920:421:02 Seminar in Sociology: Inequalities
(Draft, 8/12/14)

Patricia A. Roos
Fall, 2014
Monday/Thursdays, 12:35-1:55 p.m.
Rm. 122 Davison Hall, Douglass campus

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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 examining its historical context. We’ll assess what theories researchers have proposed to examine inequality, and how important class remains in defining our life chances 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 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.

II. Readings:

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


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

III. Expectations:

This is an advanced 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.

Your final grade will be based on:

1) Class participation/attendance, including written class memos (20 percent total)
Beginning week 2 (September 8th), 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 Sunday (for our Monday class), and Wednesday (for our Thursday 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 three 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.

**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 October 6th; post to Sakai no later than 12 noon the day before; 30 percent)

Read through the articles for 10/2 on white privilege, and participate in our discussion in class. **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 your readings, or any other topic related to inequality that interests you. For some ideas, 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](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](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 September 29th. I encourage you to talk with me early and often. Your paper outline is due November 24th, the first draft of the paper on December 1st, and the final draft on December 15th. 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 (December 8th). We will talk more about this as the semester progresses.

**Summary of due dates:**

September 29th: 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)
October 6th: Short paper due (3-4 pp.; send email attachment)
November 24th: Final paper outline due (send email attachment)
December 1st: First draft of final paper due (send email attachment)
December 8th: Class presentations with power point slides (post slides to Sakai by 12 noon the day before)
December 15th: Final draft of paper due (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, 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 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.

Please link to these, and read through:
[Interactive-Tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity](#)
[Don’t Plagiarize? Document Your Research](#)
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

September 4th: Introduction and Course Overview


(read in class and discuss)

September 8th & 11th: Why Inequality is Important?

Monday: Robert Reich: Inequality for All (film, 85 mins)

Thursday: Discussion re Reich movie, and:

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

September 15th & 18th: Theory and Historical Context


Recommended:


September 22nd, 25th, & 29th: From Origins to Destinations: Inequality Over the Life Cycle


Thursday: Alexander et al., Chs. 5-7 (pp. 75-156)

Monday: Alexander et al., Chs. 8-9 (pp. 157-188)

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

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

October 2nd: Race I: Exploring White Privilege
http://amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html

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


We’ll watch this in class:
Tavis Smiley, PBS Interview with Nancy DiTomaso, September 9, 2013:
http://video.pbs.org/video/2365073464/

Recommended:


October 6th & 9th: Race II: Race and Crime


Assignment due: short paper

Thursday: Alexes Harris. 2014. ‘Yes, America, we have returned to debtor’s prisons.” Los Angeles Times, June 6, 2014.

We’ll watch 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

October 13th & 16th: Class I: Reproducing Inequality and Consequences


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


We’ll watch these in class:  
http://www.nytimes.com/packages/khtml/2005/05/16/national/class/20050516_CLASSHEALTH_FEATURE.html  

Recommended:  

Inequality graphic:  

October 20th & 23rd: Class II: Urban Disadvantage and Crime

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


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

October 27th & 30th: Gender I: Theory


Thursday: 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
[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]

November 3rd & 6th: Gender II: Gender and Unemployment in a Recession

Monday: Mary Gatta. 2014. All I Want is a Job! Unemployed Women Navigating the Public Workforce System. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Chs. Introduction, 1-2 (pp. 1-100)

Thursday: Gatta, Chs. 3-4 (pp. 101-132).

Part III: Consequences of Inequality

November 10th & 13th: Consequences: Education


Thursday: Little Rock Central (film, 70 minutes)

Recommended:


Class Matters: Education:
David Leonhardt, “The College Dropout Boom” and Timothy Egan, “No Degree, and No Way Back to the Middle”
http://www.nytimes.com/indexes/2005/05/24/national/class/

November 17th & 20th: Consequences: Work and Family


Thursday: Schulte, pay special attention to Chs. 8, 9, 11, 12

Recommended:


November 24th & 25th—TUESDAY = THURSDAY: Consequences: Gender Gap in Wages and Positions


Rachel Maddow, “Fact or Friction (women get paid less than men for the same work)”: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26315908/#47240047

Assignment due: final paper outline


Recommended:


December 1st & 4th: Writing It All Up

Monday & Thursday: expectations re presenting and writing up results and questions?

Assignment due: first draft of final paper (Monday)

December 8th: Student presentations (post power point slides to Sakai by 12 noon, December 7th)

December 15th: Final draft of paper due (send email attachment)

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


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


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

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


American Sociological Association, "Writing an Informative Abstract"

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