This course provides an introduction to the field of sociology through engagement with major contemporary issues. The underlying objective is for students to develop their “sociological imaginations” in relation to the world around them. The course is structured in three parts which each raise a major contemporary social issue: Mass Incarceration; Surveillance; and “Illegal Immigration”. We begin each section by reflecting upon the “common sense” that shapes our understandings of these issues: what are the ideas, perspectives and underlying assumptions that we, often unconsciously, hold? Having excavated this “common sense” we then turn to sociology to develop radically new ways of approaching these issues. The goal is to utilize sociology, with its emphasis on analytic, theoretical and critical thinking, to disrupt our “common sense” and enable us to develop new ways of understanding the major political, economic and social issues of our time.

INTRODUCTION – What is Sociology?

1/16 Course Introduction: Sociology as the Disruption of “Common Sense”

In Class Viewing of Documentary 13th (2016)

PART 1: MASS INCARCERATION

“Mass Incarceration is the New Jim Crow” Michelle Alexander

1/18 Mass Incarceration as a Racial Caste System

In Class Viewing of Documentary 13th (2016)

1/23 The Historical Evolution of Racial Caste Systems
Alexander, Ch.1 “The Rebirth of Caste” (pp. 20-58)

1/25 The “New Jim Crow”: Mass Incarceration
Alexander, Ch.2 “The Lockdown” (pp.59-96)

1/30 Beyond the Prison Walls
Alexander, Ch.4 “The Cruel Hand” (pp.137-172)

2/1 Historical Parallels & Divergences
Alexander, Excerpts of Ch.5 “The New Jim Crow” (pp. 178-208; 217-220)

2/6 The Economies of “Peculiar Institutions”

2/8 “Colorblindness” and the Limits of Civil Rights Advocacy
Alexander, Chapter 6 “The Fire this Time” (pp.221-261)

2/13 The Dialectic of Resistance & Repression

2/15 Conclusion

https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/incarcerated-women-and-girls/


***MIDTERM Exam distributed during class on 2/15

*MIDTERM EXAM DUE on Monday 2/19 by 10pm*
PART 2: SURVEILLANCE

“To be governed is to be watched…” Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

2/20 Surveillance in the “War on Terror”


In-Class Viewing of Documentary *Spying on the Homefront* (2007)  
[https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/homefront/](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/homefront/)

2/22 Surveillance as a “Technology of Power”

Foucault (pp.170-177; 195-209)

2/27 The Plantation Surveillance System & the “Accumulation of Bodies”


3/1 Chinese Exclusion & the “Benevolent Gaze”

Parenti, Ch. 5 “Cruel Gam Saan: Surveillance and Chinese Exclusion” and Ch. 11 “The Benevolent Gaze: Dossiers and the Helping Professions” (pp.61-76; 151-168)


3/6 The “Eye of Justice”: *Surveillance and the Criminal Justice System*


Parenti, Ch. 12 “The Eye of Justice” (pp.169-182)

3/8 The “War on Terror” and the “Privacy Paradigm”

Parenti, Ch. 14 “Fear as Institution: 9/11 and Surveillance Triumphant” (pp.199-212)

Discrimination by Design: Racialized Strategies of Pre-Emption


Segue: Surveillance and the Identification of Citizens

Lyon, Ch.1 & Excerpt of Ch.2 (pp.19-55)

PART 3: “ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION”

“Ilegality’ is lived through a palpable sense of deportability…” Nicholas DeGenova

The State Monopolization of the “Legitimate Means of Movement”


The Historical Origin of the “Illegal Alien”


SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

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The Quota Act and the Reconstruction of Race through Immigration Law

Ngai, Ch.1 “The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 and the Reconstruction of Race in Immigration Law” (pp.17-55)

Deportation Policy and the Racialized Production of the “Illegal Alien”

Ngai, Ch.2 “Deportation Policy and the Making and Unmaking of Illegal Aliens” (pp.56-90)

4/10  Filipino Migrants: *The Exclusion and Repatriation of Former Colonial Subjects*

Ngai, Ch.3 “From Colonial Subject to Undesirable Alien: Filipino Migration in the Invisible Empire” (pp.93-126)

4/12  “Imported Colonialism”: *Braceros, “Wetbacks” and Mexican Agricultural Labor*

Ngai, Ch.4 “Braceros, “Wetbacks,” and the National Boundaries of Class” (pp.127-166)

4/17  The Production and Political Economy of Migrant “Illegality”


4/19  From Exclusion to Confession: *The Cold War Chinese Immigration Crisis*

Ngai, Ch. 6 “The Cold War Chinese Immigration Crisis and the Confession Cases” (pp.202-224)

4/24  Immigration Reform and the Limits of the Liberal Critique

Ngai, Ch.7 “The Liberal Critique and Reform of Immigration Policy” and Epilogue (pp.227-270)

4/26  Resistances: The Movement for Immigrant Rights


Additional reading TBA.

***Final Exam distributed during class on 4/26***

*FINAL EXAM DUE on Monday 5/7 by 3pm*

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

10%  Attendance & Participation

25%  Pop Quizzes

25%  Midterm Exam (*Due 2/19*)

40%  Final Exam (*Due 5/7*)
Students are expected to thoroughly and carefully read the course policies below.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:

Class attendance is mandatory and lectures are structured to maximize student participation. Being present and actively participating in class is central to the learning process. Attendance will be taken at every class meeting and it is students’ responsibility to make sure that they have signed the attendance sheet. If you are present in class and for some reason fail to sign the attendance sheet, you are required to notify me of this via email within 24 hours.

Students are allotted 3 absences without penalty. This allotment is intended to account for all illnesses and any family and personal matters, as well as to relieve me of the enormous administrative work of dealing with absence requests on an individual basis. Please do not email to notify me or explain absences – the absence allotment is intended to accommodate for any/all reasons for missing class. Exceptions/accommodations to the attendance policy will only be made in situations of serious extended illness or severe crises, and require submitting the relevant documentation as well as a meeting with me to discuss the situation.

Class begins promptly at 10 minutes after the scheduled hour. Please be present on time as late arrivals disrupt the class. Students are expected to remain in the classroom until the conclusion of the lecture. Students should never leave class early without discussing this with me prior. Late arrivals and early departures will be noted and will impact the attendance/participation grade.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Our primary work as sociologists involves reading – this course requires extensive and careful reading. The assignments listed for each class meeting are to be read prior to that scheduled class. The expectation is that students allocate the necessary time to undertake a thorough and careful reading. The examinations for this course consist of take-home essays which students will have a limited time to complete. Thus highlighting, underlining and notetaking throughout the semester will prove highly beneficial for these exams.

All readings listed on the syllabus are included in the course reader, available at Replica Digital Ink (510 549-9991) at 2138 Oxford Street (by the Center Street entrance to campus near the Downtown Berkeley BART station), around the corner from Starbucks). Course readings are also available on bCourses.

Whether you choose to purchase the course reader or utilize the digital copies on Bcourses, you are expected to bring the assigned readings to every class meeting (as we will be doing extensive readings of the texts together in class).

READING GUIDES:

Included in the course reader (and available on bCourses) are reading guides for most of the assigned readings. You should always refer to the reading guides before beginning the assigned
readings as they are intended to make the process easier (especially for the more difficult theoretical texts). Utilizing these guides will enable you to focus on the most important issues and help clarify your reading. Paying careful attention to the questions/issues/concepts listed in the guides is crucial for doing well on the pop quizzes.

**POP QUIZZES:**

To ensure that students keep up with reading assignments, 6 pop quizzes will be given throughout the semester at unannounced times. The quizzes will be quick and short and will assess basic comprehension of the assigned readings. You don’t have to fully understand the readings to do well on the quizzes (we will make full sense of them together in class), but they do require that you read the assigned texts fully and carefully. They also require that you pay careful attention to the reading guides provided.

Out of the 6 pop quizzes given, only 4 will count towards the final grade. This accommodates for any students who miss pop quizzes due to absences (there are no make-ups for pop- quizzes). For students who are present and complete more than the required 4 pop quizzes, the lowest grades will be dropped. Given that this policy enables students to miss 1/3 of the total pop quizzes, no further accommodations or exceptions will be made. I have purposely set this generous allotment for missed quizzes to accommodate for any/all situations and thus to relieve myself of the extensive work of dealing with individual requests for accommodations.

**EXAMS:**

The midterm and final for this course will be take-home examinations that consist of short essays that assess students’ mastery of the course materials. Essays will be geared towards asking students to synthesize the scholarship covered in each part of the course, and to apply relevant concepts and theories to our empirical cases. The distribution and due dates for the exams are listed on this syllabus. Students are expected to be aware of these dates and to schedule and prepare accordingly. Please do not contact me with requests to change due dates because of other academic obligations. Late submissions will result in a grade penalty.

**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Please notify me immediately if you require any special accommodations for the course. If you are registered with the DSP program, please ensure that your authorization letter is forwarded to me at the beginning of the semester. Students who wish to utilize DSP accommodations for the midterm or final exams are required to contact me about this well in advance.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

All written work must be your own. Any words, or even ideas, drawn from another source (even if paraphrased) must be appropriately cited.