

090:280 Honors Seminar: Inequality and Opportunity in America

(Draft, 1/16/12)

Patricia A. Roos
Spring, 2012
Tuesdays 1:10-4:10 p.m.
Brett Hall Seminar Room, CAC

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Office hrs: Tuesday 4:15-5:15 @ Brett Hall Seminar Room (or by appointment—especially Wednesdays—in Davison Hall)

I. Course Description:

Social scientists—and especially sociologists—have long studied how inequality gets produced and reproduced, and how ascriptive inequalities shape our access to a wide range of opportunities. We will focus on these core issues.

We begin with an overview of why class still matters in contemporary American society. We'll assess how important class remains in defining our life chances, and our opportunity to pursue the American Dream.

We will also examine how inequality has been rising in recent years, and how durable that inequality remains. We'll focus on categorical (i.e., group) inequalities, especially the "big three" (race, class, and gender), but we'll address other forms of inequality as well.

As more overt forms of discrimination have declined, researchers have begun to examine the more subtle ways in which inequality is reproduced. We'll talk about these more subtle *mechanisms of inequity*, and discuss the ways they are often embedded in interactions among people and in the policies and procedures of our social institutions.

There are no prerequisites for this course. Although the readings come from a variety of disciplines, an important goal of this course is to introduce you to the sociological imagination.

Brett Hall is wireless. We will try to take advantage of this, so please bring your laptops to class when we're scheduled to use it.

II. Readings:

There are six required books available at the Rutgers College bookstore. Additional readings are available on Sakai. The required books (in alphabetical order) are:

Dalton Conley. 2010. *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America*. 10th Anniversary Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Annette Lareau. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. 2nd edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Devah Pager. 2009. *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cecilia L. Ridgeway. 2011. *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kristen Schilt. 2010. *Just One of the Guys? Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mitchell Stevens. 2009. *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Purchase each of these books early in the semester to make sure you have them when you need them.

III. Expectations:

This is an honors seminar, so I have high expectations of each of you. Because we meet only once per week, ***it is important that you attend each class meeting***. Indeed missing even one class without an approved excuse could reduce your grade. If something horrible happens, let me know asap.

Because this is a "seminar," the format will be discussion, not lecture. The success of the course thus depends on your active participation, and the small class size should facilitate this goal. Assigned readings should be completed ***prior to class***, and you should come prepared to ask and answer questions.

In addition to books, I've assigned both academic and media (newspaper, magazine) articles, the latter of which tend to be quite short. To keep the number of readings down to a reasonable number, I've moved some of the readings to "recommended." While these articles or books are not required, I nonetheless do recommend them to you if you'd like to do extended reading on the topic, or use them for your writing.

We will occasionally use laptops in class. If you have a laptop, bring it to class. The Brett Hall Seminar Room is a wireless classroom, so I hope to use this to good advantage.

Your final grade will be based on:

1) ***Class participation/attendance, including written class memos*** (20 percent total)

Beginning week 2 (January 24th), for each class period, write one to two paragraphs (no more than a page) about one or more of the readings. ***Post it to Sakai by 5 p.m. on Monday***. Is there

something in the readings that you find particularly intriguing? Or something that puzzles you that you think merits class discussion, or with which you disagree? Which issue would you like to talk about with your parents, siblings, or friends?

You can miss two memos over the course of the semester without harm to your grade ("life happens" to all of us at one time or another). More than two, however, will negatively affect your grade.

Read everyone's memo before class. We'll use them to structure the day's discussion. Each of you should be prepared to "lead off" the class discussion. I'll randomly choose one (or more) of you to lead the discussion. Please be considerate of me and your fellow students: make sure you post to Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Tuesday afternoon class.

2) To get you writing and thinking early in the semester, there will be *two short papers, or "real world reflections."* These should be double-spaced, 3-4 pp. max, and are due January 31st and February 28th [10 percent each (20 percent total); post to Sakai no later than 5 p.m. Monday]

We are talking about topics that are very much applicable to the "real world." To encourage you to read the news, and to make the course more relevant to your lives, find a current (no earlier than 2012) newspaper or magazine article that addresses an issue we have talked (or will talk) about in our readings and/or discussions. Describe how course concepts illuminate the issues the article addresses. *Take a stand, make an argument, and justify it.*

I encourage you to find articles with some "meat" on them (e.g., a breezy USA Today or short Star Ledger article just won't do it). I'm looking for articles from reputable sources, such as the New York Times Magazine, Fortune, the Atlantic Monthly, the New Republic, Forbes, the Wall St. Journal, the Huffington Post, or the New Yorker, written by an academic or a reporter who has actually done background research, and assessed evidence on both sides of an argument. Although it's perfectly okay to have a political point of view, avoid political rants. It's best to come to a considered opinion based on a review of competing evidence.

Important: provide a link to the article, or attach it to your paper, so I know what you are responding to.

3) *Analytic review and debate* (double-spaced, 4-5 pp. max; due March 27th; 20 percent)

On Tuesday March 27th (right in the middle of the election primaries), we will have an in-class debate on the candidates' arguments regarding topics related to inequality. You will team up into groups of two to research an issue you jointly choose. There are a number of issues relevant to the topics we discuss this semester (e.g., race, gender, class, education, the economy). These are very broad topics, so you'll likely want to narrow down your topic into something you can more easily research and write about. Each group of two will choose an issue to research; one of you will take the GOP point of view, and the other the Democrats, as represented by the presidential candidates. Each of you will write an *analytic critique* of the research material you collect. On the day of the debate, you will use the candidate's viewpoint as the basis for your arguments. Think of yourself as the GOP candidate, or as Obama (or their chiefs of staff). Thus,

you will critique the research in your analytic review, and argue for its viewpoint in the debate. For advice on how to write an analytic review, see Clarke's "On Writing and Criticism" (Sakai).

You might want to start with the candidates' web pages:

<http://www.barackobama.com/>

vs.

the GOP (choose one of the top three candidates, as of the Iowa caucuses):

<http://www.mittromney.com/s/welcome>

<http://www.ricksantorum.com/index.php>

<http://www.ronpaul2012.com/>

But don't stop there. These websites are obviously produced by the candidates themselves, and not subject to independent fact checking. What do academic researchers and reputable news organizations say about the legitimacy of the candidates' arguments? Avoid news organizations that espouse only one political viewpoint (you'll get enough of that from the candidates' websites). Read some "think" pieces in the popular press, or on legitimate academic websites about your chosen topic. One example of the latter (but there are others):

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/scspi/>

4) ***Final research paper*** (double-spaced, approx. 10-12 pages, with a minimum of 7 *academic* references) on a topic of your choice (40 percent).

Note: this can be an outgrowth of one of your short papers, the debate topic, or any other topic related to the theme of the course. A written description of your paper topic (1-2 pages) with at least 3 annotated references is due February 14th. Clear your topic with me ahead of time. Your outline is due April 3rd, the first draft on April 17th, and the final draft on May 1st. Use primarily academic references for this paper. It's okay to supplement with excellent articles from reputable media sources (e.g., Fortune, the New York Times), but these should be few in number in comparison with academic references.

Each student will also present a brief summary of her or his paper during the last class session (April 24). Prepare a few power point slides to accompany your presentation. More on this as the semester progresses.

Feel free to work in groups, researching different aspects of the same issue. You'll each still need to do an oral presentation, and to write individual final papers. But collaborative efforts can often be greater than the sum of their parts.

Summary of due dates:

January 31st: Real word reflection #1 (post to Sakai by 5 p.m. Monday)

February 14th: Description of final paper topic, with at least 3 annotated references; brief in-class presentations (post to Sakai by 5 p.m. Monday)

February 28th: Real word reflection #2 (post to Sakai by 5 p.m. Monday)

March 27th: Analytic review and debate preparation due (bring hard copy to class)
April 3rd: Final paper outline due (bring hard copy to class)
April 17th: First draft of final paper due (bring hard copy to class, and send email attachment)
April 24th: Class presentations with power point slides (post slides to Sakai by 5 p.m. Monday)
May 1st: Final draft of paper due (put hard copy in my Davison Hall mailbox, and send email attachment)

IV. Academic Integrity:

This course will be conducted in full accordance with the university's Academic Integrity Policy:

“The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of unsanctioned materials or unsanctioned collaboration.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.” (Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, 2011, p. 1)

Note: it is very easy to cut and paste from the internet, and/or copy verbatim selections from articles or books. **This is called plagiarism.** It's also pretty easy to find plagiarism nowadays. You can use internet sources (preferably academic sources you find online through IRIS), as well as print sources, but paraphrase the work you use and properly cite it. Avoid over-quoting, but if you do use an author's exact words *you must put them in quotes and cite, including page numbers.* A reader needs to be able to check all sources.

I will not accept any assignments or papers from students involved in dishonest behavior, and I am required to report such students. Students engaging in dishonest behavior hurt all students.

V. Classroom Atmosphere:

I encourage the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Thus, behavior that distracts students and faculty is not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, discourteous remarks, and other disrespectful behaviors. Courteous and lawful

expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is, of course, permitted (and indeed encouraged).

VI. Course Outline (with the exception of the books you buy, **all articles are available either online or through Sakai**):

Part I: Overview, Theory, and Historical Context

Week 1 (Jan. 17): Introduction and Course Overview

New York Times. 2005. Class Matters. New York: Times Books. Henry Holt and Company. (read Scott and Leonhardt and at least two of the remaining four readings for January 17th; in original New York Times article format)

Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, “Shadowy Lines that Still Divide”

Janny Scott, “Life at the Top in America Isn’t Just Better, It’s Longer”

David Leonhardt, “The College Dropout Boom”

David Cay Johnston, “Richest Are Leaving Even the Rich Far Behind”

Isabel Wilkerson, “Angela Whitiker’s Climb”

In class: Implicit attitudes exercise; decide on debate groups, and spend some time doing initial web research; bring your laptops.

Week 2 (Jan. 24): Categorical (and Durable) Inequalities: Theory and Historical Context

Theory: Categorical Inequalities and their Reproduction

Charles Tilly. 1998. Durable Inequality. Berkeley: University of California Press. Ch. 1: “Of Essences and Bonds” (pp. 1-40)

Douglass S. Massey. 2007. Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 1: How Stratification Works (pp. 1-27)

Historical Context: Transformation of the American Economy and its Effects on Middle Class Jobs

Arne Kalleberg. 2011. Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s to 2000s. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 1: “Job Quality in the United States” (pp. 1-18) and Ch. 2: “Economic Transformations and the Decline of Institutional Protections” (pp. 21-39)

Congressional Budget Office. 2011. “Trends in the Distribution of Household Income Between 1979 and 2007.” Washington D.C.: Congressional Budget Office.

Recommended:

U.S. Department of Census. 2011. "Poverty: 2009 and 2010."

Movies: Inside Job (2010); Margin Call (2011)

Part II: Categorical Inequalities: Race, Class, and Gender

Week 3 (Jan. 31): Race I: Wealth Matters

Dalton Conley. 2010. Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America. 10th Anniversary Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Paul Taylor, Rakesh Kochlar, Richard Fry, Gabriel Velasco, and Seth Motel. 2011. "Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics." Pew Research Center, July 26.

In class: Reflect on reflections #1

Week 4 (Feb. 7): Race II: Race and Crime

Devah Pager. 2009. Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/18/opinion/sunday/young-black-and-frisked-by-the-nypd.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

In class: Debate groups convene; bring laptops

Week 5 (Feb. 14): Class I: Reproducing Class

Annette Lareau. 2011. Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life. 2nd edition. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Chs. 1-5, 12, Part IV (Chs. 13-15)]

In-class: Presentations on final paper topic

Week 6 (Feb. 21): Class II: Occupy Wall Street: the 99% vs. the 1%

Occupy Wall Street: Academic Voices

G. William Domhoff. 2011. "Wealth, Income, and Power."

<http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>

And, a link within Domhoff:

http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/investment_manager.html

http://www.bostonreview.net/BR36.6/occupy_movement_forum.php (this is a compilation of 14 different opinion pieces by Stanford professors; read at least seven)

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/scspi/cgi-bin/facts.php>

http://blog.nj.com/njv_guest_blog/2011/12/occupy_wall_street_political_t.html

Occupy Wall Street: Other Voices (in brief)

<http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/02/income-inequality-in-america-chart-graph>

<http://www.thenation.com/article/164207/why-occupy-wall-street-has-left-washington-behind##>

<http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/tue-november-1-2011/men-of-a-certain-wage>

<http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/tue-november-1-2011/men-of-a-certain-wage---money-talks>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/15/business/the-1-percent-paint-a-more-nuanced-portrait-of-the-rich.html?pagewanted=1&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=th23>

In class: Guest speaker: Victoria Gonzalez, “Occupy Wall Street: A Participant Observation”

Recommended:

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/how-the-gop-became-the-party-of-the-rich-20111109>

<http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/>

Week 7 (Feb. 28): Gender I: The Persistence of Gender

Cecilia L. Ridgeway. 2011. *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jeff Hayes and Heidi Hartmann. 2011. *Women and Men Living on the Edge: Economic Insecurity after the Great Recession*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Women’s Policy Research.

In class: Reflect on reflections #2

Week 8 (March 6): Gender II: Gender Differences → Gender Inequality

Kristen Schilt. 2010. *Just One of the Guys? Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

In class: Debate groups convene; bring laptops

Spring Break! (no class March 13th)

Week 9 (March 20): Redoing Gender? Implications for Race? Class?

Dana M. Britton. 2000. "The Epistemology of the Gendered Organization." *Gender & Society* 14:418-34.

Robin J. Ely and Debra E. Meyerson. 2010. "An Organizational Approach to Undoing Gender: The Unlikely Case of Offshore Oil Platforms." *Research in Organizational Behavior* 30:3-34.

A symposium on "Doing Gender":

Nancy C. Jurik and Cynthia Siemsen. 2009. "'Doing Gender' as Canon or Agenda: A Symposium on West and Zimmerman." *Gender & Society* 23:72-75.

Dorothy E. Smith. 2009. "Categories Are Not Enough." *Gender & Society* 23:76-80.

Barbara J. Risman. 2009. "From Doing to Undoing: Gender as We Know It." *Gender & Society* 23:81-84.

Raewyn Connell. 2009. "Accountable Conduct: "Doing Gender" in Transsexual and Political Retrospect." *Gender & Society* 23:104-11.

Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman. 2009. "Accounting for Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 23:112-22

In class: Constructive Controversy Case Study: Group Discussions

Recommended:

Other articles in the "Doing Gender" symposium (*Gender & Society*, February, 2009)

Part III: Producing Advantage and Disadvantage in the Workplace: Implications for Policy

Week 10 (March 27): Debate! Categorical Inequalities and National Policy: Assessing the Candidates

Week 11 (April 3): Education I: Reproducing Elites

Mitchell L. Stevens. 2009. *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

David Brooks. 2001. "The Organization Kid." *Atlantic Monthly*, April.

Week 12 (April 10): Education II: Reproducing Inequality

James E. Rosenbaum. 2001. *Beyond College for All: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Preface (pp. xi-xii) and Ch. 1: "Pathways to Adulthood: Reversing the Downward Spiral of the Youth Labor Market (pp. 1-23)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/opinion/brooks-the-wrong-inequality.html>

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/12/06/women-high-income-families-outpace-their-brothers-college>

Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl. 2011. "Our Economically Polarized College System: Separate and Unequal." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 25, 2011.

Neil Parmar. 2009. "Why The Ivies Aren't Worth It." *Smart Money*, January.

In class: Little Rock Central: 50 Years Later, HBO special

Recommended:

Nancy Folbre. 2010. *Saving State U: Why We Must Fix Public Higher Education*. New York: The New Press. [a book on U. Mass-Amherst; an economist writes about the effect of budget cuts on the public higher education system]

James E. Rosenbaum. 2001. *Beyond College for All: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 2: "Market and Network Theories of the High School-to-Work Transition" (pp. 24-54) and Ch. 12: "Policy Implications: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half" (pp. 265-82)

Week 13 (April 17): Organizations: Embedded Social Capital

Mario Luis Small and Laura Stark. 2005. "Are Poor Neighborhoods Resource Deprived? A Case Study of Childcare Centers in New York." *Social Science Quarterly* 86:1013-36.

Mario Luis Small, Erin M. Jacobs, and Rebekah Peeples Massengill. 2008. "Why Organizational Ties Matter for Neighborhood Effects: Resource Access through Childcare Centers." *Social Forces* 87:387-414.

In class: Discussion of final papers

Week 14 (April 24): Student presentations (bring in power point slides) [and catered lunch]

VII. Help on Research, Thinking, and Writing:

Becker, Howard S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Clarke, Lee. "Notes on Proposing" and "On Writing and Criticism"

Germano, William. 2005. "Passive Is Spoken Here." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2005.

Jasper, James. "Why So Many Academics are Lousy Writers"

Rosenfield, Sarah. "Some Things To Think About While Reading Papers"

Strunk, William Jr., and E.B. White. 2000. *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition. New York: Allyn & Bacon.

American Sociological Association, "Writing an Informative Abstract"

And, for some humor: "How to Write Good"