

Sociology 130AC
UC Berkeley, Fall 2019

Social Inequalities, American Cultures

Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 3 PM-4 PM, 145 Dwinelle

Instructor: Joanna Reed, Ph.D., joannareed@berkeley.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 10-12 (sign-up), Friday 11-12 (drop-in) and by appointment.
Sign up: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/dkikz>

Course Description:

This course explores 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.

This course may be challenging in several ways:

- **There is a lot of reading.** Some of it may make you uncomfortable, be conceptually difficult, and seem dry or overly technical.
- **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. Your questions should show some consideration for your audience, and your answers should show some knowledge and context for the topic being discussed.

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 collecting and analyzing sociological data through the class neighborhood project.

Required Readings and Reading Schedule:

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

This book is available at the campus bookstore and available as an electronic resource through the UCB library website. Look up the title on “Oskicat” and click on the ebook option.

Reader: The course reader can be purchased at the Copy Central Store at 2411 Telegraph Ave and is on bCourses.

Articles: Journal articles that are available through the library’s website are posted on bCourses but are not in the physical copy of the reader, if you buy one. These are indicated with a (bC).

Supplemental References: Throughout the semester, I post documents I think will be useful to you in the “Supplemental Resources” folder under “Files” on bCourses.

Reading Schedule: For any given week, please read in the order listed on the syllabus. Readings are assigned for the week (rather than the day) to allow for more flexibility in lecture, but we will generally consider them sequentially. I will provide more guidance on

what to read and when, and when readings should be paired together either in class or via a bCourses announcement prior to the week in question. In general, aim to have read the first reading listed before Monday's class, and completed all the reading for that week before Friday's class. Bring your readings with you to class, as you may need to refer to them during class discussions and activities.

EVALUATION:

Applying Theory Paper: 20% of grade

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

Neighborhood Project: 30% of grade. This is a two-part assignment. You will complete the fieldwork portion first, which consists of a neighborhood visit and observations. This is worth 10% of your grade. The written part of the assignment will be due later, and is worth 20% of your grade.

Take-Home Final Exam: 20% of grade

Quizzes and Participation throughout the semester: 10% of grade

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.

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 assignment prompt is posted on bCourses.

Neighborhood Project and Data Science Module: The project incorporates elements of fieldwork, working with data and a written essay. Our class will collect data that will become our class dataset. We will use this, along with census data, to analyze and map social patterns in local neighborhoods. There are specific instructions for these assignments posted on bCourses.

Quizzes and Participation: You will get credit for taking quizzes on bCourses that are announced in class. You will have 24 hours to complete a quiz once it is announced. The quizzes are meant to help you with reading comprehension and to encourage attendance in lecture; your answers do not need to be correct for you to get credit. In addition to the quizzes, we will likely have a few activities in class that will count for this part of the grade. You can also expect a short assignment in lieu of lecture on the Monday of Thanksgiving week. You cannot make up missed quizzes, but everyone will be able to miss one quiz/activity without a penalty, and I will give you some make up opportunities at the end of the semester.

GRADING POLICIES:

Exams and assignments must be 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.

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.

Turnitin: All of your assignments will be checked for plagiarism by Turnitin. 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.

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 during office hours, and consult Ch. 6 of the writing guide "Writing for Sociology", available on the Soc. department website.

Students are responsible for all material covered in lecture, including announcements, as well as keeping up with readings as listed on the syllabus. You will be expected to integrate materials from lecture and readings on exams and papers. Do not enroll in this class if you are unable (or do not plan) to attend lectures regularly. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out from the lecture slides or a friend what you missed—please do not ask me if you missed anything!

OFFICE HOURS:

I will have sign-up office hours on Wednesdays from 10-12. Sign up here: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/dkikz>

I will have drop-in office hours on Fridays from 11-12—no appointment necessary.

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 early in the semester. I can't help you if you don't communicate with me! 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.

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 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: Keep in mind that I may not be able to respond to email right away. Do not expect a response on weekends or outside of regular working hours. I do not answer emails when the answer is easily found on the course syllabus (i.e., “when are your office hours?”).

OTHER:

Accommodations: 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.

Technology: Please consider reducing the use of technology when it comes to reading and taking notes. **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. **Put your phone away during class**, and please do not text, check email or social media, shop, make travel plans, etc. during class. I will be enforcing a “no phones out” policy this semester. If you do not plan on participating and giving class your full attention, please do not come to class.

Lecture Slides: Lecture slides will be available on bCourses after class. Media clips and other resources discussed or used in lecture may not be on the posted slides. Please keep in mind that the slides are an outline for what is covered in class, and are not a substitute for your own note taking.

Student Learning Center: This is the primary academic support resource for Berkeley students, located in the Cesar Chavez Student Center on Lower Sproul Plaza. Visit the website or in person early in the semester to find what will be helpful to you.

<https://slc.berkeley.edu/>

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. 28, 30: Introductions

Readings: syllabus!

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

Recommended: Keister, L. (2014) "The One Percent". *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 40, pp. 347-367 (focus on "Defining the One Percent" and "Contemporary Income and Wealth Concentration") (bC)

Week 2: Sept. 4, 6: Foundational Theories of Inequality and Stratification:

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

Week 3: Sept. 9, 11, 13: Foundational Theories of Inequality and Stratification

Readings: DuBois, W.E. B. (1903/2003) *The Souls of Black Folk*. Ch. 6, 8, 11. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics

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>

Week 4: Sept. 16, 18, 20: More Theories of Inequality and Stratification: Building on Foundations

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

Risman, B. (2004) "Gender as a Social Structure: Theory Wrestling with Activism". *Gender & Society* 18(4):239-50 (bC)

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

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

Week 5: Sept. 23, 25, 27: Theories of Racial and Ethnic Inequality

Applying Theory Paper due on Sept. 27th, 5 pm.

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 (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

Bobo, L. (2017). "Racism in Trump's America: Reflections on Culture, Sociology and the U.S. 2016 Presidential Election". *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 68, S1 (bC)

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

Recommended: Pew Research Center, June 27, 2016. "On Views Of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart" (bC)

Week 6: Sept. 30, Oct. 2, 4: Racial and Ethnic Inequality

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

Zhou, M. (2004) "Are Asian Americans Becoming 'White'?" *Contexts*, Vol. 3 (bC)

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 7: Oct. 7, 9, 11: 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"

Gilens, M. & Page, B. (2014) "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups and Average Citizens". *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (bC)

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

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

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

Week 8: Oct. 14, 16, 18: Families and Family Structure

Take Home Midterm Due Oct. 18th at 5 pm. 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

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"

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

Recommended: 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 9: Oct. 21, 23, 25: Neighborhoods

Readings: 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

Clampet-Lundquist, S., Edin, K., Kling, J. & Duncan, D. (2011) "Moving Teenagers out of High-Risk Neighborhoods: How Girls Fare Better Than Boys". *American Journal of Sociology* 116(4) 1154-1189 (bC)

Week 10: Oct. 28, 30, Nov.1: Neighborhoods

THERE IS A LOT HAPPENING THIS WEEK, SEE BELOW!

Wed. Oct. 30th: Neighborhood Project fieldwork due by 5 pm. Submit as an assignment on bCourses AND to the google form (link and instructions for this will be sent in a bCourses announcement). You must do both for full credit.

Friday Nov. 1: In-class presentation of the Data Science Module portion of the Neighborhood Project. Bring your laptop or tablet to class, or plan to look on with a classmate. Do not miss this!

Readings: 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".

Verma, P., Rinzler, P., Kaplan, E. & Zuk, M. (2019) "Rising Housing Costs and Re-Segregation in the San Francisco Bay Area". *Urban Displacement Project*, UC Berkeley

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 (bC)

Recommended: 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 (bC)

Week 11: Nov. 4, 6, 8: 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 (bC)

Jimenez, T. & Horowitz, A. (2015) "Whitewashing Academic Mediocrity". *Contexts*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 38-42 (bC)

The College Payoff, The Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University (bC)

Week 12: Nov. 13, 15: Education/ Labor Markets

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

Week 13: Nov. 18, 20, 22: Labor Markets

Neighborhood Assignment due on Nov. 18, by 5 pm.

Edin, K. & Shaefer, L. (2015). *\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Ch. 2 "Perilous Work"

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

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

Week 14: Nov. 25* (Thanksgiving Break): Labor Markets

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

*We will not have lecture on Nov. 25th. We will have an alternative assignment that will count towards your participation grade based on the above reading.

Week 15: Dec. 2, 4, 6: Mass Incarceration

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

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

Reading, Review and Recitation week: Dec. 9-13

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM: Due. Dec. 17th, 5 pm to bCourses. Questions will be available one week prior to the exam due date.

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