This course is about inequality in American society. While there are many approaches to studying inequality, we will analyze this problem by examining how the construction of class- and status-based identities contribute to an unequal social world. That is, we will investigate how individuals go about living their everyday lives and how their lives are structured by their position in the social order. Readings are organized to interrogate American individualism and provide sociological explanations for stratification.

The pedagogical approach to this course is simple- we will study the intimate lives of different socio-economic groups in American society. We will start by observing the lives of elites and then working our way down the socio-economic ladder to understand the lives of those who are less affluent. We will focus on the elites, the middle-class, the working class, and the poor. We will also explore different racial experiences within these groups. Sociological theory will ground the empirical readings for each group. Students will learn to think sociologically about the organization of these social groups. We will compare how individuals spend their time, consume goods, reproduce class and status-based-identities, and perceive their own social positions. Throughout the semester we will thoroughly interrogate the influence of social structure and individual agency in shaping opportunity in American society.

**Learning Objectives**

- Students will learn how to think sociologically and use social theory to understand and explain the social world.
- Learn how different socio-economic groups understand, explain, and express their social position.

**Course Requirements**

- **Attendance/Participation**: 20%
- **Response Memos (4)**: 80%
READINGS
There are four required texts for this course. These books are available at the university bookstore and other major booksellers. All other readings are available on Canvas.


PANDEMIC POLICIES
The COVID-19 pandemic has created multiple uncertainties, which demands flexibility and patience from faculty, students, and staff. I encourage you to prioritize your safety and well-being throughout this semester. Recognize that the grind of any academic semester is challenging and under today’s circumstances even more so. To this end, I do not wish to add the challenges of your daily life. I encourage you to see the course as a respite from the rest of world, where you can explore and sharpen your scholarly imagination. For this semester, I will offer a 48 hour grace period to all students when they submit their assignments. That is, you can submit your assignment up to 48 hours after the stated deadline without penalty. You do not need to ask for this grace period, it is given. Please use this extra time it to produce your best work. Unfortunately, I cannot extend this grace period for your final memo, which must be turned in on time.

In return, I ask that you extend this same kindness and patience to me as your professor.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
I expect every student to come prepared for each class. This means not only have you read the assigned texts but you have synthesized these materials and are prepared for class discussion. You are permitted to miss three classes before unexcused absences are negatively weighted on your final grade.

- Maintaining an academic, respectful, and honest classroom environment is a collective effort. I am relying on you to please:
- When possible please keep your cameras on, particularly when you are speaking.
- Be respectful of others’ ideas and arguments. This means providing space for fruitful debate.
• Do not interrupt each other. You do not have to raise your hand to speak, but please allow the current speaker to complete their thoughts before you speak.
• Arrive to class on time.
• Complete and submit your assignments on the days they are due.

RESPONSE MEMOS

We will read sociological scholarship that investigates stratification and identity amongst elites, the middle class, and the working class in American society. Students will be required to write four response memos critically engaging course readings, one for each socio-economic group. Memos should be one page singled spaced. Students are expected to briefly summarize key findings and then provide their own assessments of the work(s). Students should rely on theoretical perspectives covered in class and provide data driven arguments to receive a high score. Memos that simply rearticulate points mentioned in class will be graded poorly. Memos will be graded on originality, logic, content, and grammar.

Response Memo 1 on Elites
Response Memo 2 on The Middle Class
Response Memo 3 on The Working Class
Response Memo 4 on the Poor

FORMATTING

You will automatically lose 5pts if ALL criteria are not met for written assignments. Please give yourself enough time to make sure that your assignments are in compliance with the formatting expectations before turning in your work. If you have trouble making this format changes on your word processing program, please consult with the college tech services.

• Font: Times New Roman
• Size: 12
• Margins: 1-inch all around
• Left alignment
• Single-spaced
• Consistent in-text references and bibliography (I prefer Chicago citation styles)

Grading Rubric

A: Outstanding
A-: Outstanding, with one or two areas of improvement
B+: Very good
B: Good
B-: Good overall, with some significant weaknesses
C+: Satisfactory, with some potential for improvement
C: Satisfactory, but needs significant development
C-: Barely satisfactory
D: Poor: overwhelming flaws
F: Failing: doesn’t complete assignment

Final Grades
89.45+ = A, 89.44-84.45= B+, 84.44-79.45= B, 79.44-74.45=C+, 74.44-69.45=C, 69.44-65.45=D, 65.44-Below= F
Course Schedule

*PLEASE READ ALL READINGS BY MONDAY

Week 1

**WEEK 1 (SEPT 7TH ) FIRST DAY OF CLASS**
No readings !

**WEEK 2 (SEPT 12TH AND 14TH ) HOW TO THINK LIKE A SOCIOLOGIST**
“The Promise” in C. Wright Mills’ *the Sociological Imagination*

**THE ELITES**

**WEEK 3 (SEPT 19TH AND 21ST)**

Class, Status, and Party” Max Weber
*America’s 1% hasn’t controlled this much wealth since before the Great Depression*

Chapters 1 and 3 of Elizabeth Currid Halkett’s *The Sum of Small Things*

**WEEK 4 (SEPT 26TH AND 28TH )**

Chapters 4 and 5 of Elizabeth Currid Halkett’s *The Sum of Small Things*

**WEEK 5 (OCT 3RD AND 5TH )**

Chapters 1 and 2 of Rachel Sherman’s *Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence*

**THE MIDDLE CLASS**

**WEEK 6 (OCT 10TH AND 12TH)**

*Defining the middle class: Cash, credentials, or culture?*
*Does the U.S. Still Have a ‘Middle Class’?*
Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of Annette Lareau’s Unequal Childhoods

**WEEK 7 (OCT 17TH AND 19TH ) THE MIDDLE CLASS**

Chapters 6, 7, 8 of Annette Lareau’s Unequal Childhoods
WEEK 8 (OCT 24TH AND 26TH) THE MIDDLE CLASS

R.L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy *Inequality in the Promise Land*. “Segmented Suburbia” and “Making Your Public School Private”

THE WORKING CLASS

WEEK 9 (OCT 31ST AND NOV 2ND)
Excerpts from W.E.B. DuBois’ *Black Reconstruction* and Peggy McIntosh “White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack”
Excerpts from Arlie Hochschild *Strangers in Their Own Land* and Monica McDermott’s *Working Class White*

WEEK 10 (NOV 7TH AND 9TH)
Chapter 2 and 3 of Jennifer Silva’s *Coming Up Short*

WEEK 11 (14TH AND 16TH)
Chapter 4 and 5 of Jennifer Silva’s *Coming Up Short*

WEEK 12TH (NOV 21ST) THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY — REMOTE WORK

THE POOR

WEEK 13 (NOV 28TH AND NOV 30TH)
*Herbert Gans “The Functions of Poverty” and Wilbert Moore and Kingsley Davis “Principles of Stratification”*

WEEK 14 (DEC 5TH AND 7TH)
*Chapter 1 and 2 of Kathryn Edin and Luke Shafer’s $2 A Day*

WEEK 15 (DEC 12TH AND 14TH)
*Chapter 3 and 4 of Kathryn Edin and Luke Shafer’s $2 A Day*
GUIDING QUESTIONS

ELITES
1. Who are the elites? How do we measure this group?
2. How do elites behave? How has their behavior changed?

THE MIDDLE CLASS
1. Who is the middle class?
2. How do middle class families reproduce their class position and erect boundaries between different racial and class groups?
3. How does race and racism shape middle class experiences?

THE WORKING CLASS
1. Why isn’t their solidarity between individuals who share similar class positions?
2. How does race shape class identities?
3. In what ways do children from working class families behave differently from middle class children?
4. How has the lives of working class adults changed over the past decades?

Memo 3 Due

THE POOR
1. What shapes the life situation of those living in poverty?
2. Is social structure or individual agency more influential in determining life chances?
3. Are those dynamics similar to or different from the social factors that shape the lives of the affluent?
4. What would it take to eliminate extreme poverty in American society?
CLASS POLICIES

CANVAS
All class communication will be through Canvas. This syllabus is subject to revision and any updated version will be posted to the course site. Please check the site regularly for notification. All assignments must be submitted through Canvas.

EMAIL POLICY
You may email me any time/day, but please do not expect an immediate response. I try to respond to emails within 12 hours. I only reply to emails Monday-Friday (so, I might not respond to emails received on Friday until the next Monday). In your email subject line, include the name of the course (i.e., SOCI 255). In the body of your email, please use a proper address (e.g., Dear Prof. Jones) and signature.

OFFICE HOURS
“Office hours” are times reserved outside of our usual class meetings for students to discuss and/or ask questions about the course materials and concepts with me 1:1. While you are not required to attend office hours, I strongly encourage students to see me at least once during the semester even if you do not have a specific question (I will start the conversation. It will not be awkward, I promise)

ATTENDANCE POLICY
Attendance is required. There will be no make-up opportunities for missed classes.
Excused vs. Unexcused absences: The Rutgers-Newark Undergraduate catalog

The recognized grounds for absence are illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions.” If you plan to claim a religious holiday as an excused absence, you must inform me of this fact within the first two weeks of class.

PLAGIARISM POLICY
Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, for which a student may receive a range of punishments, including failing the course, a permanent record on his or her final transcript, suspension or even expulsion from the University. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s definition of plagiarism by reviewing the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity, here: http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/plagiarism.
If I suspect any student of plagiarism I will bring it to his/her attention and report it to the administration. We faculty have a professional obligation to report all instances of plagiarism in our classes. Failure to do so promotes inequity among the student body, given that honest students have not had the advantage of using external sources in preparing their work.
All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

**Disability Services and Accommodations**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form). For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973)353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.