

## Structured Inequalities (SOAN 265)

Fall 2023  
Barnett Hall 2224, TR 9:00-10:20  
Office: MC 227  
Office Hours: TR noon-1:20 (and by appointment)

Marc Becker  
marc@truman.edu  
Phone: x6036  
<https://zoom.us/my/marcbecker>

### Description

Welcome to Structured Inequalities. At a time of so much economic and social disruption as well as full-throated attacks on transgender rights and the weaponizing of discourse around critical race theory (CRT), you may find yourself wondering how we have come to face so much uncertainty, and whether the past can offer us any leads for how we can create a more stable and sustainable future. In this class you will have an opportunity to explore important sociological concepts and ideas that were developed to explain prior moments of social inequality and to test their utility in understanding the social processes shaping our lives today, as well as how the cultural and institutional legacies of the past influence how we make sense of the world, the resources at our disposal as well as what we can envision for the future. Sustained inequality, that which is reproduced over a life time and even from generation to generation, relies on differential treatment by social group or category. Although there are multiple systems our society uses to categorize people and therefore to determine how they are to be treated, this semester much of our focus will be on the interactions between capitalism and racial class and gender systems of classifying people.

See the syllabus addendum on Brightspace for additional class policies.

### Readings

This course has one required book plus additional readings on Brightspace:

Walter Benn Michael and Adolph L. Reed, *No Politics but Class Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023). ISBN: 9781912475575

### Assignments and grades

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
27 reading responses (1 pt each)	27
28 participation responses (1 pt each)	28
Class discussion leader (3 times, 15 pts each)	45

Grades are calculated out of a total of 100 points: 90-100 points is an A, 80-89 is a B, 70-79 is a C, and 60-69 is a D. Fewer than 600 points is an F. Successful completion of all assignments is required to receive credit for this class.

**Reading responses:** Post a comment, question, response, or reaction for each daily reading to the discussion board on Brightspace before each class period. 1 pt each, 27 pts total.

**Participation:** After each class period, post to the discussion board on Brightspace a summary of

what contributions you made to classroom discussions for that day. 1 pt each, 28 pts total.

**Class discussion leader:** For each class period, one student will sign up to lead the discussion (organize the reading responses into a logical flow) and another to moderate discussion (run stack) to assure that everyone has equal space to speak. Sign up for a total of three times (including once and only once for the readings from Michael and Reed's book *No Politics but Class Politics*), and at least once for both leading and moderating the discussion. Sign up to lead discussion at

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Yj9vqnG5hoOeWQzhtKfChpN9mTjRwYmvBVg\\_up47q74/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Yj9vqnG5hoOeWQzhtKfChpN9mTjRwYmvBVg_up47q74/edit?usp=sharing). 3 times, 15 pts each, 45 pts total.

## **Class Schedule**

### **Tues, August 22: Introductions**

### **Thurs, August 24: Identities**

*Readings:*

- Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. Article 8: 139-67.
- Barbara Foley, "Intersectionality: A Marxist Critique," *New Labor Forum* 28, no. 3 (September 2019): 10-13.
- Adolph L. Reed, "Trickle-Down Diversity," *The Nation* 317, no. 4 (August 21/28, 2023): 8, 10.

### **Tues, August 29: The relationship between citizenship and equality in a democratic society**

*Reading:*

- "Citizens and Citizen Stuart Hall (sociologist/cultural studies) and David Held (political scientist) "Citizens and Citizenship" from *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* edited by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques. London: Verso 1991. 173-188.

### **Thurs, August 31: What kinds of inequality are a problem?**

*Reading:*

- Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (sociologists), "Some Principles of Stratification," [1945] in *Inequality and Society: Social Science Perspectives on Social Stratification*, ed. Jeff Manza and Michael Sauder (New York, NY: Norton, 2009), 137-47.

### **Tues, September 5: How could we promote the American Dream and Equality?**

- Charles Tilly (sociologist), "Historical Perspectives on Inequality," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Inequalities*, ed. Mary Romero and Eric Margolis, *Blackwell companions to sociology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 15-30.

### **Thurs, September 7: Classification and Social Order**

*Reading:*

- Zygmunt Bauman (sociologist) and Tim May (sociologist), "Drawing Boundaries: Culture, Nature, State and Territories," in *Thinking Sociologically*, 2d ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 125-46.

*Optional*

- Patricia J. Williams (legal scholar), "On Being the Object of Property," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 216-36.

**Tues, September 12: The political origin of race**

*Reading:*

- Dorothy E. Roberts (sociology/law), "The Invention of Race," in *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Crete Race in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: New Press, 2011), 3-25.

**Thurs, September 14: Women without rights or obligations**

*Reading:*

- Linda K. Kerber (historian), "No Political Relation to the State," in *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 3-46.

**Tues, September 19: Disabling disqualification**

*Reading:*

- Douglas C. Baynton (historian), "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 33-57.

**Thurs, September 21: Competing ways of understanding Capitalism: An Idealized account**

*Reading:*

- Erik Olin Wright (sociologist) and Joel Rogers (political scientist), "The Capitalist Market: How it is Supposed to Work," in *American Society: How it Really Works* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 35-46.

**Tues, September 26: Marx's (and Engels) more critical assessments**

- Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era: Text and Readings*, ed. Laura Desfor Edles and Scott Appelrouth, 3d ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015), 47-54.
- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," [1848] in *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era: Text and Readings*, ed. Laura Desfor Edles and Scott Appelrouth, 3d ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015), 57-71.
- Karl Marx, "Capital," [1867] in *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era: Text and Readings*, ed. Laura Desfor Edles and Scott Appelrouth, 3d ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015), 71-87.

**Thurs, September 28: Was slavery antithetical to or fundamental to the growth of the capitalist West?**

*Reading:*

- Edward E. Baptist (historian), *Introduction: The Heart, The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2014), xiii-xxvii.

**Tues, October 3: Contemporary Capitalism**

*Reading:*

- Jane L. Collins (anthropology/sociology), "Tracing the Threads of a Global Industry," in *Threads: Gender, Labor, and Power in The Global Apparel Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1-26. Note: I've included both chapters 1 and 2, however reading chapter 2 is optional.

**Thurs, October 5: Tempering Capitalism's Excesses: How the United States avoided the crises of economic and political collapse**

*Reading:*

- Fred Block (sociologist), "Introduction," in Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001 [1944]), xviii-xxxviii.

**Tues, October 10: Capitalist Crisis and the New Deal compromise**

*Reading:*

- Alan Brinkley (historian), "The New Deal Experiments," in *Liberalism and its Discontents* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 17-36.

**Tues, October 17: Building Categorical Inequality into New Deal Government Programs and Policies. Choice 1: Helping Americans buy a home/Embedding Inequality in the American landscape**

*Reading:*

- Richard Rothstein (legal scholar), *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), "Preface," vii-xvii; "If San Francisco, Then Everywhere?," 3-14; "Looking Forward, Looking Back," 177-93; "Considering Fixes," 195-213; "Epilogue," 215-17.

**Thurs, October 19: Choice 2: Gendered and raced access to social security programs**

*Readings:*

- Alice Kessler-Harris (historian), "Introduction," in *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-18.
- Linda K. Kerber (historian), "'I'm Just as Free and Just as Good as You Are': The Obligation Not to be a Vagrant," in *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 47-80.

### **Tues, October 24: Pushing for Rights expansion**

#### *Reading:*

- Aldon D. Morris (sociologist), "A Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement: Political and Intellectual Landmarks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25, no. 1: 517-39.

### **Thurs, October 26: Work on projects**

### **Tues, October 31: The Neoliberal Project, pt. 1**

#### *Reading:*

- Peter B. Evans (sociologist) and William H. Sewell, Jr. (historian), "Neoliberalism: Policy Regimes, International Regimes, and Social Effects," in *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*, ed. Peter A. Hall and Michèle Lamont (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 35-68.

### **Thurs, November 1: The Neoliberal Project, pt. 2**

#### *Reading:*

- Jacob S. Hacker (political scientist), "Introduction: On the Edge," in *The Great Risk Shift: The New Economic Insecurity and the Decline of the American Dream*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1-60.

Readings from Walter Benn Michael and Adolph L. Reed, *No Politics but Class Politics*:

### **Tues, November 7**

#### *Reading:*

- "Foreword" and "Marx," pp. 11-36

### **Thurs, November 9**

#### *Reading:*

- "What Matters," "Limits," and "From Black Power," pp. 37-58

### **Tues, November 14**

#### *Reading:*

- "Beyond," "Trouble," and "Race," pp. 59-100

### **Thurs, November 16**

*Reading:*

- “Political,” “Autobiography,” and “Believing,” pp. 101-138

**Tues, November 28**

*Reading:*

- “Jenner,” “Identity,” and “*Django*,” pp. 139-94

**Thurs, November 30**

*Reading:*

- “Who gets ownership” and “Chris Killip,” pp. 195-229

**Tues, December 5**

*Reading:*

- Interviews, pp. 229-324

**Thurs, December 7**

*Reading:*

- “Conclusion,” pp. 325-44

**Final Exam:** Thursday Dec. 14, 7:30 a.m. - 9:20 p.m.