Graduate Course in the Department of Sociology, Sociology 563

Mechanisms for Perpetuating or Reducing Race, Class, and Gender Inequalities

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This course is synchronous. We will meet weekly on Mondays from 5:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. with a break. (The timing is to help the department avoid having overlapping graduate courses.) In addition, students will be in a “buddy group” where they meet with other members of the class on a weekly basis to discuss ideas, paper projects, and general issues in graduate school. In the first few weeks of the semester, I will meet with each of you individually over zoom.

Here is the reoccurring link:

https://upenn.zoom.us/j/93753539874?pwd=L2JldlZzR21TUzk5YWxzdTdlbVFzd09

Overview:

This graduate level seminar begins with the considerable evidence of inequality in the perpetuation of key forms of advantages across generations in many spheres. The focus of the course is to understand critical mechanisms which perpetuate or enhance inequality or act to reduce inequality by class, race, and gender. The course provides a survey of recent work in a number of areas. More senior graduate students have shared that weekly reflection paper (of less than two pages in length) can be invaluable for later (e.g., while working on a dissertation), but it is critical that you set a timer so that you don’t work on them more than two hours. But, these reflection papers are only due on six weeks. Two weeks, nothing is due (but you will complete the readings). The remaining weeks, you will simply share your notes with me or bullet points with me in a brief email with two discussion questions or topics. You choose what to do each week.

Each student will write a paper unique to the course approximately 20 to 25 double-spaced pages in length (including references). One possibility is for the paper to be an analytical literature review or two sample comprehensive essays in a field of the student’s choice where the student succinctly critically assesses a body of literature. A second possibility is for the student to carry out empirical research on a topic of interest. Since all writing involves revision, you will turn in a draft of the paper, get feedback, and then submit a revised paper which is a major revision. We will have some in-class exercises to help you develop your paper.

Graduate students in the sociology department are automatically admitted to the course; graduate students in other departments or colleges should contact the instructor, but they are generally warmly welcome in the course.

The readings are below. As you will see, we normally read either around four or so journal articles per week or one highly-readable book, usually using qualitative data. From time to time, you will be given brief research reports of statistical patterns to review. During class, we will discuss the readings. We will also have some in-class activities to help you develop your research paper. Each student will share key results of the paper with the class in a brief (ungraded) presentation. We will have some advanced
sociology graduate student be guests in the class to share their work; we will read one paper by each guest. Finally, we will talk each week about social changes which can disrupt or “interrupt” these mechanisms of the transmission of inequality. Indeed, each week I’d like you to come to class prepared to discuss this issue.

These elements will count in the following fashion:

Complete six reading reflections by Sunday evening at 8:00 p.m.; two weeks you have nothing due; the remaining weeks you submit your rough notes or bullet points. Usually these are around two pages single-spaced. You choose your schedule, but I would like you to submit rough notes/bullet points or a reflection on the theoretical readings for our class on February 1. Please email me the reflections: alareau@sas.upenn.edu. Remember not to spend more than two hours on the writing (under *any* circumstance). The reading is important. The essays are not a place for you to show your expertise; they are simply there to help you formulate your thoughts and for me to guide discussion. Your notes will help you in the future, but the weekly reflections can be rough around the edges. (Your paper will be more polished.) You will share your reading reflections with the class by posting them on Canvas. You are not required to read them, but you might find it helpful to see how others approach the task. Each week two students will prepare questions to guide discussion.

First draft of paper: (due April 2nd) 30%
Final paper: (due May 7th) 50%
Course engagement and participation 10%
(Here the focus is on your preparation, engagement, comments, and general participation in class)
Reflection readings: 10%

All of the books have been ordered from the Penn bookstore as well as on course reserves in the library:

**Course calendar:**
The course presumes that students have some basic familiarity with the empirical patterns of class, race, and gender inequality in American society. This course focuses on unpacking key mechanisms for sustaining or transforming these well-established patterns. There is flexibility in the readings. If you have a book or set of articles you would like to read, we can certainly discuss it. If you have previously read a book or set of articles, we will work out an alternative reading assignment which you might enjoy.

**Monday, January 25th: Course Overview**

In our first class, we will have a cursory overview of the many forms of inequality in the United States today.

Please come to class with a single slide with data on it to provide an example of an empirical pattern of inequality which interests you. Please bring a piece of data to share in a power point. (The source can be a highly-regarded newspaper such as the NY Times, Post, or Guardian, it could be a research institute such as Pew, Brookings, Urban Institute, or Hechinger, or it could be a social science research article. You will talk for one minute or two (no slides --- just talking to the class) sharing with the class your data pattern, saying why you think it is important, and speculating on the mechanisms which might produce it.

For example, you might show disparities in labor market opportunities, mass incarceration, racial segregation, education outcomes, educational experiences, family life, children’s life chances, workplace, work-family, health, political participation, school funding.

Please read the Viscelli article and review the other websites:

- Deregulation: impact on trucking Viscelli, Steve, “The Big Rig,” pp 1-27
  (Please review) Racial bias in sentencing: Bias on the Bench, [http://projects.heraldtribune.com/bias/data/](http://projects.heraldtribune.com/bias/data/)
  (Please review) Tax inequality: [https://taxjusticenow.org/#/](https://taxjusticenow.org/#/) look especially at: [https://taxjusticenow.org/#/wealthtax](https://taxjusticenow.org/#/wealthtax)
  (Please review) Gender inequality, particularly in the workplace: [https://iwpr.org/](https://iwpr.org/)

**Recommended:**


**Monday, February 1st: Theoretical perspectives on the transmission of advantage: 4 readings**

Here is an overview of the seven mechanisms we will study. We will read pieces on four of the mechanisms right now; the rest we will learn about as we move through the semester.

1. **Capacity of key groups (especially elites) to shape state policy and corporate policy**

3. **Organizational policies and practices**: Weber, Max, “Bureaucracy,” *Economy and Society*


5. **Inheritance of financial capital**


7. **Culturally sensibilities and constraints**: sense of possibility, duties, and obligations, cultural logics (motherhood, working-class youths’ sense of obligation to their families, gendered obligations)

=> Residential segregation (shapes schools, inheritance, health, job opportunities, police)

=> State policies reverberating into family life:

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**February 8, 2021: State policy and corporate policy, disproportionate influence of select groups**

Please read the readings on the updated website, Who Rules America: William Domhoff: :
https://whorulesamerica.ucsc.edu/about.html


**February 15, 2021: Dysfunctional bureaucracy as a Stumbling Block to Providing High Quality Services and Reform**


NY Times, “How Police Unions Became Such Powerful Opponents to Reform Efforts.” (Canvas)

**February 22, 2021: Discrimination**


**February 29, 2021: Discrimination**

Articles: Choose to read a selection of articles (so that you have the equivalent of reading approximately four journal articles or so)

Employment Hiring:


**Health:**


**Schooling:**


**Housing (These reports can be more up-to-date than journal articles.)**

Racial Disparities in home appreciation, 2019
https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2019/07/15/469838/racial-disparities-home-appreciation/

https://www.brookings.edu/research/devaluation-of-assets-in-black-neighborhoods/

Race determines home value more today than it did in 1980, 202.

**Eviction:**


“Geographies of Eviction” https://cura.vcu.edu/media/cura/pdfs/curation-documents/GeographiesofEviction.pdf

**Policing, Mass Incarceration and the Criminal Justice System**


ASA resources on race and police violence

Contexts: “11 Recent Sociological Findings on Race and the Criminal Justice System” 2014
https://contexts.org/blog/contexts-quicklit-11-recent-sociological-findings-on-race-and-the-criminal-justice-system/

Politics:


“GOP Racial Gerrymandering Mastermind Participated in More States Than Previously Known,” 2019,


March 8, 2021: Opportunity Hoarding


March 15, 2021: Ramifications of Racial Segregation: Impact on Children


Although not on children, if you want to substitute Mary Pattillo’s book, Black Middle Class: Peril and Privilege, 2nd Edition, you may.

Please review the “Opportunity Atlas” by Raj Chetty and colleagues. https://www.opportunityatlas.org/

March 22, 2021 Bureaucracy: Pathways of Navigation

Clair, Mathew, Privilege and Punishment, Princeton University Press, 2020


March 29, 2021 Inheritance of Cultural Capital


Harvey, Peter, Specialness paper

April 5, 2021 Cultural Sensibilities and Interactions with Institutions


Hays, Sharon, *Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, introduction

Sackett, Blair and Annette Lareau, *Seeking Refuge, Finding Inequality*,


**April 12, 2021 No class! Organizational Policies**

Tyson, Karolyn, *Integration Interrupted*

OR


See also research on organizational gender segregation, sponsorship/mentorship and career success, social ties, and organizational policies

What doesn’t work: Diversity Training, see work of Frank Dobbin (Harvard)

**April 19, 2021 State policies and the (unequal) institutionalization of the family**


Silva, Jennifer, *We’re Still Here*, pp 1-18 (canvas)

**Monday, April 26th: Inheritance of Financial Capital**

(Some of these pieces are very brief. Others are more substantial. Please read Pfeffer and Killewald in *Social Forces* and then a selection. All in all, you want to approximate the equivalent of four journal articles.)


Wealth Patterns among the Top 5% of African-Americans (canvas and here: https://heller.brandeis.edu/iasp/pdfs/racial-wealth-equity/racial-wealth-gap/top-5-percent.pdf).


