

**Sociology 111C: The Sociology of Childhood**  
**UC Berkeley, Fall 2021**

Tues/Thurs 12:30-2 PM  
Social Sciences Building 170

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Office Hours: Mon. 12:30-2 PM

Sign-up: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/siwtw>

**Course Description**

What does it mean to be a child? What is it like to be a child? Drawing on the tools of sociology, we will see how children's lives and life chances are shaped by their social position, their social contexts, and the broad social structures in their society. We will examine how the very notions of "childhood" and "adolescence" are socially constructed, varying across history and cultures rather than stemming from biology alone. We will consider why contemporary constructions of children are so contradictory—sometimes framing them as victims needing protection, and sometimes as deviants needing correction—and what these views say about broader societal anxieties. Next, we will examine several key influences on children's socialization, highlighting how class, gender and race shape children's experiences. Throughout, we will consider how children actively shape their own social worlds, and how their existence shapes society itself. We will close by examining several social issues related to children.

**Course Goals**

- 1) To understand what it means to study childhood from a sociological perspective
- 2) To explain historical and cultural variation in the meaning of childhood and adolescence
- 3) To explain how social context and social institutions, especially family and school, shape children's lives and life chances
- 4) Understand how childhood experiences and opportunities vary according to social categories including race, social class, and gender
- 5) To understand how children actively and creatively shape their own social worlds
- 6) To understand a range of social issues facing today's children in the United States—and to appreciate how some issues are less about harm to children and more about adults' anxieties

**COMPONENTS**

**20% Paper 1: Babies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century USA (100 points)**

Goal: To apply your new appreciation of the social construction of childhood to an original analysis of real-life objects: baby products! You will analyze the social constructions of infants that are embedded in four baby products of your choosing (e.g., toys, baby loungers, car seats, booger suckers, white noise machines, etc.). Based on this analysis, you will make inferences about how infants and infant care are constructed in the contemporary United States. **Due 10/5 by 11:59PM to bCourses**

**20% Paper 2: Original Analysis of Children and Childhood in the World (100 points)**

Goal: To use your new sociological insights to analyze how issues discussed in class are manifest in the "real" world and to refine your sociological perspective in the process. You will analyze cultural products or cultural representations in one of three categories: *goods* and/or *services*; a *practice* or *philosophy* regarding infant care, childrearing, or pedagogy (e.g., co-sleeping, free-

range childrearing, Montessori); or a current *political/social issue* or other debate regarding children (e.g., debates about whether 16 year-olds be able to vote; foster-care system, etc.).

**TOPIC DUE 10/26 by 11:59PM TO bCOURSES**

**PAPER 2 DUE 11/16 by 11:59PM TO bCOURSES**

**20% Final Exam (100 points each):**

Goal: To apply your new knowledge by developing a logical, well-substantiated argument in response to several essay questions. **Held on 12/7, 8-11 AM** (Exam group 17), location TBD

Late assignments lose a letter grade for each day (or fraction thereof) that they are late. The final exam cannot be made up.

**20% Daily Quizzes (100 points):**

Goal: 1) To keep you on top of assigned readings and videos and 2) to assess your comprehension of that material. Format: Three questions in yes/no, multiple-choice, and/or fill-in-the-blank format. Schedule and duration: every Tuesday and Thursday before lecture. Quizzes will be open 9 AM – 12:10 PM (from 3 hours before class to 10 minutes into class).<sup>1</sup> You have 10 minutes. 22 quizzes total. (None on first day or on discussion and review days. There will also be two “reverse pop quizzes” where the quiz is randomly cancelled.) The two lowest grades will be dropped (meaning you’ll be graded on 20/22 quizzes). No make-up quizzes. Content: Basic concepts and key arguments from readings and videos. You can look at your materials for the quiz, but you won’t have a ton of time to do so. Logistics: Take on bCourses in “Assignments.”

**10% Lecture Attendance and Participation (50 points):**

Goal: To *reinforce* and *clarify* the assigned materials; to *broaden* and *deepen* your knowledge with complementary information; and to offer opportunities to *apply* this knowledge. Lectures will also help auditory and visual learners by presenting course content in a different format. Logistics: Lecture slides will be posted right before class. Attendance is tracked with a sign-in sheet. You will automatically get a *maximum* grade of C if you are involved in falsifying the sign-in.

You get one automatically excused absence. After that, absences are excused only for health or personal emergencies or religious observances, and require documentation. You are still accountable for the material covered in missed classes.

**10% “Exit Ticket” (50 points)**

Goal: For you to reflect on course material and lectures, and for me to gauge your understanding and level of interest. Format: An “exit ticket” is a question, comment, or request for clarification. They can range from a few sentences to a paragraph (but can be longer if you wish). I will not be able to reply to every one, but I read them all and use them to prepare for lecture. Schedule: Submitted to bCourses weekly on Thursday by 7 PM. Can pertain to Tuesday’s class, Thursday’s class, or both. Graded complete/incomplete. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer, but you will get no credit if it’s clear that you didn’t do the reading or attend lecture.

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<sup>1</sup> This window lets you start early in case you tend to experience technological glitches, while also allowing you to use class time so you don’t *have* to find time outside class for the quiz

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

**Tues/Th** 9 AM – 12:10 PM: daily quiz open

**Tues/Th** 2:11-3:30 PM: lecture

**Thurs** 7 PM: weekly exit ticket due

## GRADING

This course has a total of **500 points**:

Analytic papers: **200 points** (100 each)

Final exam: **100 points**

Daily quizzes: **100 points**

Attendance and participation: **50 points**

Exit tickets (weekly): **50 points**

<b>A</b>	94-100%	<b>B+</b>	88%-89.99%	<b>C+</b>	78%-79.99%	<b>D+</b>	68%-69.99%
<b>A-</b>	90-93.99%	<b>B</b>	84-87.99%	<b>C</b>	74-77.99%	<b>D</b>	64-67.99%
		<b>B-</b>	80-83.99%	<b>C-</b>	70-73.99%	<b>F</b>	<63.99%

**Incomplete Grades:** Incompletes are the 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 must have a passing grade overall and in each course component, and they must provide documentation of the reason for the request.

**“Borderline” Grades:** After you receive your final grade, please do not ask me to raise your grade if you feel that you are very close to the next highest grade. Because I drop two quizzes and offer one free unexcused absence, your grade has already been raised. I will only change grades if there has been a factual error in calculation.

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

## Grading

This course has one reader, who will grade your papers and final exam. Her name is Jackie Lepe, and she is a PhD candidate in sociology. Before grading, Jackie and I will discuss the grading rubric. After returning graded assignments, Jackie will hold office hours to discuss papers and offer feedback. Please know that readers are not GSIs; their responsibilities are limited to grading and meeting with students only after assignments are returned. I will do my best to inform Jackie of paper-writing questions you have discussed with me (e.g., if it’s OK to say  $x$  in a paper). If you feel your grade does not reflect this discussion, please email or meet with Jackie during office hours. If that doesn’t address your concerns, then contact me.

## MATERIALS

Most course materials are posted as PDFs in bCourses under Files → Readings. Look up any websites and assigned videos on your computer or phone.

## **COURSE ORGANIZATION**

The course has three thematic sections: 1) Perspectives on Children and Adolescents; 2) Socialization and Socializing (aka Kids Learn, Kids “Do”); 3) Social Issues. There is a review session at the end of each one (with the third review session falling in RRR week). Childhood is a big topic, so we can’t cover everything. This class aims to prepare you to pursue any lingering topics with greater skill and perspective.

**Re-grade Policy:** If you believe a mistake was made in grading your assignment, and you want me to review it, email me a paragraph explaining what you think the mistake was and why you think your assignment deserves a different grade. Make sure to reference the assignment rubric. I will re-grade your paper and determine the final grade for the assignment. Your grade could go down, so consider these requests carefully. All re-grade requests must be made within a week of when an assignment is handed back. Per University policy, final exams cannot be regraded.

## **POLICIES**

### Academic Integrity and Honesty:

Academic dishonesty of any kind (including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, falsification, copying and sharing individual work) will not be tolerated, as specified in UC Berkeley’s Code of Student Conduct: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity/addressing-misconduct>. All course assignments are checked by Turnitin, a plagiarism detection tool. You will get **no** credit for a paper with plagiarism. Other instances of dishonesty may result in **zero** points for the **entire** course component. Academic dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. Note: it is possible to plagiarize without intending to do so (e.g., failing to cite references properly; sticking too closely to an author’s original wording). If you have any questions about plagiarism, just contact me.

### Email

I will respond to emails once a day, excluding weekends, when I check email infrequently. If your question is answered on the syllabus or a handout, I may not reply. Keep your eyes out for emails from me. They will include announcements, updates, and any changes.

### Devices and Distraction

Non-assistive devices like your phone, computer, or tablet compromise your learning by splitting your attention. Keep them out of sight and turned off while class is in session. Studies show that the mere presence of a cell phone can be distracting. You will lose a whole letter grade for attendance and participation FOR THE SEMESTER if I see you using your phone or computer without permission. Let’s focus!

### Back Up Your Work

Save your paper and exam responses somewhere other than your computer, such a thumb drive, an external hard drive, Dropbox, or Google Docs—or just email yourself a copy when you’re done doing a chunk of work. Computers can fail, and we don’t want to lose the fruits of our effort. I expect you to back up your work. This means I will not be lenient in grading if you say your computer crashed and you lost what you wrote.

### COVID Precautions

Campus COVID policies will be followed and enforced. Everyone must wear a mask covering both nose and mouth. You will be asked to wear a mask if you come without one. Anyone who does not comply must leave the room and will forfeit attendance and participation points for that day. Let me know early in the semester if you have a medical exemption. Currently, there are no social distancing requirements. COVID protocols may change over the semester. I will keep you apprised of any changes.

### Disruptions to the Semester

The world is wacky these days. We may experience disruptions due to COVID, wildfires, or power outages. In this case, we will move to remote learning. Details will follow (but hopefully not).

### “User Agreement”

A syllabus is like a contract that outlines the rights and responsibilities of instructor and student alike. Students are responsible for understanding the syllabus and its policies, and are responsible for bearing the consequences of not being familiar with the syllabus and its policies.

## **STUDENT SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES**

### Office Hours:

Don't be shy, come on by! Office hours can feel intimidating, but don't be scared and don't worry about asking “stupid” questions. There's nothing stupid about wanting to learn or just say “hi.” Research shows that office hours can be especially intimidating for first-gen college students, who often think that academic success comes from toughing it out alone, or who feel unprepared to interact with authority figures. I've been there. I was a first-gen student, too, struggling with money and problems back home. Don't be afraid to come on by.

### Economic, Food, and Housing Support

If you need economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at [basicneeds.berkeley.edu](https://basicneeds.berkeley.edu). You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [calfresh.berkeley.edu](https://calfresh.berkeley.edu) or our [Food Assistance Program: https://financialaid.berkeley.edu/financial-literacy-and-resources-financial-literacy-and-resources/basic-needs/](https://financialaid.berkeley.edu/financial-literacy-and-resources-financial-literacy-and-resources/basic-needs/). If you need of food immediately, please visit the UC Berkeley Food Pantry at [pantry.berkeley.edu/](https://pantry.berkeley.edu/). If you're low on food, this is meant for you!

### Mental Health and Wellness

Anyone can experience issues that get in the way of learning, like strained relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol and substance use, difficulties with concentration, sleep, and eating, and/or lack of motivation. Such concerns can affect both academic performance and quality of life. If you need mental health support, or are concerned about a friend, UC Berkeley offers many services, such as free short-term counseling at University Health Services. For links to many resources: <http://recalibrate.berkeley.edu/> For resources addressing mental health issues during the COVID pandemic, see: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/coronavirus/student-mental-health>  
**Seeking help is a good and courageous thing to do — both for yourself and for those who care about you.**

## Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services

Survivor Support Services provides information on these issues, including how to file a report and receive support services: <http://survivorsupport.berkeley.edu>. Please note that I am legally required to report incidents of sexual harassment or violence that students disclose to me. To speak to a confidential care advocate: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/dean/confidential-care-advocate/>

### **SCHEDULE AND TOPICS:**

Below is a schedule of reading assignments and topics of discussion. Complete readings before class. Our pace and agenda may change somewhat throughout the term. I will keep you informed of any changes.

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Class, Date	Topic
1 8/26	Introduction: What is Childhood?
	No Reading

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### **1. PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

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#### **Theoretical Approaches**

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2 8/31	Developmental Perspectives
	Woodhead, Martin. 2005. "Chapter 1: Children and Development" in <i>Psychological Development and Early Childhood</i> , pp: 18-29.
	Greenspan, S. "The Functional Developmental Growth Chart and Questionnaire," pp. 47-51.
	Harkness, S and Super, C. 1983. "The Cultural Construction of Child Development: A Framework for the Socialization of Affect."

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3 9/2	Sociological Approaches ("Old")
	Mead, G. H. "Play, the Game, and the Generalized Other," in <i>Mind, Self &amp; Society</i> , pp. 149-163.
	Matthews, S.H. "A Window on the 'New' Sociology of Childhood," <i>Sociology Compass</i> .

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4 9/7	Sociological Approaches ("New")
	"Interpretive Reproduction in Children's Peer Cultures," William Corsaro, <i>Social Psychology Quarterly</i> .

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#### **The Social Construction of Childhood**

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5 9/9	Historical (Western) Constructions
	Mintz, Steven. "Prologue" and Chapter 1, "Children of the Covenant" in <i>Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood</i> .
	Wade, Lisa. 2009. "Child Labor in America 1908-1912." <i>Sociological Images</i> . <a href="https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2009/12/03/child-labor-in-america-1908-1912/">https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2009/12/03/child-labor-in-america-1908-1912/</a>

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“20 Images of Child Labor:”

<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/these-20-images-child-labor-will-make-you-speechless.html>

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6 9/14 Contemporary (Western) Constructions

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Zelizer, “From Mobs to Memorials: The Sacrilization of Child Life,” Chapter 1 in *Pricing the Priceless Child*. pp. 22-55.

Cohen, P. 2011. “Play, Supervision, and Pressured Parenting,” *Sociological Images*.  
<https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2011/11/04/play-supervision-and-pressured-parenting/>

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7 9/16 Contradictory Constructions

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Jenkins, H. 1998. “Introduction: The Innocent Child and Other Modern Myths,” in *The Children’s Culture Reader*. Select pages (**skip** anything crossed out)

“Different Cultures, Different Childhoods.”

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/different-cultures-different-childhoods>

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8 9/21 Cultural Constructions of Adolescence

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Lesko, N. (2012). Chapter 1, “Up and Down the Great Chain of Being” in *Act Your Age! The Cultural Construction of Adolescence*

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9 9/23 **DISCUSSION and REVIEW**

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No reading

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**2. SOCIALIZATION and SOCIALIZING**

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**Mechanisms of Socialization**

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10 9/28 Primary Socialization (Family)

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Quinn, N. (2005). “Universals of Child Rearing.” *Anthropological Theory* pp: 477-516.

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11 9/30 Secondary Socialization (School)

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Handel, Cahill, and Elkin. (2007) Chapter 6, “Schools” in *Children and Society: The Sociology of Children and Childhood Socialization*

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**Domains of Socialization**

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**Gender**

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12 10/5 Gender Shapes Kids’ Lives (aka Kids Learn Gender)

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Kane, Emily. 2006. ““No Way My Boys are Going to be Like That’: Parents’ Responses to Children’s Gender Non-Conformity” *Gender & Society*

Martin, Karin. 1998. “Becoming a Gendered Body: Practices of Preschools.” *American Sociological Review*

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→ → **PAPER 1 DUE TO 11:59PM** ← ←

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13	10/7	Kids “Do” Gender: Girls and Boys
		Thorne, Barrie. 1993. <u>Ch. 4</u> “Gender Separation: Why and How,” and <u>Ch. 5</u> “Creating a Sense of ‘Opposite Sides,’” in <i>Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School</i> .
14	10/12	Kids “Do” Gender: Gender Non-Conforming Kids
		Singal, Jesse. 2018. “When Children Say They’re Trans.” <i>The Atlantic</i> . <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/07/when-a-child-says-shes-trans/561749/">https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/07/when-a-child-says-shes-trans/561749/</a>
		Meadow, Tey. 2018. “The Loaded Language Shaping the Trans Conversation.” <i>The Atlantic</i> . <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/07/desistance/564560/">https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/07/desistance/564560/</a>
15	10/14	Gender Non-Conforming Kids, Continued
		Reading TBD
<b>Race</b>		
16	10/19	Race Shapes Kids’ Lives (aka Kids Learn Race)
		Lewis, Amanda E. 2001. “There is no ‘Race’ in the Schoolyard: Color-Blind Ideology in an (Almost) All-White School.” <i>American Educational Research Journal</i> .
		“See Baby Discriminate,” Bronson, Po and Ashley Merryman. <a href="https://www.newsweek.com/even-babies-discriminate-nurtureshock-excerpt-79233">https://www.newsweek.com/even-babies-discriminate-nurtureshock-excerpt-79233</a>
17	10/21	Kids “Do” Race and Ethnicity
		Van Ausdale, Debra and Joe Feagin. “Using Racial and Ethnic Concepts: The Case of Very Young Children,” <i>American Sociological Review</i> .
		Moore, Valerie Ann. 2002. “The Collaborative Emergence of Race in Children's Play: A Case Study of Two Summer Camps.” <i>Social Problems</i> .
<b>Class</b>		
18	10/26	Class Shapes Kids’ Experiences (Kids Do Class)
		Lareau, Annette. 2002. “Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families.” <i>American Sociological Review</i> .
		Reardon, Sean F. 2013. “No Rich Child Left Behind,” <i>New York Times</i> . <a href="https://ed.stanford.edu/in-the-media/no-rich-child-left-behind">https://ed.stanford.edu/in-the-media/no-rich-child-left-behind</a>
→	→	<b>Paper Topic Due by 11:59PM to bCourses</b>
<b>Social Class</b>		
19	10/28	Kids “Do” Class
		Calarco, Jessica. 2011. “‘I Need Help’: Social Class and Children's Help-Seeking in Elementary School.” <i>American Sociological Review</i> .



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Streib, Jessi. 2011. "Class Reproduction by Four-Year-Olds," *Qualitative Sociology*.

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**Peer Dynamics**

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20 11/2 Status Shapes Kids' Experience

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Milner, Murray. Chapters 2 and 3, "Tools for Understanding" and "Fitting In, Standing Out, and Keeping Up" in *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids*.

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21 11/4 **DISCUSSION and REVIEW**

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No reading

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**3. SOCIAL ISSUES**

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22 11/9 Consumer Culture

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Pugh, Allison. 2009. Chapter 1, "Care and Belonging in the Market" and Ch. 3 "Making Do: Children and the Economy of Dignity" (pp. 48-71 only) in *Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture*.

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11/11 **NO CLASS—Veterans' Day**

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23 11/16 Bullying

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Peguro, Anthony. 2012. "Schools, Bullying, and Inequality: Intersecting Factors and Complexities with the Stratification of Youth Victimization at School," *Sociology Compass*: 402-412.

Faris, Robert and Diane Felmlee. 2014. "Casualties of Social Combat: School Networks of Peer Victimization and their Consequences," *American Sociological Review*: 228-257.

→ → **PAPER 2 DUE by 11:59PM TO bCOURSES** ← ←

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24 11/18 Delinquency

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Rios, V. (2011) *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. Ch. 1 and 3.

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11/23 **NO CLASS** (Have a nice break ☺ )

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11/25 **NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING**

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25 11/30 Child Poverty

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Bruenig, Matt. 2019. *Family Fun Pack*.  
<https://www.peoplespolicyproject.org/projects/family-fun-pack/>

Rector, Robert. 2016. *Marriage: America's Greatest Weapon Against Child Poverty*. Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/poverty-and-inequality/report/marriage-americas-greatest-weapon-against-child-poverty-0>

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26	12/2	Transition to Adulthood
		Furstenberg, F. et al. 2004. "Growing Up is Harder to Do," <i>Contexts</i> .
		Gonzales, R.G. (2011). "Learning to be illegal: Undocumented youth and shifting legal contexts in the transition to adulthood." Pp: 602-619. <i>American Sociological Review</i> .
	12/6 to 12/10	<b>RRR Week</b>
	12/9	<b>Discussion and Review</b> (will be recorded)
	12/17	<b>Final Exam</b> , location TBD (Exam group 17)
	8-11 AM	**Note exam day and time—different than class day and time**