

# SOCIOLOGY 248

## RACE, ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

**Marc Schneiberg**  
Elliot 409, ext. 7495  
[Marc.Schneiberg@reed.edu](mailto:Marc.Schneiberg@reed.edu)

**TTh: 1:10—2:30, ETC 205**  
**Office hours: TBA**

**Course objectives:** This course addresses the organizational, institutional and public policy foundations of stratification and racial inequality in the United States. Focusing primarily on the situations of African Americans during the twentieth century, the course develops three basic arguments. First, racial hierarchies and the fates or life chances of individuals and groups are fundamentally determined by the socio-economic contexts of action, public policy and the social structure of markets. For sociologists, individuals and groups are everywhere and always embedded in socio-economic systems that profoundly shape their fates both by channeling, filtering and sorting actors in various ways, and by shaping the payoffs to individual characteristics, efforts and investments. Understanding inequality and racial stratification thus means going beyond a focus on attitudes, personal prejudice and the characteristics of individuals to consider social contexts and their characteristics in some detail.

Second, these contexts or systems are themselves best understood in terms of the organizational and institutional structures identified by economic sociologists – that is, in terms of the rise and decline of corporations, changes in industrial relations, the dynamics of networks and social capital, the ways that private associations and states constitute markets, and the relationship between law, organizations and public policy. These “ordering principles” or social structures of economic life are the sites where life chances, inequalities, and opportunities are constructed, reproduced and transformed.

Third, effective social change means going beyond politics of redistribution, policies that pursue equality via legal or bureaucratic enforcement, and programs that target attitudes or the characteristics of individuals to address the organizational, institutional and public policy bases of racial inequality and stratification. Indeed, social structural analyses and the historical record suggest that policies of redistribution, enforcement and education are likely to fail *unless* they are coupled with programs of economic development, institution-building and community self-organization that harness existing local arrangements and that confront how law, institutions and public policy have created inequality in markets, wealth and economic opportunity.

The objectives of this course are to: 1) understand how public policy and the institutional and organizational structure of economic life shape inequality and racial stratification in the United States; and 2) build on these analyses to assess and develop programs, policies and prospects for change.

**Course outline:** The course pursues this agenda in three parts. Part one sets the stage by addressing two debates over racial stratification in the contemporary period. We first revisit debates over the significance of race and ethnicity in a post Civil Rights and multiracial era, considering claims about assimilation and boundary blurring alongside claims about the resurgence of racial caste. We then consider debates over how well individual characteristics and differences explain inequality and racial stratification. Here we engage the “Bell Curve” controversy, using debates over IQ to develop tools for

conceptualizing how social structures, institutions and public policies shape not just the fates of individuals and groups, but also the relative impact of individual characteristics on stratification outcomes.

Part two develops the contextual approach by working systematically through the institutional, organizational and public policy foundations of inequality and racial stratification in the United States. Here, we reject the neo-classical vision of markets as aggregates of autonomous rational actors, arguing instead that markets and economic activity are socially structured and highly organized: They are arenas or practices that are constituted through social networks, corporate hierarchies, private associations, and state bureaucracies, as well as through impersonal system of exchange. And for sociologists, economic institutions like states or corporate hierarchies are key sites where inequalities and identities are constructed, reproduced and transformed. With this in mind, we begin with the rise and fall of the mass production corporation, and with the role that state and private associations play in organizing housing markets, neighborhoods and social space. We then turn see how these pivotal institutions shape – and differentially promote actors’ capacities to develop three different forms of capital – physical, human and social. We address this first by analyzing wealth, schooling and employment networks, and the destruction of these key resources among certain social groups, and second, by exploring how actors respond to impoverishment and economic devastation by trying to reconstruct associations, social networks and political authority within their communities.

Part three tackles the thorny problem of social change. Here, we analyze the fates of the welfare state and legal bans against discrimination, arguably the two most important efforts to use the power of the law and the state to solve problems of inequality, impoverishment and race in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. We address the relationship between law, public policy and economic organization, consider the limits of policies that rely on redistribution or legal-bureaucratic enforcement, and review other kinds of programs and proposals. Using recent advances in economic sociology, we will pay special attention to: 1) assessing the extent to which programs and proposals address or work with the institutional, organizational or public policy dimensions of stratification and racial inequality, and 2) enhancing existing efforts with programs that promote local self-organization, institution-building and “bottom-up” processes of economic and policy development.

**Course prerequisite:** Sociology 211, Introduction to Sociology, is *required* for this course. This course assumes a background in classical sociological theory and its modern applications; a basic introduction to social stratification and political sociology; and familiarity with some elementary analytical concepts and techniques, including correlation, p-values, and the logic of hypothesis testing. It also assumes familiarity with specific readings from the introductory class, as signified in list of readings that follows.

**Readings and writing assignments:** This is a reading and discussion based course whose success hinges critically on students’ preparation and active participation. The reading is varied, ranging from historical and ethnographic materials to multi-variate statistical analyses, and often difficult, requiring a collective “piecing-together” of the argument, evidence and method within the conference. It is also cumulative in character. Thus, *falling behind in the reading or failing to prepare for conference is not an option.*

To focus and deepen engagement with the course materials, students will conduct a semester long project, involving a series of 4 exercises and a final paper, in which they will analyze a policy or program designed to address the situations and life chances of African Americans in the United States. Students can chose among a wide variety of efforts. They can analyze a federal, state or local program, a legislative reform, a

community organizing effort, or a local development project. However, students must select a program that falls in one of three policy areas: economic development, job or business creation; housing and neighborhood revitalization; or education and skill formation. In addition, the projects must focus from the outset on a *specific* policy, program or proposal. Furthermore, all projects must critically and systematically assess the viability, strengths and limits of the program in light of the concepts and material developed in class. That is, projects will address the extent to which the policy or program confronts the organizational, institutional and public policy bases of racial stratification. They will consider whether the policy or program involves institutional or organizational reform, as opposed to focusing on attitudes, culture or the characteristics of individuals. And they will use the assessment to outline a proposal for improving the efficacy of the policy, program or effort.

The schedule for the exercises and the final paper appear below.

The following *books* are required and can be purchased from the Reed College Bookstore. These books are also available on 2-hour reserve at the Reed College library, and will be supplemented with a small packet of articles and chapters on the moodle.

- Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press.
- Claude Fischer, et al. *Inequality By Design*. Princeton: Princeton University
- William Julius Wilson. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton. *American Apartheid*. Chicago: U. Chicago.
- Roger Waldinger. *Still the Promised City? African Americans and New Immigrants in Post-Industrial New York*. Harvard: Harvard University .
- Jonathon Kozol. *Savage Inequalities*. New York: Harper Trade
- Carol Stack. *All Our Kin*. New York: Harper.
- Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, *Black Wealth, White Wealth*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed  
Routledge: New York
- Frank Dobbin. *Inventing Equal Opportunity*. Princeton: Princeton University.
- Jill Quadagno. *The Color of Welfare*. New York: Oxford University Press,

## READING ASSIGNMENTS

### PART 1 POSING THE PROBLEM: TWO DEBATES

#### Week 1: (January 28, 30)

*The declining significance of race in an era of multiculturalism?*

Richard Alba and Victor Nee. 2003. "Assimilation Theory: Old and New," and "Conclusion: Remaking the American Mainstream." *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Jennifer Lee and Frank Bean. 2004. "America's Changing Color Lines: Immigration, Race/Ethnicity and Multiracial Identification." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 221-42

Jennifer Lee and Frank Bean. 2012. "A Postracial Society or a Diversity Paradox? Race, Immigration and Multiraciality in the Twenty First Century." *Du Bois Review* 2: 419-437.

#### Week 2: (February 4, 6)

*Declining significance?*

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*. New York: The New Press. Introduction, and chapters 1, 3 and 5

*Thinking structurally: the problem of inequality*

Fischer et. al. *Inequality by Design*. Princeton: Princeton Press. Chapters 1, 4-6.

#### Week 3: (February 11 evening class, 13)

*Thinking structurally: Addressing inequality--states, markets and beyond*

Wolfgang Streeck and Phillippe Schmitter. "Community, market, state—and associations? The prospective contribution of interest governance to social order." Pp. 1-29 in *Private Interest Government and the State*, W. Streeck and P Schmitter eds. London: Sage

Lester Salamon and Helmut Anheier. "The Third Route: Government Non-Profit Collaboration in Germany and the US." Pp. 111-162 in *Private Action and the Public Good*, WW Powell and E Clemens eds. New Haven: Yale University.

Theda Skocpol et. al. "How Americans Became Civic." P 27-80 in *Civic Engagement In American Democracy*, Theda Skocpol and Morris Fiorina eds. Washington DC: Brookings/Russell Sage Foundation.

**PART II**  
**THE CONTEXTUAL BASES OF RACIAL INEQUALITY:**  
**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION AND PUBLIC POLICY**

**Week 4:** (February 18, 20)

*Corporation and the Decline of Mass Production*

Review: Michael Burawoy, “The Rise of an Internal Labor Market” and  
“Consolidating and Internal State,” from *Manufacturing Consent*

Read: William Julius Wilson. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New ‘  
Urban Poor*. New York: Vintage Books

**First policy memo:** due Friday, February 21

**Week 5:** (February 25, 27))

*States, Associations and the Markets for Housing*

Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton. *American Apartheid*. Chicago: U Chicago.

**Week 6:** (March 4, 6)

*States, Neighborhoods and Economic Capital*

Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, *Black Wealth, White Wealth*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed NY:  
Routledge.

**Week 7:** (March 11, 13)

*States, Neighborhoods and Human Capital*

Jonathon Kozol. *Savage Inequalities*. New York: Harper Trade

**Second policy memo due:** Friday, March 14

**Spring Break**

**Week 8:** (March 25, 27)

*Networks, Employment and Social Capital*

Roger Waldinger. *Still the Promised City? African Americans and New  
Immigrants in Post-Industrial New York*. Harvard: Harvard University.

**Week 9:** (April 1, 3)

*Reconstituting networks, associations and quasi-states*

Martin Sanchez Jakowski. *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*: California: University of California Press Chapters 1, 4, 6-7.

Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh. "The Social Organization of Street Gang Activity in an Urban Ghetto." *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 103, No. 1. (Jul., 1997), pp. 82-111.

Carol B Stack, *All Our Kin*. New York: Harper and Row.

**PART III:  
LAW, ORGANIZATION AND STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE:  
THE WELFARE STATE AND BEYOND?**

**Week 10:** (April 8, 10)

*Redistribution and the welfare state*

Jill Quadagno. *The Color of Welfare*. New York: Oxford University Press, Intro, chapters 1-5

Cybelle Fox. 2010. "Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and Public and Private Social Welfare Spending in American Cities, 1929." *American Journal of Sociology* 116(2):453-502.

Reread: Lester Salamon and Helmut Anheier. "The Third Route: Government Non-Profit Collaboration in Germany and the US

**Third policy memo due:** Wednesday April 9

**Week 11:** (April 15, 17)

*Civil rights and anti-discrimination law*

Frank Dobbin. *Inventing Equal Opportunity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

**Week 12:** (April 22, 24)

*Beyond redistribution and bureaucratic enforcement? Policy proposals*

William Julius Wilson. "Racial Antagonisms and Race Based Social Policy," and "A Broader Vision," chapters 7 and 8 in *When Work Disappears*

Jill Quadagno. *The Color of Welfare*. New York: Oxford University Press, Chapters 7-8

Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton. "The Future of the Ghetto," chapter 8 in *American Apartheid*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, "Getting Along: Renewing America's Commitment to Racial Justice," chapter 7 and 9 in *Black Wealth, White Wealth*

Lester Salomon, "Partners in Public Service: The Scope and Theory of Government-Nonprofit Relations," pp. 99-117, in *The Nonprofit Sector*, Walter Powell ed. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Michelle Alexander. "The Fire This Time," *The New Jim Crow*.

David Strong, Pamela Walters, Brian Driscoll and Scott Rosenberg. 2000. "Leveraging the State: Private Money and the Development of Public Education for Blacks." *American Sociological Review*. 65: 658-681.

Marylee C. Taylor. 1995. "White Backlash to Workplace Affirmative Action: Peril or Myth?" *Social Forces* 73:1385-1414.

Susan Sturm and Lani Guinier. "The Future of Affirmative Action: Promoting diversity in education and employment requires us to rethink testing and "meritocracy." And replies. A debate in the New Democracy Forum of the *Boston Review* <http://bostonreview.mit.edu/ndf.html#Inequality>

**Paper outline due:** To class members, Monday, April 28

**Week 13:** (April 30 **rescheduled evening class**, May 1)

*Class presentations*

No readings beyond paper outlines

**\*\*\*\*\* FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY, MAY 9 AT NOON \*\*\*\*\***