Course Description

This course provides intensive training in substantive, theoretical, and methodological topics in the field of social stratification. We will begin with stylized facts and theoretical approaches to the questions of inequality and mobility. Subsequent sections discuss patterns and sources of economic and class inequality, and the factors affecting mobility over the individual life-cycle and across generations. We will discuss institutional determinants of stratification, including the educational system, the family, and the political system. We will also examine micro- and macro-level mechanisms for stratification including social networks, the role of place, and ascriptive sources of inequality such as race/ethnicity and gender. We will close with a discussion of the (potential) consequences of inequality.

After the course students will be well-versed in both in both major perspectives in the field and the most recent themes and findings. However, the field is too vast to cover exhaustively in a single semester. The main objective of the course is to provide an introduction to compelling theoretical ideas and empirical issues so that students can continue research on their own.

Prerequisites:

A graduate-level introductory statistics course including regression analysis. Our discussion will focus on substantive issues rather than methods. However, in order to fully engage with some of the readings, basic statistical knowledge is needed.

Assignments

1) Class participation (15% of the final grade): This course is a collective enterprise and I expect everyone to come prepared to contribute. This involves being able to convey the arguments offered by each reading and to share your reaction/criticism of the material. Prior to each class I will post guiding questions that may help you think about the readings.

2) A series of discussion papers that critically engage with the readings (30% of the final grade). The discussion papers should be approximately 2 single-spaced pages long. They are not just a summary of the readings. Rather, they should offer an extension, critique, or discussion of the implications of the readings. You should submit 6 discussion papers during the semester, so you can select the weeks you are most interested in or curious about. The discussion paper should be submitted at the beginning of class the weeks of your choosing.
Tips for writing discussion papers: You do not need to provide a comprehensive summary of the readings. Focus on the core of the argument(s) offered by the authors and move on quickly to your own argument, critique, or extension of the material discussed. You do not need to engage each one of the readings assigned and can draw on prior/other literature to articulate your own argument. Be concise and focused, do not get sidetracked by many minor points. Discussion papers should use the kind of language and syntax that you would read in a published research article.

3) A written assignment due at the end of the semester (55% of the final grade). This assignment can be:

1. An original research paper on a topic that interests you. This might serve as the basis for your research paper requirement, a journal submission, or a chapter in your dissertation.
2. A detailed proposal for a research project, including an extensive and critical review of the literature on the topic. This might serve as the basis for a grant proposal to support your dissertation or future work.
3. A review of the literature in a broad topic area including a critical assessment of the various contributions to the topic (e.g., gender labor market inequality, ethnic/racial discrimination, migration & stratification, etc.). This might serve as preparation for your comprehensive exam or dissertation.

A 1-page proposal for your final written assignment should be submitted on March 2nd.

Course Schedule

Jan 27: Introduction
No readings assigned, start doing the readings for 2/3 if you can.

Feb 3 – Basic Facts on Inequality: Trends and Determinants.


Feb. 17 – Beyond Income and Status Attainment: Theoretical Perspectives on Stratification.


Wright, Eric Olin. 2005. “If Class is the Answer, what is the Question?” Conclusion in *Approaches to Class Analysis*. Cambridge University Press.


Feb 24 – Intergenerational Mobility.


Mar 2 – Families and Stratification Dynamics.


Mar 16 Spring Break

Mar 23 – Educational Stratification: The Role of Schools.

Mar 30 - Gender Inequality

Apr 6 – Racial and Ethnic Stratification

**Apr 13 – Place and Disadvantage**


**April 20 – Social Status and Networks**


**Apr 27 – Inequality and Politics**


**May 4 - Consequences of Inequality: Micro and Macro**


