

Sociology 3AC

Principles of Sociology: American Cultures University of California, Berkeley Spring 2014

Course Details

CCN: 81654
Instructor: Brian Powers
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Phone: (510) 642-4766 messages only
Office: 488 Barrows Hall
Office hours: Monday, Wednesday, 12:15 -2:30

Lecture: Monday, Wednesday, 4 - 5.30
Location: 4 Leconte

Required books: Dalton Conley. *You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Thinking Like A Sociologist* (3rd Edition). New York: W. W. Norton, 2013.

Online readings: A number of items of required reading are available electronically at the course bSpace site (bspace.berkeley.edu) and through the UCB library's e-books collection (site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/)

EARLY DROP DEADLINE: **SOC3AC has been designated an Early Drop Deadline course and cannot be dropped after FRIDAY, JANUARY 31. Please decide QUICKLY whether you wish to remain in the class. To allow others on the waitlist to enroll, we will take attendance daily through JANUARY 31. Students who are absent without a legitimate explanation will have to be dropped!**

ACES Program: American Cultures Engaged Scholarship CONTINUING NEW DEVELOPMENT!! This course offers opportunities to 15-20 students to participate in the Chancellor's innovative program in community service learning. Selected students will supplement and enhance their Soc 3AC learning, and earn 2 extra units of P/NP credit, serving as mentors to young people in the community through the programs of one of two community partner organizations. They also will participate in a *required* weekly two hour seminar with the instructor and Chancellor's Public Fellow. Interested? Please attend the organizational meeting at the date and time to be announced.

Course Background

What is a society and how does it affect who we are and what we do as individuals? How do we account for the differences we observe among ourselves? What is the nature of the human bonds that create enduring "structures" of human cooperation that shape social experience?

In sociology, each of these questions could inspire a book. We will sample some of the research that has shed light on these and other topics, with special attention to the American Dream, social and economic achievement, and education among different groups in the US.

This course introduces students to principles of social analysis and social research, in part, through the lens of the puzzle of achievement in society. Drawing on writings by premier scholars, it presents students with basic concepts in this field, important research traditions and their findings, and ways sociology contributes to the public life of societies, while speaking to the personal concerns of individuals in them. By examining the conditions under which individuals define and achieve goals, the course will demonstrate how sociology as a discipline investigates many assumptions and beliefs about society and human nature that its members frequently take for granted. Along with other social sciences, sociology examines how the world we take as given has been produced over time through human action.

While mastering the use of crucial analytical tools and theories, students will learn how scholars have established the importance of social institutions for the political values, personal identities, and moral choices that shape public and private social life. In the studies of social structure and human action so central to its agenda, sociology questions the tacit acceptance of many social phenomena as natural or inevitable facts of life. Its researchers have shown how human efforts that coalesce as social forces construct these realities, the beliefs or mythologies that explain them, and institutions that intentionally or not sustain them. These perspectives are reflected in the material on education, achievement, and the American Dream.

Students should anticipate leaving this course with a working knowledge of central topics and analytical approaches in contemporary sociology and a strong appreciation of the way social institutions and the social order affect the opportunities, thoughts, strategies, and achievements of individuals and groups. The course does not require memorization or any direct applications of “formula” or simple models of analysis. It does require students to search for reasons for social realities through two small-scale projects of original research and conscientious applications of ideas found in course readings and lectures.

Course Requirements

The instructor reserves the right to make modest, announced adjustments to the schedule of assignments, the weighting of assignments, and the schedule of readings.

Assignment	Handout date	Due date	Grade	Notes
1. Sociobiography Project and Paper 1	Week 2: Wed., Jan 29	Week 8 W, March 12	30%	5-7 pages based on interview data
Quiz 1 Posing Analyzable Questions	Week 2 M, Jan 27	Week 3 M, Feb 3	3%	One page, single space, 12 pt font, One-inch margin. MAX
Quiz 2 Finding an Informant	Week 3 M, Feb 3	Week 4, M, Feb 10	3%	One page, single space, 12 pt font, One-inch margin. MAX
	Week 4	Week 5	3%	Complete Two Tables Organizing

Quiz 3 Tables 1 and 2	M, Feb 10	W, Feb 19		Data for Sociobiography
Quiz 4 Thesis Statement	Week 5 W, Feb 19	Week 6 M, Feb 24	3%	One page, single space, 12 pt font, One-inch margin. MAX
Quiz 5 Sources and Materials for Paper 1	Week 6 M, Feb 24	Week 7 M, March 3	3%	One page, single space, 12 pt font, One-inch margin. MAX
		Paper 1, Sociobiography Due Week 8, W March 12		
SPRING BREAK	March 24 - 28			
Quiz/Journal 6 Racial Formation and the Diversity Report	Week 10 W, April 2	Week 12 W, April 16	3%	One page, single space, 12 pt font, One-inch margin. MAX
2. Paper 2, Census Tables and Intergroup Differences	Week 8 Distribution in Class M, March 10	Due Week 13, W, April 23	20%	
Library Research Workshop (in-class)	Week 8 March 10 or 12			History of the census and public access to data
3. Final Exam: Application of Scholarship on the Formation of Racial and Income Groups	Week 14 W, April 30	Friday, May 16, 8-11 a.m.	20%	Analysis of course writings on the reasons for group differences, 5 pages

Note: Make sure your exam schedule does not conflict with obligations for other classes.

Grading and Credit

All requirements must be met for course credit. All assignments must be completed and submitted for this class. A missing assignment, even a quiz, will result in an "F" for the course.

Participation

Full credit for your participation grade requires:

- At least one visit to my office hours before April 19! You are welcome to visit alone or in a group. We will schedule occasional Sociological Chat Sessions.
- At least three contributions to the bSpace FORUMS discussions, one in each of three areas:
 - A response or comment that you post on course materials, including readings, lectures, or media.
 - A comment or response you post to another posting already up at a discussion.
 - A comment on an incident, topic, issue on campus or in the real world which you find sociologically interesting and to which you can apply sociological ideas.

Grades

Grades will be based exclusively on written work. Papers will be graded for their sociological reasoning, and not for writing mechanics or language skills per se, but students' weaknesses in expository writing and inattention to details of presentation will be noted and can affect grades, especially when they undermine or inhibit the strengths of students' sociological thinking.

Successful papers are original, well-organized, well-researched and supported, with ideas clearly expressed in solid prose. Papers submitted that literally reflect the guidelines of course assignments, even if they do so in a polished way, are considered "good work," and can be expected to earn a grade of B. As an incentive for creative thinking and writing, grades higher than a B reflect students' original contribution to the course material, weaving together themes and material from different parts of the curriculum, reflecting students' creativity, imagination, initiative, independent scholarship and special insights that show initiative, diligence, and add value to the assignment.

Eligibility for credit

Please note, if you have taken Sociology 1, Sociology 3, or Sociology 3A on this campus, or Sociology 1 or an equivalent introductory course elsewhere, and you are using that course for units toward your degree, this course would count as a duplicate in the view of the UCB registrar, and the repeat units would probably not count toward your degree requirements. For this reason, this Sociology 3AC would probably not fulfill the AC requirement. If you have questions about this, consult the registrar's office or your undergraduate program adviser.

Course Schedule

Note: This segment of the syllabus is a map, not a train schedule. Lectures may fall out of sync with the schedule of assigned readings. Please read on schedule to manage the material assigned for the class.

Part I: General Issues in Sociological Inquiry

Week 1: The individual, social structure, and processes of social attainment

Wednesday, January 22

- Dalton Conley. *You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Thinking Like A Sociologist* (3rd Edition). New York: W. W. Norton, 2013. Chapter 1. Sociological Imagination: An Introduction, pp. 3-39.

Week 2: Research -- How We "Know" about Social Structure, the Individual, and Social Attainments:

Monday, January 27

- Conley. *You May Ask Yourself*, Chapter 2. Methods, pp. 43-67.

Wednesday, January 29

- Suskind R. (1999). *A hope in the unseen: An American odyssey from the inner city to the Ivy League*. New York: Broadway, pages 25-51. (Available on course site)
- Conley D. (2000). *Honky*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pages 65-110. (Available on course site)

Week 3: The Changing Structure of Social Experience: The Economy, Work, Post-Industrial Society

Monday, February 3

- Reich R. (1990). *The work of nations: Preparing ourselves for 21st century capitalism*. New York: Knopf, pages 171- 184; 196-224.

Wednesday, February 5

- Conley. *You May Ask Yourself*, Chapter 10. Poverty, pp. 372-384.
- Conley – *You May Ask Yourself*, Chapter 14. Capitalism and the Economy, “Recent Changes in Capitalism,” 549 -569.

Week 4: Wealth, Poverty, and Their Impact on Individuals

Monday, February 10

- Conley. *You May Ask Yourself*, Chapter 7. Stratification, pp.250- 274.

Wednesday, February 12

- Fischer C, Hout M, et al. (1996). *Inequality by design: Cracking the myth of the bell curve*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Ch. 6, “How unequal? America’s policy choices,” pages 129-157. (Available on course site).
- Conley. *You May Ask Yourself*, Chapter 4. Socialization, pp. 118-134.

Week 5: How Location in Social Structure Affects Groups’ Strategies for Attainment – A Sociological Reconsideration of the role of “Culture”

Monday, February 17 Presidents’ Day Holiday – Classes Not in Session

- Conley. *You May Ask Yourself*, Chapter 3. Culture and Media, pp. 80-96; 103-107.

Wednesday, February 19

- Glenn EN. (1983). Split household, small producer, dual wage earner: An analysis of Chinese American family strategies. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 45(1): pages 35-46. (Available on course site)

Week 6: The Family: An Institution Historically Defined and Socially Situated

Monday, February 24

- Conley. *You May Ask Yourself*, Chapter 12. Families, pp. 460 – 492.

Wednesday, February 26

- Lareau A. *Unequal childhoods: Class, race and family life*. 2nd edition. Berkeley: UC Press, 2011, Chapters 3 and 4, pages 38-81.

(Available on ebrary site at

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/docDetail.action?docID=10484233> – Cal Net ID required)

Week 7: Education

Monday, March 3

- Conley. *You May Ask Yourself*, Chapter 13. Education, pp. 495 - 516.

Wednesday, March 5

- Noguera, PA. (2003) *City schools and the America Dream*. New York: Teachers College Press, pages 23-41. (Available on course site)

Week 8: Gender and Sex Differences

Monday, March 10

- Conley. *You May Ask Yourself*, Chapter 8. Gender, pp. 279 – 300.

Wednesday, March 12

- Heidi Hartmann (1976), “Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1(3), pages 137 – 171.
- Ann Fausto Sterling (1985), *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men*. New York: Basic, pages 3-12.

Week 9: Gender Variations and Sexualities / Learning from the FIELD – REPORTS from the ACES Students

Monday, March 17

- George Saunders. “My Amendment.” *New Yorker*, March 23, 2004.

Wednesday, March 10

- Jonathan Ned Katz (1990), “The Invention of Heterosexuality,” *Socialist Review* 20(1) pages 7-34.

SPRING BREAK: Monday, March 24 through Friday, March 28

Part II: The racial order: Social structure and group experience

Week 10: The social construction of the American racial order

Monday, March 31

- Omi M & Winant H. (2012). “Racial formation rules: continuity, instability, and change.” In Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka La Bennett, and Laura Pulido (eds.), *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*. (Berkeley: UC Press, 2012) pages 302-331.

Wednesday, April 2

- Institute for the Study of Social Change, University of California, Berkeley. (2009). *The Diversity Project: Final Report* (2nd ed.), with a new Introduction by Troy Duster, pages 19-47. (Available on course site)

NOTE: Friday, April 4
DEADLINE TO CHANGE GRADING OPTION

Week 11: Changing the Meanings of “Blackness” in American Life

Monday, April 7

- Wilson WJ. (1987). “Change and dislocation in the inner city,” in *The truly disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pages 20-62.

Wednesday, April 9

- Conley. *You May Ask Yourself*, “Chapter 18. Collective Action, Social Movements and Social Change, pp. 706 – 725, (Movements).

Week 12: Whiteness as an Acquired and Social Trait

Monday, April 14

- Haney-Lopez I. (1996). *White by law: the legal construction of race*. New York: NYU Press, pages 1-27. (Available on course site)

Wednesday, April 16

- Roedigger DR. (2005). *Working toward whiteness: How America’s immigrants became white*. New York: Basic, Chapter 4, pages 157-198.

Week 13: Asian American Experiences in the US Division of Labor

Monday, April 21

- Cheng L & Yang PQ. (1996). *Asians: The ‘Model Minority’ deconstructed*, in Waldinger R and Bozorgmehr M, eds., *Ethnic Los Angeles*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 325-344.

Wednesday, April 23

- Louie V. (2004). *Compelled to excel: Immigration, education and opportunity among Chinese Americans*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pages 123-145
- Ong A. (2003). *Buddha is hiding: Refugees, citizenship, the New America*. Berkeley: UC Press, pages 229-249.
 - “Guns, Gangs, and Donut Kings” is available online ebrary:
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/docDetail.action?docID=10058584> or
<http://oskicat.berkeley.edu:80/record=b13649319~S55>

Week 14: Latino Experiences in the Social Structure

Monday, April 28

- Gandara P & Contreras F. (2009). The Latino education crisis: The consequences of failed social policies. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, “Beating the odds and going to college,” pages 196-249. (Available on course site)

Wednesday, April 30

- Massey DS. (2007) *Categorically unequal: The American stratification system*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pages 113-157.
- Morales R and Bonilla F. (1993). *Restructuring and the New Inequality*. In Morales and Bonilla, eds., *Latinos in a changing US economy: Comparative perspectives on growing inequality*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Recommended: Vargas Z. (1998). *Rank and file: Historical perspectives on Latino/a workers in the US*, in Darder A and Torres RD, eds., *The Latino studies reader: Culture, economy, and society*. Malden, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1998.

Week 15: Reading, Recitation, and Review Week

Monday, May 5, Wednesday, May 7, Friday, May 9

NO FORMAL INSTRUCTION – Review Session and Office Hours to be Announced

FINAL EXAM

Friday, May 16, 8-11 AM

Course Format

This course requires independent reading and synthesis of assigned materials. It is important for you to show in your writings that you understand *the meaning* of the work of particular course authors and course concepts and that you know *how to apply the ideas to issues* in the social world, more than that you simply know what someone said or wrote on a specific topic.

The course has several components:

- Lectures
- Reading assignments
- Research tasks
- Media (audio/video, tables and charts, still images)
- Study guides
- PowerPoint presentations
- Supplementary postings from the news media

These components complement and reinforce one another. They have been chosen to help you understand the content of course ideas and help you apply them to topics in the real world and research papers.

Each class session will address a set of concepts drawn from readings, with some data, references to the real world, or references to course media. To do well in this course you will have to attend lectures. However, success in this class requires more effort. The content of lectures will not be limited to facts you need to know for an exam. Instead, lectures are opportunities for you to observe and practice sociological thinking.

Please do not allow yourself to drift or mistakenly think that nothing of value is taking place in class discussions or presentations. If you find yourself thinking that way, see me for help getting back on track.

Course Sites: bSpace.berkeley.edu and site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/

You will need immediate and regular internet access to the course site. At bSpace, I will post:

- Administrative announcements
- Downloadable assignment instructions
- Handouts
- Lecture notes

Access to the course site is also necessary for you to participate in online course discussion groups. Make sure you have an active email account on record with the registrar (bearfacts.berkeley.edu) that you actually look at. I will also email you often via bSpace, which uses an automatically generated course mailing list from the registrar's data base of student information. I will use the course web site starting today, to which you will have access automatically as an enrolled student.

Course Materials

PowerPoint slides, lecture notes and study guides will be posted online. These will summarize and supplement lectures and conversations in class. These items will be posted at the "Resources" tab at the course site. Please use these materials to help integrate readings, lectures and class discussions in your understanding of the course.

Office Hours and Contact Information

Email is the best way to communicate with me, at brpowers@berkeley.edu. You may also leave messages for me with the Sociology office, (510) 642-4766.

My office hours will be in 488 Barrows Hall, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12.15 to 2.30. I may also be available by appointment. Please sign up for an office hour slot in advance at wejoinin.com/brpowers@berkeley.edu. Advance requests for office hours get priority. If others are waiting, please check in at wejoinin and please circulate a sign-up sheet to establish an order.

Each student must visit at least one office hour with me either as an individual or in group before Thanksgiving. We can arrange conversations on particular topics as the semester moves along.

Assignments

All assignments must be submitted on paper in class and electronically through bspace site under the "Assignments" tab. PLEASE DO NOT EMAIL WORK TO US WITHOUT PRIOR PERMISSION.

Course papers must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the page. You are responsible for keeping a backup of all work submitted. If any work is misplaced, you must be able to furnish a duplicate.

You will be assigned to a reader group. After you are assigned, you must write the reader's name and reader group number on all work submitted. Work not labeled with your reader group and reader name will be penalized by a reduction in one grade step (e.g., A- to B+).

Course Citizenship

Email Etiquette

When you use email, please remember to write clearly and professionally. Imagine that you are speaking directly to your recipient when you write an email, and monitor the content, tone, and attitude of your message accordingly. Please avoid writing emails in a state of panic or extreme stress. If you do not receive a response from me when you wish, please remember there other students in the course who may be contacting me, and I have other obligations besides those important ones to Sociology 3AC students. I will appreciate your patience.

Despite the many advantages of email, it may not be the best venue for all concerns students have. For example, it is not a good means to resolve issues you may have about the evaluation and grading of your work. It is better to come to office hours to discuss such a topic.

Some emails are not always welcome, especially those that re-ask a question that has been addressed in class, at the course site as an announcement, or in an email to the class. Pay attention to notifications of updates, schedule changes, new materials, and other clarifications. By all means use email for clarification, but monitor your use. Before hitting the send button on a message for information about course procedures, please double check for earlier information and updates.

Emailing the reader(s)

Remember, course readers are not graduate student instructors (GSIs) and they are paid quite differently. Please address your questions about the substance of the course and its procedures directly to me. Respect readers' limited responsibilities to a course and its students. The most common topic you will need to email your assigned reader about is your attendance at the office hour scheduled to discuss the grade whenever a major paper assignment is returned. Emails to readers on any other topic are not appropriate. If they require an answer, they will be forwarded to me to answer.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty. THE HONOR CODE

Please pay close attention to the detailed statement of principle and policy about academic integrity and honesty on campus, to reflect the campus-wide commitment to a honor code adopted by student government.

Visit the website www.asuc.org/honorcode information on the Honor Code movement.

You should be aware that we will be especially vigilant in responding to academic dishonesty and plagiarism in this class. **MOST IMPORTANT DETAILS:** You must submit work written by you, in your own words, following a plan of your own design, unless explicitly told otherwise by your teacher (in a collaborative project cleared for credit). You must properly cite sources of all work that is not your own. Consult me for advice in case of uncertainty. You should be aware that penalties for plagiarism are outlined by the university and can

include expulsion. Students in my classes have been failed for the entire course for breaching rules of academic honesty. When in doubt about proper use and citations of other's writings in your work, ask for guidance.

Review the principles and polices pertaining to Academic Honesty and penalties for violations at the Center for Student Conduct site: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct>

A mutual agreement

In Sociology 3AC, I will be present during lectures with an agenda for discussion and reflection based on curricular readings and supplemental sources. I will be available for questions and discussion in office time and via email. I will work at mastering new electronic technologies for to support your learning and use those that I already know. I will post lecture notes, reading summaries, and study questions, along with power point presentation files at the course website. I will offer staged guidance as you conduct your research, including written handouts, in class elaborations, demonstrations, and help provide the tools to enable you to carry it out successfully. I will work with course readers to assure that your work is evaluated thoughtfully, constructively, and fairly.

If you enroll in this course I expect that you will complete all course assignments, make an effort to introduce yourself to me or the reader(s), keep up with the readings and devote as much time to this course and its learning tasks as you devote to other courses with equivalent unit value, especially those closest to your professional aspirations and academic specialization.

I ask that you open your mind to theories about society that are unfamiliar to you; seek out opportunities to learn with and learn from your co-course members; and continually think about ways to participate in the class sessions, especially to teach your co-course members about the social world you know about may be different from theirs;

I hope that you will listen respectfully and openly to ideas that may challenge your own, and contact course personnel if you need help sorting through new ideas about new parts of the social world.

I expect you to attend all lectures, including video showings, and reserve the right to take attendance at different points in the semester. I ask that you be prepared to participate in discussions that emerge during class sessions.

Entering the scholarly conversation

The best way to grow intellectually through the material in the class is to develop your own dialogue with it. Sociology is a skeptical field, asking questions about the world in an effort to make some novel sense of it. You should feel free to be as demanding of sociology as it is of the world it analyzes. Do not expect to get much from this course unless you invest time and energy in the readings, lectures and research.

Following the Direction of the Course

Consider this syllabus a map of the territory in sociology and the social world we will cover in readings, lectures, and other course activities. It does not describe a strict timetable for what will be covered and exactly when materials will be explicitly addressed. Lectures and class activities may move in and out of sync with the schedule of assigned readings. When this happens, I will always tell you which readings are relevant to particular lectures, media presentations, or course activities.

Main Topics

In exploring the dreams, attainment strategies, and achievements of Americans, the course agenda concerns the social significance of everyday life and its relationship to the class structure, the racial order, and the gender system in the US. Here are some questions it raises and tries to answer:

- What do we mean by the structure of society anyway?
- How does society influence the actions, aspirations, and attainments of individuals and groups?
- Why do men and women earn different incomes and why are the genders still likely to be found in different lines of work?
- What is race and what do racial categories and classifications mean after all? Why are there disparities among the races in their social attainments and circumstances?
- How does sociology work as research discipline?
- What relevance does sociology have for an individual and the life he or she has led and seeks to lead?

American Cultures Requirement

This course is included in the curriculum of the American Cultures (AC) program. It enables students to fulfill their AC graduation requirement. Over the semester, as the topic of race emerges across areas of discussion, students need to constantly remember the purpose of the AC requirement and the way this course enables them to fulfill it. For more information about the AC requirement, please go to americancultures.berkeley.edu

As a sociologist and a educator, I am happy to offer an AC course. Students should familiarize themselves with the purposes of the AC initiative on campus, when it began, and its continuing importance in this diverse campus as it, and the rest of the US, work toward a genuine post-racial world.

UC Berkeley students may use their enrollment in this course to meet the AC requirement.

Topical and Controversial Material

Conversations about social structure inevitably touch on the subject of differences and disparities in the experiences of individuals and members of social groups, including those defined by race and other socially-defined characteristics. These can be sensitive matters to address, mostly because we are unused to talking about them in analytical terms as artifacts of social processes, as opposed to speaking of them as “natural” differences or regarding them in moralistic and judgmental terms, regarding them as matters of personal opinion or experience. It is easy for them to stir up passions and fan misunderstandings because the ideas often touch on our identities and experiences. As an AC course within sociology, this class looks directly at racial experiences and racial disparities, but you should pay close attention to the *institutional* view it follows in exploring group disparities and the ways we think about them analytically.

Since we assume that race is a concept that is a creation of the social world which somewhat impersonally imposes interpretations of their attributes upon individuals and groups, in sociology we feel a bit more comfortable taking up topics often viewed as too hot to handle in general conversation. Based in the approaches available in sociology, this course shows the parts institutions have played in creating and making use of racial and other forms of categorical classifications in the US.

Social Ideals and Human Possibilities: Fairness

Most sociologists are motivated by hopes that the benefits of systems of human cooperation be fully realized and distributed fairly and widely among individuals or groups differently situated in the social order. American ideals about equality, fair play, and shared values define a high standard for societies to live up to, with hopes and expectations of the fruits of social cooperation equally high. The realities of social life are often experienced as disappointing. Sociology helps us measure the distance between reality and the ideals and potential of society. It also suggests reasons for the gaps between hopes and disappointing realities and it sketches out possible pathways and strategies of action to narrow the gap between them.

This is an important point for anyone considering this class to consider. To follow the logic of the course. Students may need to entertain some different assumptions about the world they already know pretty well, including topics on race and other social differences. The course has been designed to create space for rational and research-based reflection about different kinds of experiences in the US. In examining the workings of social institutions and their effects on individuals' attainments and life experiences, we want to avoid the "blame game" that can emerge or is thought to emerge when this set of topics arise. Please remember we are not trying to assign personal responsibility or induce guilt for aspects of US historical and social development that have worked out differently for different groups in the population.