

**Controversies About Inequality**  
SOCIOLOGY 141 & 241  
Spring Quarter, 5 credits  
Tuesday & Thursday, 1:15pm-2:30pm  
Building 320 (Braun Corner), Room 105  
Instructor: David B. Grusky

In recent years, issues of poverty and inequality have become increasingly common topics of public debate, as academics, journalists, and politicians attempt to come to terms with growing income inequality, with the increasing salience and visibility of inter-country differences in wealth and income, and with the persistence of extreme forms of racial, ethnic, and gender stratification. The purpose of this course is to study these various forms of inequality more closely and to introduce students to ongoing debates about their sources and consequences as well as the types of public policy that might be pursued to reduce (or even increase) inequality. These topics will be addressed through the vehicle of public debate and discussion among world renowned scholars.

**Format:** For each of the four topical modules, we will spend several sessions completing relevant background readings and otherwise preparing for the debate and discussion. We will begin by discussing the larger intellectual context within which the debate is located and then turn to the more specific issues at stake. The four debates will occur during regular class sessions and will be open not just to class members but to the wider Stanford community.

**Assignments:** The course grade will be based in part on reports for each of the four debates. For each debate, students should (a) outline the key issues at stake, (b) rehearse the competing positions that might be staked out with respect to those issues, (c) discuss the types of empirical evidence that are relevant in choosing from among competing positions, and (d) conclude by laying out an argument for a particular position. In assembling these papers, students should draw as necessary on the materials provided in the lectures, debates, and required readings. The papers should be no longer than 5 pages (double-spaced) and are due one week after the day on which the debate is held.

**Papers:** In addition to the four debate-based writing assignments, students should complete a 15-page (double-spaced) research paper. This paper should be based on any of the four debate topics covered in class or on some other controversy of the student's choosing (with the only constraint being that it must pertain to issues of poverty or inequality). This paper should take on the same structure as the usual 5-page debate write-up, but a broader review of the relevant research literature should now be completed.

**Sociology 241 Requirements:** For those taking Sociology 241 (instead of Sociology 141), a 20-page (double-spaced) research paper is expected rather than a 15-page paper, but in all other respects the requirements are the same.

**Grades.** Grades will be based on the four 5-page writing assignments (20% each) and the research paper (20%). The research paper is due on Monday, June 11 and should be submitted to the TA.

**Readings:** All readings can be found on CourseWork.

**Assignment due dates:** The following due dates should be borne in mind:

Thursday, April 19: Racial and ethnic inequality paper

Tuesday, May 1: Poverty paper

Thursday, May 17: Incarceration paper

Thursday, June 7: Gender inequality paper

Monday, June 11: Final research paper

## Schedule

### A. Introduction

**Tuesday, April 3:** Introductory comments

### B. Racial and ethnic inequality

**Thursday, April 5:** Lecture

**Tuesday, April 10:** Lecture

**Thursday, April 12:** Debate and discussion

“What is Discrimination?”

*Richard T. Ford*, George E. Osborne Professor of Law, Stanford University

*Devon W. Carbado*, Associate Dean and Professor of Law, University of California – Los Angeles

**Tuesday, April 17:** Debriefing on debate

#### *Overview readings*

Bertrand, Marianne, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2007. “Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination.” *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi. Boulder: Westview Press.

Feagin, Joe R. 2007. “The Continuing Significance of Race: Antiblack Discrimination in Public Places.” *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi. Boulder: Westview Press.

Wilson, William J. 2006. “Social Theory and the Concept ‘Underclass.’” *Poverty and Inequality*, edited by David B. Grusky and Ravi Kanbur. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

#### *Debate readings*

Ford, Richard. 2002. “Beyond ‘Difference’: A Reluctant Critique of Legal Identity Politics.” *Left Legalism, Left Critique*, edited by Wendy Brown and Janet Halley. Durham: Duke University Press.

Carbado, Devon, and G. Mitu Gulati. 2003. “The Law and Economics of Critical Race Theory.” *The Yale Law Journal* 112(7): 1757-1828.

***Due date for racial and ethnic inequality paper: Thursday, April 19***

## C. Poverty

**Thursday, April 19:** Lecture

**Tuesday, April 24:** Debate and discussion

“Poverty and Microlending”

*Eric Weaver*, Executive Director, Lenders for Community Development

*Matthew Flannery*, CEO and Co-Founder, Kiva.org

*Jessica Flannery*, Co-Founder, Kiva.org

**Thursday, April 26:** Debriefing on debate

### *Overview Readings*

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2007. “Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America.” *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi. Boulder: Westview Press.

Smeeding, Timothy, Lee Rainwater, and Gary Burtless. 2007. “United States Poverty in Cross-National Context.” *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi. Boulder: Westview Press.

Kakwani, Nanak. 2004. “New Global Poverty Counts.” *In Focus* (September): 9-11.

### *Debate Readings*

Littlefield, Elizabeth, Jonathan Morduch, and Syed Hashemi. 2003. “Is Microfinance an Effective Strategy to Reach the Millennium Development Goals?” *Focus Note* 24: 1-12.

Servon, Lisa J. 2006. “Microenterprise Development in the United States: Current Challenges and New Directions.” *Economic Development Quarterly* 20: 351-67.

Dichter, T. 2007. “Hype and Hope: The Worrisome State of the Microcredit Movement.” *The Microfinance Gateway*.

(available at <http://www.microfinancegateway.org/content/article/detail/31747?PHPSESSID>)

***Due date for poverty paper: Tuesday, May 1***

## D. Incarceration

**Tuesday, May 1:** Lecture

**Thursday, May 3:** No class

**Tuesday, May 8:** Lecture

**Thursday, May 10:** Debate and discussion

“Incarceration, Race, and Poverty”

*Lawrence D. Bobo*, Martin Luther King Jr. Centennial Professor and Director, Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity, Stanford University

*Christopher Uggen*, Distinguished McKnight Professor and Chair of Sociology, University of Minnesota

**Tuesday, May 15:** Debriefing on debate

### ***Overview Readings***

Western, Bruce. 2007. "Incarceration, Unemployment, and Inequality." *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi. Boulder: Westview Press.

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

### ***Debate Readings***

Uggen, Christopher, Jeff Manza, and Melissa Thompson. 2006. "Citizenship, Democracy, and the Civic Reintegration of Criminal Offenders." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 605: 281-310.

Bobo, Lawrence D., and Devon Johnson. 2004. "A Taste for Punishment: Black and White Americans' Views on the Death Penalty and the War on Drugs." *Du Bois Review* 1: 151-180.

***Due date for incarceration paper: Thursday, May 17***

## **E. Gender inequality**

**Thursday, May 17:** Lecture

**Tuesday, May 22:** Lecture

**Thursday, May 24:** No class

**Tuesday, May 29:** Lecture

**Thursday, May 31:** Debate and discussion

"Employment Discrimination and Gender"

*Barbara Reskin*, S. Frank Miyamoto Professor of Sociology, University of Washington

*Trond Petersen*, Professor of Sociology, University of California-Berkeley

**Tuesday, June 5:** Debriefing on debate

### ***Overview Readings***

Belkin, Lisa. 2007. "The Opt-Out Revolution." *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi. Boulder: Westview Press.

Blau, Francine D. and Lawrence M. Kahn. 2006. "The Gender Pay Gap: Going, Going, ... But Not Gone." *The Declining Significance of Gender?*, edited by Francine D. Blau, Mary C. Brinton, and David B. Grusky. New York: Russell Sage.

Blau, Francine D. Mary C. Brinton, David B. Grusky. 2006. "The Declining Significance of Gender?" *The Declining Significance of Gender?*, edited by Francine D. Blau, Mary C. Brinton, and David B. Grusky. New York: Russell Sage.

Goldin, Claudia, and Cecilia Rouse. 2007. "Orchestrating Impartiality." *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi. Boulder: Westview Press.

### *Debate Readings*

Reskin, Barbara. 2002. "Rethinking Employment Discrimination." *The New Economic Sociology: Developments in an Emerging Field*, edited by Mauro F. Guillen, Randall Collins, Paula England, and Marshall Meyer. N.Y.: Russell Sage.

Petersen, Trond. "Motive and Cognition: Conscious and Unconscious Processes in Employment Discrimination." *Understanding Choice, Explaining Behaviour. Essays in Honour of Ole-Jorgen Skog*. Oslo: Oslo Academic Press.

**Due date for gender inequality paper: Thursday, June 7**