

Social Inequality (Sociology 41)

University of Pennsylvania

Spring 2009: McNeil 110

Prof. Lareau

Office: 288 McNeil Building

215 898-3515 email: alareau@sas.upenn.edu

Office hours: Monday 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. and by appointment

Required readings:

The books are on sale at HOUSE OF OUR OWN, 3920 Spruce Street Phone: 215 222-1576.
Hours: Monday to Saturday 10-7, Sunday 12-5. On January 14th and 15th they are open until 9:00 p.m.

Gladwell, Malcolm *Outliers*

Keller, Bill and *The New York Times, Class Matters*. New York: MacMillan

MacLeod, Jay *Ain't No Making it* 2008 edition, Westview.

Young, Alford *Minds of Marginalized Black Men*, University of Chicago Press.

Shapiro, Thomas and Melvin Oliver, *Black Wealth/White Wealth* 10th anniversary edition, Routledge Press.

Pattillo-McCoy, Mary, *Black Picket Fences*, University of Chicago Press

Edin, Kathy and Maria Kefalas, *Promises I Can Keep*, University of California Press.

Lareau, Annette *Home Advantage*.

You will have to Xerox and turn in six research articles for your paper.

There will also be additional readings posted on Blackboard under each week. Here is the login for Blackboard:

<https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu/>

Course requirements:

- ❖ Weekly in-class writings on the readings
- ❖ Midterm
- ❖ Final (comprehensive with more emphasis on the period since the midterm)
- ❖ Research paper (i.e., six to seven pages in length) on a sociological question of your choice
- ❖ Exercises

In addition, of course, it is expected that you will complete all of the reading *before* class. Each class we will have an in-class writing where you will reflect on the readings. One week you may skip this in-class writing. You also may skip one exercise (with the exception of the very last exercise where you provide feedback to your classmates on the research paper). These course requirements will contribute to your final grade in the following fashion:

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| Midterm: | 30% |
| Final: | 38% |
| Research Paper: | 20% |
| Exercises: | 5% |
| Class engagement: | 2% |
| In-class writings: | 5% |

| | Wednesday | |
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| Week 1 | 1/14 | Exercise 1: Conduct an interview with someone (ideally) who is around 40 to 50 years of age and has a blue-collar job about how his or her life is going; use the questions (in modified form) that MacLeod uses. The interview should last around 90 minutes or so. |
| <i>Outliers</i> | What is sociology? | |
| Exercise 1 is due by email on Tuesday January 27 th in the evening. You will turn in a short essay where you summarize who you interviewed, what you learned, and how it gave you new insights into the readings and class discussions. Please bring the interview to class; please select a segment to play for the class that lasts about three to five minutes. | | |

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| Week 2 <i>Ain't No Making It</i> Methodological appendix, Part I | 1/ 21: Discussion of <i>Outliers</i> | |
| Week 3 <i>Ain't No Making It</i> Part II and Chapter 12 | 1/28: Discussion of <i>Ain't...</i> 1-276 | Exercise 2: Imagine that you do not have a college degree. What jobs can you apply for and get? How much do they pay? How much does health insurance cost? Write a page describing your life in some detail. What is your job? How much do you make? Where do you live in Philadelphia? How much do you pay in rent? Do you have health insurance? Can you afford car insurance? |
| Week 4 <i>Ain't No Making It</i> (finish) Part III and appendices Exercise 2 is due on February 3 rd . | 2/4 | |
| Week 5 BB: Readings on Racial Inequality: Massey chapter Oliver and Shapiro Chapters 1-5 | 2/11 | Exercise 3: Buying a house exercise. Based on the month of your birth you will be allocated resources and an income. Find a real house in a real neighborhood that you want to buy. How much is your down payment? How much are your payments? What is the interest rate? How does the resources that your family is able to give you have an impact on the kind of house you can buy? There is a handout for this exercise. |
| Week 6 Finish Oliver and Shapiro BB: Readings on Racial Inequality Feagin Exercise 3 is due February 17th | 2/18 Presentation s begin | |
| Week 7 Young, <i>Minds of Marginalized Black Men</i> : Chapters 1-5 BB: Readings on Racial Inequality Western | 2/25 | Exercise 4: Explore Philadelphia; Choose two neighborhoods. One neighborhood must be West Philadelphia (beyond 50 th), Kensington, or North Philadelphia. Visit these neighborhoods and compare them with a |

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| | | more prosperous neighborhood in the city of suburbs. What kinds of stores exist? Are there grocery stores? Can one buy fruits and vegetables? Where is the post office? How long is the line? What is the tone and atmosphere of the neighborhood? Try to find out how much car insurance would cost you in each of these neighborhoods. How do the neighborhoods differ in their access to valuable social resources? |
| Week 8 Young: Chapters 6,7, and 8 (about 50 pages) <i>Class Matters</i> Appendix, Chapters 1,2,4,7, 10, and 12 | 3/4 Discussion of reading Midterm | Midterm covers reading through Young's book but not the <i>Class Matters</i> book |
| SPRING BREAK | | |
| Week 9 Edin and Kefalas: <i>Promises</i> 225-250, Chapters 1, 2, 3 | 3/18 | Exercise 5: Class-generated exercise |
| Week 10 Edin and Kefalas: 4-6, Conclusion BB: Hart and Risley Exercise 4 is due March 24 th . | 3/25 | |
| Week 11: Lareau, <i>Home Advantage</i> Chapters 1-6 BB: Black/White Test Score Gap articles Exercise 5 is due on March 31 st . | 4/1 | |
| Week 12 Lareau, 6,7,8,9, Foreword McCoy, <i>Black Picket Fences</i> 1,2 Your paper is due on April 8 th . Please bring two hard copies and also email it to your two readers. It is due at the BEGINNING of | 4/8 | Exercise 6: Providing feedback Paper due!(You will read papers by two of your classmates and provide feedback to them.) |

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| class on April 8 th . | | |
| Week 13 McCoy, <i>Black Picket Fences</i> 3,4,5,6,Conclusion Exercise 6 is due in class on April 15 th . Please type out comments for your classmates (in addition to providing detailed written notes on the paper). Please turn in your summary comments for credit. | 4/15 | Comments due! |
| Week 14 Western: <i>Punishment</i> Introduction, Chapters 1,4,5, and 6 | 4/22 Last class Final, revised, paper due April 29 th 5:00 p.m. | |
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| Final examination: Thursday May 7 th 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. | | |

Exercises:

The exercises are intended to help bring the concepts of the course to life. The exercises normally will not take a large amount of time to complete. In addition to the “leg-work” please write two paragraphs where you reflect on what you learned from the exercise. Are there any readings or course discussions that you understand somewhat differently after having done the exercise? There are six exercises; with the exception of the last exercise you may skip one exercise.

Research Paper:

In the class you will have an opportunity to investigate a sociological question of your choice. It is my hope that you will find this class assignment to be interesting. Your paper should be six to eight pages in length (i.e., double-spaced with 1 inch margins). Each member of the class will give a presentation about his or her paper. We will try to arrange the presentations so that students studying similar topics will present the same week. We also will coordinate the presentations with the readings. As a result you will need to choose a tentative subject by the second week of class. Here are some tentative subjects for a paper topic:

*How much mobility exists in America?

- *Do Americans accept that there is a social class system in America? What is the evidence that they do or do not support this view?
- *Does race make a difference in home ownership? Why?
- *Has there been a change in patterns of interracial dating and marriage?
- *Does social class shape child rearing?
- *How do social networks shape access to jobs? Do those social networks vary by race and class? Does this have an impact on patterns of unemployment?
- *Have there been important changes in patterns of incarceration over time? Is there a racial bias in the criminal justice system?
- *What is the impact of a young man being in jail on family life?
- *How does race shape residential patterns? How much is racial segregation choosing?
- *Do people of different walks of life come together in America regularly and frequently? How? Where?
- *How does the media portray Americans? Are people of different walks of life represented in television or other forms of media? How accurate are the portraits? Is there a pattern of bias?
- *What role did the government play in supporting racial segregation in housing? Did the government play an important role or was it a minor role?
- *Do accidents of birth shape life chances? How? Does the social class position of parents shape the educational prospects for children?
- *Does race, independent of class, shape educational outcomes? Why?
- *How much discrimination is there in public places to individuals of different social groups?
- *Have there been important changes in patterns of the likelihood of children's parents being married? Does this vary by race?

Your question must be one that can be addressed with existing research. You need to collect at least six articles from *peer-reviewed journals* (e.g., JSTOR) and one piece of government evidence (e.g., a simple statistic collected by the government) to support your claims. Please do choose research articles that you can understand. It does not matter what thesis you choose but you need to support it with evidence. You may choose the same topic as a friend in the class but you each need to collect unique articles; you may share and discuss the topic as long as you each write your own paper. [Please note that an important element of academic integrity is fully and correctly attributing any materials taken from the work of others. Use ASA, APA, or Chicago Style. Please also look at the library's site which is very useful:

<http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/PORT/documentation/avoidingplagiarism.html>] We are fortunate to have the Penn Online Research Tutorial which is very helpful:
<http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/PORT/>

You must meet with me to have your topic approved. You will need to turn in your topic and then turn in hard copies of your articles before you turn in your final paper. These will be returned to you. The articles will be returned the same day that you bring them to class. In addition you will write a draft and get feedback from other members of the course (as well as give feedback). Please be certain to turn in a hard copy of all of the research articles you used in writing the paper along with the paper. Almost all important sociological questions have been researched. If you are having trouble finding research on a topic try using the thesaurus in sociological abstracts or making an appointment to work with a reference librarian. Choose a

question that is of interest to you! I am hopeful that you will find it to be a valuable learning experience.

Academic integrity:

Please familiarize yourself with Penn's Code of Academic Integrity, <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html>, which applies to this course. It goes without saying that I do not anticipate any problems with academic integrity. In the unlikely event that any concerns do arise on this score, I will forward all related materials to Penn's Office of Student Conduct, <http://www.upenn.edu/osc/index.html>, for an impartial adjudication.

Penn Resources:

We are blessed to have many resources at Penn. The Weingarten Learning Resource Center has a number of valuable handouts on-line about how to improve your studying and test preparation. There are instructors with whom you may schedule a (free) appointment. Their email is <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/lr/>

The library also has many valuable on-line guidelines to help you in doing the research and writing for your paper. You may also schedule an appointment with a reference librarian.

Welcome to the class!