

Irene Browne  
Soc. 719R/WS 585H  
“Gender, Race and Economic Inequality in the U.S.”  
Fall 2000

## ***SYLLABUS***

### Description and Goals:

This course is designed as an overview of major theories, trends and debates on the topic of gender, race and economic inequality in the contemporary United States. The main focus of the course will be on labor market inequality, with a particular emphasis on patterns of inequality that are the center of current debates among policy-makers. We concentrate on labor market inequality for several reasons: First, it is my own area of research. I will be discussing studies and using data that I employ in my own work. This will provide an opportunity for students to carve projects out of the course readings. (However, no one is obligated to use my data, or even to do a quantitative analysis in their final paper). Second, wage labor is the primary source of income for the majority of non-elderly adults in the U.S. Therefore, labor market dynamics are a substantial piece of the puzzle regarding economic inequality. Third, this course is a complement to other courses on social stratification offered in the sociology department. The companion stratification courses cover important and relevant issues to the study of gender and race inequality, including social class and social conflict, inequality in the cross-national context, political and social movements, and intergroup relations.

The course is divided into 4 parts. The first section is a broad overview of the theoretical and empirical issues underlying economic inequality by race and gender. The course begins with a reflection on the historical and sociological aspects of the categories of “race” and “gender” that will be used in our readings, and underscores the importance of looking at race and gender *together* in studying economic inequality.

We then examine some of the major dimensions of labor market inequality in the U.S., so that we can describe the extent of inequality in the labor market at the aggregate level, and identify which aspects of inequality researchers are trying to explain. After a review of the empirical literature on current trends in labor market inequality, we will cover the major theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain those trends. While all students will read a selection representing each theoretical approach, students will also be assigned to concentrate on one particular theoretical perspective, which they will present to the class.

Section II of the course applies these broad theoretical perspectives to some of the major debates about particular aspects of labor market inequality in the U.S. Over the past ten years, William J. Wilson’s book, *The Truly Disadvantaged* has dominated the research and policy agenda for the study of race and economic inequality in the U.S. Section II will therefore explore the issues that Wilson raises, through an in-depth coverage of some of his major themes. The second section also moves beyond Wilson to look at important aspects of labor market inequality that he fails to address (in particular, the sex segregation of the labor market.)

In Section III, we turn from an examination of the structure of the economy as a whole to dynamics *within* the workplace that produce inequality by race and gender. We will explore how race

and gender inequality is produced and reproduced through social interaction, as well as how racism and sexism are experienced by individuals as they go through their daily lives.

Section IV addresses questions of poverty and social welfare more broadly defined. We will touch on the role of the state in perpetuating and (perhaps) ameliorating social inequality by race and gender.

While being grounded in sociological perspectives on inequality, the course is interdisciplinary, drawing on work from such diverse fields as economics, political science, Women's Studies, Latino/a Studies and African American studies.

The goals of the course are:

1. To provide a conceptual framework for understanding the “interlocking” character of economic inequality by gender and race.
2. To introduce students to the empirical literature on labor market inequality in the United States. Students should be able to describe current trends, including the overall growth in income and wage inequality that occurred in the 1980s in the U.S., and the current gap in income and wages between particular race, ethnic and gender groups.
3. To develop a comprehensive knowledge of the major theoretical explanations of economic inequality by gender and race/ethnicity in the United States. Students should be able to articulate how the respective theories contribute to our understanding of economic inequality by gender and race/ethnicity, how the core assumptions differ between the theories, and the level of analysis that the respective theories represent. Students are also expected to offer critiques of each of the theoretical perspectives we cover.
4. To provide a summary of the major debates regarding specific aspects of race and gender inequality and to review the types of evidence that exist in support of these debates.
5. To understand the relationship between gender, race and poverty, and have an introduction to the ways that the state and welfare policy influence economic inequality and poverty.
6. To develop skills in oral and written critical analyses that will facilitate students' effective participation in broader academic contexts, including conferences, workshops, and panel discussions.

## Requirements:

### 1. Short paper #1: Theories of labor market inequality

You will also be required to submit a short paper (around 5 pages) comparing two theories of inequality in labor markets. For each of the two theories, you should describe the theory and explain the major underlying assumptions. You should also present a critique of each theory, identifying the strengths as well as the weaknesses. (5 pages)

### 2. Presentation and short paper #2:

You will be responsible for leading discussion during one of the seminar sessions. You will be required to provide a list of 4-7 discussion questions on the readings for the class. During the seminar, you will give a 10 to 15 minute summary of the main arguments presented in at least 3 of the readings and highlight the common themes that emerge from all of the readings. You should then facilitate class discussion on those themes with questions that counterpose competing claims from the readings.

You should provide a written summary of the main themes in the readings, and present your own synthesis and critique of the issues covered (5-7 pages). The paper is due the day of your seminar presentation.

### 3. Memos:

For three of the weeks that you do not present, you should submit a short memo (2-3 pages). In the memo, you should discuss at least 2 of the readings that are assigned for a given date. You can choose how to engage the readings (eg, a summary of the arguments; a critique; a discussion of a particular issue or question.)

### 4. Term paper.

You will be required to write a term paper (20-25 pages) on a topic related to gender, race and economic inequality. You must draw on one of the issues or theories covered in class, but you can expand the topic (for instance, you could look at gender, race and economic inequality in a country other than the U.S.) The paper can be either an empirical study or a research proposal. Students who wish to do a different type of paper (for instance, a review of the literature) should consult with me.

## Grading

The grading for the course will be as follows:

Short paper #1:	15%
Presentation:	20%
Short paper #2:	15%
Memos (3):	15%
Final paper:	25%
Participation:	10%

Final term papers are due on Dec. 14th. Late papers submitted before the end of the semester (12/18) will receive a deduction of one-half grade. Papers that are submitted after the end of the semester will receive a deduction of one whole grade. (Incompletes are strongly discouraged).

*REQUIRED TEXTS:*

There are four books and a number of articles required for the course. The texts by Browne, Higginbotham, and Tomaskovic-Devey should be in the bookstore. You will need to order the book by Lisa Maher (*Sexed Work*) from AMAZON.COM (It was just released in paperback this August).

The articles are on electronic reserve, accessible through EUCLID on the Emory website.

Books:

Browne, Irene, ed. 1999. *Latinas and African American Women at Work: Race, Gender and Economic Inequality*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Higginbotham, Elizabeth, and Mary Romero. 1997. *Women and Work: Exploring Race, Ethnicity, and Class*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Tomaskovic-Devey, Donald. 1993. *Gender & Racial Inequality at Work: The Sources and Consequences of Job Segregation*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Maher, Lisa. 2000. *Sexed Work: Gender, Race, and Resistance in a Brooklyn Drug Trade*. Clarendon Press.

Irene Browne  
SOC 710R/WS 585H  
“Gender, Race and Economic Inequality in the U.S.”  
Fall 2000

### ***COURSE OUTLINE***

Sept. 5  
OVERVIEW OF COURSE

Sept. 12  
INTRODUCTION:

KEY CONCEPTS AND THEIR INTER-RELATION: “RACE,” “GENDER,” AND “CLASS”

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1986. Chapter 4: Racial Formation. *Racial Formation in the United States*. Routledge.

King, Deborah. 1989. “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology.” *Signs* 14(1): 42-72.

Higginbotham and Romero (eds). *Epilogue*.

Lucal, Betsy. 1999. “What It Means to Be A Gendered Me: Life on the Boundaries of a Dichotomous Gender System” *Gender & Society* 13(6): 781-97.

Conley, Dalton. 1999. “Wealth Matters.” Chapter 1 in *Being Black: Living in the Red*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wright, Lawrence. 1994. “One Drop of Blood.” *The New Yorker*. July 25.

### PART I: RISING INEQUALITY IN THE U.S. LABOR MARKET

Sept. 19  
LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Bound, John and Richard Freeman. 1992. “What Went Wrong?” The Erosion of Relative Earnings and Employment among Young Black Men in the 1980s.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII: 201-232.

Browne, Irene (ed). Introduction, Chapters 1-3, 6.

Morris, Martina, and Bruce Western. 1999. “Inequality in Earnings at the Close of the Twentieth Century.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 25: 623-57.

Cheng, Lucie, and Philip Q. Yang. 1996. “Asians: The ‘Model Minority’ Deconstructed.” In

*Ethnic Los Angeles.*

Smith, Vicki. 1993. "Flexibility in Work and Employment: The Impact on Women." *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* 11:195-216. JAI Press.

Sept. 26 - Oct. 3

#### COMPETING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Neo-classical economic theory (supply & demand; human capital)

Institutionalist and Neo-institutionalist theories (Doeringer and Piore; Powell and DiMaggio; Kaufman)

Marxist and neo-marxist theories (Wright; Bonacich; Reich)

Weberian status-maintenance theories (Lieberson; Bielby; Tomaskovic-Devey; Connell)

Feminist and womanist theories (Mink; hooks; Collins)

September 26

Tomaskovic-Devey, Donald. 1993. *Gender and Racial Inequality at Work*. ILR Press.

October 3

Bonacich, Edna. 1972. "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market." *American Sociological Review* 37(5):547-559.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. "Defining Black Feminist Thought" and "Work, Family, and Black Women's Oppression." Chaps. 2 and 3 in *Black Feminist Thought*. Harper and Collins.

Acker, Joan. 1990. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Signs* 4(2):139-158.

Ridgeway, Cecilia. 1997. "Interaction and the Conservation of Gender Inequality: Considering Employment." *American Journal of Sociology* 62(2):218-35.

Oct. 10

#### SKILLS MISMATCH DEBATES

Holzer and Vroman. 1992. "Mismatches in the Urban Labor Market." In *Urban Labor Markets and Job Opportunities*, edited by Peterson and Vroman. Urban Institute Press.

Jenson, Jane. 1989. "The Talents of Women, the Skills of Men: Flexible Specialization and Women." In *The Transformation of Work? Skill, Flexibility, and the Labor Process*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Steinberg, Ronnie. 1990. "The Social Construction of Skill: Gender, Power, and Comparable Worth." *Work and Occupations* 17:449-82.

Newman, Katherine. 1999. "School and Skill in the Low-wage World" and "Getting Stuck,

Moving Up.” in *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Oct. 17 FALL BREAK

Oct. 24

#### THE CULTURE OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Anderson, Elijah. “Sex Codes and Family Life Among Northton’s Youth” in *Streetwise: Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community*.”

Young, Alford. 1999. “Navigating Race: Getting Ahead in the Lives of ‘Rags to Riches’ Young Black Men.” In *The Cultural Territories of Race*, edited by Michele LaMont. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mead, Lawrence. 1992. “Introduction” and “Human Nature” (Chaps. 1 and 7) in *The New Politics of Poverty*. Basic Books.

Wacquant, Loic and William J. Wilson. 1989. “The Cost of Racial and Class Exclusion in the Inner City.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 501(January):8-25.

Fernandez Kelly, Patricia. 1995. “Social and Cultural Capital in the Urban Ghetto: Implications for the Economic Sociology of Immigration.” PP. 213-247 in *The Economic Sociology of Immigration*, edited by Alejandro Portes. NY: The Russell Sage Foundation.

Lewis, Oscar. 1965. “The Culture of Poverty.” In *Poverty in America*, edited by Louis Ferman, Joyce Kornbluh, and Alan Haber. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press.

#### RECOMMENDED

Newman, Katherine. 1999. “No Shame in (This) Game.” Chapter 4 in *No Shame in My Game*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Oct. 31

#### IMMIGRATION, ETHNIC ENCLAVES

Portes, Alejandro. 1995. “Economic Sociology and the Sociology of Immigration: A Conceptual Overview.” Pp. 1-41 in *The Economic Sociology of Immigration*, edited by Alejandro Portes. NY: The Russell Sage Foundation.

Zhou, Min and John Logan. 1989. “Returns on Human Capital in Ethnic Enclaves: New York City’s Chinatown.” *American Sociological Review* 54(5):809-820.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierette. 1997. Chap. 5: “Working ‘Without Papers’ in the United States” in Higginbotham and Romero, eds.

Ong, Paula, and Abel Valenzuela, Jr. "The Labor Market: Immigrant Effects and Racial Disparities." In *Ethnic Los Angeles*, edited by Roger Waldinger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr. NY: The Russell Sage Foundation.

Butler, John Sibley. 1991. Chapter 1: "The Sociology of Entrepreneurship" and Chapter 2: "Race and Entrepreneurship: A Respecification" in *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help among Black Americans* by John Sibley Butler. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Nov. 7

#### THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

Maher, Lisa. 2000. *Sexed Work: Gender, Race, and Resistance in a Brooklyn Drug Market*. Clarendon Press.

### PART II: CONSTRUCTING GENDER AND RACE INEQUALITY WITHIN THE LABOR PROCESS

Nov. 14

#### GENDER, RACE AND POWER IN THE WORKPLACE

Weston, Kathleen and Lisa Rofel. 1984. "Sexuality, Class and Conflict in a Lesbian Workplace." *Signs* 9(4):623-646.

Kanter, Rosabeth. 1977. Chap. 7: Power. In *Men and Women of the Corporation*. Basic Books.

Higginbotham and Romero. 1997. Chapters 2, 4, 6.

Burt, Ronald. 1998. "The Gender of Social Capital." *Rationality and Society* 10(1):5-46.

NOV. 21 TBA

Nov. 28

#### DISCRIMINATION

Feagin, Joe and Melvin Sikes. 1994. Chapter 1: The Continuing Significance of Racism and Chapter 4: Navigating the Middle-Class Workplace. In *Living With Racism: The Black Middle-class Experience*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Browne, ed. Chaps. 9-10.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Law and Politics." *The Politics of Law*

Woo, Deborah. 1989. "The Gap Between Striving and Achieving: The Case of Asian American Women" in *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By and About Asian-American Women*, edited by Asian Women United of California. Boston: Beacon Press.

O'Neill, June. "Discrimination and Income Differences." In *Race and Gender in the American Economy: Views from Across the Spectrum*, Edited by Susan Feiner. Prentice-Hall.

### PART III: POVERTY AND POLICY

Dec. 5

#### GENDER, RACE AND WELFARE

Edin, Kathryn and Kathleen Mullan Harris. 1999. "Getting Off and Staying Off: Race Differences in the Route Off Welfare." In *Race, Gender and Economic Inequality: African American and Latina Women in the Labor Market*, edited by Irene Browne. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Misra, Joya. 1999. "Latinas and African American Women in the Labor Market: Implications for Policy." Chapter 13 in *Race, Gender and Economic Inequality: African American and Latina Women in the Labor Market*, edited by Irene Browne. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Corcoran, Mary. 1995. "Rags to Rags: Poverty and Mobility in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 21:237-267.

Danziger, Sheldon. 1999. "Approaching the Limit: Early Lessons from Welfare Reform." Working paper. Joint Center for Poverty Research. URL: <http://www.jcpr.org/wp/WPprofile.cfm?ID=203>

Johnson, Earl, and Fred Doolittle. 1998. "Low-Income Parents and the Parents' Fair Share Program." Chapter 9 in *Fathers Under Fire*, edited by Irwin Garfindel, Sara McLanahan, Daniel Meyer, and Judith Seltzer.

Dec. 12

#### SUMMARY