Social Science 603C
Seminar on Social Stratification

Spring 2008
Tue 18:30-21:20
Room 3412, Academic Building

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. WU Xiaogang (sowu@ust.hk)

OFFICE: ROOM 3377, Academic Building (Phone 23587827)

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment only

TEACHING ASSISTANT: ZHANG Zhuoni (zhzhni@ust.hk)

OBJECTIVES:
Sociology is the study of social structure. All human societies classify their members into categories that carry significant social meaning. These categories may be relatively simple, such as age and sex, or they may be complex, such as occupation, kinship, class. The social structure of a society is the aggregate of all meaningful social categories. A primary interest of most sociologists is stratification, which considers hierarchical social structures that rank people with respect to access to some resource, and how such structure/pattern varies with space and time.

This course is an introduction to the modern research literature on social stratification and social mobility, as represented by journal articles and research monographs. It focuses on concepts, data, methods, and facts about: occupational and class structure; the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status; the effects of marriage, family, school, and labor market on socioeconomic achievement, careers, and inequality; earnings and income distribution; subjective aspects of stratification. Students are required to complete SOSC509 and SOSC534 before taking this course. Students who are concurrently enrolled in SOSC534 may, with the consent of the instructor, take the course.

While this is not a course on Chinese stratification, the discussion of the general materials is expected to stimulate ideas and finally to lead to empirical research papers on China. After the course you will be well-versed both in the longer term trajectory of research in this area and in the most recent themes and findings.

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS
Reading materials from various electronic sources will be available either via JSTOR, or the course web page.

Each week several leading articles or chapters dealing with a particular topic are read and discussed in class. They fall into the “core” readings, which should be read by everyone.
There are some supplementary readings, each of which is to be read by one student who will prepare and distribute a précis prior to each week’s class. We will finalize the assignment once the course enrollment is closed.

A précis is a summary that contains the essential details about theory, method, and findings. It is not a critique. For a 20 page article, a 1-2 page, single-spaced summary usually suffices. Précis should be posted on the web on every Tuesday morning.

Typical, each student is expected to read 3 or 4 articles/chapters per week.
CLASS FORMAT
This is a graduate-level research seminar. Because the course put SOSC509 and SOSC534 as the prerequisites, the class will be small. Students would take this chance to engage themselves in the intellectual discussions on certain topics. Participation in the class discussion is an integral part of the work of the course. Students should come prepared to analyze the week’s readings with respect to both substance and method and must participate actively in the discussion. As the course instructor, I will provide an overview of the topic and readings and co-lead the discussion with another student in each week. Sometimes Chinese can be used in conversation more effectively.

Your responsibilities as the student leader include: (1) to prepare a brief oral introduction of the readings for the purposes of initiating the class discussion; and (2) to prepare a set of questions that will guide class discussion. For the most part it is NOT the responsibility of the student leader to lecture to the class. Rather, the team’s responsibility is to keep the discussion going and to make sure that the key aspects of the readings are covered. Conversely, students who are not discussion leaders in a given week have the same responsibility as the leaders to read and be prepared to discuss the week’s readings, and to write the précis for the week.

GRADING: The final course grade will be based on performance on the following:
Take-home midterm exam 20%
Class participation 20%
Term paper 60%

Each student is required to write a critical review about the research literature on a chosen topic, and should go beyond the reading materials already covered in the class. Coverage of new reading materials, critical comments, theoretical/substantive insights, and writing effectiveness are the four criteria for receiving a high grade. When writing this paper, each student must keep in mind the scenario that he/she has a plan to conduct an empirical study about that topic.

Procedure: (1) Begin thinking of what topic to write on for this term paper in the third week of the class; (2) Meet with the instructor to discuss a chosen topic in the fifth week; (3) On April 1st, turn in a detailed outline of the term paper for feedbacks from the instructor; (4) Present the outline or drafted paper in class; (5) Turn in a final version at the end of the class. Due date: by noon, 30 May.

BACKGROUND READINGS:


Both books are available from the HKUST library.

SCHEDULE
Week 1 (5/2) Introduction
Week 2 (12/2) Occupations, Classes, Prestige and Socioeconomic Status
Week 3 (19/2) Status Attainment
Week 4 (26/2) Educational Stratification I
Week 5 (4/3) Educational Stratification II
Week 6 (11/3) Career Mobility
Week 7 (18/3) Firms, Labor Markets, and Inequality
Week 9 (1/4) Intergenerational Social Mobility I
Week 10 (8/4) Intergenerational Social Mobility II
Week 11 (15/4) Marriage, Family, and Social Stratification

http://home.ust.hk/~sowu/teaching/sosc603c.htm
Week 12 (22/4) The Communist Party and Social Stratification
Week 13 (29/4) Consequences of Social Stratification
Week 14 (6/5) Student Presentation
Week 15 (13/5) No class

READINGS
Abbreviations are used for major journals
AJ S American Journal of Sociology ARS Annual Review of Sociology ASR American Sociological Review SF Social Forces
ESR European Sociological Review RSSM Research in Social Stratification and Mobility SE Sociology of Education SSR Social Science Research

Useful Links

5/2 – Introduction

Core


Hout, Michael, and Thomas A. DiPrete. 2005 “What We Have Learned: RC28’s Contributions to Knowledge about Social Stratification.” RSSM

Supplementary


12/2: Occupations, Classes, Prestige, and Socioeconomic Status

Core


Supplementary


19/2 - Status Attainment
Core


Supplementary


26/2 - Educational Stratification I
Core


**Supplementary**


**4/3 - Education Stratification II**

**Core**


**Supplementary**


**11/3- Career Mobility**

**Core**


Wu, Xiaogang. 2006. “Communist Cadres and Market Opportunities: Entry to Self-Employment in


**Supplementary**


**18/3 - Firms, Labor Markets, and Inequality**

**Core**


**Supplementary**


**1/4 - Intergenerational Mobility I**

**Core**


Supplementary


84 - Intergenerational Mobility II
Core


Supplementary


22/4 - Marriage, Family, and Stratification
Core


**No Supplementary**

**29/4 – Party Membership and Social Stratification**

**Core**:


**No Supplementary**

**4/5 – Consequences of Social Stratification: Cultural Consumption and Political Action**

**Core**:


**No Supplementary**

**13/5 Student Presentation**

**Term Paper due on or before 12:00pm, May 30, 2008**