

920:570 Grad Seminar: *Inequality and Opportunity*
(8/21/15)

[Patricia A. Roos](#)

Fall, 2015

Tuesdays 9:30-12:10

Sociology Department Seminar Room (Davison 128)

Contact information:

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I. Course Description:

Issues of inequality are central to the research that many social scientists do. This seminar is primarily an overview course, focusing on a select number of important topics in inequality research. We 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. Throughout the course we'll assess what theories and methods researchers use to examine inequality. We'll focus on categorical (i.e., group) inequalities, specifically how class, race, and gender define our opportunities over the life cycle, as individuals and as families.

As more overt forms of discrimination have declined, researchers have begun to examine the more subtle ways in which inequality is reproduced. These subtle *mechanisms of inequity* are often embedded in interactions among people and in the policies and procedures of our social institutions. Because inequalities are embedded in our policies and social institutions, we close by thinking about policy change, and the role of the public intellectual.

II. Learning Goals:

- Evaluate theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of inequality, especially investigating how inequality gets produced and reproduced.
- Learn about historical patterns of inequality, especially ascriptive inequalities by class, race, and gender.
- Critically analyze social science researchers on inequality.
- Explore how inequalities are embedded in policies and social institutions, and policy strategies designed to ameliorate them.
- Develop research questions in the inequality field, and write an independent research project.

Several methods will help to achieve these objectives:

- In-depth weekly discussions of assigned readings
- Facilitating seminar discussions
- Writing evaluative reports of the literature
- Writing and presenting a final research paper

III. Diversity Statement:

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

IV. Readings:

There are six required books available at the bookstore. Additional readings are available on Sakai, or online as indicated. All the books are available in paperback. 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.

Michelle Alexander. 2011. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

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

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

Alice Goffman. 2015. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. New York: Picador.

Kristen Schilt. 2011. *Just One of the Guys?: Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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

V. Expectations:

This is a seminar, not a lecture course. You are expected to complete all the required reading prior to class, prepare written comments, and participate actively in class discussions. Your grade will be based on:

1) Class participation, including written commentary (20 percent)

Everyone is required to do all the reading. For each class period, select one reading (or group of readings) and post a brief (1-2 paragraph) comment on Sakai, no later than 12 noon Monday for our Tuesday class.

Depending on the size of the class, one or more class members will facilitate each day's discussion. The facilitator(s) will bring in a set of written questions for the class to discuss.

These questions should extend, not reproduce, the readings.

2) Two reaction papers (3-4 pages maximum) (due October 6th and November 3rd; 20 percent each)

In these short papers, I want you to ***ask and answer a question*** derived from your readings to date. The first reaction paper should address a question of interest from Weeks 2 (Sept. 15th) through 4 (Sept. 29th). The second reaction paper should address a question of interest from weeks 5 (Oct. 6th) through 9 (Nov. 3rd). See course outline below.

Follow your interests here, be creative. What struck you as most interesting about one or more of these readings? Did they raise a question to which you'd like an answer? Are there problems you see with the author's argument? Are there subthemes in one or more of the readings you'd like to explore in greater depth? Bring in other relevant literature, or not.

The question you ask should be brief and clear. Whatever question you ask, your answer should be an analytic essay. For advice on how to write an analytic essay, see Clarke, "On Writing and Criticism" (Sakai). ***Make an argument*** that clearly and systematically answers the question you raised. An example of a question might be: "Have the economic transitions of the post-World War II U.S. exacerbated, or narrowed, class inequality?" Alternatively, you might want to ask a more conceptual question, one you think through logically, something that might build on previous literature, or something you'd like to examine in a longer essay.

3) Final paper (approximately 15 pp.), on a topic related to course content (due December 11th; 40 percent) Note: this can be related (or not) to one of your reaction papers, or to a theme (or themes) you discussed in a class memo. A written description of your paper topic with 2-3 references is due September 15th (post on Sakai). A final paper outline is due November 10th, class presentations will be December 8th. Clear your topic with me ahead of time, and if you change your mind, clear it with me again. Feel free to adapt this requirement to work on a relevant qualifying paper or dissertation chapter. As long as the paper is related to "inequalities" it's appropriate, even if I have not assigned readings on that substantive topic (e.g., immigration, education).

Tentative due dates:

- September 15th: Paper topic, with 2-3 references; post on Sakai by Monday 12 noon
- October 6th: Reaction paper #1; due in hard copy in class
- November 3rd: Reaction paper #2; due in hard copy in class
- November 10th: Final paper outline; due in hard copy in class
- December 8th: Class presentations on final paper; post ppt file on Sakai Monday 12 noon
- December 11th: Final paper due; due in hard copy in my box, or under my door, by 12 noon

We have only 14 meetings, 2 of which are given over to an introduction and class presentations. Attendance and participation are required. **The norm for graduate courses is: thou shalt not miss class!**

VI. 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 impermissible materials or impermissible 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 Academic Integrity Policy, 2013, 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 am required to report any instances of academic dishonesty.

VII. Course Outline (with the exception of the books noted above, **all articles are available either online or through Sakai**):

September 1st: 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>

Alex Tribou and Keith Collins. 2015. “This is How Fast America Changes its Mind.”
Bloomberg Business, June 26, 2015.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2015-pace-of-social-change/>

Robert Reich. 2014. “The Four Biggest Right-Wing Lies About Inequality.” May 5, 2014.
<http://robertreich.org/post/84828387105>

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

We’ll discuss the Reich movie in class.

September 8th: [RU Monday: NO CLASS!]

September 15th: Theory and Historical Context

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

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

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

Recommended:

Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez. 2001. “Income Inequality in the United States, 1913-1998.” NBER Working Paper Series. 8467. Sakai.

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w8467>

Assignment: Paper topic due on Sakai (w/2-3 references); we'll discuss in class

September 22nd: The Long Shadow of Class

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.

September 29th: Insecure Families

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

Recommended:

Annette Lareau. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Families*. Second edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Andrew J. Cherlin. 2014. *Labor's Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class Family in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Linda Tirado. 2014. *Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

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>

Robert D. Putnam. 2015. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

October 6th: Class, Race, and White Privilege: Producing and Reproducing Inequity

Nancy DiTomaso. 2013. *The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality Without Racism*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 1: "Introduction: Racial Inequality Without Racism" (pp. 1-45) and Ch. 2: "Jobs, Opportunities, and Fairness: The Stakes of Equal Opportunity" (pp. 46-66). 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 8, 2014.

<http://occupywallstreet.net/story/explaining-white-privilege-broke-white-person>

Patricia J. Williams. 2014. "The Value of Whiteness." The Nation, November 12, 2014.

<http://www.thenation.com/article/190489/value-whiteness>

Jamie Kapp. 2014. "White Privilege, Explained in One Simple Comic." Everyday Feminism, September 21, 2014.

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/09/white-privilege-explained/>

John Metta, "I, Racist." Huffington Post, July 10, 2015.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-metta/i-racist_b_7770652.html

John Blake. 2014. "The New Threat: 'Racism Without Racists'." November 27, 2014.

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/26/us/ferguson-racism-or-racial-bias/index.html>

Recommended:

Interview with Nancy DiTomaso, Aired, 9/2/13. Sakai.

Assignment: Reaction paper #1 due

October 13th: Race and Incarceration

Michelle Alexander. 2011. The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. New York: The New Press.

Recommended:

Bruce Western. 2006. Punishment and Inequality in America. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

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

Devah Pager. 2007. Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

October 20th: Beyond Incarceration: Effects on Inequality

Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow (review Ch. 4)

Alexes Harris, Heather Evans, and Katherine Beckett. 2010. "Drawing Blood from Stones: Legal Debt and Social Inequality in the Contemporary United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 115:1753-99. Sakai.

Alexes Harris, Heather Evans, and Katherine Beckett. 2011. "Courtesy Stigma and Monetary Sanctions: Toward a Socio-Cultural Theory of Punishment." *American Sociological Review* 76:234-64. Sakai.

John Oliver, "Bail." Last Week Tonight. June 7, 2015.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IS5mwymTIJU>

Recommended:

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>

Timothy Williams. 2015. "A Psychologist as Warden? Jail and Mental Illness Intersect in Chicago." *New York Times*, July 30, 2015.
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/31/us/a-psychologist-as-warden-jail-and-mental-illness-intersect-in-chicago.html?emc=edit_th_20150731&nl=todaysheadlines&nid=4046836

October 27th: The Surveillance State

Alice Goffman. 2015. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. New York: Picador.

November 3rd: Meta Analysis: Rethinking Goffman's Findings and Methods

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.

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, 2013.
<http://chronicle.com/article/The-American-Police-State/142965/>

Christina Sharpe. 2014. "Black Life, Annotated." *The New Inquiry*, August 8, 2014.
<http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/black-life-annotated/>

Steven Lubet. 2015. "Ethics On The Run." *The New Rambler*. n.d.
<http://newramblerreview.com/book-reviews/law/ethics-on-the-run#.VWUI-dzdBu4.facebook>

Alice Goffman. 2015. "A Reply to Professor Lubet's Critique."

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/soc/faculty/docs/goffman/A%20Reply%20to%20Professor%20Lubet.pdf>

Steven Lubet. 2015. "Alice Goffman's Denial of Murder Conspiracy Raises Even More Questions." New Republic. June 3, 2015.

<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/121958/sociologist-alice-goffman-denies-murder-conspiracy-run>

Jennifer Schuessler. 2015. "Alice Goffman's Heralded Book on Crime is Disputed." New York Times, June 5, 2015.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/06/books/alice-goffmans-heralded-book-on-crime-disputed.html?_r=0

Marc Parry. 2015. "Conflict Over Sociologist's Narrative Puts Spotlight on Ethnography." Chronicle of Higher Education. June 12, 2015.

http://chronicle.com/article/Conflict-Over-Sociologists/230883/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

Jesse Singal. 2015. "The Internet Accused Alice Goffman of Faking Details in Her Study of a Black Neighborhood. I Went to Philadelphia to Check." Science of Us. June 18, 2015.

<http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2015/06/i-fact-checked-alice-goffman-with-her-subjects.html?mid=fb-share-scienceofus>

Leon Neyfakh. 2015. "The Ethics of Ethnography." Slate. June 18, 2015.

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/crime/2015/06/alice_goffman_s_on_the_run_is_the_sociologist_to_blame_for_the_inconsistencies.html

Paul Campos. 2015. "Alice Goffman's Implausible Ethnography." Chronicle of Higher Education, August 21, 2-15. Sakai.

Assignment: Reaction paper #2 due

November 10th: Gender: 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.

Cecilia L. Ridgeway. 2014. "Why Status Matters for Inequality." American Sociological Review 79:1-16. Sakai.

Paula England. 2010. "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled." *Gender & Society* 24:149-66. Sakai.

Recommended:

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.

Assignment: Final paper outline due

November 17th: Transgender: The Persistence of Gender Inequality

Kristen Schilt. 2011. *Just One of the Guys?: Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

November 24th: Gender and Policy

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

December 1st: Inequality and the Role of the Public Intellectual

Ta-Nehisi Coates. 2014. "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*. June, 2014.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Ta-Nehisi Coates. 2015. "Letter to My Son." *The Atlantic*. July 4, 2015. [Excerpt from *Between the World and Me*.]
<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/tanehisi-coates-between-the-world-and-me/397619/>

Dani McClain. 2015. "Why 100 Black Intellectuals Rallied Behind This Professor." *The Nation*. July 14, 2015.
<http://www.thenation.com/article/why-100-black-intellectuals-rallied-behind-this-professor/>

December 8th: final presentations in class

December 11th: Final papers due

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." Sakai.

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

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

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

10 Top Writing Tips: <http://withoutbullshit.com/blog/10-top-writing-tips-psychology/>

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." Sakai.

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