



The University of Western Ontario

**SOCIOLOGY 4420G - 001**  
**The Social Context of Racial Inequality**  
**Winter 2023**

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

**Instructor:** Patrick Denice, Assistant Professor

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

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

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**Course Description:** 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.

**Prerequisite(s):** Registration in third year or above in any Department of Sociology module, or fourth year in any module.

**Anti-requisite(s):** Sociology 4485F/G.

**Course Objectives and 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.

**Communication:** Students are responsible for checking the *OWL course website* on a regular basis for news, updates, assignments, and additional materials. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. 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 announcements, notes, or other materials. If you have a specific

question or issue, you may send me an *email* ([pdenice@uwo.ca](mailto:pdenice@uwo.ca)). I typically respond to students within 24-48 business 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.

### **Method of Evaluation:**

The evaluation methods listed and described below are essential requirements for the course.

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|----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Class participation     | 10% |
| 2. Facilitating discussion | 20% |
| 3. Short reaction memos    | 30% |
| 4. Final paper             | 40% |

***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.

***Facilitating Discussion (20%):*** All students will lead up to two discussions 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.

***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 February 14, and they must have turned in both by March 21.

***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.

**Additional Notes About Grading:** There will be no opportunities for extra credit. I encourage you to work consistently throughout the semester, and to reach out to other students in the class or me as soon as you have trouble with the material. Consistent with departmental guidelines, it is expected that the class average for this course will be around 78-82%. Should the final overall grades yield a value significantly below this range, grades will be adjusted upward to ensure an appropriate mean for the class.

**Contingency Plan for an In-Person Class Pivoting to 100% Online Learning:** In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the delivery of our course moving away from face-to-face interactions, affected course material will be delivered entirely online and asynchronously through OWL. The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted as determined by the course instructor.

**Student Absences:** 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.

Additionally, if you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below:

*Assignments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade:* In this class, we only have one assignment worth less than 10% of your overall course mark—one of your two discussion facilitations. Students who foresee an issue with their assigned date can switch with another student in the class. For those who are unexpectedly absent on the day of their presentation, the student and instructor will work out an alternative assignment (at the discretion of the instructor).

*Assignments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:* For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible. In most cases, students with

approved accommodations will be granted a one-week extension. If a student's situation requires a longer absence or extension, the assignment will be dropped, and their overall course grade will be reweighted without it.

*Absences from final examinations:* There is no final exam for this class.

*Note:* Missed work can only be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is not sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator, or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.

## Course Schedule and Readings

*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

Jan. 10 – Getting started

- No readings due

Jan. 17 – What is race? What is ethnicity?

- Yetman, *Majority and Minority*, ch. 1 (pp. 1-20)
- Fox and Guglielmo, “Defining America’s Racial Boundaries”

Jan. 24 – Prejudice, racism, and racial attitudes

- Shiao and Woody, “The meaning of ‘racism’”
- Underhill, “Parenting During Ferguson: Making Sense of White Parents’ Silence”

Jan. 31 – Introducing institutions of racial and ethnic inequality

- Bonilla-Silva, “What makes systemic racism systemic?”
- Brown, “Who is an Indian child? Institutional context, tribal sovereignty, and race-making in fragmented states”
- Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White*, chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-52)

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

Feb. 7 – Housing, part 1

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

Feb. 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*

Feb. 21 – *Reading Week – Enjoy the break!*

Feb. 28 – 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”

Mar. 7 – 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”

Mar. 14 – Schools, part 1

- Listen: *This American Life*, “The Problem We All Live With”
- Rooks, *Cutting School: The Segregomics 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”

Mar. 21 – 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***

Mar. 28 – Criminal justice

- Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, ch. 3 (pp. 97-139)
- Pager, *Marked*, ch. 5 (pp. 86-99)
- Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk, “Police Violence and Citizen Crime Reporting in the Black Community”

Apr. 4 – Wrapping up

- Pirtle, “Racial Capitalism: A fundamental cause of COVID-19 pandemic inequalities”
- Williams, “A Call to Focus on Racial Domination and Oppression”
- Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

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

## Important Policies

**Academic Consideration for Missed Work:** Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation in order to receive accommodation for missed work worth 10% or more of the final grade in the course. All required documentation for absences must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty. Individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds or for other reasons.

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf). The student medical certificate is available at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

**Religious Accommodation:** When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at <https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

**Accessibility Options:** Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD, [http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)), which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: [www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

**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, at the following web site: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

**A Note on 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.

**Plagiarism Checking:** 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 (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

**Mental Health:** Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western ([www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: [Academic Counselling - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.uwo.ca/academic_counselling/).

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

**Copyright of Lectures and Other Course Materials:** Any materials created by the instructor (e.g., videos, notes, hand-outs, 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 offense.

**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. 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.

**Rounding of Marks:** Final marks, irrespective of the number of decimal places used in marking individual assignments and exams, will be calculated to one decimal place and rounded to the nearest integer (e.g., 74.4 becomes 74, 74.5 becomes 75). Marks will not be bumped to the next grade or GPA (e.g., a 79 will not be bumped up to an 80). The mark attained is the mark you achieved; requests for mark "bumping" will go unanswered and will be denied.

**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.



## 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