



The University of Western Ontario

**SOCIOLOGY 4420F**  
**The Social Context of Racial Inequality**  
**Fall 2021**

**Thursday, 9:30am–12:30pm**  
**SSC 5230**

**Instructor:** Patrick Denice, Assistant Professor

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:00–4:00pm (<https://calendly.com/patrickdenice/15min>)

Email: [pdenice@uwo.ca](mailto:pdenice@uwo.ca)

---

This course is currently scheduled to be held *in person*. Given the ongoing uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Denice reserves the right to shift the course *online* at any point during the term. Additionally, if you are unable to attend in person, remote access will be available. Please get in touch with Dr. Denice to make arrangements for attending via Zoom.

## Course Description

### **Overview:**

This course provides an in-depth overview of sociological understandings of race and ethnicity, with a particular focus on the institutional underpinnings of racial and ethnic inequality in the United States and Canada. The core question we seek to address is: What are the sociological origins of racial inequality? To answer this, we begin by investigating how sociologists understand racial and ethnic distinctions. What comprises a racial or ethnic group? We then shift our attention to patterns of racial and ethnic inequality, focusing on the major institutions through which racial inequality is generated: the housing market, the labor market, schools, and the criminal justice system.

### **Prerequisites:**

Enrollment in fourth year of one of the Honours Specializations or Honours Double Major in Sociology. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**Antirequisites:** None.

(Note that this course is cross listed with the graduate program in Sociology, under course number SOC 9177.)

## Learning Outcomes

1. Gain a general understanding of how race/ethnicity is studied by sociologists.
2. Critically examine some of the theoretical and empirical approaches applied to the study of race and ethnicity.
3. Analyze how institutions contribute to the creation and maintenance of racial/ethnic stratification.
4. Develop your intellectual and sociological voice as you critically engage with the course material, participate in and lead discussions with your colleagues, and write a policy or research proposal.

## Course Materials

All required readings, assignment prompts, and other course materials will be made available through our OWL course site.

## Course Organization

Students will be asked to review and critically engage with course material (readings, podcasts, etc.) prior to class meetings. Class time will consist of student presentations, structured class discussions, and small group activities.

## Course Evaluation

### **Class Participation (10%):**

Your active participation in class discussions is crucial to your success in this class. Active participation means that you consistently ask and answer questions, reflect thoughtfully on the readings, and engage respectfully with your colleagues. Additionally, throughout the term, we may complete short, low-stakes writing activities prior to or during class. Some of these will be collected, and we will talk about them during our synchronous seminars, either the full class or in smaller groups. They are intended to help you complete the final paper assignment as well as engage more deeply with the material.

Finally, students will be expected to ask (as well as respond to) questions about the material. To help make the most of our in-class time together, students will post open-ended questions about the week's readings to an OWL Forum. Students do *not* need to answer the questions on the Forum, as we'll work through some of them together. Students should post their questions by *10:00am on the Wednesday* before class. *Of the 9 eligible weeks (starting with Sept. 23), students will need to post at least 1 question for 5 weeks.* Note that students should read through the questions already posted for a given week before posting their own since questions cannot be repeated.

### **Short Reaction Memos (30%):**

Throughout the term, you are required to submit two (2) short reaction papers. Each paper should be approximately 2-3 pages in length (12-point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced). These are not meant to be summaries of the readings. Rather, they are your opportunity to critically engage with a particular reading or topic. You can, for example, connect a reading to a current

event, draw out a common thread (i.e., argument) across a few papers related to a topic, or propose a counterargument to a particular author by incorporating insights from other readings. The timing of these papers is largely up to the student; however, students must have turned in at least one memo by **October 14**, and they must have turned in both by **November 18**.

### **Facilitating Discussion (20%):**

All students will lead one discussion at some point over the course of the quarter. More information will be given on the first day of class, but in general discussion leaders have the following 3 responsibilities:

1. Provide a clear and concise summary and critical analysis of the assigned reading(s). Identify the authors' argument and the evidence used to support that argument, evaluate the effectiveness of the argument, and discuss what you learned from the reading(s).
2. Highlight the ways in which the day's reading material fits (or doesn't fit) with material we've already covered.
3. Guide discussion among your colleagues through questions. I will provide an initial bank of discussion questions that will be relevant to almost all readings we cover throughout the term. You are welcome to draw on these as a starting point, and you should also develop additional questions specific to the day's readings.

### **Final Paper (40%):**

Students' final papers will take the form of either a research proposal or a policy proposal. Both options must do the following: identify a specific area of racial/ethnic inequality as well as its implications, and suggest possible explanations (mechanisms) for this inequality. For those writing a research proposal, students will then develop a strategy for analyzing the inequality identified. For those writing a policy proposal, students will suggest and critically evaluate 1 or 2 policies that might alleviate the problem. The paper should be approximately 10-12 pages in length (12-point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced). More detailed information will be provided early in the term.

*A Note About Attendance:* Because you cannot participate and actively engage with the materials and your colleagues if you are not here, in order to receive a passing grade, students are expected to attend at least 80% of the class meetings for this course. This requirement will only be waived in exceptional circumstances with documentation. While attendance is not an explicit part of the evaluation breakdown, you will see your final grade lowered if you miss an excessive number of class sessions. Please inform me as soon as possible if you are unable to attend a class for medical or personal reasons.

### How to Contact Me

I can be reached via email at [pdenice@uwo.ca](mailto:pdenice@uwo.ca). During the academic year, I try to respond to emails within 24 business hours. Questions that require long explanations are best asked in class or during office hours.

Students are encouraged to come to office hours. To set up either an in-person or Zoom meeting during my office hours, go to the following link: <https://calendly.com/patrickdenice/15min>. Students may also drop in (without setting up a meeting) to my office hours on a first-come/first-

serve basis. If my office hours do not work, students are welcome to set up an appointment at a different time, or to approach me before or after class.

### How to Get Important Information

You will find course content and announcements posted to our OWL course website. I will also announce any upcoming deadlines or changes to the course schedule in class. If you miss a class, check first with a classmate for any notes or other materials.

## Important Policies

### **Assignment Deadlines:**

Students must submit their assignments by the date and time stated in the course outline and on the OWL website. Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each day they are late. Any assignment not received within 5 days of the due date will not be accepted, except in the event of a documented medical or family emergency. If a student anticipates an issue with an assignment, they are encouraged to speak to the professor as early as possible to make alternative arrangements.

### **Plagiarism:**

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)).

### **Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:**

I encourage you to take notes without a computer if you are able. If you need a laptop to take notes during class, please refrain from browsing the internet, texting, or going on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter. Students who disrupt their colleagues' learning through the use of their laptop or tablet will be told to put away their device, and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are silenced and put away at the beginning of class.

### **Recording Devices:**

Recording devices may not be used in this class. Some of the topics we discuss may be of a sensitive nature. In order to cultivate an atmosphere in the classroom where we all feel comfortable sharing our ideas, questions, and personal stories or experiences, we need to be free from worry about being recorded. If you require a recording device for medical, accessibility, or other reasons, please see me.

### **Lectures and Other Course Materials:**

Any materials created by the instructor (e.g., notes, handouts, summaries, slide decks, assignments, exams, etc.) are protected by copyright law and may not be copied or distributed in any form without the explicit permission of the instructor. Any non-authorized use of these materials constitutes an academic offence.

**Scholastic Offences:**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy—specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence

([www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)).

**Accommodation for Medical Illness:**

Find Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness at:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf). Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodations: [https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic\\_consideration.html](https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html).

**Accessibility Options:**

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2111, x82147, for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html).

**Mental Health:**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness Western ([http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options for getting help.

**Disputing a Grade:**

Students who wish to dispute an assignment, exam, or course grade must write a one-page explanation justifying why their work should be re-evaluated. Such explanations should focus on the merit of the work itself. Work will not be re-evaluated on the basis that students were sick or feeling stressed when completing the assignment. Please be advised that a student's mark may go up or down upon re-evaluation.

**Extraordinary Circumstances:**

The content and/or evaluation of this course is subject to change in the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's or instructor's control.

## Course Schedule

*Please note: Readings should be completed prior to class on the date listed. This outline is subject to change over the course of the term in order to meet the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and/or through our OWL course website.*

### **Part I: Sociological Understandings of Race and Ethnicity**

Sept. 16 – Getting started: What is race? What is ethnicity?

- Yetman, *Majority and Minority*, ch. 1 (pp. 1-20)
- Brown, “Who is an Indian child? Institutional context, tribal sovereignty, and race-making in fragmented states”

Sept. 23 – Prejudice, racism, and racial attitudes

- Fox and Guglielmo, “Defining America’s Racial Boundaries”
- Underhill, “Parenting During Ferguson: Making Sense of White Parents’ Silence”
- Shiao and Woody, “The meaning of ‘racism’”

Sept. 30 – Introducing institutions of racial and ethnic inequality

- Bonilla-Silva, “What makes systemic racism systemic?”
- Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White*, chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-52)

### **Part II: Institutions of Racial and Ethnic Inequality**

Oct. 7 – Housing, part 1

- Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, chs. 1, 3-4 (pp. 3-14, 39-75)

Oct. 14 – Housing, part 2

- Fong and Wilkes, “Racial and Ethnic Residential Patterns in Canada”
- Khazan, “Being Black in America Can Be Hazardous to Your Health”

⇒ *First short reaction memo must be submitted no later than this date via OWL*

Oct. 21 – Labor market, part 1

- Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White*, ch. 3 (pp. 53-79)
- Kay, “Social Capital, Relational Inequality Theory, and Earnings of Racial Minority Lawyers”

Oct. 28 – Labor market, part 2

- Quillian et al., “Evidence from field experiments in hiring shows substantial additional racial discrimination after the callback”
- Banerjee, “An Examination of Factors Affecting Perception of Workplace Discrimination”
- Harvey Wingfield, “How organizations are failing black workers – and how to do better”

Nov. 4 – Reading Week – Enjoy the break!

Nov. 11 – Schools, part 1

- Listen: *This American Life*, “The Problem We All Live With”
- Rooks, *Cutting School: The Segregnomics of American Education*, ch. 3 (pp. 79-107)
- Milne and Wotherspoon, “Schools as ‘really dangerous places’ for Indigenous children and youth: Schools, child welfare, and contemporary challenges to reconciliation”

Nov. 18 – Schools, part 2

- Chen and Stulberg, “Racial Inequality and Race-Conscious Affirmative Action in College Admissions”
- Bailey, “Indigenous Students: Resilient and Empowered in the Midst of Racism and Lateral Violence”

⇒ ***Second short reaction memo must be submitted no later than this date via OWL***

Nov. 25 – *No class*

- Use this week as an opportunity to make progress on your final papers.

Dec. 2 – Criminal justice, and Wrapping up

- Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, ch. 3 (pp. 97-139)
- Pager, *Marked*, ch. 5 (pp. 86-99)
- Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

⇒ ***Final paper due by 11:55pm via OWL***



## Recommended Reading

*This is a collection of books, articles, and films that (at least for now) just missed inclusion in our class. If you are interested in delving further into a given topic, these are good places to start. I am happy to suggest others!*

### Part I: Sociological Understandings of Race and Ethnicity

- Bonilla-Silva, E. 2018. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Denis, J. S. 2015. "Contact theory in a small-town settler-colonial context: The reproduction of laissez-faire racism in Indigenous-white Canadian relations." *American Sociological Review* 80(1): 218-242.
- Frederickson, George M. 2002. *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Goodman, Philip. 2014. "Race in California's Prison Fire Camps for Men." *American Journal of Sociology* 120: 352–394.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. 1996. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- Mueller, Jennifer C. 2017. "Producing colorblindness: Everyday mechanisms of white ignorance." *Social Problems* 64(2): 219-238.
- Ray, V. 2019. "A theory of racialized organizations." *American Sociological Review* 84(1): 26-53.
- Saperstein, Aliya, and Andrew Penner. 2012. "Racial Fluidity and Inequality in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 118: 676–727.
- Telles, Edward E. 2004. *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

### Part II: Institutions of Racial and Ethnic Inequality

- Bertrand, M, and Mullainathan, S. 2004. "Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination?" *The American Economic Review* 94(4): 991-1013.
- Billingham, Chase M., and Matthew O. Hung. 2016. "School Racial Composition and Parental Choice: New Evidence on the Preferences of White Parents in the United States." *Sociology of Education* 89: 99–117.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. *Between the World and Me*. Spiegel and Grau.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2017. "My President Was Black." *The Atlantic*, January/February issue.
- Cottom, Tressie McMillan. 2017. *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy*. The New Press.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted*. Crown.
- Massey, Douglas S. 2007. *Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System*. Russell Sage.
- Massey, Douglas S., and Nancy Denton. 1998. *American Apartheid*. Harvard University Press.

- Pettit, B., & Western, B. 2004. “Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in U.S. Incarceration.” *American Sociological Review* 69(2): 151-169.
- Posselt, J. R., Jaquette, O., Bielby, R., & Bastedo, M. N. (2012). Access Without Equity: Longitudinal Analyses of Institutional Stratification by Race and Ethnicity, 1972–2004. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(6), 1074–1111.
- Rosenfeld, Jake, and Meredith Kleykamp. 2012. “Organized Labor and Racial Wage Inequality in the United States.” *American Journal of Sociology* 117: 1460–1512.
- Sharkey, Patrick. 2013. *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Equality*. University of Chicago Press.
- Stainback, K., Jason, K., and Walter, C. 2018. “Organizational context and the well-being of black workers: Does racial composition affect psychological distress?” Pp. 137-164 in *Race, Identity, and Work (Research in the Sociology of Work, vol. 32)*, eds. E. L. Mickey and A. H. Wingfield. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Sugrue, Thomas J. 2014. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton University Press.
- Wilson, William Julius. 1997. *When Work Disappears*. Vintage Books.
- *13th* (documentary). 2016. Directed by Ava DuVernay. Starring Melina Abdullah, Michelle Alexander, and Cory Booker.
- *Fruitvale Station* (film). 2013. Directed by Ryan Coogler. Starring Michael B. Jordan, Melonie Diaz, and Octavia Spencer.
- *When They See Us* (mini-series). 2019. Directed by Ava DuVernay. Starring Blair Underwood, John Lequizamo, and Michael K. Williams.

## Race in London, ON

Listen to stories from Hear Here (<https://www.hearherelondon.org/stories/>), especially those from the following individuals:

- Henderson, Francis
- Henderson, Margaret
- Hodder, Genet
- Holmes, John
- Jones, Aby B.
- Jones, Alfred T.
- Miller, Benjamin
- Moore, John D.
- Morehead, Henry
- Sam, Joan