Overview

The topic of social inequality has recently garnered much public interest and penetrated political debate. Of course, as a subject of scientific inquiry, social inequality has a much longer and rich history in sociology and, in one way or another, continues to underlie most sociological inquiry. This course provides a broad approach to this core topic by examining theories and empirical contributions in the main areas of social stratification. We will discuss sociological approaches to understanding the shape, causes, and consequences of inequality in class, status, income, wealth, education, race, and gender. The course includes a focus on the dynamics of inequality, assessing its maintenance across time and generations. Furthermore, we will investigate the role of institutional contexts and policies in shaping socio-economic inequalities.
Course Requirements

Class Participation
This seminar requires your active participation in class, which relies heavily on you completing all required readings for each week and coming to class prepared to discuss them. Each week features foundational readings that will help shape your sociological thinking even where you may not yet see an immediate connection to a specific research idea or project that you are working on. During class, only active engagement with each participant’s questions or insights will provide the type of intellectual community that benefits everyone. Active engagement includes the ability to listen carefully to others’ questions and insights – otherwise, we are just talking at each other.

Weekly Reading Interrogations
To help you fully engage with the readings you will write weekly memos. These memos are not supposed to be summaries of the readings but critical interrogations: While you may need to briefly review some of the arguments made in the readings, you should spend most of your energy on an active conversation with them, i.e. discuss their particular strengths or potential weaknesses, ways to expand them, how they relate to other required readings of that week or even other topics, or simply what surprised you about them and why. In addition, I especially encourage you to raise “simple” clarification questions – often, they turn out to be not simple at all but instead point towards parts of an argument that raise additional issues. These memos will form an integral part of our classroom discussions. The length of each memo should be about 2-4 paragraphs (no strict word limit/requirement, but somewhere around 500 words may be a good initial target). It is important that you submit your memo every Wednesday by 6pm via the Canvas “Discussions” function. I also strongly encourage you to review others’ memos before class, which you will be able to access once you have submitted yours.

Class Presentation
Each week includes a list of supplementary readings. As the name suggests, these readings are not required but you are welcome to make use of them for any week that is of particular interest to you. However, for a week of your choice, you will prepare a classroom presentation based on those supplementary readings. The presentation should be around ten minutes long and provide a broad overview of the lines of arguments and findings provided in the supplementary readings and how
they relate to that week’s required readings. The presentation can be low-tech (no presentation slides needed) and I encourage you to check in with me before you start reading (some of the readings are more supplementary than others) and as you prepare your presentation if questions arise.

**Final Writing Assignment**

The final writing assignment is designed to be as flexible as possible to be as useful as possible to you. Though listed under “course requirements”, you should think of it as an opportunity to move your own project ideas forward and, ideally, begin or expand a paper that can eventually be published. You should put particular focus on the development of a cohesive argument and framing, locating your project within the broader stratification literature covered in this course. That does not mean that you need to spend the majority of this project on theoretical motivation and literature review; in fact, some of the most interesting and important analytic questions sometimes require the least motivation and conceptual set-up. You should be able to explain your main argument/question, why it is important, and why it has not been answered so far in 2 minutes, in other words, the length of an extended abstract. In fact, that is exactly what I would like to receive from you mid-way through the seminar: an extended abstract (1-2 double-spaced pages) of your final writing assignment and a 2-minute summary in person to start a one-on-one conversation about the project during my office hours. Please submit your **extended abstract by October 24** and meet with me to **discuss it by November 04**. The **final writing assignment is due December 16**. It should be between 15-25 pages long (double-spaced) and can take the form of a paper draft, thesis proposal, fellowship or grant application, or similar.

**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Reading Interrogations</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Writing Assignment</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class / Requirement</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09/08</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/15</td>
<td>Social Class and Occupations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/22</td>
<td>Income and Wealth</td>
<td>Nora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/29</td>
<td>The Top of the Distribution</td>
<td>Brittany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/06</td>
<td>The Bottom of the Distribution</td>
<td>Zach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/13</td>
<td>Race, Ethnicity, and Gender</td>
<td>Stephanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/24</td>
<td><strong>Extended abstract for final project</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20</td>
<td>Intragenerational Dynamics</td>
<td>Luis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/27</td>
<td>Intergenerational Dynamics</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/03</td>
<td>Demographic Processes</td>
<td>Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/04</td>
<td><strong>Meeting about final project</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10</td>
<td>Attitudes and Social-Psychological Processes</td>
<td>Dylan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/17</td>
<td>Neighborhood Contexts</td>
<td>Cathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/24</td>
<td><strong>Thanksgiving Break - No Class</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/01</td>
<td>Historical and Institutional Contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/08</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Hailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16</td>
<td><strong>Final Writing Assignment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading Assignments

Readings – in many cases page selections of articles and books – are available as pdf files through Canvas. Supplementary readings are marked with ◊. A few books that we will read in their entirety are recommended for purchase, namely


Furthermore, though not used in this course, the following reader is a very useful source for additional readings


Concepts of Inequality

(1) Sept 8: Class Overview and Introduction to Social Stratification

* No required readings

  ◊ Davis, Kingsley, and Wilbert E. Moore. 1945. Some Principles of Stratification

  ◊ Tumin, Melvin M. 1953. Some Principles of Stratification. A Critical Analysis

  ◊ Swift, Adam. 2006. Political Philosophy

(2) Sept 15: Social Class and Occupations

* Wright, Erik O. 1997. Class Counts

* Sørensen, Aage B. 2000. Toward a Sounder Basis for Class Analysis


* Chan, Tak Wing, and John H. Goldthorpe. 2007. Class and Status

(3) Sept 22: Income and Wealth

- Kenworthy, Lane. 2007. Inequality and Sociology
- Piketty, Thomas and Emmanuel Saez. 2003. Income Inequality in the United States
- Mouw, Ted, and Arne L. Kalleberg. 2010. Occupations and the Structure of Wage Inequality in the United States
- Western, Bruce and Jake Rosenfeld. 2011. Unions, Norms, and the Rise in U.S. Wage Inequality
- Piketty, Thomas. 2014. Capital in the Twenty-First Century
  - Kenworthy, Lane, and Jonas Pontusson. 2005. Rising Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution in Affluent Countries
  - Gornick, Janet G. and Markus Jäntti. 2014. Income Inequality
  - Killewald, Alexandra, Fabian T. Pfeffer, and Jared Schachner: Wealth Inequality and Accumulation

(4) Sept 29: The top of the distribution

- Mills, C. Wright. 1956. The Power Elite
- Keister, Lisa A. 2014. The One Percent
- Alvaredo, Facundo, Anthony B Atkinson, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez. 2013. The Top 1 Percent in International and Historical Perspective
* Mankiw, N. Gregory. 2013. Defending the One Percent
  ◦ Frank, Robert H. and Philip J. Cook. 1996. The Winner-Take-All Society
  ◦ Ohlsson, Henry, Jesper Roine, and Daniel Waldenström. 2008. Long-Run Changes in the Concentration of Wealth
  ◦ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1989. From Ruling Class to Field of Power
  ◦ Khan, Shamus R. 2012. The Sociology of Elites

(5) Oct 6: The bottom of the distribution
* Smeeding, Timothy. 2016. Poverty Measurement
* Desmond, Matthew. 2016. Evicted
  ◦ Edin, Kathryn J. and Luke H. Shaefer. 2016. $2.00 a Day

(6) Oct 13: Race, Ethnicity, Gender
* Tilly, Charles. 1999. Durable Inequality
* Oliver, Melvin L. and Thomas M. Shapiro. 2006. Black Wealth, White Wealth
* Grusky, David and Katherine Weisshaar. 2014. A Stalling Out? (Stratification Reader)
  ◦ Pager, Devah. 2003. The Mark of a Criminal Record
Pattillo, Mary. 2016. Black Picket Fences
Wilson, William Julius. 2011. The Declining Significance of Race: Revisited & Revised
Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2014. The Case for Reparations
Collins, Patricia Hill. 2015. Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas
Pascoe, C.J. 2011. Dude You Are a Fag

Dynamics of Inequality

(7) Oct 20: Intrigenerational Dynamics

* Blau, Peter M. and Otis D. Duncan. 1967. The American Occupational Structure
* Piore, Michael. 1970. The Dual Labor Market
* Baron, James N. and William T. Bielby. 1980. Bringing the Firm Back In
* Kalleberg, Arne L. 2012. Precarious Work, Insecure Workers
* Western, Bruce, Deirdre Bloome, Benjamin Sosnaud, and Laura Tach. 2012. Economic Insecurity and Social Stratification
  * Braverman, Harry. 1974. Labor and Monopoly Capital
  * Fisher, Jonathan et al. 2016. Inequality and Mobility Using Income, Consumption, and Wealth for the Same Individuals
  * Gabler, Neal. 2016. The Secret Shame of Middle-Class Americans
(8) Oct 27: Intergenerational Dynamics

* Sorokin, Pitrim. 1959. Social and Cultural Mobility
* Torche, Florencia. 2015. Analyses of Intergenerational Mobility
* Hout, Michael. 2015. A Summary of What We Know About Social Mobility
* Shavit, Yossi and Hans-Peter Blossfeld. 1993. Persistent Inequality
* Torche, Florencia. 2011. Is a College Degree Still the Great Equalizer?
* Swift, Adam. 2004. Would Perfect Mobility Be Perfect?
  ◦ Chetty, Raj, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, and Emmanuel Saez. 2014. Where Is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States
  ◦ Bloome, Deirdre. 2015. Income Inequality and Intergenerational Income Mobility in the United States
  ◦ Pfeffer, Fabian T., and Florian R. Hertel. 2015. How Has Educational Expansion Shaped Social Mobility Trends in the United States?
  ◦ Breen, Richard, Carina Mood, and Jan Jonsson. 2016. How Much Scope for a Mobility Paradox?
  ◦ Jencks, Christopher, and Laura Tach. 2006. Would Equal Opportunity Mean More Mobility?

(9) Nov 3: Demographic Processes

* Blau, Peter M. and Otis D. Duncan. 1967. The American Occupational Structure
* Mare, Robert D. and Vida Maralani. 2006. The Intergenerational Effects of Changes in Women’s Educational Attainments
* Schwartz, Christine R. 2010. Trends and Variation in Assortative Mating: Causes and Consequences
* Western, Bruce, Deirdre Bloome, and Christine Percheski. 2008. Inequality among American Families with Children 1975 to 2005
∗ Cherlin, Andrew J., David C. Ribar, and Suzumi Yasutake. 2016. Nonmarital First Births, Marriage, and Income Inequality

∗ Mare, Robert D. 2014. Multigenerational Aspects of Social Stratification

∗ Seltzer, Judy. 2016. Family Change and Changing Family Demography

○ Schwartz, Christine R. 2010. Earnings Inequality and the Changing Association between Spouses’ Earnings

○ Bloome, Deirdre. 2014. Racial Inequality Trends and the Intergenerational Persistence of Income and Family Structure


(10) Nov 10: Attitudes and Social-Psychological Processes

∗ Durkheim, Emile. 1893. The Division of Labor in Society


∗ McCall, Leslie. 2013. The Undeserving Rich

∗ Brady, David, and Amie Bostic. 2015. Paradoxes of Social Policy Welfare Transfers, Relative Poverty, and Redistribution Preferences

∗ Page, Benjamin I., Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright. 2013. Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans

∗ Fiske, Susan T. 2012. Envy Up, Scorn Down

○ McCall, Leslie and Lane Kenworthy. 2009. Americans’ Social Policy Preferences in the Era of Rising Inequality

○ Putnam, Robert D. 2007. E Pluribus Unum

○ Carter, Sue, James Harris, and Stephen W. Porges. 2009. Neural and Evolutionary Perspectives on Empathy

○ Haushofer, J., and E. Fehr. 2014. On the Psychology of Poverty

○ Hanson, Jamie and Daniel A. Hackman. 2012. Cognitive Neuroscience and Disparities in Socio-Economic Status
Contexts of Inequality

(11) Nov 17: Neighborhood Contexts

* Sampson, Robert J. 2013. Great American City
* Sharkey, Patrick. 2013. Stuck in Place
* Podcasts: The Problem We All Live With, Part 1 & Part 2
  ◦ Wilson, William J. 1987. The Truly Disadvantaged
  ◦ Owens, Ann. 2016. Inequality in Children’s Contexts

Nov 24: Thanksgiving Break

(12) Dec 1: Institutional Contexts

* Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1990. The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism
* Kenworthy, Lane. 2004. Egalitarian Capitalism
* Brady, David, Agnes Blome, and Hanna Kleider. 2016. How Politics and Institutions Shape Poverty and Inequality
* DiPrete, Thomas A. 2002. Life Course Risks, Mobility Regimes, and Mobility Consequences
* Breen, Richard and Jan O. Johnson. 2005. Inequality of Opportunity in Comparative Perspective
  ◦ Hall, Peter and David Soskice. 2001. Varieties of capitalism
  ◦ Prasad, Monica. 2012. The Land of Too Much: American Abundance and the Paradox of Poverty
  ◦ Van de Werfhorst, Herman and Jonathan Mijs. 2010. Achievement Inequality and the Institutional Structure of Educational Systems
(13) Dec 8: Policy

* Wright, Erik. 2010. Envisioning Real Utopias

* Atkinson, Anthony B. 2015. Inequality: What Can Be Done?

* Stone, James M. 2016. Five Easy Theses [* added for reasons discussed in class *]

* Johnson, Rucker. 2016. Spencer Lecture (min. 4 - 58)
  
  ◦ Kenworthy, Lane. 2014. Social Democratic America
  ◦ Ackerman, Bruce A. and Anne Allstot 2000. The Stakeholder Society
  ◦ Bailey, Martha J. and Danziger: Legacies of the War on Poverty
  ◦ Howard, Christopher. 1999. The Hidden Welfare State
  ◦ McCabe, Brian J. 2016. No Place Like Home