

SOCI 130 Social Inequalities (4)

Fall, 2024

Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30-10:59 a.m.

20 Social Sciences

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will examine the patterns and processes of social inequalities which exist in the United States today from a sociological perspective. While the focus will be primarily on the contemporary American experience, some consideration will be given as to how social inequalities have played out in other times and places. The course begins by describing the extent and prevalence of current social inequalities in American society, with a focus on class, race and gender differences. We will next turn our attention to different conceptual frameworks and theoretical explanations of inequality, beginning with the work of classical sociologists around systems of stratification before turning to more contemporary iterations of theory which look at the constructions of race and gender, and how they intersect with social class. The questions that animate this section include how differences are socially constructed and arranged hierarchically so that members of diverse social groups may be privileged or disadvantaged in the game of life. How do the intersection of one's race, gender, and class background shape their life opportunities and outcomes across different social domains? Given that we are never only one identity or positioned one way in society, we will examine how cross cutting identities play out in different ways to allow some people to secure resources, while others are denied. After the midterm we will examine how different economic, political, and cultural institutions, such as the family, school, residence, and work, serve to perpetuate and reproduce inequalities by maintaining a web of advantage or disadvantage for the individuals caught up within them. At the end of the semester, we will give some consideration about the relationship of current political systems to contemporary inequalities and the struggles they generate in the United States and across the globe.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students should be able to do the following:

1. Describe the inequalities which exist within overall social structure of the United States, with a focus on the inequalities based on the intersections of class, race, and gender.
2. Apply different concepts and theoretical perspectives to explain why social inequalities exist.
3. Explain how social inequalities may be reproduced or challenged within and across an array of institutional domains over time.
4. Describe the relationship of social inequalities to the U.S. political system.
5. Apply various course concepts and ideas to understanding your own social location and biographical experience.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND PROCESS:

Generally, for class I will be presenting via PowerPoint an overview, which will provide further context and more depth about the topic(s) and readings being covered for the period. But this will be no substitute for doing the assigned readings. While my presentations will serve as a “spine” for the course, I hope students come prepared to discuss the readings assigned for every class and ask any questions they might have about it. Occasionally, I’ll be using some videos and other media to convey course content. Moreover, I will post for most classes different analytical exercises called SEEs (Student Engagement Exercises) to keep students engaged. These SEEs will also count towards the participation component of your grade.

Note this class may make things feel “uneasy” for you in a couple of different ways, as social inequalities are a controversial topic. First, some of the materials you read will be new to you, sometimes theoretically dense and intellectually challenging. I am sure you are up to the challenge and hope you find it exciting to encounter new ideas. Part of my job is to help you “unpack” some of the more abstract material and explain them in concrete terms. Please do not be afraid to ask if you have questions about something, because there’s a strong chance you are not alone. The course may provoke “uneasiness” in a second sense: depending on one’s position in the social structure, some of the material you encounter may evoke strong feelings and reactions. Some of the materials may defy your “common sense” about how the social world works, causing some confusion and disorientation. For others, again depending on position in the scheme of thing, the material might produce sadness or anger. While understanding that personal experience is valid and real, understand also that experience is socially structured and hence not universal. People in different position may read the same material in different ways. I hope you’ll endeavor to be open to listening respectfully to the diverse experiences of others, even as you might strenuously disagree with them. Given that no one is in an omniscient position to hold a monopoly on Truth (this includes your Dear Professor!), by engaging in generous dialogue and civil discussion with one another, as individuals we are better able to expand our collective vision of the world and thus more fully approach a modest version of the truth.

In both instances of “uneasiness” described above, the SEEs exercises mentioned above are a good forum to share whatever thoughts and feelings you might have about anything you’ve encountered in the course, whether the readings, my presentations, or the comments/questions raised by other students.

REQUIRED READINGS:

1. Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*, 3rd edition. Routledge, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0813343587 (Note, you will want to get the third edition, as it is substantially updated from previous ones.) You are welcomed to obtain the book from whatever source is cheapest, but here is the Amazon link for the book for your reference:

<https://www.amazon.com/Aint-Makin-Aspirations-Attainment-Neighborhood/dp/0813343585>

2. There is no other required text for this class. Instead, there are a series of weekly readings (around 4-5 per week and typically between 50-75 pages total.) These can be found on your bCourse under the appropriate weekly module and are listed briefly on the syllabus below. It is expected that students will have completed the reading prior to class on the date assigned. This will help you get the most out of both the reading(s) and the in-class presentation and discussion. Note that the readings under the weekly Canvas module will have an T (complete for Tuesday), or TH (complete for Thursday).

REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES:

Autobiographical Essay (3-4 pages due September 12)	100 points
Midterm Exam (Scheduled for October 17)	150 points
Two out of three Analytic Journal (150 points each due various dates)	300 points
Final Exam (including a 6-8 pp. take home component worth 150 points)	350 points
<u>Class Participation (includes SEEs)</u>	<u>100 points</u>
TOTAL: 1000 points	

Grading Scale in Terms of 1000 Points

A+=Above 950	B+ = 899-870	D+ 699-670
C+ = 799-770		B = 869-830
A = 930-950	C = 769-730	
D = 669-630		
A- = 929-900		B- = 829-800
	C- = 729-700	
D- = 630-600		
		F = Below 600

Attendance Policy:

Regular attendance at classes is not only expected but considered essential for successful academic work. If you anticipate missing a class and can let me know ahead of time. Please do so via email. Note that class participation is a portion of your final grade. There are ways you may participate even if you are shy and introverted. Let me know privately if you have any concerns in this area. If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please let me know even if you don't yet have the letter from DSP.

Students with Disabilities

Phone: (510) 642-0518 | Email: dsp@berkeley.edu

The Disabled Students' Program (DSP) supports students with disabilities in achieving academic success. DSP staff includes disability specialists, professional development counselors, and accessibility experts that work with students with disabilities throughout their educational career.

DSP serves currently enrolled UC Berkeley students with documented disabilities seeking undergraduate and graduate degrees. For more information on applying for DSP services go to: <https://dsp.berkeley.edu/students/new-students>

Statement on Classroom Climate:

We are all responsible for creating a learning environment that is welcoming, inclusive, equitable, and respectful. The expectation in this class is that we all live up to this responsibility, even during vigorous debate or disagreement, and that we will intervene if exclusionary or harassing behavior occurs. Please see the “Class Climate” document posted under the course orientation. If you feel that these expectations are not being met, you can consult your instructors or seek assistance from campus resources.

Mental Health and Wellness:

All students — regardless of background or identity — may experience a range of issues that can become barriers to learning. These issues include, but are not limited to, strained relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol and other drug problems, difficulties with concentration, sleep, and eating, and/or lack of motivation. Such mental health concerns can diminish both academic performance and the capacity to participate in daily activities. In the event that you need mental health support, or are concerned about a friend, UC Berkeley offers many services, such as free short-term counseling at University Health Services.

An excellent campus website having links to many resources is: <http://recalibrate.berkeley.edu/>
Another campus website addressing mental health services in specific reference to this time of the coronavirus pandemic is: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/coronavirus/student-mental-health>

Remember that seeking help is a good and courageous thing to do — both for yourself and for those who care about you.

Academic Integrity Statement (retrieved from

<https://teaching.berkeley.edu/statements-course-policies>):

“You are a member of an academic community at one of the world’s leading research universities. Universities like Berkeley create knowledge that has a lasting impact in the world of ideas and on the lives of others; such knowledge can come from an undergraduate paper as well as the lab of an internationally known professor. One of the most important values of an academic community is the balance between the free flow of ideas and the respect for the intellectual property of others. Researchers don’t use one another’s research without permission; scholars and students always use proper citations in papers; professors may not circulate or publish student papers without the writer’s permission; and students may not circulate or post materials (handouts, exams, syllabi--any class materials) from their classes without the written permission of the instructor.

Any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in

publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. If you are not clear about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or examination, be sure to seek clarification from your instructor or GSI beforehand. Finally, you should keep in mind that as a member of the campus community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors and will be evaluated on your own merits. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty—including a formal discipline file, possible loss of future internship, scholarship, or employment opportunities, and denial of admission to graduate school—are simply not worth it.”

The complete Academic Code, which covers acts of misconduct including assistance during examination, fabrication of data, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and assisting other students in acts of misconduct, among others, may be found in the University Catalog and here: <https://conduct.berkeley.edu/integrity/> While I recognize this is not a problem for most students, most times, to encourage these standards I will be using Turnitin.com as a means of detecting any unoriginal work. Note it is better to NOT do an assignment than to turn on one that is plagiarized. If you do NOT turn in a written assignment, you will receive half the available points. If you turn in a plagiarized assignment, you will receive 0 points and will likely fail the course.

COURSE OUTLINE and READINGS:

Please note: The syllabus is subject to change in order to more fully meet the needs of the students and the instructor. Any updates will be clearly communicated and posted on Canvas and will not result in additional work. Please be sure to check your bcourse (Canvas) on a regular basis for any updates to the syllabus and further course announcements. You are responsible for course material even when you've missed class. Students are expected to have completed the readings before class on the date they are assigned so that they may participate fully in class discussions, student engagement exercises, and be able to ask questions about the materials. Note that a reading marked “T” is expected to be completed by Tuesday, and “TH” by Thursday.

PART I: Describing Social Inequalities

Week 1: August 27 & 29 -- Introducing Social Inequalities

Readings:

1. Lisa Keister and Darby Southgate, Chapter 1 in *Inequality: A Contemporary Approach to Race, Class and Gender*, 2nd ed. (T)
2. John Marger, Chapter 7 on “Stratification Systems and Social Mobility” in *Social Inequality*, 6th ed. (T)
3. Hamilton Carroll, “‘If You Want to Know Why 2016 Happened, Read This Book’: Class, Race, and the Literature of Disinvestment (the Case of Hillbilly Elegy)” (TH)

4. Rebecca Scott, “The Sociology of Coal Hollow: Safety, Othering, and Representations of Inequality.” (**Recommended but NOT required**). (TH)

5. Jay MacLeod, Chapters 1 & 3 of *Ain't No Makin' It*, 3rd ed.

Week 2: September 3 & 5 -- The Class Structure: An Overview

Readings:

1. Dennis Gilbert, Chapter 1 on “Social Class in America” in *The American Class Structure in an Age of Growing Inequality*, 11th edition.

2. Christine Percheski, “Income Inequality.”

3. Jessica Semega and Melissa Kollar, “2021 Income Inequality Increased for the First Time since 2011.”

4. Jessica Semega, “2022 Income Inequality Decreased for the First Time since 2007.”

5. Michael Hout, “Social Mobility.”

6. Stephen Rose, “Squeezing the Middle Class.”

Week 3: September 10 & 12 -- Moving Up and Down the Class Structure

Readings:

1. Diana Kendall, “Class in the United States: Not only alive but reproducing”

2. Rachel Sherman, Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence*.

3. Barbara Ehrenreich, Excerpt from *Nickle and Dimed*.

4. Sharon Hays, Excerpt from *Flat Broke with Children*.

Assignment: Autobiographical Assignment due September 12

PART II Explaining Social Inequalities

Week 4: September 17 & 19 -- Theoretical Perspectives on Social Inequalities: Conflict Approaches.

Readings:

1. Karl Marx, “Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism”

2. Max Weber, “Class, Status and Party.”

3. Eric Olin Wright, Chapter 1 “Class Analysis” in *Class Counts*.

4. Jay MacLeod, Chapter 2 in *Ain't No Makin' It*, 3rd ed.

Week 5: September 24 & 27 -- Theoretical Perspectives on Social Inequalities: Functionalism and its Discontents

Readings:

1. Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification."
2. Melvin Tulmin, "Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis."
3. Martin Marger, Chapter 13 on "Ideology and Legitimation" in *Social Inequality*, 3rd ed.
4. Pew Research Center, "How the American middle class has changed in the past five decades."

Assignment: Analytic Journals #1 due on September 27.

Week 6: October 1 & 3 -- Theoretical Perspectives on Social Inequalities: Looking Beyond Class to Race and Gender

Readings:

1. Patricia Collins and Sirma Bilge, Chapter. 1 "What Is Intersectionality?"
2. WEB DuBois, Chapter 6 on "Of The Ruling of Men" in *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*
3. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Chapter 1 on "The Strange Enigma of Race in Contemporary America" in *Racism Without Racists*.
4. Institute for Women's Policy Research, "The Gender Wage Gap."

Week 7: October 8 & 10 -- Recent Perspectives on Social Inequalities: Forms of Capital

Readings:

1. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital."
2. Susan Newman and Donna Celano, "Worlds Apart."
3. Annette Lareau, "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families."
4. Jay MacLeod, Chapters 4-6 of *Ain't No Makin' It*, 3rd ed.

8/19/24

Week 8: October 15 & 17 -- Catch up and Review: Midterm will be on October 17

Readings: Jay MacLeod, Chapters 7 & 8 of *Ain't No Makin' It*, 3rd ed.

In class Midterm on October 17th; The take home component will be due October 17th at 11:59 p.m.

PART III Key Institutional Mechanisms of Social Reproduction

Week 9: October 22 & 24 -- Family Structure and Culture

Readings:

1. Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty."
2. Sara McLanahan & Christine Percheski, "Family Structure and the Reproduction of Inequalities."
3. Laura Tach and Kathryn Edin, "The Social Safety Net After Welfare Reform: Recent Developments and Consequences for Household Dynamics."
4. Jay MacLeod, Chapters 9 & 10 of *Ain't No Makin' It*, 3rd ed.

Week 10: October 29 & 31 -- Education and Inequality

Readings:

1. Jabari Mahiri et al., "Responding to Educational Inequality: Addressing Race and Social Class Disparities to Increase Opportunity."
2. Suzanne Metler, Chapter 1 on "Creating Degrees of Inequality" in *Degrees of Inequality*.
3. Jay MacLeod, Chapters 11 & 12 of *Ain't No Makin' It*, 3rd ed.

Assignment: Analytic Journals #2 due on October 31.

Week 11: November 5 & 7 -- The Power of Place: Residential Segregation and Habitus

Readings:

1. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, Chapter 2 on "Constructing the Ghetto" in *American Apartheid*."
2. Eric Chyn and Lawrence F. Katz, "Neighborhoods Matter: Assessing the Evidence for Place Effects."

3. Center for American Progress, “Systematic Inequality: Displacement, Exclusion, and Segregation.”
4. Victor Rios, “Stealing a Bag of Potato Chips.”
5. Jay MacLeod, Chapters 13-14 of *Ain't No Makin' It*, 3rd ed.

Week 13: November 12 & 14 -- Labor Markets

Readings:

1. Andrew Cherlin, Chapter 5 on “The Fall of the Working Class Family” in *Labor's Love Lost*.
2. Arne Kalleberg, Chapters 1 & 2 on “Job Quality in the United States” and “Economic Transformations” in *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs*.
3. Stephan Rose and Heidi Hartmann, “It’s Still a Man’s Labor Market.”
4. Jay MacLeod, Chapters 15-16 of *Ain't No Makin' It*, 3rd ed.

PART IV: Inequality, Politics and Beyond

Week 14: November 19 & 21 Inequalities, Politics and Public Policy

Readings:

1. G. William Domhoff, “Who Rules America.” Website.
2. Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens.”
3. Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, “How the Right Rules.” Youtube video from the Commonwealth Club.

Week 15: November 26. (No class on November 28, Thanksgiving)

Readings:

Give Thanks, Review and Catch Up (Especially *Ain't No Makin' It!*)

Week 16: December 3 & 5 Inequalities: Past, Present and Future

Readings:

1. Ho-fung Hung, “Recent Trends in Global Economic Inequality.”
2. Paolo Gerbaudo, “After Globalization.”

3. Filipe Campante and David Yanagizawa-Drott, “Did declining social mobility cause Trump’s rise? In a word, no.”
4. Diana Mutz, “Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote.”

Assignment: Analytic Journals #3 due on December 5.

The final exam will have both an in class and take-home essay component. The in-class final is scheduled for Tue, Dec 17 • 3:00P - 6:00P • Exam Location TBD. The take home final component will be due on Tuesday, December 17th by 11:59 p.m. A study guide with the take-home question will be available by the last week of class, if not before. An optional review session will be scheduled for some time during RRR week.