth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Ch 6 "How Unequal? America's Invisible Policy Choices"

Wacquant, L. (2008) "The State and Fate of the Dark Ghetto at Century's Close", Ch. 2 pp. 43-91. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press

Mills, C. Wright. 2001(1956) "The Power Elite" pp. 202-211 in *Social Stratification in Sociological Perspective*, 2nd Edition. Ed. Grusky, D. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Recommended:

Domhoff, G.W. (2002) *Who Rules America? Power and Politics*. New York: McGraw Hill

Freeland, C. 2011. "The Rise of the New Global Elite". *The Atlantic*, Jan./Feb. 2011 (online)

O'Connor, A. 2001. *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in 20th Century U.S. History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Week 6: Feb. 26, 28 LABOR MARKETS AND WORK—social mobility and labor markets—historical overview; work and communities; gender segregation

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. 1,2

Wilson, W.J. *When Work Disappears*. New York: Vintage Books. Ch. 3, "Ghetto-Related Behavior and the Structure of Opportunity", pp. 51-86

Newman, Katherine. 1999. *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, Vintage . Ch. 1, 2

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

Recommended: Peck, D. 2010. "How a New Jobless Era will Transform America". *The Atlantic*, March 2010

Newman, K. 1999. *Falling From Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence*. Berkeley, CA.: UC Press

Aronowitz, S. & DiFazio, W. 2010. *The Jobless Future*. Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press

Week 7: Mar. 5, 7 LABOR MARKETS AND WORK—segmented labor markets; examples of labor market processes

MIDTERM March 7 in class.

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,

Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R. 1996. *Immigrant America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 3
“Making it in America: Occupational and Economic Adaptation”

Week 8: Mar. 12, 14 LABOR MARKETS/EDUCATION—globalization and U.S. labor markets; Why do we have public education?

Readings: Waldinger, R. & Lichter, M. 2003. *How the other half works: Immigration and the social organization of labor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 9, 11, 12

Adams, D. (1999) “Excerpts from Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928” pp. 20-58 in *American Families, A Multicultural Reader*, Eds. Coontz, S., Parson, M. & Raley, G. New York: Routledge

Week 9: Mar. 19, 21 EDUCATION—education and achievement gaps; social mobility, class and education in the U.S.

Paper 2 due in class, March 21

Readings: Kao, G. & Thompson, J. 2003. Racial and ethnic stratification in educational achievement and attainment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29, pg. 417 (Bspace)

Lareau, A. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 1, 3

Farkas, G. 2004. “The Black-White Test Score Gap”. *Contexts*, Vol. 3, no. 2. (Bspace)

Recommended: Bowles, S., Gintis, H., & Groves, M., Eds. 2005. *Unequal Chances: Family Background and Economic Success*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Lucas, S. 1999. *Tracking Inequality: Stratification and Mobility in American High Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press

McLeod, J. 2004. *Ain't No Makin' It: Leveled Aspirations in a Low-Income Neighborhood*, Revised Edition. Boulder, CO.: Westview Press

SPRING BREAK

Week 10 : Apr. 2, 4 EDUCATION—Higher education

Readings: Hout, M. 2012. “Social and Economic Returns to College Education in the United States”. *Annual Review of Sociology* 37, forthcoming (Bspace)

Rosenbaum, J. 2001. *Beyond college for all: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half* . New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 3, 12

Bowen, W. & Bok, D. 2000. *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College Admissions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Preface through xxxii, Ch. 9

Recommended: Lemann, N. 2000. *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux

Leonhardt, D. 2005. "The College Dropout Boom". *The New York Times*, May 24, 2005 (online, Class Matters series)

Week 11: Apr. 9, 11 CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM—mass incarceration

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

Recommended: Pager, D. 2003. The mark of a criminal record. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 108. no. 5:937-75 (Bspace)

Comfort, M. (2008) *Doing Time Together: Love and Family in the Shadow of the Prison*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Week 12: Apr. 16, 18 NEIGHBORHOODS AND RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION—the "color line"; how do neighborhoods matter? Segregation in California today

Readings: Massey, D. & Denton, N. 1993. *American Apartheid*. Ch. 4

Klinenberg, E. (2002) *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*. Ch. 2 Pp. 79-128

Patillo-McCoy, M. 1999. *Black picket fences: Privilege and peril among the Black middle class*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1,5

Briggs, X., Popkin, S., & Goering, J. (2010) *Moving to Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment to Fight Ghetto Poverty*. Oxford University Press. Ch. 1 & 2

Recommended: Rubinowitz, L. & Rosenbaum, J. 2000. *Crossing the Class and Color Lines: From Public Housing to White Suburbs*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press

Kotlowitz, A. 1991. *There are no children here*. New York: Anchor Books

Li, W. (2009) *Ethnoburb: The New Ethnic Community in Urban America*. University of Hawaii Press

Week 13: Apr. 23, 25 NEIGHBORHOODS/ FAMILIES, INEQUALITY AND POLICY—family structure, race and class

Paper 3 due in class, Apr. 25

Readings: DeParle, J. 2004. *American Dream*, Ch. 1, Part 2

Recommended: McLanahan, S. & Percheski, C. 2008. "Family Structure and the Reproduction of Inequalities". *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 257-74

Hays, S. 2003. *Flat Broke With Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA

Week 14: Apr. 30, May 2 FAMILIES, INEQUALITY AND POLICY--poverty, race and welfare; welfare reform

Paper 3 due Nov. 30

Readings: DeParle, J. *American Dream*, Part 3 (except Ch. 14-15)

Recommended: Gilbert, N. 1998. "Working Families: Hearth to Market" Ch. 9 pp. 193-216 in Eds. Mason, M., Skolnick, A., Sugarman, S. *All Our Families: New Policies for a New Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Piven, F. & Cloward, R. 1971. *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*. New York: Pantheon

Week 15: "RRR" week : Extra office hours, TBA

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM: Distributed on Bspace **on Friday, May 10** by 9 am. **Due by 3 pm to box in 410 Barrows Hall on Monday 5/13.**

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