

**Sociology 130AC**  
**UC Berkeley, Fall 2021**

**Social Inequalities, American Cultures**

MWF, 2:00-3:00pm, 145 Dwinelle

**Instructor:** Joanna Reed, Ph.D., [joannareed@berkeley.edu](mailto:joannareed@berkeley.edu), 479 Social Sciences Building

**Office hours:** In-person appointments: Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30 in 454 SSB (not my regular office!)

In-person drop-in: after class on Mondays outside Dwinelle (east entrance), until 3:30ish

Remote appointments: Tuesdays, 10-11 (Zoom link is on sign-up sheet and bCourses main page)

**Sign up here for both in-person and remote appointments:**

<https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/pedfc>

**Course Description:**

If you have ever taken a social science course, or even look at the news these days, then you already know that there is a lot of inequality in the U.S. This course offers a systematic introduction to exploring the causes, consequences and extent of social and economic 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 and how these are maintained and reproduced. This first part of the course will focus on answering the following questions: What social categories are most meaningful for explaining contemporary U.S. inequalities? How are these categories stratified, how are people assigned to them, and how are resources distributed across these categories? The second part of the course is devoted to providing a glimpse into how inequalities “work” in practice by examining key institutions central to generating and sustaining inequalities in the contemporary United States: families, neighborhoods, education, labor markets and incarceration. Within each domain, we pay special attention to the significance of race and ethnicity, social class and gender and how they combine to produce different outcomes and consequences for individuals and social groups.

*You are used to academic challenges! This course may also be challenging in non-academic ways that will vary depending on your life experiences and identities:*

• **The material may challenge some of your common-sense understandings of social inequalities** and lead you to confront your own (and your family’s) place in the U.S. stratification system. For some students, being in this course is the first time they recognize the depth of their own disadvantages or the extent of their privilege, all of which may cause discomfort.

• **Your personal experiences may not fit the sociological insights presented** in class or in the readings. This is an opportunity for learning and exploration, but some students find this personally challenging and even threatening.

• **We will be frankly discussing controversial topics in class. You are likely to encounter viewpoints that challenge your own or that you perceive as ignorant, and hear opinions that you disagree with.** It is crucial that we strive to maintain an atmosphere of open-mindedness and respect for each other's perspectives and experiences. Please respect each other and the class by asking questions and making critiques that are *grounded in class topics and materials*, and by being tactful and polite. Think before you speak and consider how your position may sound to others. Respond to *ideas* rather than personally attacking or labeling the *person* expressing them.

### **Goals for the course:**

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Understand and explain sociological perspectives for how and why people are classified into social categories, and the social categories most consequential for explaining contemporary social inequalities.
- Understand and explain the role of institutions like the family, neighborhoods, education, labor markets and incarceration in structuring contemporary social inequalities.
- Apply this knowledge to understanding and contextualizing current events and debates centered around social inequalities, and to your own position in different systems of inequalities.
- Discuss some theoretically and empirically grounded ideas for what might shift current patterns of inequality.
- Gain experience in working with Census data through the neighborhood project.

### **What to expect this semester**

I am glad to be back to teaching in-person, and I hope you are happy to be back on campus. That said, I understand that there is some uncertainty about how things will proceed this year, and we are all being asked—yet again—to be flexible and ready to adapt to changing circumstances. I ask for your flexibility and understanding as we move forward, and I will extend the same to you.

- **Public health guidelines:** We will be following all campus guidelines regarding public health and masking. Masks are required in indoor spaces for everyone, vaccinated or not. *If you are feeling sick, or experiencing symptoms*, please err on the side of caution and don't come to class. You can stay caught up by viewing the course capture recordings. Likewise, if I am feeling sick, I will most likely move class to zoom for that day if I can.

- **Course capture:** I have signed our class up for course capture. This means that there will be recordings (audio recording + slides) available of each class meeting on our class bCourses site. These will be posted as soon as they are available.
- **Check your email before class!** Just in case there is a last-minute change of plans. I will be using the bCourses announcement feature to communicate with you.
- **Office hours:** We will start the semester with a mix of in-person and remote office hours. Please bear in mind that I may shift these around depending on how things go.
- **Please reach out to me if you have problems or concerns!**

### **Navigating the course and finding the information you need**

- **Syllabus:** You are reading this right now. This is the full plan and overview for the course. Information about course policies is also included here. If you are looking for the course schedule in a more digestible weekly format, check the “Pages” in bCourses. *Please read through the full syllabus.*
- **bCourses:** This is the name of UCB’s online course management platform. There is a bCourses site for our class. If you are enrolled, you should automatically have access to it. You can find all assignment prompts, schedule information, and course readings here. You will also use bCourses to turn in your work and view your grades and comments. *Be sure to check the weekly pages regularly, which will have the most up to date information for each week!*
- **Readings:** All readings will be available to you through bCourses. You can find the complete collection in “Files”> “Readings”. Most students find it easiest to go to the bCourses page for the week and access the readings there. (For example: go to “Pages”> “Week 1”.)

We are reading several chapters from the following book. The chapters will be available to you online, but if you would like to purchase a copy for easier reading here is the information: Edin, K. & Shaefer, L. (2015) *\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (Any edition is fine)

**Bound hard copies of readings available for purchase:** If you would like a bound hard copy of the course readings, you can buy one at the Copy Central Store at 2411 Telegraph Ave. Copy Central also offers rentals of digital readers. I am told that these have several helpful features, such as highlighting, bookmarking, read aloud and more.

**Try to keep up with the news,** using a reliable source. This will make class more meaningful as you will see how often our class topics are relevant to what is happening on a daily basis. I suggest major news outlets such as NPR (National Public Radio), *The New York Times*, *The LA Times* or other major newspapers. NPR is free, and you can get access to newspapers through the UCB library. More information is on the “Library Resources” page on bCourses.

## **Evaluation:**

**Applying Theory Paper:** 20% of grade

**Take-Home Mid-term Essay Exam:** 20% of grade

**Neighborhoods and Social Environments Project:** 25% of grade

-Fieldwork, Data and Analysis Report (10%)

- Paper (20%)

**Take-Home Final Essay Exam:** 20% of grade

**Response/Reflection Papers:** 10% of grade

**Take-home Exams:** Both the midterm and final exam will be take-home essay exams. Essay prompts for both exams will be posted one week before each exam is due. The final exam will focus on the second part of the course but may include material from before the midterm. Exams will be evaluated according to the traditional letter-based system (i.e. "A", "B", "C", etc.).

**Applying Theory Paper:** In this 4-6 page paper, you will analyze either a current event or other recent social phenomenon according to at least 2 different theories/readings we have considered and discussed in class. The complete prompt is on bCourses. This paper will be evaluated with letter-based grading.

**Neighborhood and Social Environments Project:** This project incorporates elements of fieldwork, working with census and possibly other data and a written essay. The purpose is to explore how social inequalities are spatially distributed, and how places matter in creating social environments and context. The full prompt and instructions are on bCourses. The paper itself will be evaluated with letter-based grading; the Fieldwork, Data and Analysis Report will be evaluated according to a contract-based system (i.e. you will get full credit if you follow instructions and make a good effort).

**Response/Reflection Papers:** There will be four short reflection papers due during the semester. The purpose of these papers is to create a space for students to reflect on their personal reactions and responses to the course material. These papers will be contract based, in terms of evaluation. If you miss one of these assignments during the semester, you can make it up during RRR week. Prompts for each of the four papers will be on bCourses two weeks prior to the due date.

## **Grading Policies:**

**Due dates and Grace Period:** All assignments will have a due date, as usual. However, in the spirit of offering more flexibility to everyone, there will be a grace period that will

extend for 24 hours after the deadline. An assignment turned in after the due date, but before the end of the grace period will not be considered late. The grace period extends to all students—you do not need to ask for permission or notify me if you plan to turn in work during the grace period.

**Late Assignments Policy:** If you have a personal emergency or are ill, contact me at the *earliest opportunity* to discuss alternative arrangements. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each day they are late after a special grace period of two days (Fall 2020 semester only). At times, I may request documentation of an illness, emergency or other situation.

**Academic Accommodations:** Ask for accommodations if you are a DSP student (according to your LOA). You can assume that the DSP office will send me a copy of your letter. If you have an accommodation for take-home assignments though, it is your responsibility to contact me to make arrangements for extra time for turning these in. Please bear in mind that accommodations for extra time on in-class exams do not apply to take-home assignments. You are always welcome to reach out to me to discuss accommodations. Accommodations are also available for the observance of religious holidays or conflicts related to student athletics (for student athletes only). Please reach out to me if you have another issue not “officially” covered and we can talk about it. Here is a link to more information from UCB about academic accommodations and resources:  
<https://evcp.berkeley.edu/programs-resources/academic-accommodations-hub>.

**Re-grade policy:** Please first talk with the person who graded your assignment for more feedback on your work. Readers have the authority to change grades if they believe it is warranted. If you believe a mistake was made on your assignment, and want me to review it, write a short paragraph explaining why you think your assignment deserves a different grade, making sure to reference the assignment rubric. This statement should be about the substance of your work, rather than effort. You can email this to me, or give it to me in person. 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. All re-grade requests must be made within a week of when an assignment is handed back. Per University policy, no re-grades are possible for final exams.

**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 at least 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 submits their own work. Suspected violations relating to this course will be reported to the office of student conduct and dealt with according to university policies. *Be aware of plagiarism.* Word for word use of even a single sentence from any author, publication or website without proper citation is plagiarism and is unethical and unacceptable. So is very closely following the structure and wording of another author's work. In addition, please be aware that you may not turn in any portion of *your own* previous work submitted for credit in another course without substantial revision. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade on the paper or exam in question with no opportunity to rewrite, as will any other kind of academic dishonesty. If you have questions about how to properly cite materials, or how to paraphrase appropriately, ask!. The Student Learning Center is also a good resource to help with this.

**Turnitin:** All of your assignments will be checked for plagiarism by Turnitin when you turn them in on bCourses. Please be aware that this program keeps a database of work previously turned in for this class by other students, as well as any of your own work that you turned in for credit in a previous class.

**Office Hours:** Please bear in mind that I may shift the balance of in-person/remote times as we see what will work best for everyone.

In-person appointments: Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30 in 454 Barrows (not my regular office!)

In-person drop-in: after class on Mondays outside in front of Dwinelle, until 3:30ish.

Remote appointments: Tuesdays, 10-11

Sign up here for both in-person and remote appointments:

<https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/pedfc>

If you are having trouble with the class or are experiencing personal problems that are hindering your ability to do well in it, please come to office hours! I can't help you if I don't know what is going on! Please also come to office hours for whatever reason—dropping by to say “hi” is a good reason. So are questions about the class topics and readings and your interests in them, or to share a personal experience. Remember also that if I know you, I will be able to write you a much better letter of recommendation if you find yourself in need of one in the future.

**Email:** This is generally a good way to get in touch with me, but I may not be able to respond right away. Do not expect a response on weekends or outside of regular working hours.

**Your Health and Well-Being:** Being a college student can be full of excitement and possibilities, but at times may feel overwhelming or be difficult in other ways. Some degree of this is to be expected, but if you are experiencing a lot of distress, anxiety or have a pre-

existing mental health issue, there are resources on campus to help. You are not alone; many others share your difficulties. Even if you don't think you need them, I encourage you to look at these websites now, so you know what is available. There is much more than counseling appointments: there are web tutorials and videos, support groups and mindfulness classes, for example. Counseling center staff have told me these groups and classes can be a great preventative resource, and are a great way to get the semester off to a good start. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), (510) 642-9494, <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling>. More general resources on mental health, services are at <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/health-topics/mental-health>.

## **Course Schedule\*:**

### **Part I: Understanding Social Inequalities**

#### **Week 1: Aug. 25, 27: Where we are now**

Readings: Bosman, J., Kasakove, S. & Victor, D. (2021) "U.S. Life Expectancy Plunged in 2020, Especially for Black and Hispanic Americans. *The New York Times*, July 21, 2021

MacFarquhar, N. (2021) "Evicted, Despite a Federal Moratorium: 'I Do Not Know What I Am Going To Do'." *The New York Times*, Aug. 14, 2021

Flavelle, C. (2021) "Work Injuries Tied to Heat Are Vastly Undercounted, Study Finds". *The New York Times*, July 17, 2021

Look at <https://inequality.org/facts/inequality-and-covid-19/> and choose a few areas to explore.

#### **Week 2: Aug. 30, Sept. 1, 3: A portrait of extremes: life at the bottom and top of the income scale**

Readings: Hout, M. (2019) "Social Mobility" and Percheski, C. (2019) "Income Inequality" in *Pathways, State of the Union 2019*. Stanford Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality. (two separate short articles)

Edin, K. & Shaefer, L. (2015) *\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Introduction and Ch. 4 "By Any Means Necessary"

Sherman, R. (2017) *Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1, pp 1-57

#### **Week 3: Sept. 8, 10: Foundational Theories of Inequality and Stratification:**

#### **Response/Reflection #1 due Sept. 10**

Readings: Marx, K. "Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism" in Eds. Grusky, D. & Szelenyi, S. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class and Gender* (2007), pp. 32-43. Westview Press: Boulder, CO

Weber, M. "Class, Status and Party" in Eds. Grusky, D. & Szelenyi, S. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class and Gender* (2007), pp. 32-43. Westview Press: Boulder, CO

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

Recommended: Burrell, J. & Fourcade, M. (2021) "The Society of Algorithms". *Annual Review of Sociology*, 47:213-37

#### **Week 4: Sept. 13, 15, 17: Foundational Theories of Inequality and Stratification**

Readings: DuBois, W.E. B. (1903/2003) *The Souls of Black Folk*. Ch. 6 or 8 (you choose!). New York: Barnes & Noble Classics

Morris, A. (2017) "W.E.B. DuBois at the Center: From Science, Civil Rights Movement to Black Lives Matter." *British Journal of Sociology*, 68(1)

Collins, P. & Bilge, S. (2016) *Intersectionality*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. Ch. 1 "What Is Intersectionality?"

Lorber, J. (2011) "The Social Construction of Gender" in Eds. Grusky, D. & Szelenyi, S. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class and Gender* (2007), pp. 318-325. Westview Press: Boulder, CO

#### **Week 5: Sept. 20, 22, 24: More Theories of Inequality and Stratification: Building on Foundations**

##### **Applying Theory Paper due Sept. 24**

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>

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

#### **Week 6: Sept. 27, Sept. 29, Oct. 1: Theories of Racial and Ethnic Inequality**

Readings: Roberts, D. (2011). *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics and Big Business Re-Create Race in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: The New Press. Ch. 1 "The Invention of Race"



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 (Ch. 2 recommended)

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

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

### **Week 7: Oct. 4, 6, 8: Racial and Ethnic Inequality**

#### **Response/Reflection #2 due on Oct. 6**

Readings: Portes, A. & Zhou, M. (1993) "Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants", in Eds. Grusky, D. & Szelenyi, S. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class and Gender* (2007), pp. 208-220. Westview Press: Boulder, CO

Dreby, J. (2015). *Everyday Illegal: When Policies Undermine Immigrant Families.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 2 "Nervios"

Gonzales, A. (2001) "Urban(Trans)Formations: Changes in the Meaning and Use of American Indian Identity". Pp. 169-185 in eds. Lobo, S & Peters, K. *American Indians and the Urban Experience.* Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press

### **Week 8: Oct. 11, 13, 15: Inequality, Politics and Policy**

Readings: Hacker, J. & Pierson, P. (2010). *Winner Take All Politics.* New York: Simon & Schuster. Ch. 1 & 2 "How the Winner Take All Economy Was Made"

Hacker, J. & Pierson, P. (2019). "Plutocrats with Pitchforks: The Distinctive Politics of Right -Wing Populism in the U.S." American Political Science Association, 2019

Edin, K. & Shafer, L. (2015) *\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Ch. 1 "Welfare is Dead"

### **Part 2: How Inequalities Work: Institutions and the Distribution of Resources**

#### **Week 9: Oct. 18, 20, 22: Families and Family Structure**

#### **Take-Home Mid-term Essay due Oct. 18 (no lecture that day)**

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

### **Week 10: Oct. 25, 27, 29: Neighborhoods**

#### **Response/Reflection #3 due Oct. 29**

Readings: "Neighborhoods Matter". *Opportunity Insights*, Harvard University. Make sure to explore the "Opportunity Atlas" linked in the site.

<https://opportunityinsights.org/neighborhoods/>

Massey, D. & Denton, D. (1993) *American Apartheid*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Ch. 2

Peterson, R. & Krivo, L. (2010). *Divergent Social Worlds: Neighborhood Crime and the Racial-Spatial Divide*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 3 "Divergent Social Worlds", pp. 50-70

### **Week 11: Nov. 1, 3, 5: Education**

Readings: Carter, P. (2016) "Educational Equality is a Multifaceted Issue: Why We Must Understand the School's Sociocultural Context for Student Achievement." *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, Vol 2, No. 5, pp. 142-163

Parks, C. (2021) "Going Home: Black Families Begin Teaching Their Own Children". *The New Yorker*, June 21, 2021

Arum, R. & Roksa, J. (2014) *Aspiring Adults Adrift: Tentative Transitions of College Graduates*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1 "College and Emerging Adults" and 2 "Social and Academic Learning in College"

Recommended: *The College Payoff*, The Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University

### **Week 12: Nov. 8, 10, 12: Education/ Labor Markets**

#### **Neighborhood and Social Environments Project: Fieldwork, Data and Analysis Report due Nov. 12**

Readings: Mettler, S. (2014) *Degrees of Inequality: How the Politics of Higher Education Sabotaged the American Dream*. New York: Basic Books. Ch. 1 "Creating Degrees of Inequality" & 2 "Diminishing Returns: The Transformation of Federal Student Aid Over Time"

Kalleberg, A. (2011) *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 1, 2

Recommended: Edin, K. & Shaefer, L. (2015). *\$.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Ch. 2 "Perilous Work"

**Week 13: Nov. 15, 17, 19: Labor Markets**

Schor, J., Cansoy, M., Charles, W., Ladegaard, I., & Wengronowitz, R. (2019)  
"Dependence and Precarity in The Platform Economy". Boston College

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

**Week 14: Nov. 22-26 (Thanksgiving Holiday Break):**

**Neighborhood and Social Environments Paper due Nov. 24**

No class this week and no new reading.

**Week 15: Nov. 29, Dec. 1, 3: Mass Incarceration**

**Response/Reflection #4 due Dec. 3**

Readings: Wakefield, S. & Uggen, C. (2010) "Incarceration and Stratification". *Annual  
Review of Sociology*, Vol. 36, pp. 387-406

Western, B. (2018). *Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison*. New York: Russell Sage  
Foundation. Ch. 1, 3, 11

**"RRR" week: Dec. 6-10**

**Final Exam: Take Home Final Exam is due on Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm.** Questions will be  
available one week prior to the due date.

**\*Course schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.**