In recent years, issues of poverty and inequality have become increasingly common topics of public debate, as academics, journalists, and politicians attempt to come to terms with growing income inequality, with the increasing salience and visibility of inter-country differences in wealth and income, and with the persistence of extreme forms of racial, ethnic, and gender stratification. The purpose of this course is to study these various forms of inequality more closely and to introduce students to ongoing social scientific debates about their sources and consequences as well as the types of public policy that might appropriately be pursued to reduce (or increase) inequality. These topics will be addressed through the vehicle of public debate and discussion among world renowned scholars.

**Format:** For each of the four topical modules, we will spend several sessions completing relevant background readings and otherwise preparing for the debate and discussion. We will begin by discussing the larger intellectual context within which the debate is located and then turn to the more specific issues at stake. The four debates will occur during regular class sessions and will be open not just to class members but to the wider Stanford community.

**Assignments:** The course grade will be based in part on reports for each of the four debates. For each debate, students should (a) outline the key issues at stake, (b) rehearse the competing positions that might be staked out with respect to those issues, (c) discuss the types of empirical evidence that are relevant in choosing from among competing positions, and (d) conclude by laying out an argument for a particular position. In assembling these papers, students should draw as necessary on the materials provided in the lectures, debates, and required readings. The papers should be no longer than 5 pages (double-spaced) and are due one week after the day on which the debate is held.

**Papers:** In addition to the four debate-based writing assignments, students should complete a 15-page (double-spaced) research paper. This paper should be based on any of the four debate topics covered in class or on some other controversy of the student’s choosing (with the only constraint being that it must pertain to issues of poverty or inequality). This paper should take on the same structure as the usual 5-page debate write-up, but a broader review of the relevant research literature should now be completed.

**Sociology 241 Requirements:** For those taking Sociology 241 (instead of Sociology 141), a 20-page (double-spaced) research paper is expected rather than a 15-page paper, but in all other respects the requirements are the same.

**Grades:** Grades will be based on the four 5-page writing assignments (15% each) and the research paper (40%). The research paper is due on Tuesday, June 13 and should be submitted to either of the TAs.

**Readings:** All readings can be found on CourseWork.
**Assignment due dates:** The following due dates should be borne in mind:

Thursday, April 20: Income inequality paper
Tuesday, May 9: Racial and ethnic inequality paper
Tuesday, May 23: Politics and inequality paper
Tuesday, June 6: Gender inequality paper
Tuesday, June 13: Final research paper

**Schedule**

A. Introduction

**Tuesday, April 4:** Introductory comments

B. Income inequality

**Thursday, April 6:** Lecture
**Tuesday, April 11:** Lecture
**Thursday, April 13:** Debate and discussion

“Income Inequality: Where are We Going and What is to be Done?”

*Robert Frank*, Henrietta Johnson Louis Professor of Management and Professor of Economics, Cornell University

*Bruce Western*, Professor of Sociology, Princeton University

**Tuesday, April 18:** Debriefing on debate

**Overview readings**


**Debate readings**


**Due date for income inequality paper:** **Thursday, April 20**
C. Racial and ethnic inequality

Thursday, April 20: Lecture
Tuesday, April 25: Lecture
Thursday, April 27: Lecture
Tuesday, May 2: Debate and discussion
“Racial and Ethnic Inequality: Where are We Going and What is to be Done?”
Mary C. Waters, Professor of Sociology, Harvard University
Howard Winant, Professor of Sociology, University of California – Santa Barbara
Thursday, May 4: Debriefing on debate

Overview Readings


Debate Readings


Due date for racial and ethnic inequality paper: Tuesday, May 9
D. Politics and inequality

Tuesday, May 9: Lecture
Thursday, May 11: Lecture
Tuesday, May 16: Debate and discussion
    “Politics and Inequality: Where Are We Going and What is to be Done?”
    John Ferejohn, Caroline S.G. Munro Professor of Political Science and Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University
    Jeff Manza, Professor of Sociology, Northwestern University
Thursday, May 18: Debriefing on debate

Overview Readings


Debate Readings


Additional readings to be announced

Due date for politics and inequality paper: Tuesday, May 23
E. Gender inequality

Tuesday, May 23: Lecture
Thursday, May 25: Lecture
Tuesday, May 30: Debate and discussion
“Gender Inequality: Where Are We Going and What is to be Done?”
Trond Petersen, Professor of Sociology, University of California-Berkeley
Cecilia Ridgeway, Lucie Stern Professor in the Social Sciences, Stanford University
Thursday, June 1: Debriefing on debate
Tuesday, June 6: Open discussion

Overview Readings


Debate Readings


Due date for gender inequality paper: Tuesday, June 6