Addressing Inequality in the Twenty-First Century
In this course, students will learn how sociologists study and think about economic processes as the products of distinct forms of social action and social structures, from the networks that bond and shape market transactions, to the states and organizations that set the guidelines for trading, commerce, and the development of capital. In focusing our conversations, Economy & Society will seek to study the growth of economic inequality as a particularly important and pressing issue. In understanding how economic inequality is produced by social action and structures we will investigate how economic outcomes are shaped by class, gender, and race. For this, we will read about how meritocracy, innovation, professions, careers, organizations, credit, and prices ultimately encode the weight of class, race, and gender in the economy.
Learning outcomes

The overall learning outcomes for SOCI 121R are to provide students with:

**UNDERSTANDING**
a conceptual framework that allows them to explain, in their own words, how the economy and economic processes are ultimately shaped and determined by society. By the end of the term, students should be able to identify original examples of social structures shaping and defining economic outcomes;

**CRITICAL THINKING**
a theoretical toolkit to make sense of how inequalities are reproduced through the dimensions of class, race, and gender. By the end of the term, students should be able to use sociological concepts and explanations to critically analyze how their own economic lives are shaped by broader social structures;

**ENGAGED THINKING**
a means for making sense of their own lives and their responsibilities in their communities. By the end of the term, students should be able to use sociological concepts of networks, cultures, and institutions to identify and critique discourses that reproduce economic inequality in their own lives and their communities.
Requirements

The course does not assume prior knowledge of sociology, economics, or any other social-scientific discipline. Previous exposure to the social sciences, however, is always helpful. The course does assume that individual students will be avid readers, passionate about conducting research, asking questions, discussing topics, and writing analytical essays.

This course is entirely remote and asynchronous. It requires students to do all the readings and assignments in the specified order: assessments are incremental, and keeping to plan is important for your learning. This course will also involve small-group online discussions (discussion boards) and virtual meetings (Q&A sessions), and I expect students to use these resources to ask questions, talk about the readings and assignments, and clarify concepts, when possible.
Grading

We will be using the +/- grading scale, to describe levels of performance between a maximum of A+ and a minimum of F. We will use the 100-point scale as detailed on Canvas.

Your final grade is a combination of various components:

1. **Final essay** (30%) A 2000 word final essay, based on one of five possible prompts to be made public no earlier than week 7.

2. **Weekly write-ups** (20%). Every week, you will be asked to write a brief write-ups on key concepts and connections (<400 words).

3. **Empirical assignments** (30%). You will be asked to engage in short empirical projects and write a short essay on your findings (<500 words).

4. **Quizzes** (10%) Throughout the course, you will have to answer short, low-stakes quizzes related to the readings and videos.

5. **Discussion questions** (10%) Twice a week, you will have to submit two questions based on the readings for collective discussion.
Communication policy

Because this is a completely remote course, online communication will be critical for our collective success. To make communication as efficient as possible, this course will have the following policies.

1. If you have a question, please consult the syllabus first, followed by the Frequently Asked Questions module on Canvas as well as recent course announcements. This module will be populated with answers to the most common questions raised about the course’s organization (e.g. deadlines, assignments, final essays).

2. If you send me an email/message on Canvas, be advised that due to high levels of email traffic, I will only respond to emails for this class for 2hrs per day during weekdays. I will reply to emails on first come - first serve, so if you don’t hear from me immediately, wait 24hrs before raising the issue again. You will not be punished because of your position in the email queue (e.g. because I only read your email after a deadline.)

3. Please use office hours as much as possible to ask questions about the course and Q&A sessions to talk about content in conversation with your peers. Email is not the best format for explaining complex ideas, so do make as much use of the virtual meeting opportunities as you can.

4. Also, please use my virtual office hours to ask specific, one-on-one questions. Remember that these will require booking in advance and you should be prepared (I will only allocate 15 minutes per meeting).

5. Please: practice patience.
Wellbeing

This course was designed to meet the academic standards of a face-to-face class while keeping in mind the affordances and realities of remote teaching (asynchronous lectures, flexibility in communication, and transparency about expectations).

For some, remote courses involve handling more things at the same time than face-to-face courses, and I just wanted you to know that I am aware of these challenges. Some might be taking this course because they have additional responsibilities at home, others might be facing more challenging situations in their personal lives, others might be in employment and with schedules that make remote courses better for their hectic lives. I just wanted you to know that I am fully aware of this potential uncertainty, anxiety, and stress, and I will err on the side of generosity and caution to make this class as approachable, useful, and enjoyable as possible without it becoming a tremendous burden in your lives.

Indeed, throughout your time at UC San Diego, you may experience a range of issues that can negatively impact your learning. These may include physical illness, housing or food insecurity, strained relationships, loss of motivation, depression, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol and drug problems, feeling down, interpersonal or sexual violence, or grief. These concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and affect your ability to participate in day-to-day activities. If there are issues related to coursework that are a source of particular stress or challenge, please speak with me, Juan Pablo, so that I am able to support you.

UC San Diego also provides a number of resources to all enrolled students, including:

Counseling and Psychological Services (858-534-3755)
Student Health Services (858-534-3300)
CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center (858-534-5793)
The Hub Basic Needs Center (858-246-2632)
What is Social About the Economy?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1.1 Describe the meaning and importance of the concepts of 'networks', 'institutions' and 'culture' in understanding the economy.
1.2 Identify the short- and long-term social consequences of economic inequality.
1.3 Explain how economic inequality is configured by different combinations of networks, institutions, and culture.
1.4 Identify sociological mechanisms associated to the reproduction of economic inequality.

WEEK 1 - INTRODUCING ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

READ


Viviana Zelizer, "Do markets poison intimacy?", Contexts (2006)

WATCH

What is Economic Sociology?
What makes something 'valuable'?
Who is worthy?

ACTIVITIES

Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Readings quiz
Integrative video quiz (readings + videos)
What is Social About the Economy?

WEEK 2 - ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

READ


WATCH
What is economic inequality and why does it matter?
Reproducing inequality: the case of philanthrocapitalism
Flexibility, precarity, and inequality

ACTIVITIES
Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Writing assignment on "The gig economy"
LEARNING OUTCOMES

2.1 Demonstrate understanding of the foundational concepts of social, cultural and economic capital
2.2 Describe the links between social class, occupational structures, fit, and the structures of opportunities afforded to individuals to ideas of ‘reproduction’
2.3 Express, though empirical cases relating to innovation, how privileged social actors have greater abilities to fail and innovate than less privileged actors

WEEK 3 - CLASS AND STATUS

READ


Daniel Laurison and Sam Friedman, "The class gap in higher professional and managerial occupations" American Sociological Review, (2016)


WATCH

What is social class: from Veblen to Bourdieu?
Meritocracy and the myth of social mobility

ACTIVITIES

Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Readings quiz
WEEK 4 - DO YOU ‘FIT’? CLASS IN EMPLOYMENT AND INNOVATION

READ
Ken Auletta, "Blood, simpler: one woman's drive to upend medical testing", The New Yorker, (2014)

WATCH
Employment, organization, and social class
The classed entrepreneur: how failure is a luxury

LISTEN
The Dropout (episodes: Myth-making; A star is born; The downfall)

ACTIVITIES
Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Class-ify the resume (group activity)
Brief write-up on fit and employment
Write up assignment on Theranos
LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.1 Explain the gendered character of occupations, wages, and opportunities
3.2 Link gender, occupational structures, fit, and structural dis/advantages
3.3 Express, though empirical cases, how risks and rewards are gendered in the economy

WEEK 5 - GENDER AND THE NATURALIZATION OF INEQUALITIES

READ


WATCH

What is gender?: a primer
How is the economy gendered? Expectations, roles, and structures of opportunities.
The fallacy of choice: how gendered inequalities are 'naturalized'
Not everyone is Elizabeth Holmes: gender in innovation

LISTEN

Freakonomics (podcast): “What Can Uber Teach Us About the Gender Pay Gap?”

ACTIVITIES

Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Readings quiz
Group poster on gender inequality
WEEK 6 - DO JOBS HAVE GENDERS?

READ


WATCH
Economies of care
Gender and occupational hierarchies
Gender, mobility, and employment

ACTIVITIES
Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Brief write-up on segregation in the labor market
Write up assignment on "Who cares in higher education?"
Racial Capitalism

LEARNING OUTCOMES

4.1 Explain the racialized character of residential policies, lending policies, occupations, wages, and opportunities
4.2 Explain the reproduction of racial inequality through color-blind policies in organizational settings
4.3 Express, though empirical cases, how race shapes the experiences and outcomes of economic agents

WEEK 7 - RACE, RACISM, AND INEQUALITY

READ


Adrian Florido, "How segregation defined San Diego’s neighborhoods", Voice of San Diego, (2011)

WATCH
Race and capitalism
How is the economy racialized?
Redlining and the intergenerational reproduction of racial inequalities

ACTIVITIES
Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Quiz on residential segregation
Group poster on redlining in San Diego
Racial Capitalism

WEEK 8 - DO JOBS HAVE GENDERS?

READ


WATCH
Organizations as (racial) hierarchies
How formal 'equality' fosters material inequality
Whiteness as credential

ACTIVITIES
Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Brief write-up on segregation in the labor market
Write up assignment on "Is higher ed racialized?"
Domesticating Markets

LEARNING OUTCOMES

5.1 Explain the importance of finance and financialization across numerous domains of economic life
5.2 Show the mechanisms through which financialization extracts productivity from workers in unequal ways
5.3 Evaluate alternative ways of valuing people, work, and institutions in more equitable ways.

WEEK 9 - INEQUALITY AND FINANCIALIZATION

READ


WATCH

What is financialization?
Labor, finance, and inequality
Counterfactual worlds

ACTIVITIES

Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Quiz on financialization
Integrative video quiz
Domesticating Markets

WEEK 10 - MAKING BETTER FUTURES

READ
Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy, "Seeing like a market" Socio-Economic Review (2016)


WATCH
Moral markets
Forms of redistribution
Market designs

ACTIVITIES
Submit questions for the Q&A Session
Brief writing assignment on the financialization of opportunities and the cost of higher education