

# Sociology 214: Class, Status, and Power

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## Course Description

Although themes of opportunity and prosperity dominate American culture, inequality has increased markedly over the past generation and the United States has a higher level of inequality than any other affluent country. This course explores inequality in the contemporary U.S. We will examine: (1) recent trends in incomes, income inequality, poverty, wealth, consumption, mobility, and access to basic material and social needs; (2) the ways in which inequality is patterned by class, race, and gender; (3) institutions aimed at reducing inequality and poverty, including the welfare state and labor market regulation. Throughout the course we will pay particular attention to changes over time and to similarities and differences between the United States and other affluent nations.

## Requirements

**Readings.** The required readings for the course are listed in the schedule below. All of the articles and book chapters are available via E-reserve. To access them, go to [www.library.emory.edu](http://www.library.emory.edu), click on "Reserve Desk" at the top of the screen, type in SOC214, and click on "Course Number." You can then print them. The books are available at the campus bookstore and on reserve at Woodruff Library (or, if you prefer, through various online bookstores). They are:

- Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, 2001.
- Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work*, 1997.
- Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*, 1995.
- Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes, *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience*, 1994.
- Arlie Hochschild, *The Second Shift*, 1989.
- Robert E. Goodin, Bruce Headey, Ruud Muffels, and Henk-Jan Dirven, *The Real Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, 1999.

**Lecture Guide.** I have put together a booklet of lecture outlines, tables, and charts for each topic we will cover in the course. You will need to bring this to class regularly. A spiral-bound copy of the booklet, called *Exploring Inequality: A Lecture Guide*, can be purchased at the Kinko's at the corner of N. Decatur and Clairmont. Call 24 hours ahead to order: 404-377-4639. If you prefer, you can download the booklet from my webpage at [www.emory.edu/SOC/lkenworthy](http://www.emory.edu/SOC/lkenworthy).

**Grading.** Quizzes 10% (2% each); midterm exam 25%; paper 30%; final exam 35%. The grading scale for the course is: A = 93 and above; A- = 90-92; B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82; C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72; D+ = 67-69; D = 63-66; D- = 60-62; F = 59 and below. Consistent, constructive participation in class discussions will help your grade if you are on the borderline. There will be no extra-credit projects or assignments of any kind.

**Exams.** There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. The dates are listed in the schedule below. Make-ups will be permitted only in extremely dire circumstances. If something happens that forces you to miss an exam, you must notify me (either in person or by voice mail, 404-727-7538) within 2 hours of the scheduled exam start time and provide documented proof of the circumstances. If I don't deem it a reasonable excuse, you will receive a zero for the exam.

**Quizzes.** There will be six short in-class quizzes, each consisting of five multiple choice and/or true/false questions. The tentative dates for the quizzes are listed in the schedule below. These are designed to be sure you are keeping up with and understanding the course material. Like the exams, they will cover material from both lecture and the readings. Your lowest quiz grade of the six will be dropped.

**Paper.** The paper assignment is described in detail below.

**Accommodating Disabilities.** If you have or acquire any sort of condition that may require special accommodation(s), please inform me as soon as possible (not on the day of an exam) so that we may make the appropriate arrangements. Proper documentation from the Office of Disabilities Services will be required. Contact their office for information on available services and accommodations as well as documentation requirements: 404-727-1065, [www.emory.edu/EEO/ODS](http://www.emory.edu/EEO/ODS).

## Schedule

Introduction (Aug. 30)

- *E-reserve* — William Ryan, excerpt from "The Equality Dilemma: Fair Play or Fair Shares?" in *Equality*, Pantheon, 1981, pp. 3-10.

### Part I Inequality and Well-Being in the United States

1. Incomes and Income Inequality (Sept. 4, 6, 9, 11, 13)

- Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, entire book.
- *E-reserve* — Richard Freeman, "Is the New Income Inequality the Achilles' Heel of the American Economy?" in *The Inequality Paradox*, edited by James A. Auerbach and Richard S. Belous, National Policy Association, 1998, pp. 219-229.

#### ***Quiz #1 — Monday, Sept. 16***

2. Poverty (Sept. 16, 18, 20, 23)

- Edin and Lein, *Making Ends Meet*, chapters 1-6, 8.

#### ***Quiz #2 — Wednesday, Sept. 25***

3. Wealth, Consumption, and Mobility (Sept. 25, 27, 30)

- *E-reserve* — Peter Gottschalk and Sheldon Danziger, "Family Income Mobility: How Much Is There and Has It Changed?" in *The Inequality Paradox*, edited by James A. Auerbach and Richard S. Belous, National Academy Press, 1998, pp. 92-111.

#### ***Quiz #3 — Friday, Oct. 4***

4. Access to Basic Needs (Oct. 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 16)

- *E-reserve* — Jonathan Kozol, excerpt from "Other People's Children," chapter 2 in *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, Crown Publishers, 1991, pp. 41-67.
- *E-reserve* — Paul Osterman, "The Changing Structure of the American Labor Market," chapter 2 in *Securing Prosperity*, Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 20-70.
- *E-reserve* — Arlie Hochschild, chapters 1-4 in *The Time Bind*, Metropolitan Books, 1997, pp. 1-52.

#### ***Midterm Exam — Friday, Oct. 18***

**Part II Who Gets Ahead? Determinants of Attainment**

5. Class (Oct. 21, 23, 25, 28)

- MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It*, chapters 1, 3-7, 9-11.

***Quiz #4 — Wednesday, Oct. 30***

6. Race and Ethnicity (Oct. 30, Nov. 1, 4, 6, 8)

- *E-reserve* — Stephen Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom, excerpt from "The Rise of the Black Middle Class," chapter 7 in *America in Black and White*, Simon and Schuster, 1997, pp. 183-200.
- Feagin and Sikes, *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience*, chapters 1-4, 6.

***Quiz #5 — Monday, Nov. 11***

7. Gender (Nov. 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22)

- *E-reserve* — Barabara Beck, "Women and Work: For Better, for Worse," *The Economist*, 18 June 1998, pp. 3-16.
- Hochschild, *The Second Shift*, chapters 1-2, 4-7, 12-16.

***Quiz #6 — Monday, Nov. 25***

**Part III What Is To Be Done?**

8. Reducing Inequality and Poverty (Nov. 25, Dec. 2, 4, 6, 9)

- Goodin et al., *The Real Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, chapters 1-4, 6-8, 16.

***Paper due — Friday, Dec. 6***

***Final Exam — Tuesday, Dec. 17, 8:30-11:00 am***

## Paper Assignment

**Topic.** Propose and argue for a solution to one of the following problems in the U.S.

- Limited and stagnant intragenerational income mobility
- Balancing work and family
- The African American inner-city "underclass"

You do not need to come up with an original proposal. Feel free to borrow from others and to draw on ideas discussed in class or in the course readings.

I strongly suggest that you focus on a *single* solution. These are big problems, and any true solution will almost certainly need to be multifaceted. But this is a relatively short paper. If you spread yourself too thin by proposing multiple solutions, you probably won't be able to treat each one with the necessary depth, and your grade will likely suffer.

**Grading.** Your grade will be based on how convincingly you argue for your proposed solution. A convincing argument consists of clear, concise, effective statements of (1) the problem, (2) your proposed solution and how it will help, (3) relevant evidence (data, research findings, etc.), and (4) potential objections to your view along with your responses to those objections.

**Due date.** The paper is due in class on the date listed in the schedule above. I won't permit extensions, so please don't bother asking for one. Your grade will be dropped 5 points for each day after the due date that the paper is turned in. No exceptions. If you have any reason to suspect that your printer may break down or you might get the flu the night before the paper is due, then get it finished earlier.

**Length and format.** The paper should be 8–10 double-spaced typed pages of text, plus a separate title page and reference page(s) and any tables or charts you might wish to include. Use a staple — no binders or paper clips, please.

**References.** There is no minimum or maximum number of references required; you may use as few or as many as you like. Feel free to use the course readings.

**Citing references.** Beware of plagiarism. You must cite the reference for any idea, quotation, or factual information you get from an article, book, or website. And any statements copied directly must be put in quotation marks. If you are uncertain of the rules regarding proper citation, see me. To cite a source, you may use either a parenthetical reference, such as (Beck 1998, p. 14), or a footnote. I'm not picky about the format for your reference list; use something like the format in *Ain't No Makin' It*.

**Poor writing, grammatical errors, and misspellings.** Proofread your paper carefully. A few grammatical errors and misspellings are acceptable, but if you have more than a few I'll lower your grade. If you need help with your writing skills, you can get assistance from the Writing Center: 205-A Callaway Center North, 404-727-0886, [www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/WC/](http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/WC/).