

Macalester College
Department of Sociology
SOCI110.01/03

Introduction to Sociology

Fall 2004
MWF 10:50 – 11:50 am, 1:10 – 2:10 pm
Carnegie Hall, Room 208, Room 204

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Synopsis

Describing and explaining social inequalities are important concerns for sociologists. This course provides an overview of the principal concepts and debates that have informed competing perspectives on the nature and origins of inequality.

The class readings, lectures, discussions and assignments examine three, broadly focused topics in the study of social stratification. The first section of the course surveys the pivotal contributions of two classical sociologists -- Karl Marx and Max Weber -- to ongoing debates over historical patterns of social inequality. Marx and Weber observed, and developed opposing interpretations of, emergent social hierarchies accompanying the great transformation of the European political economy between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries: the transition from agrarian, householding economies to industrial-capitalist ones, and the reinvention of political governance stemming from the collapse of feudal polities and the ascendancy of the modern bureaucratic state. The second aim of the course is to explore contemporary revisions of classical theories of inequality growing out of the reconstruction of the political economies of the advanced industrial democracies in the twentieth century: the emergence of corporate capitalism, the corresponding growth of the new occupational hierarchies, and the expansion of the welfare state and other government interventions into the realm of economic production. The third and final movement of the class engages current debates over the dynamics of gender and racial inequality in American society.

Assignments/Grading

No exams or term papers are required of students in this class. You need prepare an essay for 10 of the 12 weeks with assigned readings (all but the 1st, 8th, and 15th weeks of the fall calendar). Of these 10 essays, the 8 highest scores account for 80% of the final grade. A minimum of four essays must be handed in before midterm break. Class attendance and participation account for the remaining 20%.

The weekly memos are due the beginning of class, Mondays.

The memos should not exceed 5 pages.

Memos

* Double space at all times.

* Spell-check.

* The first line of your memo should list the course title, week and your name:

e.g. SOC110/Week2/DeWitt Wallace.

No other information need appear, though you may entitle your memo if you wish.

* Proof read your essay before handing it in. Revise your prose for simplicity, clarity and conciseness.

* Reading and writing skills are fundamental to your performance in this course. One of the principal objectives of the class is to hone your ability to distill the essential arguments of the readings, and further, to communicate them in a succinct, coherent way.

* I encourage you to append written suggestions for class discussion to your memos: matters of clarification concerning the readings that you would like to raise; points of controversy that you hope to explore further; or topics of immediate relevance to the themes of the readings, but not otherwise addressed in the texts.

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1. Introduction

September 8, 10

On Writing

Lanham, Richard. 1984. *Revising Prose*. New York: Macmillan. pp. 1-27.

On Sociology

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 3-24; 143-64.

Political Power and Social Power

Poggi, Gianfranco. 1990. *The State: Its Nature, Development and Prospects*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 3-18.

Part I. The Great Transformation: The Rise of Capitalism, Industrialism, and the Modern State

Week 2. Social Power in Pre-Industrial Societies

September 13, 15, 17

The Primacy of Political Power in Agrarian Societies

Lenski, Gerhard. 1966. *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*. New York: McGraw-Hill. pp. 189-296.

European Feudalism

Poggi, Gianfranco. 1978. *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. pp. 16-35.

Answer the first question and one of the following two questions.

1. Poggi recognizes three distinct and (potentially) independent sources of social power. The capacity of some people to dominate others has multiple origins: political; economic and ideological. In Lenski's writings he observes that political power, economic power and ideological power are not very much differentiated from each other in agrarian societies. They fuse in the monarchy and the landed aristocracy. Moreover, political power subsumes and subordinates economic and ideological power, and not vice versa. Identify and synthesize the arguments and evidence in *Power and Privilege* that substantiate this thesis.

2. Lenski shows that political power did not wholly dominate the economic and ideological realms of agrarian societies. To demonstrate this point, compare and contrast relations between the peasants and the landed aristocracy to the relations between the urban classes (merchants and guilds) and the landed aristocracy. How does the former represent an amalgamation of the means of coercion with economic domination? How does the latter demonstrate limits to the warrior caste's monopoly over economic resources?

And further, briefly describe the apparently conflicted position of the Roman Catholic Church in European feudal society. How was the Church both subject to political power and supportive of it, but at the same time, attempt to limit the exploitative power of the monarch and the landed aristocracy?

3. European feudalism constituted one manifestation of agrarian rule. The extreme fragmentation of political power among the landed aristocracy distinguished European feudalism from other agrarian societies. What was responsible, according to Poggi in his writing on feudalism, for the pronounced anarchic tendencies of European feudalism?

Week 3. From Feudalism to Liberalism

September 20, 22, 24

The Investiture Conflict and the Beginnings of the Modern European State

Strayer, Joseph. 1970. *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp. 12-56.

Standestaat, and Absolutism

Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, pp. 36-85.

War-Making and the Rise of the Absolutist State

Tilly, Charles. 1990. *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1992*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. pp. 67-91.

The Liberal-Constitutional State

Poggi, *The State*. pp. 52-68.

Carnoy, Martin. 1984. *The State and Political Theory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp. 10-23.

A Comparative Interpretation of the Rise of the Capitalist-State in Europe

Hall, John and G. John Ikenberry. 1989. *The State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. pp. 22-42.

Answer any three questions.

1. Strayer offers an interpretation of the origins of the modern state emphasizing the growing importance of the separation of church and state in Europe, beginning with the Investiture Conflict. In his estimation the differentiation of political power from other forms of social power begins with the administration of justice and the securing of domestic order and peace. Briefly recapitulate Strayer's central arguments about how this historical process unfolded. Pay attention to how the separation of church and state changed the legitimating ideology of monarchy. Why was the administration of justice a likely starting point of the origins of the state insofar as it was consistent with "the proprietary theory of the state", as described in Lenski?

Preface to questions 2-5:

The rise of the modern state attended the collapse of the landed aristocracy. The aristocracy lost its political role as European monarchs progressively established a monopoly over the means of violence. Monarchs gathered unto themselves the exclusive prerogatives of political power: the undivided capacity to wage war; to collect taxes; and to establish courts and other legal instruments to maintain domestic order. The political disenfranchisement of the aristocracy paralleled their economic demise. The economic dominance of the nobles rested upon their power to extract rents from peasants working the land within their fiefs. As lands were the principal source of wealth in the feudal age, landlordism underpinned the political power of the nobility. With the commercialization and urbanization of the European

economy, the bourgeoisie eclipsed the aristocracy as the dominant economic force. The rise of capitalism and of the modern state occurred simultaneously.

2. Poggi describes the growing importance of towns in the feudal polity and in the polity of estates. With the growing economic strength of capitalist entrepreneurs within the urban economy, the bourgeoisie began to redefine its social identity from that of an *estate* to that of a *class* and then sought to undermine the polity of estates and to endorse the growth of the absolutist state. Why did the towns at first seek a corporate form of self-government within the feudal polity? What distinguishes a *class* from an *estate* in Poggi's estimation? Why did the capitalist class lose its interests in directly possessing powers of self-government in favor of vesting political rule in a unitary state that stood "apart and above" class in a distinctive "public sphere."

3. The bourgeoisie had vested interests in expanding the sovereignty of absolutist monarchs. But monarchs also had a reciprocal interest in expanding trade and commerce according to Charles Tilly. The financing of war prompted a close alliance between monarchs and the bourgeoisie. What changes in military technology rendered the landed aristocracy relatively useless to the crown in prosecuting wars? And why did these changes increase the dependence of monarchs on capitalists, and as such, witness absolutist states encourage to the greatest extent the growth of monetarized economies? How did war making within the context of commercial economies progressively expand and reform the administrative apparatus of newly emerging states?

4. The development of the modern state in England diverged from the pattern evident in continental Europe. What was different about the English experience of state building? And how did it culminate in liberal-constitutionalism, and subsequently, liberal democracy? The political thought of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau mirror the evolution of the modern state from absolutism, to constitutional liberalism, to liberal democracy. Recapitulate briefly how these political theorists arrived at different interpretations of the legitimacy of state power. (Or, to put it another way, what does each political theorist say the state should and must do to preserve the good society?) How do these different accounts of state power correspond to the evolutionary stages mentioned above?

5. Peter Hall and John Ikenberry attempt to identify the unique causes of European state development through comparison with other agrarian societies. In their estimation, what was distinctive about the political and cultural contexts of Europe that allowed for the rise of

capitalism and the modern state there as compared to Chinese, Indian and Islamic civilizations?

Week 4. The Age of Ideology

September 27, 29, October 1

Ideology

Dickerson, Mark O. and Thomas Flanagan. 1982. *An Introduction to Government and Politics: A Conceptual Approach*. New York: Methuen. pp. 56-60.

Liberalism and Conservatism

Heywood, Andrew. 1992. *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*. New York: St. Martin's Press. pp. 15-68.

The New Right

Barbara Ehrenreich. 1987. "The New Right Attack on Social Welfare." Pp. 161-95 in *The Mean Season: The Attack on the Welfare State*. New York: Pantheon Books.

In the United States, the present-day ideology of the Republican Party is often described as an amalgam of beliefs selectively drawn from both classical liberalism and conservatism. Explain. Draw upon Barbara Ehrenreich's observations about the New Right to substantiate your answer. In her opinion, why is this combination of economic laissez-faire and social conservatism inherently contradictory? In your opinion, do think the ideological synthesis of the new right can sustain itself in the long run?

Part II. The Sociology of Karl Marx

Week 5. Alienation and Expropriation

October 4, 6, 8

Class Conflict

Marx, Karl. [1848] 1998. "The Manifesto of the Communist Party." Pp. 167-79 in *Social and Political Theory: Classical Readings*. Edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Charles Stephen. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Alienation

Tucker, Robert C. (ed.). 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. pp. 70-93.

Grabb, Edward G. 1997. *Theories of Social Inequality: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Toronto: Harcourt-Brace. pp. 15-32.

The Theory of Surplus Value

Burawoy, Michael. 1977. *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 13-30.

Answer the following questions.

Marx identified two principal sources of working-class deprivation under the capitalist mode of production: alienation and exploitation. What is alienation? Why does capitalism uniquely engender this sense of dissatisfaction with labor among workers? Compare briefly feudal and capitalist forms of appropriation of surplus labor. Why does capitalist exploitation seem obscured or invisible to the working classes?

Week 6. Political and Economic Inequality in the 20th Century

October 11,13, 15

Economic Inequality in America

Gilbert, Dennis and Joseph A. Kahl. 1993. *The American Class Structure: A New Synthesis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. pp. 85-109.

Capitalism, Democracy and Socialism

Lindblom, Charles. 1977. *Politics and Markets*. New York: Basic Books. pp. 119-33; 161-221.

Block, Fred. 1977. "The Ruling Class Does Not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State." *Socialist Review* 33 (May-June) 6-27.

Mann, Michael. 1970. "The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy." *American Sociological Review* 35 (June) 3: 423-39.

Parkin, Frank. 1978. *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*. New York: Columbia University Press. pp. 176-92.

Answer the first question and any one other question.

1. Lindblom attempts to explain why democracy (polyarchy as he calls it) is synonymous with capitalism. Why do governments accord a privileged position to business that takes precedence over popular control of political leadership? Lindblom sees elections as a rival form of control over government that may potentially conflict with business influence. As such, corporations participate in political campaigns to preempt any serious challenge to their interests. Why do corporations have disproportionate influence over political parties and electoral campaigns? Also, how do corporations directly shape citizens' voting preferences?

2. Fred Block presents a neo-Marxist interpretation of the relationship between political power and economic power in capitalist democracies. In his formulation, capitalism does not engender a politically conscious ruling class that directly orchestrates the activities of government. Rather, the survival of capitalism requires governments that possess a measure of independence from the wishes of business. What structural mechanisms, as Block calls them, may give state managers autonomy from the capitalist class? Why is this autonomy only relative, and not absolute? Or in other words, why will government not pursue policies that run counter to the interests of business in the long run?

3. Political scientists often attribute the endurance of liberal democracies to a value consensus among classes on the desirability of capitalism and democracy. Michael Mann calls into question the existence of such a consensual political culture. How do the middle classes and working classes differ in their political beliefs? Why do the deviant values of the working class not become articulated in radical, coherent political ideologies that challenge the status quo?

4. Frank Parkin compares socialism with social democracy. Why have socialist regimes not made parliamentary democracy the basis of political governance? In your answer, consider how Marxist-Leninist interpretations of the origins and purposes of parliaments have informed socialist revolutionaries' disdain for representative institutions. Consider also the global political context within which socialist regimes hoped to survive. Social democracies distinguish themselves from liberal democracies in that labor parties have formed the

government in their parliaments during the post-war era. Why have social democracies not abolished capitalism in favor of socializing the means of production as Marxist theory might otherwise suggest?

Part III. The Sociology of Max Weber

Week 7. Rationality and the Rise of the West

October 18, 20, 22

Formal and Substantive Rationality

Brubaker, Rogers. 1984. *The Limits of Rationality: An Essay on the Social and Moral Thought of Max Weber*. London: Allen & Unwin. pp. 8-10; 30-45.

Rational Capitalism

Weber, Max. [1930] 1998. "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism." Pp. 327-32 in *Seeing Ourselves*. Edited by John J. Macionis and Nijole V. Benokraitis. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Weber, Max. [1930] 1998. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Los Angeles: Roxbury. pp. 95-128.

Parkin, Frank. 1982. *Max Weber*. London: Tavistock. pp. 40-70.

Weber, Max. 1946. "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism." Pp. 302-33 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.

Briefly recapitulate Weber's *strong* and *weak* theses about the importance of Protestantism to the rise of modern capitalism as Frank Parkin describes them. In your answer, draw a distinction between rational capitalism and other historical manifestations of capitalism as Weber understood them. Why is the notion of an 'elective affinity' between Protestantism and modern capitalism questionable? In your opinion, did Protestant beliefs give ideological legitimacy to capitalism? In his essay on the Protestant sects in America, Weber points to another dimension of the relationship between church membership and the expansion of

trade and commerce that does not emphasize the importance of doctrine per se, but the importance of social trust. Explain.

Week 8. Midterm week

October 25, 27

No readings.

MIDTERM BREAK (October 28-31)

Week 9. Bureaucracy and Ration-Legal Domination

November 1, 3, 5

Weber, Max. [1922] 1998. "Bureaucracy." Pp. 214-32 in *Social and Political Theory: Classical Readings*. Edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Charles Stephen. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Perrow, Charles. 1982. *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*. New York: Random House. pp. 1-57.

Weber saw bureaucracy as extremely *efficient* relative to other types of administration and domination that preceded it in human history. One of the principal sources of bureaucratic efficiency that Weber identified was the recruitment of individuals into offices on the basis of universalistic criteria, namely, competence: the possession of technical skills relevant to organizational tasks. Why does recruitment and promotion in bureaucracies never fully achieve this ideal? Another key source of bureaucratic efficiency follows the separation of extra-organizational, or private, interests of officeholders from organizational purposes. Again, why is this ideal never fully achieved? Bureaucracies are rule-bound organizations. While rules are thought to limit individual freedom and discretion, how is it that the opposite may also be true?

Week 10. Social Closure

November 8, 10, 12

Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory*. pp. 44-116.

Answer all the questions.

1. Compare and contrast the two forms of exclusion identified by Parkin. What is the common political attribute of property and credentialism that unites these two forms of exclusionary closure? What distinguishes them from one and the other? Why do the social and economic boundaries between those who practice exclusion through property and credentialism tend to blur in modern societies? How are these forms of exclusion legitimated and what implication does this have for these dominant groups in their attempt to pass on their privileged status to their descendants?
2. Parkin identifies usurpation with two distinctive groups: organized labor, on the one hand; and ethnic, racial and gender groups, on the other. Why does usurpation generally stand in an 'uncomfortable relationship to the legal order?' How do the ends and means of usurpation nonetheless differ between unions and disadvantaged ethnic, racial and gender groups?
3. Members of subordinate groups may simultaneously resort to the practice of usurpation *and* exclusion. This is frequently true of industrial unionism. Who are the targets of the exclusionary strategies of organized labor? In particular, what common political attribute do women and ethnic and racial minorities share that makes them objects of exclusion? Dual closure is not only evident among industrial workers. The semi-professions that make up the larger share of white-collar work also resort to usurpation and exclusion. What distinguishes the semi-professions (heteronomous) from the free professions (autonomous) that causes the former to resort to trade unionism?

Week 11. Education and Inequality

November 15, 17, 19

Education, Family and Occupational Achievement

Collins, Randall. 1971. "Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 36: 1002-1019.

Gilbert and Kahl, *The American Class Structure*, pp. 161-187.

Education and Inequality

Jencks, Christopher et al. 1994. "Inequality: An Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America." Pp. 329-335 in *Social Stratification: Class, Race and Gender in Sociological Perspective*. Edited by David B. Grusky. Boulder: Westview Press.

Schooling and Minorities

Ogbu, John. 1991. "Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities in Comparative Perspective." Pp. 3-33 in *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*. New York: Garland Publishing.

Ogbu, John U. and Signithia Fordham. 1986. "Black Students' School Success: Coping with the Burdens of 'Acting White'." *The Urban Review* 18 (3): 176-206.

Answer the first question and any one of the remaining two.

1. Collins summarizes the differences between functionalist and conflict perspectives on the role of education in generating occupational inequality. What is the essential contribution of education to occupational success in these two disparate accounts of the relationship between schooling and careers? What is it about American society that so strikingly inflates the importance of educational credentials in the allocation of jobs?

2. Gilbert and Kahl provide an overview of the central, organizing controversies surrounding social origins, educational achievement, intelligence and luck on the one hand, and status attainment and income on the other hand. Drawing upon the evidence presented in their discussion, construct your own argument about the relative importance of each of these aforementioned elements in determining individuals' occupational achievement and income. Christopher Jencks et al. claim that the distribution of income inequality in the US cannot

be justified by the distribution of cognitive skills and educational achievements among the population. Why is this so in their estimation? What changes do they recommend in the income distribution to make it commensurate with the true, underlying distribution of effort and skill among the general population? Gilbert and Kahl also comment upon trends in the educational achievement among women and minorities. Are the differences in educational opportunity and returns to educational investments narrowing or widening between women and minorities and men and whites?

3. Ogbu and Fordham contrast the educational experiences of involuntary and voluntary minorities. How and why do these two groups differ in their orientation to schooling? Does your own high school experience confirm or disconfirm Ogbu's arguments? Are oppositional cultural frames of reference exclusive to involuntary minorities in your estimation? Or, do they also become apparent among specific social classes or other status groups in secondary school?

Week 12. Gender and Inequality

November 22, 24

Gender Inequality and the Family

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 1983. *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press. pp.1-13; 117-143; 169-182.

Hewlett, Sylvia Ann. 1986. *A Lesser Life: The Myth of Women's Liberation in America*. pp. 139-148.

Hochschild, Arlie. 1989. *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. New York: Avon Books. pp. 1-13.

Weitzman, Lenore J. 1985. *The Divorce Revolution: The Unexpected Social and Economic Consequences for Women and Children*. New York: The Free Press. pp. 323-356.

Gender Inequality in the Workplace

Reskin, Barbara F. and Patricia A. Roos (eds.). 1990. *Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupations*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. pp. 3-21; 301-320.

Answer all the questions on the following page:

1. What is the family wage system and how did it guarantee that women would need men more than men would need women? How have the family wage system and notions of masculinity changed in recent times?
2. Why does Sylvia Ann Hewlett view European feminism and social policy as more beneficial to women than that of America?
3. What is the 'stalled revolution', as Arlie Hochschild terms it, surrounding the entrance of wives and mothers into the workplace? How is the stalled revolution apparent in the realm of household labor?
4. Lenore Weitzman explores the economic consequences of divorce. How do divorce settlements change the incomes of ex-wives and ex-husbands? Divorce is a legal transaction, falling under the jurisdiction of judges. How do the principles and enforcement of divorce contracts favor men over women?
5. What is the most important factor that explains women's inroads into male occupations? If Reskin and Roos are correct in their assessment of how gender queues have emerged historically, is there reason to believe that women will ever gain parity with men in terms of occupational status and earnings?

THANKSGIVING BREAK (November 25 - 28)

Week 13. Gender and Inequality (cont.)

November 29, December 1, 3

Hochschild, Arlie. 1997. *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

For the purpose of this week's essay, concentrate on parts I and III of the Hochschild book.

Answer the following questions:

1. Recall Marx's concept of alienation -- the sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness and social isolation that workers experience on the job for having to relinquish control over the

labor process. How have American companies attempted to reconstruct their operations to make the working lives of employees less alienating? Do you gather that these corporate initiatives are sincere from your reading of Hochschild's description of Total Quality programs and family-friendly policies at Amerigo? In your answer consider the writings of two authors visited earlier in the course -- Charles Perrow and Randall Collins. Perrow and Collins both observed that struggles for control of the upper echelons of large-scale bureaucracies depends heavily on recruiting, retaining and promoting employees on the basis of loyalty and normative conformity to organizational culture. How does Total Quality represent an attempt to extend the principle of normative control to the bottom tiers of organizational hierarchies? Notwithstanding companies' ostensible commitment to family time, why don't most men and women take advantage of policies devoted to balancing work and family?

2. In your estimation, does the advent of "Taylorized" family lives represent a fundamental debasement of parenthood? What do you suspect are the long-term implications for American society of assigning primary responsibilities for raising children to special-purpose institutions such as child-care centers and public schools for American society?

3. Assume that the President of the United States has appointed to you to a special commission to explore the dynamics of work and family as the nation enters into the 21st century and to make recommendations for public policies to preserve the social bonds between parents and children. What recommendations would you make?

Week 14. Racial Inequality in the US

December 6, 8, 10

Racial Inequality and the 'Underclass' Debate

Lewis, Oscar. "The Culture of Poverty." pp. 176-76.

Steinberg, Stephen. 1989. *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America*.

Boston: Beacon Press. pp. 106-127.

Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 20-62.

Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth*. pp. 263-302.

Jencks, Christopher. 1992. *Rethinking Social Policy: Race, Poverty and the Underclass*.

New York: Harper Collins. pp. 120-142.

Answer all the questions.

1. Oscar Lewis's examines four aspects of the culture of poverty: attitudes toward mainstream society; community organization; family patterns; and the social-psychological traits of individuals immersed in the culture of poverty. Briefly recapitulate them.
2. According to Stephen Steinberg, conservatives have selectively appropriated the concept of the 'culture of poverty' to legitimate their views on poverty and social policy. Explain. Steinberg provides an overview of the argument that African Americans are themselves to blame for the extent of their poverty. This view is based on comparing the economic fortunes of immigrants thought to have overcome discrimination (Jews, Asians and West Indians) with those of native blacks. Why are these comparisons misleading, and as such, do not support cultural explanations of poverty?
3. William Julius Wilson's study of the Chicago underclass draws attention to the opportunity structure for employment in inner cities as well as the social transformation of inner-city neighborhoods to account for the "tangled pathology" of urban poverty. How have basic economic changes and "concentration effects" -- as Wilson calls them -- intensified the social isolation of the inner-city poor?
4. What points of agreement and disagreement do you observe between Christopher Jencks' interpretation of the causes of urban poverty and William Julius Wilson's?

Week 15.

December 13, 15

No readings.