**Sociology 139**

# Social Inequality: Class, Race, and Gender Spring 2025

## Classroom: PODEM 0133

**Class Hours: TTH 12:30-1:50 pm**

Final Exam: Monday 11:30-2:29 pm

Instructor: Vanesa Ribas Office: 470 Social Sciences Building

[Email: vribas@ucsd.edu](mailto:vribas@ucsd.edu) Course website: Canvas

Office Hours: Th 2:00-4:00pm

**Course Overview**

Social inequalities mold our life experiences from the time we are born until the day we die. Although there are numerous axes along which inequality can be studied, race, class, and gender are three of the most persistent and consequential. Often, we take the significance of these social statuses as givens; in this course, we will scrutinize the origins and contemporary manifestations of class, race, and gender inequality.

So much of what goes on around us is a reflection of contention and struggles around the three critical dimensions of this seminar – race, class, and gender. Sociologists are interested in understanding the complex entanglements and multiple intersections of these defining sources of social status. Understanding the inequalities associated with race, class, and gender – and explaining how these are produced and reproduced over time, in different places, and in diverse domains – will be a key focus of this course. In addition, we will examine how individuals and groups compose identities that are situated in the matrix of race, class, and gender, paying attention to how these identities are alternatively imposed, claimed, articulated, and challenged. We will view the social construction of race, class, and gender as a historically-situated yet shifting process that generates social inequalities resulting in the privilege or oppression of particular groups. The objectives of this class are to sensitize you to how issues involving race, class, and gender are manifest in the system of social relations and political struggles that surround us and of which we are a part, and to invite you to think deeply and critically about the processes that generate and perpetuate social inequalities.

## Course Goals

By the end of this course, you will have acquired the following skills:

* a strong awareness of the historical and contemporary social construction of race, class, and gender
* a capacity for discerning the intersections of race, class, and gender in diverse contexts
* an understanding of how the systems of social relations associated with race, class, and gender generate, reproduce, and sometimes mitigate or exacerbate inequalities between groups
* an ability to articulate these concepts from various angles, drawing on contrasting ideas and perspectives, and to critically evaluate their contribution
* an ability to express, both orally and in writing, your own ideas related to the subject matter

## Class Guidelines

1. Attend class and be ready to start class on time.
2. Read all materials for the assigned day.
3. Contribute to class discussions.
4. Listen carefully to others.
5. Turn off cell phones and other electronic devices.
6. Check your email account daily.
7. Check the course Canvas site regularly, especially the Content folders.

## Contacts

You can reach me by email at [vribas@ucsd.edu.](mailto:vribas@ucsd.edu) This is especially convenient if you have a quick question. I try to be in the classroom at least 5 minutes before class starts, and so you can talk to me then, or we can chat after class.

## Office Hours

I have office hours on Thursdays, from 2:00-4:00 pm. If you can’t make these hours, please let me know and we’ll try to arrange another time. You might meet for office hours if you have a question about a reading you don’t understand, want to review a concept we’ve talked about in class, or would like to discuss how you’re doing in the class. However, you don’t have to have a problem to come to office hours - you may just want to chat about something.

**Things you need to know how to do to succeed in this class**

Attend class, read carefully, write analytically, participate! If you come to class, take care to do the assigned readings, ask questions, contribute your thoughts in class, listen to others, and put forward a strong effort to develop your critical writing skills, you will most likely do very well in this class. Some assignments are not fully described in this syllabus. Instead, they will be posted on Canvas and discussed in class. You *must* check Canvas regularly.

## Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability will provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.

Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone)

[osd@ucsd.edu](mailto:osd@ucsd.edu)(email)  [http://disabilities.ucsd.edu](http://disabilities.ucsd.edu/)(website)

## Food Support for Students

## If you are skipping and stretching meals, or having difficulties affording or accessing food, you may be eligible for CalFresh, California’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, that can provide up to $292 a month in free money on a debit card to buy food. Students can apply at [benefitscal.com/r/ucsandiegocalfresh](http://benefitscal.com/r/ucsandiegocalfresh)

## The Hub Basic Needs Center empowers all students by connecting them to resources for food, stable housing and financial literacy. Visit their site at [basicneeds.ucsd.edu](http://basicneeds.ucsd.edu/)

## Academic Integrity

UCSD’s policy on academic integrity will be in effect throughout this course for all assignments. As an academic community, none of us can afford to tolerate academic dishonesty of any sort, including plagiarism, falsifying data, or otherwise cheating. Please talk to me or visit the University’s website if you have any questions about what constitutes academic integrity: <http://www.ucsd.edu/current-students/academics/academic-integrity/index.html>

## Readings

Most required readings will be on Canvas in the Files folder. Links will be provided for other readings. If these are UCSD library electronic holdings, you must be on the VPN or on a campus IP to access.

## Format

Our class will be structured as a mix of lectures, open and active discussion, and small group-based work. This means that you will be expected to contribute your thoughts, listen carefully to others, and be prepared to both respond to questions and raise meaningful questions yourselves on a regular basis. We will sometimes work on in-class assignments, both individually and in small groups. One objective of working in small groups is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage with the readings and topics actively. Some out-of-class assignments may also be done in groups. The opportunity to prepare for class discussions and presentations in small groups means that you will come to class already enriched by your peers’ understandings, questions, and experiences, and the whole class will benefit as a result.

## Attendance

Achieving success in this class requires consistent daily attendance. In addition, because the class – and the success of other students – depends on everyone’s participation in class discussion, your attendance is critical. Please don’t schedule any appointments, trips, association meetings, or other activities that would require you to miss class. If you know you’ll be out of town and have to miss a class, please let me know ahead of time. Also, if a family emergency or illness comes up, please let me know. You are allowed one unexcused regular class absence during the quarter. Two or more unexcused absences will result in -10% each on your final attendance grade.

## Preparing for Class

This is an advanced undergraduate course. As such, a significant amount of reading, writing, and preparation for class will be involved. For every hour that we spend in class, I recommend you set aside at least three hours for careful reading of the texts, preparation for each class session, and reviewing your notes. I will sometimes post study/discussion questions to Canvas at least two days before the assigned readings are due, if not earlier. These questions are intended to serve as *guides* or to call attention to what I think are *key themes* in the reading, but are *not* an exhaustive list of all themes or questions we will be discussing in class. I encourage you to develop one or two questions of your own for each class, and on occasion I may ask that you prepare such questions to share with the class.

During class, we will be practicing important concepts and skills in small groups. This strategy is known as cooperative learning and is designed to increase your mastery of the course content. Active participation helps ensure your and your group mates’ understanding of the ideas presented in class. We need your commitment to demonstrate a willingness to contribute ideas, to listen to others, and to be a constructive force in the learning process.

## Evaluation

Your course grade is based upon several different components: written assignments, group presentations/discussion leadership, and exams.

1. ***Attendance***: Your attendance is important – to your grade and to the success of the class. You are allowed one unexcused absence without a grade penalty. After that, each absence reduces your attendance grade by 10%. For example, if you miss three (3) classes, you will get an 80% on this portion of your grade; if you miss two (2) classes, you will get a 90% on this portion of your grade. Do your best to make it to class. Attendance will be spot checked.
2. ***Analytic Reflections***: I will ask you to turn in two **2-3 page** analytic reflection papers. In these reflections, I ask that you critically engage and evaluate the assigned readings and respond to a given prompt. Good analytic reflections are ones that demonstrate you have understood what the author(s) is saying, have reflected carefully on the arguments or issues raised, and have formulated a reasonably coherent reaction or set of questions in response to the readings and prompt. Some guidelines are posted on Canvas for your reference and I will provide a prompt. We will finalize due dates for these when the course starts, but tentative dates are listed in the course schedule. These papers will be valuable for you as a method of communication with me and as a resource when it comes time to study.
3. ***Exams***: There will be a midterm and a final exam. Exams may consist of multiple choice, short answer, and/or essay questions. You may bring one page of notes to the exam.
4. ***Group Assignment/Presentation/Discussion Leadership***: You will be responsible for helping to lead discussion for part of the class on one occasion, along with five or six other students in your group. Groups will be given a prompt. For your group presentation time, you must come up with a brief activity, exercise, or media clip relevant to the day’s topics or prompts that you would like to share with the class. I especially encourage you to relate the readings/topics you are presenting on to current events. Your group will be required to post a short (around 250 words) memo on the discussion board on Canvas by 9 pm the evening before your day to present that prompts us to think about the main issues/problems/arguments your group would like to highlight from the readings. Details and dates will be discussed in class. There may also be other in-class group work.

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| **Components of Your Grade**: | **Percent of Grade** |
| Attendance | 15% |
| Analytic Reflections (2) | 20% |
| Group Presentations/Memo/Other Assignments | 20% |
| Midterm | 20% |
| Final Exam | 25% |
| **Total** | **100%** |

## Grading Scale

At the end of the term, you will receive a letter grade, based on the following scale:

A+ = 97-100

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| A | = | 93-96 |
| A- | = | 90-92 |
| B+ | = | 87-89 |
| B | = | 83-86 |
| B- | = | 80-82 |
| C+ | = | 77-79 |
| C | = | 73-76 |
| C- | = | 70-72 |
| D | = | 60-69 |
| F | = | Below 60 |

# COURSE SCHEDULE

**(Always check your email and Canvas for changes to readings)**

**Tuesday, April 1st – Getting Started**

Course Concepts, Assignments, Goals

**Thursday, April 3rd – Social Stratification and Social Class Positions**

Inequality Reader, Chapter 2: Some Principles of Stratification (Davis and Moore)

Melvin Tumin’s Reply to Davis and Moore

Wright, Erik Olin. (1997). Chapter 1: “Class Analysis” from Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis. New York: Cambridge University Press.

**Tuesday, April 8th – Continued**

Hout, Michael. 2008. “How Class Works: Objective and Subjective Aspects of Class Since the 1970s.” pp. 25-51 in Social Class: How Does it Work eds. Annette Lareau and Dalton Conley. New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press.

Arvid Lindh and Leslie McCall. 2020. “Class Position and Political Opinion in Rich Democracies.” *Annual Review of Sociology*. 46: 419-441.

**Thursday, April 10th – Poverty, Wealth, and Growing Inequality: Causes, Structure, Experience, and Social Policy**

Inequality Reader, Chapter 17: Poorer by Comparison (Smeeding) Inequality Reader, Chapter 9: Striking It Richer (Saez)

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/02/income-inequality-in-america-chart-graph>

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/systematic-inequality/>

**Tuesday, April 15th – Institutions and Social Class**

Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss. (2004). Selection “Why Labor Matters” from *Hard Work: Remaking the American Labor Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<https://jacobin.com/2024/03/left-populists-working-class-voters>

Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton. (2015). Selection from *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Introduction through

Chapter 4. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.4159/harvard.9780674073517/html#contents>

**Thursday, April 17th – Presentations (Groups 1 and 2)**

**– Cultural Forms of Class Inequalities and the Role of Racism**

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. Selection from *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press. Pp. 128‐29; 169‐175; 190‐193.

Inequality Reader, Chapter 68: Unequal Childhoods (Lareau)

[https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/12/31/trump-white-working-class-history-](https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/12/31/trump-white-working-class-history-216200) 216200

**Tuesday, April 22nd – Aspirations and Attainment from a Class Perspective**

Jay MacLeod. (1995). Selections from *Ain’t No Makin’ It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low- Income Neighborhood*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Shamus Khan. (2021). Selections from *Privilege: The Making of and Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School*. Princeton University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1hhj146>

**Thursday, April 24th – Class, Ethnoracial Identity, and Gender**

Julie Bettie. (2014). Women Without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity. Oakland: University of California Press. Introduction and Chapters 1-3. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1525/9780520957244/html#contents>

Analytic Reflection #1 due

**Tuesday, April 29th – Continued**

Roberto Gonzales. 2015. Selection from *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America*. Chapter 1 and 2

<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1525/9780520962415/html#contents>

Presentations (Groups 3 and 4)

**Thursday, May 1st – Midterm**

**Tuesday, May 6th – The Social (and Legal) Construction of Race in Historical Perspective**

Film: Race: The Power of an Illusion

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. (2015, third edition). Selection from *Racial Formation in the United States*. New York: Routledge. Introduction and Chapter 4.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsd/detail.action?docID=1715791>

Nobles, Melissa. (2000). “Race as Discourse,” pp. 11-14 and Chapter 2: “The Tables Present

Plain Matters of Fact”: Race Categories in U.S. Censuses, pp. 25-84 from *Shades of*

*Citizenship: Race and the Census in Modern Politics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

**Thursday, May 8th – Continued with a Focus on Citizenship**

López, Ian F. Haney. (2006[1996]). Selection from *White by Law: The Legal Construction of*

*Race*. New York: New York University Press. Chapter 1 through 3.

<https://www.fulcrum.org/epubs/ww72bd678?locale=en#/6/12[title]!/4/2/3:0>

López, Ian F. Haney. (2006[1996]). *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. New York: New York University Press. Skim Chapter 4 through Chapter 8.

<https://www.fulcrum.org/epubs/ww72bd678?locale=en#/6/12[title]!/4/2/3:0>

**Tuesday, May 13th – Inequality and Immigration Today**

Ngai, Mae. 2003. “The Strange Career of the Illegal Alien: Immigration Restriction and Deportation Policy in the United States, 1921-1965.” *Law and History Review*. 21(1): 69-107.

Chávez, Leo. (2008). Selection from *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and*

*the Nation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Introduction through Chapter 2.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsd/detail.action?docID=1162035>

**Thursday, May 15th – Continued**

Chávez, Leo. (2008). *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Chapter 3 through Chapter 5.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsd/detail.action?docID=1162035>

Abigail Andrews. 2023. Selection from *Banished Men: How Migrants Endure the Violence of Deportation*. Oakland: University of California Press. Introduction.

<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1525/9780520395985/html#contents>

Presentations (Groups 5 and 6)

**Tuesday, May 20th – Contemporary Perspectives on Race/Ethnicity, Racism, and Racial Inequality**

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2003. Chapter 1: “The Strange Enigma of Race in Contemporary America” and Chapter 2: “The Central Frames of Color-Blind Racism” from *Racism without Racists: Color Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Dwanna L. McKay, Kirsten Vinyeta, and Kari Marie Norgaard. 2020. “Theorizing Race and Settler Colonialism within U.S. Sociology.” *Sociology Compass* 14(9).

Jiménez, Tomás R. and Adam L. Horowitz. 2013.  “When White is Just Alright: How Immigrants Redefine Achievement and Reconfigure the Ethnoracial Hierarchy.” *American Sociological Review*, 78(5): 849-871

Analytic Reflection #2 due

**Thursday, May 22nd – Presentations (Groups 7 and 8)**

**– The State of Gender Inequalities and the Intersectional Optic**

Ridgeway, Cecilia. 2009. “Framed Before We Know It: How Gender Shapes Social Relations.” *Gender & Society* 23(2): 145-160.

Lorber, Judith. Ch. 10 “Guarding the Gates: The Micropolitics of Gender” from *Paradoxes of Gender*.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2015. “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 41: 1-20.

**Tuesday, May 27th – Denaturalizing Gender and Challenging Heteronormativity**

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. Selection from *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 1: Dueling Dualisms--pages 1-29.

Khanna, Katharine and Tey Meadow. 2023. “The Fragile Male: An Experimental Study of Transgender Classification and the Durability of Gender Categories.” Gender & Society 37(4): 553-583.

**Thursday, May 29th – Gender Ideology and Cultural Representations**

Hari Ziyad. (July 12, 2017). “My Gender Is Black.” Afropunk. [http://afropunk.com/2017/07/my-](http://afropunk.com/2017/07/my-gender-is-black/)  [gender-is-black/](http://afropunk.com/2017/07/my-gender-is-black/)

Collins, Patricia Hill. (2004). Selections from *Black Sexual Politics*. New York: Routledge.

**Tuesday, June 3rd – Continued**

CJ Pascoe. (2007). *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Chapter 1 through 3.

Presentations (Groups 9 and 10)

**Thursday, June 5th – Review day and wrap-up**

**Monday, June 9th @ 11:30-2:29 pm – Final Exam**