

Inequality in Daily Life Sociology 41 Section 302**A Freshman Seminar****Prof. Annette Lareau****University of Pennsylvania****Spring 2019**

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Office hours: Wednesdays 11 to noon and by appointment

Welcome to our course! This course does not presume any prior knowledge of the field of sociology.

Although most Americans strongly believe that their accomplishments are the result of their hard work and talent, accidents of birth shape life chances. In this sociology course, we will learn about the amount of social inequality in the United States today, as well as the ways in which class and race inequality are interwoven. We will read about inequality in a variety of spheres education, neighborhoods, and family life. We will pay particular attention to the experiences of wealthy families since they provide a window into the power of social class.

Required readings:

Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Laura T. Hamilton, *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Harvard University Press.

Black, Timothy, *When a Heart Turns Rock Solid: The Lives of Three Puerto Rican Brothers On and Off the Street*. Pantheon.

Duncan, Greg J. and Richard Murane, *Restoring Opportunity: The Crisis of Inequality and the Challenge for American Education*. Harvard Educational Press and the Russell Sage Foundation.

Graham, Lawrence Otis, *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class*. Harper.

Lareau, Annette, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, 2nd Edition. Berkeley: University of California.

(Prof. Lareau will make an estimate of the royalties from the sale of the book to this class and donate the proceeds to charity. In addition, you are more than welcome to read Marianne Cooper's book, *Cut Adrift: Families in Insecure Times*, instead of *Unequal Childhoods*. If you wish to take advantage of this opportunity, please speak to me.)

All of the books are at the Penn Bookstore. There are also additional readings posted on Canvas: <http://canvas.upenn.edu>

Goals for the semester

- ❖ You will learn about levels of inequality in the United States and the impact of this inequality on many important areas of life.
- ❖ You will learn about the research methodology in the social sciences, particularly in sociology. You will have a chance to carry out a bit of original research. Your own data collection will help you look at the readings with fresh eyes.
- ❖ You will help to develop your analytic skills so that you can critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of an intellectual position. You will work to synthesize a variety of research evidence to support a coherent intellectual position.

Free Advice

There are many things that most of you will do during this semester. You will get settled on campus. This will mean that you will adjust to your living situation, go out with your friends, visit your family, and work. These are important. Still, your academic life should also be a foundational element of your semester and a core part of why you are here. Set high standards for yourself! Read books on your own! It is wonderful to arrange your schedule so that you come to class, do the readings, study, and absorb the material. Since this is a course in the social sciences, there is quite a bit of required reading for this course.

- ❖ The class is designed to challenge you to think about the world in new ways as well as to build your intellectual skills. I work for each class to have a point and to highlight key ideas. Each class is an important part of the goals of the semester. I am always happy to meet with you in office hours to discuss what you are learning and how you can further improve.
- ❖ Students tell me that they often enter the course expecting that it will be an “easy course.” They are surprised that it is not. It has a great deal of reading since empirical studies are crucial to understanding scientific evidence in the social sciences. Fortunately, the reading is interesting and relatively easy to read. Some, but not all, students also report that find the course to be valuable. They report that it has an impact on how they see the world.

Course requirements:

- ❖ **Reading Reflections**
Each week, a short reading reflection is due by Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. (i.e., before the class the next day). It should be no longer than 1.5 single-spaced pages. It has three parts. First, you summary the thesis or main points of the reading. Second, you list at least three questions or issues for us to discuss in class. Third, you have a paragraph where you raise

conceptual questions or concerns about the reading. I will explain in class how you do this. The first two are not graded; you will just get feedback. Also, on two (2) weeks during the semester, you may skip a reflection. You should, however, complete the reading that week. As a bonus, on one week you will get 10 points as a little boost to your grade. Taken as a whole, the reflections are worth 10% of your grade or 100 points.

❖ Midterm 1:

This midterm is intended to help you learn how to do well in this course. It is intended to provide “scaffolding” to help you develop the skills you need to flourish in this course. It is only worth 10% of our grade or 100 points. It is in class and it will last 75 minutes. Fifteen percent of the grade is based on multiple-choice/true-false, and short answer. Eighty-five percent of the grade is based on an essay. You will be given a study guide before the midterm which has sample essay questions; two of these essay questions will appear in modified form on the exam. You may bring an 8 ½ x 11” “cheat sheet” to the exam.

❖ Midterm 2: This midterm follows the same format as the first midterm. It is worth 30% of your final grade or 300 points. It will last 75 minutes.

❖ Research Exercises: 15% of your grade or 150 points

In an effort to bring social science research to life, we will have a number of research exercises.

*interviews: in connection with the reading and topics of discussion, you will do interviews. You will do the interview and upload it. There are no writing requirements, but you need to complete it before class so we can discuss it. One interview will be on the status hierarchy at Penn, one will be on study abroad, one will be on low-wage work, and one will be on a topic of your choice. Each of these four interviews will be worth 20 points each for a total of 80 points. If you complete the interview, you will get full credit. Unlike the other research exercises, the interviews are not evaluated.

*you will buy a home with an amount of a down payment that I prescribe. This exercise is worth 20 points.

* you will also name a topic of interest to you and learn to use *Sociological Abstracts* (which I will show you in class how to use), find two or three articles, read them, and write a short memo about them. This exercise is worth 50 points.

We also will have a number of in-class exercises to make class more lively and fun. We also will have a number of movies and videos.

❖ In-class Final: The final examination will follow the same format as the midterm with a few changes. Notably, the final is comprehensive, but there is more emphasis on the period since the last midterm. The final is worth 35% of your grade or 350 points.

These course requirements will contribute to your final grade in the following fashion:

Midterm 1:	10%	100 points
Midterm 2:	30%	300 points
Final:	35%	350 points
Reading reflections	12%	100 points
Research exercises	13%	150 points
Total:	100%	1000 points

It is expected that you will complete all of the reading *before* class. If you are an athlete (and you will miss classes), someone in your family is in the hospital, you have a court case, you are in the hospital, you have a death in the family, or you have a period of over a week where you are not sleeping or having a life crisis, please do let me know. We can make adjustments.

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. Of course, we do not anticipate any problems with academic integrity. In the unlikely event that any concerns do arise on this score, we 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. The student disability center is also housed in Weingarten: <http://www.college.upenn.edu/support/sds.php>

Penn also has a writing center. Here is the link: <http://writing.upenn.edu/critical/help/> Students may schedule (free) appointments to get help from a trained tutor with the writing process.

Penn also has a Counseling and Psychological Services program which offers free confidential help to students. College can be challenging. Here is the link: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps/> In addition, there are resident advisers, faculty members living on campus, academic advisers, and undergraduate advisers in each program of study. The Office of the Chaplain is also helpful.

Penn seeks to be a caring community.

Policy on laptops and electronic devices:

Recent research, including from Stanford University, demonstrates that multi-tasking reduces cognitive functioning. (See the article from Stanford University posted in Week 1 readings.) In addition, learning is not simply about memorization, but it is about actively analyzing, questioning, and assessing the ideas and evidence presented in lecture. Most importantly, when students use electronic devices in a classroom (i.e., to do email or browse Facebook) it is distracting to other students. Due to these factors, as well as additional factors, this class joins other university courses in having a policy of no electronic devices being permitted in lecture or recitation.

Welcome to the course!**Course Calendar and Readings:**

Please complete the reading before class and certainly before recitation. For the reading for the first week, please complete it by the second time our class meets.

Week 1: Wednesday: January 23rd**Reading:**

Duncan and Murane, Restoring Opportunity: pp 1-84

and

Canvas: As American as Apple Pie: Poverty in America

[In-class Movie: People Like Us: Social Class in America](#)

Week 2: Wednesday, January 30, 2019**Reading: (complete before class)**

Duncan and Murane: Restoring Opportunity: pp 85-144 and

Badger, Emily and Kevin Quealy, 2017, "How Effective Is Your School District? A New

Measure Shows Where Students Learn the Most" December 5, 2017

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/05/upshot/a-better-way-to-compare-public-schools.html>

Optional: There are short videos for "school-based initiatives" at <http://restoringopportunity.com/>

Discussion:

Growing Inequality and the implications for Education

Week 3: February 6th

Educational Inequality in College:

Readings:

Paying for the Party: 1-117, *Unequal Childhoods*, Theoretical appendix: 361-365

Discussion:

Social Class and Status Hierarchies

Exercise 1: We will create an interview guide in class on status hierarchies at Penn. Please complete the interview before class on February 13th.

Week 4: February 13th

Reading:

Paying for the Party: 118-208

and

Canvas: College Drinking Fact Sheet, “Monitoring the Future” pp 36-40 and tables only,

Canvas: “Why Colleges are not Stopping College drinking”

Exercise 1 due: interview on status hierarchies. Upload digital interview to Canvas before class to get credit.

Discussion:

Social Class, Partying, and Academics

Week 5: February 20th

Finish *Paying for the Party* 209-278

Discussion:

What is the Role of the University in Supporting a Student Culture around Partying? What are the implications of this for student advancement?

Exercise 2 due: interview on study abroad (Prof. Lareau will provide interview guide.)

Preparing for the midterm: how to write an excellent essay

Week 6: February 27th:

First midterm: in class (75 minutes)

Readings:

Unequal Childhoods: Introduction and Part I (pp. 1-105), and methodological appendix (345-365). (You will be tested on this reading on the midterm.)

Discussion:

Class and Family Life: Challenges in Ethnographic Research on Families

More on the Midterm:

The purpose of the first midterm is to help you gain the skills you need to write a strong analysis of the readings and lecture material. Writing a coherent essay is a challenging task. It takes practice. This midterm is worth a fraction of the actual midterm. In addition, there is a sample outstanding exam essay from an earlier class on Canvas as well as handouts on how to write an essay.

Please do complete the reading for today before the practice midterm.

The midterm will be in class. You will be given study-guide questions for the essay about 10 days in advance. Two of the study guide questions will appear, in modified form, on the examination. Fifteen percent of the grade will be based on true-false, short answer, and matching. You are permitted to bring one page of notes (8 1/2 x 11" piece of paper) to the examination with notes on both sides of the page. You will turn in this paper with your exam.

March 5th

Spring break!

Week 7: March 13th

Readings:

Unequal Childhoods: pp 108-181, 198-227

Discussion:

Language Use and Intervention in Institutions

Guest: Peter Harvey, University of Pennsylvania

Exercise: Help-seeking

Canvas: Jessica Calarco "I Need Help!"

Week 8: March 20th

Readings:

When a Heart Turns Rock Solid, pp 1-104

Canvas: Sharkey, Patrick. 2013. *Stuck in Place*. Chapter 4, pp. 91-116

Optional:

Canvas: Steinbugler, Amy C. 2012. *Beyond Loving*. Chapter 2. pp. 16-44.

Canvas: How Redlining's Racist Effects Lasted for Decades

Discussion:

Neighborhoods and Life Chances

Exercise 3: Home buying exercise due.

Interview guide: we will create an interview guide for the interview on low-wage work.

Week 9: March 27th

Readings:

When a Heart Turns Rock Solid: Jobs, Pp., 107-206

Canvas: Tables, *The Long Shadow*

Canvas: Median Wages by gender and education

Discussion

Jobs and Life Opportunities

Exercise 4 due: research interviews on jobs due before class

Week 10: April 3rd

Readings:

When a Heart Turns Rock Solid, Pp, 209-298

Canvas: "Language from Police Body Cameras" pp. 6521-6526

Canvas: Drop in 911 calls (very brief)

Canvas: "Behind the Badge" TABLES ONLY

Optional but fascinating: Canvas Stanford Prison Experiment, Zimbardo, Philip on Torture and humiliation in Abu Ghraib: Pp. 324-379

Discussion

Police, Prisons, and Social Inequality

Week 11: April 10th

Second midterm (in class)

Readings:

Refugees Coming to Philadelphia, Blair Sackett (to be provide) an unpublished manuscript

Canvas: Immigration: A Statistical Overview (Tables ONLY)

Discussion

Cultural Capital, Refugees, and the Speed of Immigrant Incorporation

MIDTERM

The midterm will be in class. You will be given study guide questions for essays about 10 days in advance. Two of the study guide questions will appear, in modified form, on the examination. Fifteen percent of the grade will be based on true-false, short answer, and matching.

Unfortunately, I am unable to review materials submitted by email, but I am happy to discuss sample essays in office hours. You are permitted to bring notes (8 1/2 x 11" piece of paper) with notes on both sides of the page. You will be tested on the reading for April 10th.

Week 12: Wednesday, April 17th

Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class 1-100

Exercise 5: interview on topic of your choice due.

Discussion

The Social Elite

Week 13: Wednesday, April 24

Our Kind of People, 101-182 and 376-394

Canvas: Rachel Sherman, *Uneasy Street*

Canvas: Tax rates

Exercise 6: memo on articles due

Discussion:

The Role of the State in Creating an Elite

Week 14: Wednesday, May 1st

Unequal Childhoods, *Unequal Adulthoods*, 263-311, 333-344

Canvas: Lauren Rivera, "Hiring as Cultural Matching"

Canvas: Readings on poverty

The Opioid Crisis: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/us/west-virginia-opioids.html?fallback=0&recId=1G42PiKxB0iyYPMDCzJRKEOIQ26&locked=0&geoContinen>

[t=NA&geoRegion=PA&recAlloc=story&geoCountry=US&blockId=signature-journalism-vi&imp_id=947063718&action=click&module=editorsPicks&pgtype=Article®ion=Footer](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2018/05/10/signature-journalism-vi&hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main-signature-journalism-vi%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main-signature-journalism-vi%3Ahomepage%2Fstory)

Canvas: Scarcity

Discussion:

Social Class, Race, and Life Chances

Tentative Date for the Final examination:

Friday, May 10th, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.