

## SOC 160 Social Problems & American Values

Fall 2022, #23936  
Tuesday & Thursday 9:30 am – 10:45 am  
107 Fraser Hall

### Instructor:

Name	Andrew Taeho Kim
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Office	Email me for a Zoom link
Office Hours	Tuesday 2:30 pm – 4:30 pm or by appointment

### Course Description

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This course is designed to introduce the causes and explanations of persisting social problems in the United States from a sociological perspective. Trends and various forms of inequality will be explored based on the critical assessment of the dominant definitions of social problems. We will discuss core fundamental, theoretical, and methodological issues in understanding social problems and how they relate to our personal ethics and social values.

Satisfies: Goal 4 Outcome 1 (AE41), Goal 5 Outcome 1 (AE51), Goal 1 Outcome 1 (GE11), S Social Science (S), SF Public Affairs PC (SF)

### Course Objectives

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1. Examine the structural forces that shape national and international inequality.
2. Think critically about how and why certain social problems are framed.
3. Apply course information to broader contemporary issues in news, media, and society.
4. Apply personal ethical decision-making to concepts of social responsibility.
5. Evaluate potential policy solutions to contemporary social problems.

### Learning Outcomes

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1. Students will be able to analyze and evaluate assumptions, claims, evidences, arguments, and forms of expression through critical thinking.
2. Students will be able to generate, explore, organize, and convey ideas in both written and oral communication.
3. Students will be able to investigate the diversity of human experience across key sociodemographic groups (e.g. age, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class).
4. Students will develop and apply a combination of knowledge and skills to demonstrate an understanding of social responsibility and ethical behavior.

### Required Materials

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- Edin, Kathryn J. and H. Luke Shaefer. 2016. *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. New York, NY: Mariner Books

This is one text you need to purchase or borrow. Let me know ASAP if you have trouble getting it. All other required readings will be available through course site on Canvas (<http://canvas.ku.edu>). You are responsible for checking Canvas for additional readings, announcements, or changes to the syllabus.

## Evaluation

Final grades are based on students' total point score as determined by performance on exams, papers, assignments, and attendance/participation.

Item	Weight	Percent	Grade
Exams	30	93.0 ≤	A
Short Papers	20	90.0 ~ 92.9	A–
Group Project: Presentation	10	87.0 ~ 89.9	B+
Group Project: Paper	15	83.0 ~ 86.9	B
Group Project: Involvement	5	80.0 ~ 82.9	B–
Attendance	5	77.0 ~ 79.9	C+
Participation*	15	73.0 ~ 76.9	C
		70.0 ~ 72.9	C–
		67.0 ~ 69.9	D+
		63.0 ~ 66.9	D
		60.0 ~ 62.9	D–
		≤ 59.9	F
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>		

\* Includes worksheets

## Attendance & Participation

Points from attendance and participation (including weekly worksheets) amount to 20% of your total grade. Contact me as soon as possible for conflicting dates or issues that may prohibit you from attending. Making up points for absence will be handled in a case-by-case manner.

Every day, attendance will be taken. If you are absent, your final point for the course will be reduced by one point for each absence. The first two absences will not cost the points, though. Class attendance itself is worth 5% of your final grade. You must notify me by email if there are any reasonable excuses why you cannot come to class. Supporting documents should be provided later. Students who leave before the attendance has been taken will not be counted for the day. Perfect attendance will add 2 percentage points to the final grade.

All students are expected to read assigned materials before class on Thursday of the scheduled week and actively contribute to class discussions. I am going to pick students randomly and will ask them to explain the reading assignment for that class. A complete failure in explaining the concept will lower your point. At the end of the semester, I will add bonus points to students who contributed to class discussions very actively. I will assign 0 participation points to students who did not say anything constructive during the semester.

It is important that you spend the necessary time working on this course to achieve the expected outcomes by the end of the term. If you face challenges in fully participating at any time during the semester, please let me know, and please contact me if you expect to miss class. If you need to report an extended illness or serious accident, please contact Student Support and Case Management at [course-adapt@ku.edu](mailto:course-adapt@ku.edu) or 785-864-4060. A case manager will send email notifications to your instructor(s) on your behalf. When you are able, you will need to follow up with your professors to coordinate a temporary arrangement regarding missed instruction and coursework.

## Exams

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There will be two exams, covering lectures, readings, and weekly activities. The dates of the exams are in the “Important Dates,” “Course Calendar,” and “Tentative Weekly Schedule and Readings” sections of the syllabus. The exams will take place during the scheduled class time, on Canvas. We will not meet in person on the days of the exam. Make-up exams are available only under two conditions: 1) you must have a valid excuse (this almost always means a medical excuse); or 2) you must receive my permission to miss the test prior to the test. It is your responsibility to provide written verification of your excuse to me; if I do not receive it, you will not receive any credit for the exam. All exams are open note exams. You can consult your own note in exams, but you cannot use the textbook, journal articles, or a carbon copy of someone else’s notes, including lecture slides and handouts. Both hand-written and electronically typed notes are allowed.

## Short Papers

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Two short papers will be given during the course of the semester. Being able to critique information effectively in a written format is a skill that is useful both inside and outside the college. You are required to turn in 2 short paper assignments ( $\approx$  2 pages each). Specific guidelines will be provided on Canvas.

## Group Project Presentation & Final Paper

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Toward the last third of the semester, you will be working as a group on a project. You will be asked to critically analyze the media representation of a social problem. The group project consists of a proposal, a presentation, a paper, and a peer evaluation. Details about the final group project will be discussed in class and posted on *Canvas*. Detailed descriptions will follow.

## Important Dates

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Task	Due / On
Short Paper #1	Friday 9/23, 11:59 pm
Short Paper #2	Friday 10/28, 11:59 pm
Exam #1	Thursday 10/13, 9:30 am – 10:45 am
Exam #2	Tuesday 11/15, 9:30 am – 10:45 am
Group Project Proposal	Tuesday 11/22, 11:59 pm
Group Project Presentation	Week 16
Final Paper & Peer Evaluation	Wednesday 12/14, 11:59 pm

\* All papers and evaluations are to be turned in on *Canvas*. Exams will also take place on *Canvas* during the designated class time.

## Communication

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An email is an official form of communication. You are responsible for checking your University of Kansas official email address on a regular basis. Email me with any possible inquiries relating to the course. Please use [SOC 160] followed by whatever you would like for the subject of your email.

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## Office Hours

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Office hours will be through Zoom during Tuesday 2:30 pm – 4:30 pm. Email me for a Zoom link. If this time frame doesn't work for you or you prefer to meet in person, let me know and we will set up a separate meeting.

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## Classroom Etiquette

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There are several things that I find very distracting during class, talking while I and others are speaking and leaving early from class. I ask that students do their best to respect one another's views and not personalize disagreements. Getting educated involves building an ability to entertain viewpoints and ideas different from our own. Because materials dealt with in this course can be "sensitive," please be respectful of each other. Diverse opinions, even controversial ones, are welcome. Incivility toward each other will not be tolerated.

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## Academic Misconduct

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All work submitted or presented in class should be your own and the contributions of others properly cited and acknowledged. Material should represent learning and effort in this course and are not to be materials turned in from other courses. Turning in the same paper used for another class, even if it is your own work, is not acceptable and grounds for failure.

If you are uncertain if you have cited something properly please discuss it with me before submitting. The issue of digital plagiarism has raised concerns about ethics, student writing experiences, and academic integrity. KU subscribes to a digital plagiarism detection program called SafeAssign, which will be used to check papers submitted in this course.

Using the work of another and claiming it as your own is inexcusable and will not be tolerated. If you are found to be using another person's work (that means any form of another person's work), you will automatically receive a zero on the assignment in question. Depending on the extent of the plagiarism, you may receive an F in the course. Academic misconduct is a serious offense that could possibly lead to your suspension or expulsion from the University and permanently affect your academic record. All cases of plagiarism and academic misconduct will be reported to the proper University authorities. I take zero tolerance policy in cheating and plagiarism, so if you are ever not sure about an assignment, ask first.

- Please refer to the web resources from the Dean of Students if you have questions (<https://studentaffairs.ku.edu/academic-integrity>).
- Information on avoiding plagiarism can be found at the KU Writing Center in their on-line guides for writers: (<http://www.writing.ku.edu/students/guides.shtml>).

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## Course Policies

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- **Copyrights:** All classroom materials, including syllabus, lectures, slides, and others, are allowed only for personal use. Sharing them with others (except your classmates) or selling them to third parties or anyone else, including your classmates, are strictly prohibited. Seek permission from the instructor if you need to videotape or record the lectures.
- **IT Gadgets:** The use of cell phones, tablets, or laptops should be limited to circumstances directly relating to the class. Reading random newspapers, online shopping, or messaging your friends in

class are considered class disruptions. Repeated class disruptions will result in lowering your final grade or dismissal from the class.

- **Religious Holidays:** While I have attempted to construct the course schedule around religious holidays, I may have overlooked some. If you are unable to attend a class due to a religious holiday, please let me know in advance, and we can make other arrangements.
- **Accommodations:** I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. I will need documentation from the appropriate college office before making any changes. You will need to let me know as soon as possible so that I can make arrangements.
- **Record Keeping:** Students are obliged to save their important emails, such as class absence notifications, in their email accounts and to keep other important records.
- **Other Policies:** Please note that the University of Kansas has many policies regarding how classes will be conducted and the expected behaviors of students. Even though these may not be explicitly listed here, this class will be run in accordance with other policies.

## Expectations

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What I expect from you:

- complete the weekly assigned readings before the class on Thursday
- bring your readings and notes to class
- participate in our discussion activities
- join on time and concentrate
- be respectful in your dealings with me and your classmates

What you can expect from me:

- prompt discussion and critical thinking about course materials
- respond to your emails within 24 hours
- be available for the office hours
- treat you with respect

## Disclaimer

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The syllabus and schedule are subject to change.

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**Course Calendar**


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Week	Dates	Day	Class Meeting	Topic
Week 1	8/23	Tues.	O	Course Introduction
	8/25	Thurs.	O	
Week 2	8/30	Tues.	O	
	9/1	Thurs.	O	
Week 3	9/6	Tues.	O	
	9/8	Thurs.	O	
Week 4	9/13	Tues.	O	
	9/15	Thurs.	O	
Week 5	9/20	Tues.	O	Short Paper #1 due 11:59 pm
	9/22	Thurs.	O	
	9/23	Fri.		
Week 6	9/27	Tues.	O	
	9/29	Thurs.	O	
Week 7	10/4	Tues.	O	
	10/6	Thurs.	△	
Week 8	10/11	Tues.	X	Fall Break (10/08 – 10/11) Exam #1 (on Canvas)
	10/13	Thurs.	△	
Week 9	10/18	Tues.	△	
	10/20	Thurs.	△	
Week 10	10/25	Tues.	O	
	10/27	Thurs.	O	
Week 11	11/1	Tues.	O	Short Paper #2 due 11:59 pm
	11/3	Thurs.	O	
	11/4	Fri.		
Week 12	11/8	Tues.	O	
	11/10	Thurs.	O	
Week 13	11/15	Tues.	O	Group Project Proposal due 11:59 pm
	11/17	Thurs.	O	
	11/18	Fri.		
Week 14	11/22	Tues.	X	Exam #2 (on Canvas) Thanksgiving Break (11/23 – 11/27)
	11/24	Thurs.	X	
Week 15	11/29	Tues.	O	
	12/1	Thurs.	O	
Week 16	12/6	Tues.	O	Group Project Presentations Group Project Presentations
	12/8	Thurs.	O	
Week 17	12/14	Wed.		Final Paper and Peer Evaluation due 11: 59 pm

△ Indicate no class meeting, but worksheets will be assigned.

## Tentative Weekly Schedule and Readings

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All readings are to be done prior to the class on Thursdays of the week.

### Week 1. Course Introduction

8/23 & 8/25

- Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise." In *The Sociological Imagination*, pp. 3–24. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press
- Koenig, Rebeca. 2018. "Your College Major Does Not Define Your Career." *U.S. News*, September 24, 2018 (<https://money.usnews.com/careers/applying-for-a-job/articles/2018-09-24/your-college-major-does-not-define-your-career>).
- Bruni, Frank. 2018. "How to Get the Most Out of College." *New York Times*, August 17, 2018 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/17/opinion/college-students.html>).
- Kristof, Nicholas. 2018. "Is the Business World All About Greed?" *New York Times*, January 24, 2018 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/24/opinion/davos-corporate-social-impact.html>).

### Week 2. What is a Social Problem?

8/30 & 9/1

- Harris, Scott R. 2013. "Studying the Construction of Social Problems." In *Making Sense of Social Problems: New Images, New Issues*, edited by Joel Best and Scott R. Harris, pp. 1–9. London, UK: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Best, Joel. 2013. "Claims." In *Social Problems*, pp. 29–59. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, second edition.
- Best, Joel. 2021b. "Questions and Measurements." In *Is That True? Critical Thinking for Sociologists*, pp. 85–95. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Best, Joel. 2021a. "Evidence and Echo Chambers." In *Is That True? Critical Thinking for Sociologists*, pp. 119–139. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

### Week 3. Rising Inequality: Trends

9/6 & 9/8

- Piketty, Thomas and Emmanuel Saez. 2014. "Income Inequality in the Long Run." *Science* 344:838–843.
- Autor, David H. 2014. "Skills, Education, and the Rise of Earnings Inequality among the "Other 99 Percent"." *Science* 344:843–851.
- Grusky, David B. and Jasmine Hill. 2018. "Poverty and Inequality in the 21st Century." In *Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader*, edited by David B. Grusky and Jasmine Hill, pp. 1–7. New York, NY: Routledge.

### Week 4. Economic Inequality

9/13 & 9/15

- *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Introduction, Chapter 1.
- Raz, Mical. 2018. "What We Get Wrong about the Poverty Gap in Education." *Washington Post*, July 2, 2018 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/07/02/what-we-get-wrong-about-the-poverty-gap-in-education/?noredirect=on>).
- Pinsker, Joe. 2020. "The Pandemic Will Cleave America in Two." *Atlantic*, April 10, 2020 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/04/two-pandemics-us-coronavirus-inequality/609622/>).

**Week 5. Education & Employment**

9/20 & 9/22

- *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Chapters 2–4.
- Hout, Michael. 2009. “Rationing College Opportunity.” *American Prospect*, October 22, 2009 (<https://prospect.org/special-report/rationing-college-opportunity/>).
- Torche, Florencia. 2018. “Does College Still Have Equalizing Effects?” In *Inequality in the 21st Century*, edited by David B. Grusky and Jasmine Hill, pp. 215–222. Routledge.<sup>1</sup>

\*\*\*\*\* Short Paper #1 due \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\* 11:59 pm on Friday (9/23) \*\*\*\*\*

**Week 6. Welfare**

9/27 & 9/29

- *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Chapter 5–Conclusion.
- Ferrara, Peter. 2014. “How Welfare Reform Can End Poverty In America, and Promote Booming Economic Growth.” *Forbes*, August 15, 2014 (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/peterferrara/2014/08/15/how-welfare-reform-can-end-poverty-in-america-and-promote-booming-economic-growth/?sh=47037d9b1532>).

**Week 7. Urbanization, Gentrification & Housing**

10/4 & 10/6

- Desmond, Matthew. 2018. “Eviction and the Reproduction of Urban Poverty.” In *Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader*, edited by David B. Grusky and Jasmine Hill, pp. 161–163. New York, NY: Routledge.<sup>2</sup>
- Barry, Ellen. 2020. “Is There a Such a Thing as a Humane Eviction?” *New York Times*, December 18, 2020 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/18/us/evictions-pandemic.html>).
- Baer, Drake. 2016. “Milwaukee Shows What Segregation Does to American Cities” *NY Magazine*, August 17, 2016 (<https://www.thecut.com/2016/08/milwaukee-shows-what-segregation-does-to-american-cities.html>).

\*\*\*\*\* No in-person class on Thursday (10/6) \*\*\*\*\*

**Week 8. Fall Break & Exam 1**

10/11 & 10/13

- No assigned reading.

\*\*\*\*\* No class/activity on Tuesday (10/11) \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\* Exam #1: Thursday (10/13) \*\*\*\*\*

**Week 9. Neighborhood Effects**

10/18 & 10/20

- Owens, Ann and Robert J. Sampson. 2018. “Community Well-Being and the Great Recession.” In *Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader*, edited by David B. Grusky and Jasmine Hill, pp. 151–154. New York, NY: Routledge

\*\*\*\*\* No in-person class on Tuesday (10/18) \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\* No in-person class on Thursday (10/20) \*\*\*\*\*

**Week 10. Health & Crime**

10/25 & 10/27

- Scott, Janny. 2019. “Life at the Top in America Isn’t Just Better, It’s Longer.” In *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi, pp. 614–621. New York, NY: Routledge, second edition.
- Mullahy, John, Stephanie Robert, and Barbara Wolfe. 2019. “Health, Income, and Inequality.” In *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi, pp. 622–635. New York, NY: Routledge, second edition.
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. “Introduction.” In *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, pp. 1–19. New York, NY: New Press.
- Pager, Devah. 2018. “Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration.” In *Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader*, edited by David B. Grusky and Jasmine Hill, pp. 308–314. New York, NY: Routledge.<sup>3</sup>
- Western, Bruce and Becky Pettit. 2018. “Incarceration and Social Inequality.” In *Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader*, edited by David B. Grusky and Jasmine Hill, pp. 164–171. New York, NY: Routledge.<sup>4</sup>

**Week 11. Gender & Sexuality**

11/1 & 11/3

- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2019. “The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work.” In *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi, pp. 326–331. New York, NY: Routledge, second edition.<sup>5</sup>
- Percheski, Christine. 2018. “Opting Out?” In *Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader*, edited by David B. Grusky and Jasmine Hill, pp. 362–370. New York, NY: Routledge.<sup>6</sup>
- England, Paula, Andrew Levine, and Emma Mishel. 2020. “Progress Toward Gender Equality in the United States Has Slowed or Stalled.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 117:6990–6997.
- Orenstein, Peggy. 2019. “The Miseducation of the American Boy.” *Atlantic*, December 20, 2019 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/01/the-miseducation-of-the-american-boy/603046>).
- Grigoriadis, Vanessa. 2017. “Mattress Girl” and “Introduction: Orientation.” In *Blurred Lines: Rethinking Sex, Power, and Consent on Campus*. New York, NY: Eamon Dolan/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

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Short Paper #2 due  
11:59 pm on Friday (11/4)

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**Week 12. Marriage & Family**

11/8 & 11/10

- Reeves, Richard V. 2014. “How to Save Marriage in America.” *Atlantic*, February 13, 2014 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/02/how-to-save-marriage-in-america/283732/>).
- Carbone, June and Naomi Cahn. 2014. “Class, Marriage Markets, and the New Foundations for Family Life.” In *Marriage Markets: How Inequality is Remaking the American Family*, pp. 13–20. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Bobrow, Emily. 2020. “The Pandemic is Putting Marriage Even Further Out of Reach.” *The Atlantic*, July 27, 2020 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/07/pandemic-marriage-out-of-reach-americans/614506/>).

**Week 13. Media Representations of Social Problems** 11/15 & 11/17

- No assigned reading.

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 Group Project Proposal due  
 11:59 pm on Friday (11/18)  
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**Week 14. Exam 2** 11/22 & 11/24

- No assigned reading.

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 Exam #2: Tuesday (11/22)  
 No class/activity on Thursday (11/24)  
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**Week 15. Immigration & Is Inequality Inevitable?** 11/29 & 12/1

- Klobucista, Claire, Amelia Cheatham, and Diana Roy. 2022. “The U.S. Immigration Debate.” *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 3, 2022 (<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-immigration-debate-0#chapter-title-0-2>).
- Open Society Foundations. 2019. “Why Does U.S. Need Immigration Reform?” May, 2019 (<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/why-does-us-need-immigration-reform>).
- Davis, Kingsley and Wilbert E. Moore. 2019. “Some Principles of Stratification.” In *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi, pp. 16–19. New York, NY: Routledge, second edition.<sup>7</sup>
- Fischer, Claude S., Michael Hout, Martín Sánchez Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and And Kim Voss. 2019. “Inequality by Design.” In *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi, pp. 20–24. New York, NY: Routledge, second edition.<sup>8</sup>
- Krueger, Alan B. 2019. “Inequality, Too Much of a Good Thing.” In *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi, pp. 25–33. New York, NY: Routledge, second edition.<sup>9</sup>

**Week 16. Group Project Preparation & Presentations** 12/6 & 12/8

- No assigned reading.

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 Final Paper and Peer Evaluations due  
 11:59 pm on Wednesday (12/14)  
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## Original Sources

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1. Torche, Florencia. 2011. "Is a College Degree Still the Great Equalizer? Intergenerational Mobility across Levels of Schooling in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 117:763–807.
2. Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York, NY: Broadway Books.
3. Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108:937–975.
4. Western, Bruce and Becky Pettit. 2010. "Incarceration & Social Inequality." *Daedalus* 139:8–19.
5. Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1997. *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.
6. Percheski, Christine. 2008. "Opting Out? Cohort Differences in Professional Women's Employment Rates from 1960 to 2005." *American Sociological Review* 73:497–517.
7. Davis, Kingsley and Wilbert E. Moore. 1945. "Some Principles of Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 10:242–249.
8. Fischer, Claude S., Michael Hout, Martín Sánchez Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss. 1996. *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
9. Krueger, Alan B. 2004. "Inequality, Too Much of a Good Thing." In *Inequality in America: What Role for Human Capital Policies?*, edited by James J. Heckman and Alan B. Krueger, pp. 1–75. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.