

Sociology 130AC

Social Inequalities, American Cultures

UC Berkeley, Fall 2017

Tues./ Thurs. 11-12:30, 277 Cory

Instructor: Joanna Reed, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1 -3 (sign-ups) and Thursday 1-2 (drop-in) and by appointment at 479 Barrows. Please sign up on the sheet outside the door for the Tuesday appointments.

Course Description:

This course explores the sources and outcomes 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, concentrating on how they relate to defining social class. We then turn to the central institutions and mechanisms that sociologists argue are responsible for creating, reproducing, changing and potentially reducing the structure of inequalities in the U.S. today, including families, neighborhoods, education, labor markets, 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, but place each topic in its broader historical context.

Goals for the course are:

- To foster greater understanding of the theoretical, conceptual and methodological tools sociologists use for understanding and studying inequalities through exposure to empirical research**
- For students to apply this knowledge to understanding and contextualizing current events and debates centered around social inequalities and to their own position in different systems of social inequalities**
- To participate in collecting and analyzing sociological data through the class neighborhood project, therefore gaining experience and a greater understanding of how sociological knowledge is created**
- To sharpen writing skills by formulating and effectively communicating written arguments supported by textual evidence in exams and paper assignments.**

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.

Teaching and talking about about social inequalities and politics...

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. It is also the case that it is impossible to separate a course on inequality from politics, as specific government policies directly affect social inequalities by setting the rules for how opportunities and resources are distributed. Examining these processes are a necessary focus of the class. I encourage all students to think critically about the course materials and the relationships between empirical research findings, policies and politics.

As a result, our class discussions may cover controversial subjects, and may possibly make you feel uncomfortable. You are likely to encounter viewpoints that challenge your own, and hear opinions that you disagree with. It is very important that we maintain an atmosphere of civility, comity and goodwill during class. To do that, I ask that you please respect the class and your classmates.

You can respect the class by keeping up with the reading and understanding the arguments and research that our discussions will be based upon. You do not need to agree with the authors whose work we read and discuss, but you are responsible for knowing the content of their arguments. Critiques expressed in class should be grounded. You can also respect the class by engaging with the class while present and not surfing the Internet, texting, checking email, etc. during lecture. I will publically ask you to close Internet pages or to cease texting when I observe this behavior during lectures.

You can respect your classmates 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. Your questions should show some consideration for your audience, and your answers should show some knowledge and context for the topic being discussed.

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. There is also a course reader available for purchase and that will be posted on bCourses.

1. Edin, K. & Shaefer, L. (2015) *\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin

2 Western, B. (2006). *Punishment And Inequality In America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

3. Course Reader: Purchase at Copy Central store on Bancroft St., and on bCourses. A copy of the course reader will also be placed on reserve at Moffitt Library.

4. You will need an iClicker, which I will use to gauge participation and to stimulate class discussion. You can purchase a clicker at the bookstore. We will begin using the clickers during the third week of class, when enrollment should be sorted.

Evaluation:

Two Personal Response Papers: 10% (each worth 5%), due Sept. 14 and Nov. 21

Take-Home Exam: 25% of grade due Sept. 26

Participation and Attendance throughout the semester: 10%

Neighborhood Project: Neighborhood visit, field notes and data collection, 10% of grade due Oct. 16th. Neighborhood Project Data Science Module and Essay: 25% of grade, due Nov. 7th

Take-Home Final Exam: 20% of grade, due Dec. 14

Exams: Both the midterm and final exam will be take-home essay exams. Essay prompts for both exams will be posted one a week before the exam is due, so for the midterm by 9/19 at 3 pm. The midterm exam is due to bCourses by 12:30 on Sept. 26th. The final exam may incorporate material from the entire semester and from the Data Science Module portion of the neighborhood project assignment. Questions/essay prompts will be posted about one week before the exam is due, on Dec. 6th by 3 pm. The final exam is due on Dec. 14th at 6 pm. The final exam may be turned in anytime after the exam prompt is released up until the due date. Please carefully note the dates and times exams are due.

Written assignments: In addition to the exams, you are required to turn in two short personal response papers, and an exciting new project on neighborhoods that incorporates elements of fieldwork, working with data and a written essay. This project incorporates a “data science module” built and supported by the Berkeley Institute for Data Science which will make it possible for our class will build a dataset of local neighborhoods based on collective fieldwork that we will use and map along with census data to discover and analyze social patterns in local neighborhoods. There are specific instructions for these assignments posted on bCourses. Please carefully note the date and time an assignment is due. **Please read these now so you know what is expected!**

Participation and Attendance: The participation and attendance grade will be assessed through iclicker responses over the semester, so it is essential that everyone has and registers a clicker. At the end of the semester, this grade will be assessed as a percentage of the total opportunities students have had over the semester to participate with their clickers, with 5% excused. I will use a standard grading scale, so for example, a student who has used their clickers 85% of the time would earn the point equivalent of a B for their participation and attendance grade. In addition to using clickers, students will be asked to turn in an outline of the assigned reading, along with a question or comment during Thanksgiving week, as there is no class that week. This assignment will not be graded, but it will count as part of your participation grade.

Grading: Graduate student readers, working in close collaboration with me, will do most of the hands-on grading for this course. We try very hard to maintain consistency and fairness in 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, and checking grading averages as grading is underway. 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 their responsibilities are limited to grading and meeting with students only after assignments are returned.

Grading Problems: While we make every effort to grade fairly and consistently, mistakes in grading can occur. If you believe a mistake was made on your assignment, and want me to review it, write a paragraph explaining what you think the mistake was and why you think your assignment deserves a different grade, making sure to reference the assignment rubric. 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. Please keep in mind that re-grade requests should be made based on the quality and merits of the work submitted, not based on effort, or feeling that you “deserve” a higher grade. 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.

Course Policies:

Students are responsible for all material covered in lecture, including announcements, and for keeping up with the readings as indicated on the syllabus. It is your responsibility to keep up and ask questions. 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 require **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 assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each day they are late (including weekends). Extension requests made on due dates will not be considered unless there is documentation of an illness or other emergency. 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 does 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 (except yourself), 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. 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 dishonesty. If you have questions about how to properly cite materials, or how to paraphrase appropriately, ask during office hours, and consult Ch. 6 of the writing guide "Writing for Sociology", available on the Soc. department website. To discourage plagiarism, all assignment submissions on bCourses will be checked by "Turnitin" (a plagiarism detection tool on bCourses).

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. If you don't receive a response from me, that means the answer to your question is here, on the course syllabus.

Office Hours: I urge students to talk with me sometime during the semester. You can come by just to say "hi", you don't need to have a formal question about the material or an assignment, although of course that is welcome too. I enjoy getting to know you and this is a way to make a large class more personal. Please come see me especially if you are having trouble with the course. I can't help you if you don't communicate with me! I have both sign-up and drop-in office hours. Please sign up

for office hours appointments on the sign up sheet posted outside my office door at 479 Barrows. You are free to drop by during this time as well, but I'll give priority to people who have appointments. My office is shared, so if you need to speak with me confidentially, please try to let me know ahead of time so I can try to ensure privacy.

Coffee: On a few dates (TBA) during the semester, I will invite students to join me for coffee somewhere on/near campus. I'll have coffee for the first five people who show up and bring some snacks.

Laptops, etc.: Did you know that taking handwritten notes might 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 to reduce distractions to other students. Please do not text, check email or social media, shop, make travel plans, etc. during class. If you do not plan on participating and listening, please do not come to class.

Lecture Slides: Lecture slides will be available on bCourses just before class.

Course Schedule*:

Part I

Week 1, Aug. 24: Introduction and overview of course

Week 2, Aug. 29, 31: Theoretical perspectives: class and status

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

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

PRIMARY SOURCES: Marx, K. "Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism" and 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

Week 3, Sept. 5, 7: Theoretical Perspectives: forms of capital and examples

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>
(read also my guide to understanding "The Forms of Capital", posted on bCourses)

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

Wilson, W.J. (2009) *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*. New York: Norton, Ch. 1 pp. 1-24

Week 4, Sept. 12, 14: Intersections: class, race, gender and public policies

1st Personal Response Paper Due Sept. 14, 6 pm.

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

Zhou, M. (2004). “Are Asian Americans Becoming ‘White’?”. *Contexts*, 3: 29 (bC)

Recommended and Supplemental: Pew Research Center, June 27, 2016. “*On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart*”

Watch: *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, Episode 3 “The House We Live In”, Moffitt Media Resources Center, DVD 3046 (also on youtube, more info. for streaming TBA)

Week 5, Sept. 19, 21: Intersections: class, race, gender and public policies

Take-home midterm questions posted on Sept. 19

Readings: Jimenez, T. & Lopez- Sanders, L. (2011) “Unanticipated, Unintended and Unadvised: The Effects of Public Policy on Unauthorized Immigration”. *Pathways*, Winter 2011, Stanford Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality (bC)

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

Edin, K. & Shaefer, L. (2015). *\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Introduction and Ch. 1

PART II

Week 6, Sept. 26, 28: Families, family structure and inequality

Take-home midterm due on Sept. 26, due at 12:30. (No Lecture)

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

Cherlin, A. (2014) *Labor’s Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class Family in America*. Selection from Ch. 5, “The Fall of the Working-Class Family”

Week 7, Oct. 3, 5: Family structure, inequality and policy

Readings: 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 8, Oct. 10, 12: Neighborhoods

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

Kneebone, E. & Holmes, N. (2016) "U.S. Concentrated Poverty in the Wake of the Great Recession". Brookings Institute, March 31, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/u-s-concentrated-poverty-in-the-wake-of-the-great-recession/>

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

Edin, K. & Shaefer, L. (2015). *\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Ch. 3 "A Room of One's Own".

Week 9, Oct. 17, 19: Neighborhoods

Monday Oct. 16—Neighborhood Project Data due by noon. Submit both to bCourses and to the google form (link and instructions for this will be sent in a bCourses announcement)

Oct. 19th: In-class presentation on the Data Science Module portion of the Neighborhood Project. Bring your computer or tablet to class!

Readings: Sharkey, P. & Faber, J. (2014) "Where, When, Why and For Whom Do Residential Contexts Matter? Moving Away From the Dichotomous Understanding of Neighborhood Effects". *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40:559-79

Hwang, J. & Sampson, R.J. (2014) "Divergent Pathways of Gentrification: Racial Inequality and the Social Order of Renewal in Chicago Neighborhoods." *American Sociological Review*, 79(4) 726-51

Sampson, R.J. & Raudenbush, S. (2001) "Disorder in Urban Neighborhoods—Does it Lead to Crime?" *Research in Brief, National Institute of Justice*, U.S. Department of Justice

Week 10, Oct. 24, 26: Public K-12 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)

Kirp, D. (2013). *Improbable Scholars*. New York: Oxford University Press. Introduction and Ch. 1

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, Oct. 31, Nov. 2: Higher Education

Readings: *The College Payoff*, Georgetown Univ.

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

Arum, R. & Roksa, J. (2014). *Aspiring Adults Adrift: Tentative Transitions of College Graduates*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1, 2

Week 12, Nov. 7, 9: Labor markets and work

Essay portion of Neighborhood Project due on Nov. 7, 11 am to bCourses.

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

Edin, K. & Shaefer, L. (2015). *\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Ch. 2 "Perilous Work", Ch. 4 "By Any Means Necessary", and "Conclusion: Where, Then, From Here?"

Week 13, Nov. 14, 16: 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. Introduction and Ch. 9

Rivera, L. (2012) "Hiring As Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms". *American Sociological Review*, 77(6) 999-1022

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

Week 14, Thanksgiving week (Nov. 21, 23): Mass Incarceration

No lecture this week.

2nd Personal Response Paper Due Nov. 21, 6 pm.

Turn in outline of this week's assigned reading, along with a comment or question for participation credit by 6 pm. Nov. 22

Readings: Western, B. (2006). *Punishment And Inequality In America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 1-3

Week 15, Nov. 28, 30: MASS INCARCERATION

Readings: Western, B. (2006). *Punishment And Inequality In America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 4-6

"RRR" week, Dec. 4-8, with extra office hours, TBA

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM: Due. Dec. 14th, 6 pm. Essay prompts posted Dec. 6th by 3 pm.

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