

090:294:02 Inequality and Opportunity in America
(1/14/15)



[Patricia A. Roos](#)

Spring, 2015

Tuesday 9:50-12:50

Brett Hall Seminar Room, CAC

Contact information:

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I. Course Description:

This seminar will examine how inequality gets produced and reproduced, and how ascriptive inequalities shape our access to a wide range of opportunities. We begin by examining why inequality is important, and exploring its historical context. We'll assess what theories researchers have proposed to examine inequality, and how important class remains in defining our opportunities over the life cycle. 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 and their consequences as well.

As more overt forms of discrimination have declined, researchers have begun to examine the more subtle ways in which inequality is reproduced. Taking a sociological approach, 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.

As with many social issues, there are differences of opinion about how best to remedy inequalities, or even if they should be remedied. As the new U.S. Congress takes office this month, we are seeing starkly different public policy approaches to inequality. We will investigate these different approaches, and integrate them into the course. We will do this informally at first, in the context of our class discussions. Later in the semester we'll have a more formal debate, with class members taking the respective positions of different policy groups.

II. Readings:

There are three required books available at the bookstore. Additional readings are available on Sakai, or online as indicated. The required books (in alphabetical order) are:

Karl Alexander, Doris Entwisle, and Linda Olson. 2014. *The Long Shadow: Family Background, Disadvantaged Urban Youth, and the Transition to Adulthood*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. ISBN: 978-0-87154-033-1

Mary Gatta. 2014. *All I Want is a Job: Unemployed Women Navigating the Public Workforce System*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-8047-9082-6

Linda Tirado. 2014. *Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. ISBN: 978-0-399-17198-7.

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. ***It is important that you attend each class.*** Indeed missing even one class without an approved excuse could reduce your grade. If you have to miss class for any reason, please use the university absence reporting website: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>. An email will be automatically sent to me.

Because this is a seminar, the format will be discussion, not lecture. The success of the course depends on your active participation, and the small class size facilitates this goal. Assigned readings should be completed ***prior to class***.

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 assignments or final paper.

Your final grade will be based on:

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

Beginning week 2 (January 27th), 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 12 noon on Monday (for our Tuesday class)***. Is there something in the readings that you find particularly intriguing, or with which you disagree? Or something that puzzles you that you think merits class discussion? Which issue would you like to talk about with your parents or friends? Dig deeply here, don't just reiterate what's in the article(s) (we will all have read them).

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 that, however, will negatively affect your grade. No class memos will be due on days that other writing assignments are due (see "Class Memos-Assignments" in Sakai).

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 your fellow students and me: make sure you post to Sakai no later than 12 noon the day before the readings are due.

2) To get you writing and thinking early in the semester, there will be ***one short paper, due early in the semester*** (double-spaced, 3-4 pp. max; due February 17th; post to Sakai no later than 12 noon the day before; 30 percent)

Read through the articles on white privilege for February 17th. ***Develop an argument*** using course concepts. Do not just summarize the articles. Instead, ***take a stand, make an argument, and justify it***, using points from one or more of the articles as evidence for the argument you make. Describe how course concepts illuminate the issues the articles address.

3) ***Final research paper*** (double-spaced, approx. 8-10 pages, with a minimum of 5 *academic* references) on a topic of your choice (50 percent).

Note: this can be an outgrowth of your short paper, any of the readings, or any other topic related to inequality that interests you. For some ideas, read through the syllabus and/or link to a recent National Report Card on Poverty and Inequality, available from the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality's Pathway Magazine:

http://web.stanford.edu/group/scspi/center_events_sotu.html. There are reports on a number of subfields (e.g., labor markets, wealth, health, and education). More ideas can be had from Pathways magazine, Summer 2014:

http://web.stanford.edu/group/scspi/media/pdf/pathways/summer_2014/Pathways_Summer_2014.pdf

A written description of your paper topic (1-2 pages) with at least 2 *annotated* references is due February 3rd (uploaded to Sakai by 12 noon the day before). I encourage you to talk with me early and often. Your paper outline is due April 7th, the first draft of the paper on April 21st, and the final draft on May 4th at 12 noon. 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, The Atlantic), but these should be few in number in comparison with *academic* references.

Each student will also present a brief power point presentation of her or his paper during the last class session (April 28th; upload to Sakai by 12 noon the day before). We will talk more about this as the semester progresses.

Summary of due dates:

February 3rd: Description of final paper topic (1-2 pp.), with at least 2 annotated references; brief in-class presentations (post to Sakai 12 noon the day before)

February 17th: Short paper due (3-4 pp.; post to Sakai 12 noon the day before)

April 7th: Final paper outline due (send email attachment before class starts)

April 21st: First draft of final paper due (send email attachment before class starts)

April 28th: Class presentations with power point slides (post slides to Sakai by 12 noon the day before)

May 4th: Final draft of paper due (send email attachment by 12 noon)

IV. SAS Core Learning Goals



This course satisfies the SAS Core Goal: WCD (t, u, v)

Through coursework, the student is able to:

- (t)--Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry
- (u)--Evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly
- (v)—analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

V. 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, without attribution. **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 Rutgers libraries), 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.

Please link to these, and read through:

[Interactive-Tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity](#)
[Don't Plagiarize? Document Your Research](#)

VI. 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).

VII. 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

January 20th: Why is Inequality Important?

Nicholas Kristof, “An Idiot’s Guide to Inequality.” New York Times, July 23, 2014
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/24/opinion/nicholas-kristof-idiots-guide-to-inequality-piketty-capital.html>

Nicholas Kristof, “Is a Hard Life Inherited?” New York Times, August 9, 2014
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/10/opinion/sunday/nicholas-kristof-is-a-hard-life-inherited.html>

Film: Robert Reich: Inequality for All, 2013 (85 mins)

We’ll discuss the Reich movie in class.

January 27th: Theory and Historical Context

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

Joseph E. Stiglitz. 2013. The Price of Inequality: How Today’s Divided Society Endangers Our Future. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Ch. 1: “America’s 1 Percent Problem” (pp. 1-34). Sakai.

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

We’ll watch this in class:

attn.: “Stephen Colbert’s Explanation of Income Inequality is Pretty Sharp,” 2014
http://www.attn.com/stories/232/stephen-colberts-explanation-income-inequality-pretty-sharp?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=SCIncInequ

We’ll divide the class into public policy discussion groups

Recommended:

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). Sakai

Joseph R. Blasi, Richard B. Freeman, and Douglas L. Kruse. 2013. *The Citizen's Share: Reducing Inequality in the 21st Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Lynn Stuart Parramore, "Joseph Stiglitz: Thomas Piketty gets income inequality wrong." Salon, January 2, 2015.

http://www.salon.com/2015/01/02/joseph_stiglitz_thomas_piketty_gets_income_inequality_wrong_partner/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=socialflow

Paul Krugman. 2002. "For Richer," New York Times, October 20, 2002. Sakai.

February 3rd: The Rich, the Poor, and the Long Shadow of Social Context

Karl Alexander, Doris Entwisle, and Linda Olson. 2014. *The Long Shadow: Family Background, Disadvantaged Urban Youth, and the Transition to Adulthood*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Chs. 1-4 (pp. 1-74)

Luke Shaefer and Kathryn Edin. 2014. "The Rise of Extreme Poverty in the United States." Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, Summer.

http://web.stanford.edu/group/scspi/_media/pdf/pathways/summer_2014/Pathways_Summer_2014_ShaeferEdin.pdf

Nick Hanauer, "Ultra-Rich Man's Letter: "To My Fellow Filthy Rich Americans: The Pitchforks Are Coming." Top Information Post News, June 30, 2014.

<http://topinfopost.com/2014/06/30/ultra-rich-mans-letter-to-my-fellow-filthy-rich-americans-the-pitchforks-are-coming>

Assignment due: brief description of final paper topic (we'll discuss in class)

February 10th: From Origins to Destinations: Inequality over the Life Cycle

Alexander et al., Chs. 5-9 (pp. 75-188)

Isabel Wilkerson. 2005. "Angela Whitiker's Climb." New York Times, June 12.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/12/national/class/ANGELA-FINAL.html?pagewanted=all>

We'll watch this in class:

Class Matters: Up From the Projects, 2005

http://www.nytimes.com/packages/khtml/2005/06/12/national/20050612_CLASSANGELA_FUTURE.html

Break into public policy groups/discussion

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

February 17th: Race I: Exploring White Privilege

Intellectual context:

Interview with Nancy DiTomaso (edited transcript, September 9, 2013). Sakai.

Peggy McIntosh. 1988. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack."
<http://amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html>

Gina Crosley-Corcoran. 2014. "Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person." Occupy Wall Street. May 8th.
<http://occupywallstreet.net/story/explaining-white-privilege-broke-white-person>

Patricia J. Williams, "The Value of Whiteness"
<http://www.thenation.com/article/190489/value-whiteness>

Jamie Kapp, "White Privilege, Explained in One Simple Comic":
<http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/09/white-privilege-explained/>

Nathan W. Pyle, "This Teacher Taught His Class a Powerful Lesson About Privilege,"
BuzzFeed:
<http://www.buzzfeed.com/nathanwpyle/this-teacher-taught-his-class-a-powerful-lesson-about-privil>

Assignment due: short paper

We'll watch two additional videos in class, then discuss short papers:

Tavis Smiley, PBS Interview with Nancy DiTomaso, September 9, 2013:
<http://video.pbs.org/video/2365073464/>

Jon Stewart & Bill O'Reilly, on White Privilege, 2014:
<http://www.motherjones.com/mixed-media/2014/10/jon-stewart-white-privilege-bill-oreilly>

Recommended:

Nancy DiTomaso. 2013. *The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality Without Racism*.
New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

John Blake, "The New Threat: 'Racism Without Racists'," 2014
<http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/26/us/ferguson-racism-or-racial-bias/index.html>

February 24th: Race II: Race and Crime

Devah Pager. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108:937-75. Sakai.

Alexes Harris. 2014. "Yes, America, We Have Returned to Debtor's Prisons." *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 2014.

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-harris-criminal-fines-20140608-story.html>

We'll listen to these in class: NPR interviews (Alexes Harris):

"Court User Fees Bill Defendants for Their Punishment:"

<http://www.npr.org/2014/05/18/313618296/court-user-fees-bill-defendants-for-their-punishment>

"As Court Fees Rise, The Poor Are Paying the Price:"

<http://www.npr.org/2014/05/19/312158516/increasing-court-fees-punish-the-poor>

Recommended:

"To Prison for Poverty," Part I, Brave New Films

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_cIWv9yc3A&list=PLQ9B-p5Q-YOOnGFZADPMhvYds1DJE29Dh

and,

"To Prison for Poverty," Part II, Brave New Films

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r32J0bRO1CQ&list=PLQ9B-p5Q-YOOnGFZADPMhvYds1DJE29Dh&index=2>

March 3rd: Class I: Urban Disadvantage and Crime

Alice Goffman. 2009. "On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto." *American Sociological Review* 74:339-357. Sakai.

Alice Goffman, 2014. "Appendix: A Methodological Note." Pp. 211-261 in *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Sakai.

Marc Parry. 2013. "The American Police State: A Sociologist Interrogates the Criminal-Justice System, and Tries to Stay Out of the Spotlight." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 18.

<http://chronicle.com/article/The-American-Police-State/142965/>

Christina Sharpe, "Black Life, Annotated." *The New Inquiry*, August 8, 2014.

<http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/black-life-annotated/>

March 10th: Class II: Living Poor in America

Linda Tirado, *Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Break into public policy groups/discussion

March 17th: *Spring Break!*

March 24th: *Gender I: Theory: Subtle Mechanisms of Inequity*

Barbara F. Reskin. 2003. "Including Mechanisms in Our Models of Ascriptive Inequality." 2002 Presidential Address. *American Sociological Review* 68:1-21. Sakai.

Nancy DiTomaso, Corinne Post, D. Randall Smith, George F. Farris, and Rene Cordero. 2007. "Effects of Structural Position on Allocation and Evaluation Decisions for Scientists and Engineers in Industrial R&D." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 52:175-207. Sakai.

In preparation for today's class, you should take IAT tests (Implicit Attitude Test), and we'll talk about your results in class:

Link to this page: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/Registration>

[You don't need to log in. Click on "Take a Test" at top; take at least two IATs: Gender-Career IAT and Race IAT (and any others you want); bring in your scores for discussion.]

Recommended:

Sendhil Mullainathan, "Racial Bias, Even When We have Good Intentions," *New York Times*, January 3, 2015

http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/upshot/the-measuring-sticks-of-racial-bias-.html?smid=fb-share&_r=0&referrer=

Chris Mooney, "The Science of Why Cops Shoot Young Black Men," 2014 (description of IAT) <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/11/science-of-racism-prejudice>

Patricia A. Roos & Mary L. Gatta. 2009. "Gender (In)Equity in the Academy: Subtle Mechanisms and the Production of Inequality." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 27:177-200. Sakai.

March 31st: *Gender II: Gender and Unemployment in a Recession*

Mary Gatta. 2014. *All I Want is a Job! Unemployed Women Navigating the Public Workforce System*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Break into public policy groups/discussion

Part III: Consequences of Inequality

April 7th: *Consequences: Education*

Sean F. Reardon. 2014. "Education." National Report Card, Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality. January.

http://web.stanford.edu/group/scspi/sotu/SOTU_2014_education.pdf

David Brooks. 2001. "The Organization Kid." Atlantic Monthly, April 1.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2001/04/the-organization-kid/302164/>

Jason DeParle. 2012. "For Poor, Leap to College Often Ends in a Hard Fall." New York Times, December 22.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/23/education/poor-students-struggle-as-class-plays-a-greater-role-in-success.html?pagewanted=all>

Paul Tough. 2014. "Who Gets to Graduate?" New York Times Magazine, May 15, 2014.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/magazine/who-gets-to-graduate.html>

Film: Little Rock Central (70 minutes)

Assignment due: final paper outline

Recommended:

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). Sakai.

Audrey Devine Eller. 2012. Post-Secondary Planning Paradoxes: How Regular Kids Prepare for the Future in the College-For-All Era. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Sociology, Rutgers University. (Ch. 1: "Introduction," pp. 1-45). Sakai.

Class Matters: Education:

David Leonhardt, "The College Dropout Boom" and Timothy Egan, "No Degree, and No Way Back to the Middle," 2005

<http://www.nytimes.com/indexes/2005/05/24/national/class/>

April 14th: Consequences: Health

Sarah A. Burgard and Molly M. King. 2014. "Health Inequality." National Report Card, Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality. January.

http://web.stanford.edu/group/scspi/sotu/SOTU_2014_health-inequality.pdf

Janny Scott. 2005. "Life at the Top in America Isn't Just Better, It's Longer." New York Times, May 16.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/16/national/class/HEALTH-FINAL.html?pagewanted=all>

We'll watch this in class:

Class Matters: Class and Health, 2005:

http://www.nytimes.com/packages/khtml/2005/05/16/national/class/20050516_CLASSHEALTH_FEATURE.html

Public Policy Debate: Democrats vs. Republicans on Health

April 21st: Consequences: Families

Andrew Cherlin. 2014. *Labor's Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class Family in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 1: Introduction (pp. 1-23). Sakai.

Stephanie Coontz. 2014. "The New Instability." *New York Times*, July 26, 2014.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/opinion/sunday/the-new-instability.html>

Binyamin Appelbaum, "The Vanishing Male Worker: How America Fell Behind," 2014

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/12/upshot/unemployment-the-vanishing-male-worker-how-america-fell-behind.html?emc=edit_th_20141212&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=4046836&r=0&abt=0002&abg=0

Claire Cain Miller and Liz Alderman, "Why U.S. Women Are Leaving Jobs Behind," 2014

<http://theparentingvillage.com/why-u-s-women-are-leaving-jobs-behind>

Assignment due: first draft of final paper

Recommended:

Brigid Schulte. 2014. *Overwhelmed: Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time*. New York: Sarah Crichton Books.

Anne-Marie Slaughter. 2012. "Why Women Still Can't Have It All." *The Atlantic*, July/August.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>

Katrin Bennhold, "In Sweden, Men Can Have It All," *New York Times*, June 9, 2010.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/world/europe/10iht-sweden.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

Katrina Alcorn. 2013. *Maxed Out: American Moms on the Brink*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.

Marianne Cooper. 2014. *Cut Adrift: Families in Insecure Times*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

April 28th: Student presentations (post power point slides to Sakai by 12 noon the day before)

May 4th (12 noon): Final draft of paper due (send email attachment by 12 noon May 4th)

VIII. Help on Research, Thinking, and Writing (Sakai):

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"