SOC 3880: Social Inequality and Social Mobility
Spring, 2014
Monday & Wednesday 12:00-1:20PM
LSK1033

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Social stratification concerns the unequal distribution of resources/rewards/opportunities which are scarce but widely desired, and the process of status attainment or social mobility whereby some persons or groups come to receive more of these scarce things than are received by others. This course will introduce the basic concepts and theories in analyzing social and economic inequalities in the contemporary world. Through research projects and term papers, students are expected to be able to apply the knowledge to address inequality issues in Hong Kong or mainland China.

Although there is no prerequisite for this class, students with backgrounds in Introductory Sociology and Introductory Statistics will feel more comfortable to deal with the readings and lecture materials.

FORMAT
Each class meeting consists of about 60 minutes of lecture and 20 minutes of discussion. Students are expected to finish the assigned readings before the class, and contribute ideas and questions for discussion.

TEXTBOOKS
2. Supplementary reading materials to be distributed in class, or downloadable from the course Webpage.

COURSE HOMEPAGE
I will post announcement and lecture notes on the Lmes homepage created for this course. You may use your ITSC username and password to log in (http://lmes2.ust.hk/portal) and find the
course syllabus, reading materials, and lecture notes. You may also post your questions and exchange ideas with me, TA, or your fellow classmates on the discussion board.

I will load the lecture notes on the web no later than the morning of the day when the lecture is given. You should print out the notes and bring them to the class.

**REQUIREMENTS**

(1) **Attendance and Reading Preparations**
You MUST attend all class meetings. Since there are no formal discussion sections for this course, I will leave about 15-20 minutes for questions and discussion, or for pop-up quizzes. By “pop-up” quiz I mean they will be not announced in advance. If you miss one, you will receive “zero.”

Each week you are expected to complete all assigned readings before the class, and write a weekly comment on the readings for that week. The comment should be typewritten on a piece of work (double spaced with font size no smaller than 11). You comments should be based on required readings and should not be paraphrase or summary of points made in the assigned reading, but the thoughts why you agree or disagree with particular concepts. You can also use example to illustrate your argument. A good comment usually begins with a brief introduction of the topic followed by a well-developed, thought-out comment and/or criticism. Please keep comments short but precise, that is, allowing sufficient space to fully develop your argument.

Each comment will be evaluated according to the following scale:

- 3 excellent
- 2 good
- 1 weak; little originality
- 0 not submitted

The first comment should be turned in during the second week of class, then each subsequent week (except for week xx). Out of the 10 comments, the two lowest scores will be dropped and only 8 of them will be counted in your final grade. Comments, quizzes and attendance account for 15% of your final grade.

(2) **Midterm Exam**
There will be an in-class written midterm exam, covering materials both in the lectures and in the assigned readings.

(3) **Small Research Project**
At the end of the semester, you are required to write and present a group paper. Each group should be consisted of about 5 or 6 students. Using the concepts learned from the class and additional readings, students can write on one of the following topics:

- (i) Gender Inequality in Hong Kong (or China)
- (ii) Poverty in Hong Kong (or China)
- (iii) Educational Inequality in Hong Kong (or China)
- (iv) Income Inequality in Hong Kong (or China)
To help your literature search and report writing, the library has developed a webpage with useful links to various website in Hong Kong and elsewhere (http://library.ust.hk/guides/sosc288.html). You can also ask the reference librarian for additional assistance (CAPLAN Victoria F lbcaplan@ust.hk).

(4) Final Exam
It will be similar to the midterm exam in format, covering materials both in the lectures and in the assigned readings since the midterm.

**GRADING POLICY**
- Attendance, participation, and quiz: 15%
- Midterm: 30%
- Final: 30%
- Research interview/small research report: 25%.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (Subject to Revision)**

I. Concepts and Theories

Week 1

Class 1 [6 February] Introduction and Organization
Reading:
Kerbo, Chapters 1-3

Week 2

Class 2 [10 February] Bases of Stratification in Contemporary Societies
Class 3 [12 February] Classical Theory of Inequality: Karl Marx

Reading:
Kerbo Chapter 4 (pp 80-95, 95-103)

Week 3

Class 4 [17 February] Classical Theory of Inequality: Max Weber
Class 5 [19 February] Classical Theory of Inequality: Emile Durkheim

Reading:
Kerbo Chapter 4 (pp. 103-110) Chapter 5 (pp.112-125,)
Week 4
Class 6 [24 February] Contemporary Functional Theory: Davis and Moore
Class 7 [26 February] Contemporary Neo-Marxian Theory: Erik O. Wright

Reading:
Kerbo Chapter 5 (Pp. 125-130, 131-142)

Week 5
Class 8 [3 March ] Contemporary Neo-Weberian Theory: Frank Parkin
Class 9 [5 March] The Ruling Elite: The Upper Class and Corporate Class
Reading:

Kerbo Chapters 6-8

Week 6
Class 10 [10 March] The Middle and Working Class
Class 11 [12 March] Poverty and the Urban Underclass
Reading:
Kerbo Chapters 9

Week 7
Class 12 [17 March] Occupation, Prestige, Socioeconomic Status, and Classes
Class 13 [19 March] Social Closure and Categorical Inequality
Reading:
Sorensen, Aage B. 1994. “Basic Concepts of Stratification Research: Class, Status, and Power” (S)

Week 8
Class 14 [24 March] Summary and Review
Class 15 [26 March] Midterm Exam
Reading: none

Part II. Generating Inequality: Structure and Process

Week 9
Class 16 [31 March] Human Capital, Social Capital, and Cultural Capital
Class 17 [2 April] Social Mobility
Reading:

Week 10
Class 18 [7 April] *Status Attainment*
Class 19 [9 April] *Cognitive Ability, IQ, and Stratification: The Bell Curve Myth*

Reading:
Kerbo Chapter 12

Week 11
Class 20 [14 April] *Schooling, Education, and Achievement*

Reading:

Mid-term Break [16-21 April]

Week 12
Class 21 [23 April] *Marriage, Family, and Stratification*

Reading:
Kerbo Chapter 10

Week 13
Class 22 [28 April] Gender Stratification and Inequality
Class 23 [30 April] Firms, Labor Markets, and Social Stratification

Reading:


Week 14
Class 24 [5 May] Presentation
Class 25 [7 May] Presentation

Term Project Paper Due on the Final Exam Date.