

Introduction to Sociology

University of California, Berkeley
Spring 2021

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Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 –11:00

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Office Hours: Monday 2-3 & Thursday 1-2

*Sign up at wejoinin.com/LalehBehbehanian

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 that each focus on major contemporary issues: Mass Incarceration; “Illegal Immigration” and Mass Deportation; and Surveillance. We begin each section by reflecting upon the “common sense” that shapes our understandings of these issues: what are the dominant ideas 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.

PART 1: MASS INCARCERATION

“Mass Incarceration is the New Jim Crow.” Michelle Alexander

1/19 Course Introduction: *Sociology as the Disruption of “Common Sense”*

*Read the course requirements and policies laid out on Pp.6-8 of this syllabus.

1/21 *Mass Incarceration*

Viewing Assignment: 13th (2016) <https://youtu.be/krfcq5pF8u8>

Alexander, Michelle. 2012. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press. Introduction (Pp.1-8; 12-17)

*Note that there is no class meeting today – instead, watch the documentary above (which is 1 hour and 40 minutes long) as well as complete the reading assignment above.

1/26 *Mass Incarceration as a Racial Caste System*

Alexander, Ch.1 “The Rebirth of Caste” (Pp. 20-38)

1/28 *Tactical Innovation and the Civil Rights Movement*

McAdam, Doug. 1983. “Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency” *American Sociological Review* 48, no.6. (Pp.735-745)

2/2 *The Demise of Jim Crow*

McAdam, “Tactical Innovation.” (Pp.745-752)

2/4 *“Law and Order”: The Rise of the “New Jim Crow”*

Alexander, Ch.1 “The Rebirth of Caste” (Pp. 38-57)

2/9 *“War on Drugs”: The “Engine” of Mass Incarceration*

Alexander, Ch.2 “The Lockdown” (Pp.58-68; 71-79; 81-83; 85-88; 92-94)

2/11 *Beyond the Prison Walls*

Alexander, Ch.4 “The Cruel Hand” (Pp.137-148; 150-157; 159-164)

In Class Viewing of *Do Not Resist* (2016)

2/16 *The “New Jim Crow”: Historical Parallels & Divergences*

Alexander, Excerpts of Ch.5 “The New Jim Crow” (Pp.176-182; 185-189; 192-195; 197-202; 206-208)

2/18 *The Economies of “Peculiar Institutions”*

Waquant, Loic. 2002. "From slavery to mass incarceration: Rethinking the ‘race question’ in the US." *New Left Review* 13 (2002): 41-60.

2/23 *Mass Incarceration as Counterinsurgency*

Murch, Donna. 2015. "Ferguson's Inheritance." *Jacobin*.
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/ferguson-police-black-lives-matter/>

2/25 *Conclusion: Three Approaches to Mass Incarceration*

Murch, Donna. 2019. "How Race Made the Opioid Crisis." *Boston Review*. April 10.
<http://bostonreview.net/forum/donna-murch-how-race-made-opioid-crisis>

***Exam 1 distributed**

3/2 **NO CLASS – EXAM 1 DUE**

***** EXAM 1 DUE on 3/2*****

PART 2: "ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION" & MASS DEPORTATION

"'Illegality' is lived through a palpable sense of deportability." Nicholas DeGenova

3/4 *The State's Monopoly of the "Legitimate Means of Movement"*

Torpey, John. 1998. "Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate 'Means of Movement'" *Sociological Theory* 16(3): 239-259. (Pp.239-244; 245-247; 248-256)

3/9 *The Historical Origin of the "Illegal Alien"*

Ngai, Mae M. 2005. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. "Note on Language and Terminology," Introduction and Preface to Part 1 (Pp. xix-xx; 1-11; 17-20)

3/11 *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.21-29; 35-50)

3/16 Race & Pandemics: From Smallpox to Coronavirus

Shah, Nayan. 2001. *Contagious Divides : Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Pp.11; 12-13; 15-16; 19; 41-43; 44)

Burton, Nylah. 2020. "The coronavirus exposes the history of racism and 'cleanliness'" *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2020/2/7/21126758/coronavirus-xenophobia-racism-china-asians> (Pp.1-3 only)

Kim, Joey S. 2020. "Orientalism in the Age of Covid-19" *Los Angeles Review of Books*. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/short-takes/orientalism-age-covid-19/>

3/18 Deportation Policy and the Racialized Production of the "Illegal Alien"

Ngai, Ch.1 "The Johnson-Read Act" and Ch.2 "Deportation Policy and the Making and Unmaking of Illegal Aliens" (Pp.50-51; 54-68; 71-76; 82; 84-88; 89-90)

3/23 Spring Break

3/25 Spring Break

3/30 The Production and Political Economy of Migrant "Illegality"

De Genova, Nicholas. "The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant 'Illegality'" in *Governing Immigration through Crime: A Reader*. Eds. Julie A. Dowling and Jonathan Xavier Inda. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (Pp.41-55)

4/1 The Lived Experience of "Illegality"

No Assignment

In Class Viewing of *Beyond Borders: Undocumented Mexican Americans* (2016)

***Exam 2 distributed**

4/6 NO CLASS – EXAM 2 DUE

***** EXAM 2 DUE on 4/6*****

4/8 *Mass Deportation*

Golash-Boza, Tanya Maria. 2015. *Deported: Immigrant Policing, Disposable Labor, and Global Capitalism*. New York: New York University Press. Preface, Introduction and Ch.3 (Pp.vii-x; 1-19; 94-95; 105-107)

4/13 *“Global Apartheid”*

Golash-Boza, Ch.5, Ch.6 and Conclusion (Pp.167-169; 199-203; 209-217; 256-265)

4/15 *Incarceration as a Settler Colonial Strategy of Elimination*

Hernández, Kelly Lytle. 2017. *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. (Pp.1-15; 26-30; 33-36; 42-44; 195-198)

PART 3: SURVEILLANCE

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

4/20 *The History of Surveillance in the U.S.*

Parenti, Christian. 2003. *The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America from Slavery to the War on Terror*. New York: Basic Books. Chapters 1 & 2 (Pp.1-32)

In Class Viewing of *Spying on the Homefront* (2007)

4/22 *Surveillance in the “War on Terror” & the Right to “Privacy”*

Parenti, Ch. 5 and 14 (Pp.61-76; 199-212)

4/27 *Discrimination by Design: Risk Assessment*

Marx, Gary T. 2007. “What’s new about the ‘new surveillance’? Classifying for change and continuity” in *The Surveillance Studies Reader*. Ed. Sean P. Hier and Josh Greenberg. New York: Open University Press. (Pp.83-89)

Ferguson, Andrew Guthrie. 2017. *The Rise of Big Data Policing: Surveillance, Race and*

the Future of Law Enforcement. New York: New York University Press. Ch.1 and Ch.3 (Pp.7-12; 34-40; 42-44; 47-52)

Angwin, Julia, Jeff Larson, Surya Mattu and Lauren Kirchner. 2016. "Machine Bias: There's software used across the country to predict future criminals. And it's biased against blacks." *ProPublica*. May 23.
(<https://www.propublica.org/article/machine-bias-risk-assessments-in-criminal-sentencing>).

4/29 "Hot Spots": Spatial Predictive Policing
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Ferguson, Ch.4 "Where we Police: Placed-Based Predictive Policing"
(Pp.62-67; 72-76; 88-90)

Lum, Kristian and William Isaac. 2016. "To Predict and Serve?" *Significance* 13(5): 14-19. (<https://hrdag.org/publications/to-predict-and-serve/>).

Alexander, Michele. 2018. "The Newest Jim Crow." *The New York Times*. November 8.
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/08/opinion/sunday/criminal-justice-reforms-race-technology.html>)

***Exam 3 distributed**

***** EXAM 3 DUE on 5/10*****

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

30% Exam 1 (*Due 3/2*)

35% Exam 2 (*Due 4/6*)

35% Exam 3 (*Due 5/10*)

Students are expected to thoroughly and carefully read the course policies below.

DO NOT email me with questions that can be answered by referring to this syllabus.

LECTURES:

All lectures will be held via **Zoom** (<https://zoom.us/download>) and will begin promptly at 10 minutes after the scheduled hour (**9:40 pm**). All lectures will be **recorded** and made available to students (access to recordings is limited to students in the course only). While you will have access to these recordings, students are expected to attend the real time lectures – this kind of

active engagement and discussion is crucial for the learning process and will make the course much more enjoyable. Attending real time lectures will also enable us to build our community in the classroom, which is particularly important given the social isolation we all struggle with during this pandemic. I also ask that you have your video turned on during lecture (although I understand this may not always be possible), as actually seeing each other is crucial for community building and connecting as a class.

Please note that I do not distribute lecture slides or notes.

REQUIRED READINGS:

The primary work for this class is 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, open-book exams which you will have a limited time to complete and which will require extensive citation (in other words, your answers to the exam questions will require you to provide the corresponding page numbers from the text). Hence, keeping up with the readings and notetaking throughout the semester are crucial for performing well on 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). You must first purchase the reader on their website (<https://store.replicadigitalink.com/>), and then you'll have the option of picking it up or having it shipped to you.

All course readings are **also available on bCourses**. However, I strongly recommend that you utilize a course reader rather than these digital copies. Extensive research indicates that we learn and process information much more effectively with hard copies. The course reader will also prove highly advantageous for the exams (all your readings/notes will be organized and easily accessible).

READING GUIDES:

Included in the course reader (and available on bCourses) are reading guides for all 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.

EXAMS:

The 3 exams for this course will be **open-book, take-home examinations** that consist of short essays that assess students' mastery of the course materials. Exams will be cumulative (covering material from the entirety of the semester) and will be geared towards asking students to synthesize the scholarship covered in the course. Exams will require providing citation that

illustrates that answers have been drawn directly from the relevant texts. Hence, keeping up with assigned readings will be crucial for exam performance.

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. You should check these deadlines against your other academic obligations at the beginning of the semester and ensure that you are able to meet them before deciding to remain in this course. **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 ACCOMODATIONS:

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 accommodation letter is forwarded to me at the beginning of the semester. Students who wish to utilize DSP accommodations for the 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. Be aware that all submissions for this class are routinely checked for plagiarism by bCourses. The system will automatically compare your submitted document with all other student submissions on bCourses (including previous years), academic sources and all other publicly available documents on the internet.