

Sabino Kornrich
Sociology
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Sociology 214: Class/Status/Power

I began thinking about sustainability as a topic distinct from the core of sociology, and from the sociology of inequality in particular. In my mind, a class that had a sustainability component might focus on a sociology of consumption or environmental sociology, but would be less likely to focus on the sociology of inequality. I thus thought that building sustainability into my courses would mean designing an entirely new course.

The Piedmont Project focused on sustainability and highlighted the global challenges posed by global warming, resource depletion, and challenges for the food supply. Thinking more seriously about these issues led me to the conclusion that these are important topics that I care about. By not focusing on these issues, I might be doing myself and my students a disservice: myself, because it is something that I have been passionate about, and my students, because it is one of the most important issues facing them over time.

When I realized that I was excited about this topic, I resolved to integrate sustainability into my current courses rather than designing a new course. Since I regularly teach Class/Status/Power, I thought I would start with this course. The course focuses on issues of inequality, and the lines that divide people. One of the key messages of the course is that scarce resources are inequitably divided along these important lines. And one of the key questions is whether various types of inequality are fair.

I decided that, rather than focusing on whether inequality was fair, it would be more useful to ask whether inequality was sustainable. This would accomplish two goals. First, it would directly integrate sustainability into the course. Second, it would enrich the intellectual component, because it would require students to integrate materials on inequality and materials on sustainability. In my mind, this is in some ways an improvement over a question of fairness. Although fairness is useful because there are multiple ways to evaluate fairness, it is also difficult to create changes in students' opinions precisely because it is so subjective. My hope is that asking students about sustainability might lead to more opinion change even if students have strong opinions before entering the course.

To accomplish this, I changed the framing of several of the topics in the course, directly integrating sustainability into the questions that frame the course materials. I also added readings on sustainability and I will add lectures as well. Doing so should retain much of the core content but also successfully highlight sustainability throughout the course.

Sociology 214: Class/Status/Power

Emory University

Spring 2016

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Course Content

This is a class about inequality: how individuals struggle to distribute scarce resources and the implications of this struggle for future societies.

In most societies, scarce resources – income, wealth, jobs, time, and others – are distributed unequally, so that some individuals have more and others have less. A major question for sociologists is how and why some individuals have more and others less.

In the United States, gender, race, and class are important divisions between those who have more and less. This class will focus on reasons why these are important divisions and on how unequal individuals are along these lines. We will also examine explanations for changes in inequality, asking what social policy has and has not been able to accomplish.

In addition, this course will ask about the implications of inequality for sustainability. Sustainability is one of Emory University's top priorities, and this class will highlight questions surrounding the sustainability of current social structures. Sustainability will provide a backdrop for understanding issues of inequality, as we ask whether we will be able to continue to live with the social structures and divisions of resources that currently exist.

The course will be structured around 7 questions that motivate our inquiry:

- 1) Is inequality inevitable?
- 2) Is inequality sustainable?
- 3) Is it better to be rich or well-educated?
- 4) Do we still live with "American Apartheid"?
- 5) Does prejudice underlie racial inequalities in environmental outcomes?
- 6) Is the gender gap in pay fair?
- 7) Is the division of labor at home fair?

Each unit will have associated assignments and readings. We will often begin the segment with a short film. We will conclude each unit with an in-class discussion or debate about the topics.

Course Structure

This course will rely on student participation to work successfully. Students should come prepared to discuss the readings and engage with presentations. Essay assignments and short assignments will give students opportunities to think about the material ahead of time in preparation for class. I am open to questions, relevant discussions, and other ideas about ways to advance the topic. However, I will also plan to spend time lecturing.

Much of our concern in this course will be figuring out ways to ask questions that give us answers that we are confident in. Often, there will be no established answer in the existing literature, but it can be useful to discuss how one might come to an answer.

Course Grading

The final grade in the course will consist of the following:

	Number	x	Points	= Total
Class discussion prep memos	4	x	10	=40
Class discussion participation	7	x	2	=14
Short additional assignments	4	x	3	=12
Final essay draft 1	1	x	6	=6
Final essay draft 2	1	x	28	=28
Total points:				=100

The largest portion of the course grade will be memos that you write in preparation for class discussion. We will have in-class discussions at the end of each unit, and these memos will help you prepare for the discussions. There are a total of 7 discussions, and you must write memos for 4 of these 7 discussions. You may write up to 5 memos and drop the lowest-scoring memo. You may choose which memos you wish to write. Memos will be two pages long: you will devote one page to supporting each side of the argument. Additional details are available on the memo handout. Even if you do not write a memo for the unit, you should come to class prepared to discuss the material, as the discussion is also graded.

There will be a final essay for the course. In addition, there will be four short credit/no-credit assignments.

For the final grade, I will assign letter grades based on the grade conversion chart, which will be posted online.

Additional Course Perspectives

This course relies primarily on writing to evaluate students, for two reasons. First, writing begins to require students to some of the skills that sociologists use and engage in the activities that sociologists engage in, such as the evaluation of evidence. Second, the course is designed to at least in part mimic the types of responsibilities that you might face in a full-time paid position. Thus, there are no tests, and the majority of your evaluation is based on your ability to generate good arguments and your writing ability.

Emory Writing Center

The Emory Writing Center offers 45-minute individual conferences to Emory College and Laney Graduate School students. It is a great place to bring any project—from traditional papers to websites—at any stage in your composing process. Writing Center tutors take a discussion- and workshop-based approach that enables writers of all levels to see their writing with fresh eyes. Tutors can talk with you about your purpose, organization, audience, design choices, or use of sources. They can also work with you on sentence-level concerns (including grammar and word choice), but they will not proofread for you. Instead, they will discuss strategies and resources you can use to become a better editor of your own work. The Writing Center is located in Callaway N-212. Visit <http://writingcenter.emory.edu> for more information and to make appointments.

Disability Statement

Emory University is committed under the Americans with Disabilities Act and its Amendments and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to providing appropriate accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, provide the instructor(s) with an accommodation notification letter from Access, Disabilities Services and Resources office. Students are expected to give two weeks' notice of the need for accommodations. If you need immediate accommodations or physical access, please arrange to meet with instructor(s) as soon as your accommodations have been finalized.

Emory Honor Code: The Emory University honor code applies fully to this course. When you sign an exam or submit your assignments, you are pledging to the honor code. For reference, please consult: http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policy/honor_code.html

Required Texts

In addition to the books noted below, I will place links to journal articles and several chapters on the course Blackboard website. You will also likely be able to access the journal articles simply by searching and accessing them through the publisher's website.

- 1) Lareau, Annette. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2) Iceland, John. 2009. *Where We Live Now: Immigration and Race in the United States*.
- 3) Oliver, Melvin L. and Thomas M. Shapiro. 2006. *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. New York: Routledge.
- 4) Massey and Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid*. (not ordered)

Course Schedule

Week One (Aug 22-26)

Tuesday **No class**

Thursday **Introduction**

- Short assignment 1 handed out (do before doing reading)

Week Two (Aug 29-Sep 2)

Tuesday **Sustainability and inevitability**

- Short assignment 1 due
- Read Chapter 2 (41-57) of the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (<http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>)
- Read Lenski (selection online)

Thursday **Is inequality inevitable?**

- Films: PBS Now: Income Inequality; Many Americans Stuck in a Rut
- Read Piketty and Saez 2003.

Week Three (Sep 5-9)

Tuesday **Is inequality inevitable?**

- Read Volscho and Kelly 2012
- Read Tomaskovic-Devey and Lin 2011

Thursday **Discussion: Is inequality inevitable?**

- Read Kuznets excerpt (online).
- Read chapter (Bell Curve rebuttal).
- Memo1 due

Week Four (Sep 12-16)

Tuesday **Is inequality sustainable??**

- Watch Wilkinson Ted talk.
- Read Christopher Jencks. 2002. "Does Inequality Matter?"
- Read news article: <https://hbr.org/2014/01/income-inequality-is-a-sustainability-issue-2>

Thursday **Is inequality sustainable?**

- Read: <http://laneenworthy.net/is-income-inequality-harmful/>
- Read: Inequality and Environmental Sustainability (http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2015/wp145_2015.pdf)

Week Five (Sep 19-23)

Tuesday **Is inequality sustainable?**

- Read before class: Murphy & Becker article (online)
- Kurt Vonnegut: Harrison Bergeron (online)

Comment [SK1]: Is this correct?

Thursday **Discussion: Is inequality sustainable?**

- Read before class: Beyond Economic Growth: An Introduction to Sustainable Development (http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/beyond/beyondco/beg_all.pdf)
- Memo 2 Due

Week Six (Sep 26-30)

Tuesday **Is it better to be rich or well-educated?**

- Film: People Like Us
- Read before class: Bourdieu 1986 (online)
- Short assignment 2 handed out

Thursday **Is it better to be rich or well-educated?**

- Read before class: Lareau, pages 1-70

Week Seven (Oct 3-7)

Tuesday **Is it better to be rich or well-educated?**

- Read before class: Kornrich and Furstenberg 2013 (online)
- Read before class: 2012 New York Times article (online)
- Short assignment 2 due

Thursday **Discussion: Is it better to be rich or well-educated?**

- Read Lareau, pages 71-133 and 161-181
- Memo 3 due

Week Eight (Oct 10-14)

Tuesday **No class**

Thursday **Do we live with “American Apartheid”?**

- Film: Race: The power of an Illusion
- Read Massey and Denton, chap. 1 & 2
- Short assignment 3 handed out

Week Nine (Oct 17-21)

Tuesday **Do we live with “American Apartheid”?**

- Read Iceland chapters 1-3
- Short assignment 3 due

Thursday Discussion: Do we live with “American Apartheid”?

- Read: Oliver and Shapiro, selection
- Memo 4 due

Week Ten (Oct 24-28)

Tuesday Does prejudice underlie racial environmental inequalities?

- Read: Downey and Hawkins 2008. “RACE, INCOME, AND ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES.”
- Read: Eskandari et al. 2015. http://www.pc-progress.com/Documents/RVGenugten/Eskandari_et_al_ESPR_2015.pdf
- Short assignment 4 handed out

Thursday

- EPA My Environment map
- Read: Mullainathan and Bertrand

Week Eleven (Oct 21-Nov 4)

Tuesday

- Read: Sears on Symbolic Prejudice
- Short assignment 4 due

Thursday Discussion: Does prejudice underlie racial environmental inequalities?

- Memo 5 Due

Week Twelve (Nov 7-11)

Tuesday Is the Gender Pay Gap Fair?

- Read Farrell
- Read 2 news articles
- Read

Thursday Is the Gender Pay Gap Fair?

- Read: Blau and Kahn chapter

Week Thirteen (Nov 14-18)

Tuesday Is the Gender pay gap Fair?

- Read: Corell, Benard, and Paik 2007
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Thursday Discussion: Is the gender pay gap fair?

- Read: Padavic & Reskin excerpt
- Memo 6 due

Week Fourteen (Nov 21-25)

Tuesday Is the division of unpaid labor fair?

- Film: Marilyn Waring
- Read: Baxter 2000

Thursday No class (Thanksgiving)

Week Fifteen (Nov 28-Dec 2)

Tuesday Is the division of unpaid labor fair?

- Read Baxter 2015
- Read Chesley 2011

Thursday Discussion: Is the division of unpaid labor fair?

- Read Kornrich et al. 2013
- Memo 7 Due

Week Sixteen (Dec 5-Dec 9)

Tuesday Lecture: The US in comparison (Last day of class)

- Read Various readings (on Blackboard)