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  MW 10-11AM and F 1-3PM, and by appointment.

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  MW 1-2PM, 1-2 and Th 2-3PM.

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the major sociological approaches to the study of social stratification and inequality. We begin with an examination of the concepts of social stratification and social inequality, with an emphasis on the major dimensions of stratification in the U.S. Next we examine the major theoretical traditions that form the basis for contemporary class analysis. We then focus on the distribution of income and wealth in the U.S. over the past 60 years and look at recent changes in this distribution and various explanations for change. We discuss the major class divisions in the U.S. and examine effects of transformation of the U.S. economy on particular classes. Next we examine forms and processes of stratification, with a focus on patterns of social mobility and differences in these processes and outcomes by race/ethnicity and gender, and over time. The ability to process a significant amount of quantitative information is desirable. A previous course in statistics is highly recommended but not required.

Course Objectives

Social inequality has increased over the past half century to levels unseen since the gilded age of the 1920s when inequality in the U.S. reached a peak. This class aims to inform students about the nature of social inequality and the social class hierarchies that exist in the contemporary U.S., with an emphasis on the contributions of sociologists to the theoretical understanding and major explanations of social inequality. Students will gain a theoretically and empirically grounded sense of the major dimensions of social inequality and stratification in the U.S. and the processes that have shaped trends in social inequality over the past 60 years. Lectures will provide opportunities for discussions centered on specific questions, scenarios, and current newsworthy items relating to social inequality and social stratification in the U.S. Students should gain a perspective about the relevance of social stratification in a period of increasingly unequal rewards and high levels of socioeconomic uncertainty.

Required Texts


Supplemental Readings

Additional reading materials and links to current-event topics in inequality will be posted to Blackboard.
Course Requirements and Policies

Lectures: Class meets three times per week. Students are expected to attend all lectures and participate in class discussions. Class attendance will not be formally taken. However, participation in class discussions and pop quizzes—to be given at the instructor’s discretion—will be a proxy for attendance, and may influence your final grade.

Examinations (400 points): There will be 4 in-class examinations worth 100 points each. Each exam will consist of roughly 25-35 multiple choice questions and 15-25 true/false questions.

Short Writing Assignments (100 points): Short writing projects of 500 words or less will be assigned to assess overall understanding of key concepts, to serve as study guides for upcoming exam material.

Academic Integrity: Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with using standard UT protocol. The UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism can be found at http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html

Academic Accommodations: Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/

Religious Holy Days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Lecture Topics

INTRODUCTION

Week 1 (Aug. 25-27): Introduction to Social Inequality and Stratification

Week 1 Readings:
Marger: Ch. 1

Topics:
Introduction to Social Inequality
Central Questions to be Answered in this Course
The Sociological Approach to Inequality: What are the Fundamental Aspects of Scientific Inquiry?

Weeks 2-3 (Aug. 30-Sept. 10): The Origins of Inequality

Weeks 2-3 Readings:
Marger, Ch. 2
Gilbert Ch. 1-2 & 11
K. Marks Bourgeois and Proletarians, Ch 1, pp. 12-28, in Manifesto of the Communist Party, by K. Marx and F. Engels, 1850 Chicago: Kerr

1 This is a tentative schedule. Topics and dates are subject to change.


Topics:
The Role of Individual and Structural Factors in Generating Social Inequality
The Role of Paradigms and Paradigm Assumptions in Scientific Inquiry on Social Inequality
Major Theoretical Traditions Relevant for Understanding Social Inequality
Modern Theories of Social Stratification: E.O. Wright, R. Dahrendorf, G. Lenski

**Weeks 4-5 (Sept. 14-24): Wealth, Income, and Forms and Patterns of Inequality in the Contemporary U.S.**

**Weeks 4-5 Readings:**
Marger Ch. 3
Gilbert Ch. 3-4

Topics:
Income, Types and Sources of Income and Distribution of Income
The Industrial Transformation and its Impact on the Occupational Structure and Income
Income Inequality and Changes over Time
The Role of Taxes, Transfers, and Redistribution
Wealth Inequality

*Short Writing Assignment/Study Guide* (due Friday, Sept. 24 in class)

1st EXAM (Friday, Sept. 24)

**SOCIAL CLASSES IN THE U.S.**

**Week 6 (Sept. 27-Oct. 1): The Upper Class in the U.S. Class Structure**

**Week 6 Readings:**
Marger Ch. 4 & 13
Gilbert Ch. 8

Topics:
Defining and Conceptualizing the Upper Class in the U.S.
Economic and Political Power of the Upper Class
Major Sociological Perspectives on the Upper Class

**Week 7 (Oct. 4-8): The Working and Middle Classes in the U.S. Class Structure**

**Week 7 Readings:**
Marger Ch. 5
Gilbert Ch. 5 & 9

Topics:
Definition, Conceptualization, and Composition of the Middle Class
Social, Political, and Cultural Attributes of the parts of the Middle Class Hierarchy
The Effects of Economic Restructuring on the Middle Class
Week 8: The Poor in the U.S. Class Structure

Week 8 Readings

Marger Ch. 6 & 9
Gilbert Ch. 10

Topics:
Definition and Conceptualization of Poverty
Change in Poverty Rates over Time
The Underclass and Persistent Poverty and Public Policy

Short Writing Assignment (due in class Friday, Oct. 15)
2nd EXAM (Friday, Oct. 15)

FORMS AND PROCESSES OF STRATIFICATION

Weeks 9-10 (Oct. 18-29): Social Mobility and Processes of Stratification

Weeks 9-10 Readings

Marger Ch. 7
Gilbert Ch. 6-7

Topics:
Typical Stratification Systems
Social Mobility
Trends and Patterns of Social Mobility
Generating Inequality; The Process of Status Attainment
Factors in the Attainment Process
Schools and Schooling as Equalizers

Week 11 (Nov. 1-5): Ideology and the Legitimation of Inequality

Week 11 Readings

Marger Ch. 8

Topics:
Legitimacy, Legitimation, and the Role of Dominant Ideology
Legitimation, Ideology, Socialization and the Role of Institutions

Short Writing Assignment (due in class Friday, Nov. 5)
3rd EXAM (Friday, Nov. 5)

RACE/ETHNIC AND GENDER STRATIFICATION

Weeks 12-14: Race and Ethnic Differentiation and Stratification
Weeks 12-14 Readings

Marger Ch. 10-11


Week 15: Gender Stratification

Week 15 Readings

Marger Ch. 12


Short Writing Assignment (due in class Friday, Dec. 3)

4th EXAM (Friday, Dec. 3)