The primordial task of a capable professor is to teach his students to recognize that there are uncomfortable facts, by which I mean facts that are unpleasant to the personal opinion of an individual. Indeed, there are facts that are extremely unpleasant for every opinion, including mine.

Max Weber, 1918

This course surveys and dissects the four “peculiar institutions” that have worked in succession to define and confine African Americans in US society and history from the colonial era to the present: chattel slavery, the Jim Crow regime of caste terrorism in the agrarian South, the urban ghetto in the Northern industrial metropolis, and the organizational nexus formed by the joining of the hyperghetto and the prison after the wave of race riots of the 1960s. We dissect each institution in turn, probing its genesis, structure, functions and contradictions, and how it operates to promote a certain definition of “blackness” and attach consequences to that definition. We draw the lessons of this long sociological journey for the current moment of racial struggle by considering two key policy planks: reparations for slavery and the reform of policing.

The course mixes lecture (first class of the week) and discussion (second class of the week). You are expected to read the assignments prior to the lecture for which they are listed. Your final grade will come from three components: 40% for a mid-term exam (half in class and half at home); 50% for the final exam; 10% for participation in discussion. The exams will combine true-false and multiple-choice questions as well as longer questions and a mini-essay (to take home for the mid-term). Each exam will include bonus questions to earn extra credit.

Required books
Week 1 (26, 31 August): Introduction and conceptual apparatus
Epistemological obstacles; clarifying core categories: ethnicity, race, caste; social classification and stratification; the role of religion, science, the state/law in the validation and enforcement of “race”; main forms of racial domination: prejudice, discrimination, segregation, ghettoization, violence; slavery in global history; the uniqueness of Jim Crow as racial terrorism in world-historical perspective; the ghetto, the overlooked and Janus-faced institution; when prison and ghetto meet and mesh


For more:
Davis, F. James. Who is black?: One nation’s definition.
Mara Loveman, National Colors.
Andreas Wimmer, Ethnic Boundary Making

Weeks 2-3-4 (7, 14, 21 September) SLAVERY
Slavery as violent domination; global and historical perspectives: a widespread, resilient, and multifunctional institution; the birth of American slavery: seeking bonded labor; from religion to race; distinctive characteristics of US slavery; the fight for abolition; abolition and its aftermaths

Week 2:
Patterson, “The Denial of Slavery in American Sociology” (2019)
Patterson, “Slavery in Comparative Perspective” (2004)

Week 3:

Week 4:

For more:
Weeks 5-6-7 (28 Sept, 5, 12 October) JIM CROW
A racial inter-regnum; the birth of Jim Crow as caste terrorism; sharecropping, debt peonage and convict leasing; extraction of deference and denial of reciprocity; judicial exclusion and political disfranchisement; suffusive violence as institutional glue; challenging Jim Crow

Week 5:
Berrey, Stephen A. The Jim Crow routine: Everyday performances of race, civil rights, and segregation in Mississippi. Chapter 1, pp. 19-60.

Week 6:
Berrey, The Jim Crow Routine, Introduction, chapters 2-3, pp. 61-137, chapter 5, pp. 177-217 (entire if you have the time)

Week 7:
Berrey, The Jim Crow Routine, chapters 4, pp. 138-177.

For more:
John Dollard, Caste and Class in a Southern Town.
Leon Litwack, Trouble in Mind.

Weeks 8-9 (19, 26 Oct) THE GHETTO
World War I, Fordism, Southern oppression, and the genesis of the Northern ghetto; building blocks and functions of the ghetto; Janus-faced institution: verticality/domination and horizontality-reciprocity; cultural production and collective identity; accumulation of capitals; determinants of the crash of the ghetto in the 1960s

Week 8:

**Week 9:**

**Weeks (2, 9 Nov) 10-11 The Hyperghetto Meets the Prison**
From ghetto to hyperghetto; rise of the penal state as part of the neoliberal revolution; policing, the courts, probation, jail and prison, parole; how to explain hyperincarceration and black overincarceration; triple selectivity by class, race, and space; hyperincarceration of other dispossessed and dishonored populations around the world; social and political reverberations of hyperincarceration

**Week 10:**
Wacquant, “Race, Class, and Hyperincarceration in Revanchist America” (2010).
Wacquant, Loïc. 2010. “Prisoner Reentry as Myth and Ceremony.”

**Week 11:**

**Thu 11 November, Veteran’s Day**

**For more:**
Loïc Wacquant, Punishing the Poor (2009).
Bruce Western, Punishment and Inequality (2006).
Michael Tonry, Punishing Race (2010).

**Weeks (16, 23 Nov) 12-13 Reparations, Policing Reform**
Coming to terms of the past; the politics of memory and reparations; moral theories and slavery; material compensation and symbolic recognition; three case studies: US, France, Britain; the case for and against reparations; why not reparations for Jim Crow, ghettolization, overincarceration? The entangled histories of race and policing; policing under Jim Crow, policing today; differential use of force by class, race, space: what do we know? Black Life Matters, police unions, public opinion, and policing reform

**Week 12:**

**Week 13:**

**For more:**

**Thu 25 November: Thanksgiving**

**WEEK (30 Nov, 2 Dec) 14 RECAPITULATION, GOING FORWARD**
Emotions and elucidation; historicizing ethnoracial domination; the US case, a historical outlier; learning from other times and places; ethnoracial division and citizenship in the 21st century

**Thu 2 December, last day of class**

**Mo 13-Fri 17 December, exams**