

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION
SOC329
Unique Number 45560
Fall 2010
Burdine 216
MWF 12:00-1:00PM

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

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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 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

Marger, Martin N. (2010) *Social Stratification: Patterns and Processes* (5th Edition). Boston, MA.: McGraw Hill.

Gilbert, Dennis (2010) *The American Class Structure: In an Age of Growing Inequality* (8th Edition). Los Angeles, CA: Pine Forge Press.

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 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 Topics¹

INTRODUCTION

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

Week 1 Readings:

Marger: Ch. 1

K. Davis and W.E. Moore “Some Principles of Stratification,” *American Sociological Review*, 1945 10: pp. 242-249

M.M. Tumin “Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Review,” *American Sociological Review*, 1953 18: pp. 387-394.

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

M. Weber *Class, Status, and Party*, Ch. 2, pp. 180-195, in *Essays from Max Weber*, by W. Gerth and C.W. Mills, 1948 New York: Oxford University Press

E. Durkheim *The Division of Labor in Society*, pp. xxxi, xxxii, xxxix-xl, xlii-xlv, l-lv, lviii-lix, 1984 New York: The Free Press.

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

T. Parsons *Equality and Inequality in Modern Society, or Social Stratification Revisited* (excerpt) , edited by E.O. Laumann, pp. 14-15, 22-25, 70. 1970 New York: Bobbs-Merrill.

E.O.Wright "A General Framework for Class Analysis," Ch. 2, pp. 3-43, in *Classes*, by E.O. Wright, 1984 New York: Verso.

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

Classical Theoretical Statements: K. Marx, M. Weber, and E. Durkheim

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

C.W. Mills *The Power Elite*, pp. 3-18, 20-23, 365-367, 1956 New York: Oxford University Press.

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

W.J. Wilson "Jobless Poverty: A New Form of Social Dislocation in the Inner-City Ghetto," in *A Nation Divided: Diversity, Inequality, and Community in American Society*, edited by P. Moen, D. Dempster-McClain, and H.A. Walker, pp. 133-145, 149-150, 1999 Cornell University Press.

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

Blau P.M. and O.D. Duncan "The Process of Stratification," In P.M. Blau and O.D. Duncan, *The American Occupational Structure*, pp. 163-177, 199-201, 203, 1967 New York: The Free Press.

Sewell, W.H., A.O. Haller, and A. Portes "The Educational and Early Occupational Attainment Process," 1969 *American Sociological Review* 34: pp. 82-92.

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

W.J. Wilson. *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*, pp. 1-9, 12-23, 183-185, 1978
University of Chicago Press.

W.J. Wilson. "When Work Disappears: New Implications for Race and Urban Poverty in the Global Economy," *CASE paper 17*,
London School of Economics, 1998 Center for the Analysis of Social Exclusion.

W.J. Wilson. "More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City." 2009 *Poverty and Race*, 18: pp. 1-11.

E. Bonacich "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market," 1972 *American Sociological Review*, 37: pp. 547-559.

A. Portes, and R.D. Manning "The Immigrant Enclave: Theory and Empirical Examples," pp. 47-55, 61-68, in S. Olzak and J. Nagel
Eds., *Competitive Ethnic Relations*, 1986 New York: Academic Press.

Topics:

Racial and Ethnic DifferentiationRacial and Ethnic StratificationTheoretical Explanations of Racial StratificationRace, Class, and Social Policy**Week 15: Gender Stratification***Week 15 Readings*

Marger Ch. 12

J. Lorber. "The Social Construction of Gender," pp. 13-17, 22, 25-27, 32-35, 305-306, in J. Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender*, 1994 Yale
University Press.

B.F. Reskin "Labor Markets as Queues: A Structural Approach to Changing Occupational Sex Composition," pp. 170-186, 188-192,
in J. Huber, Ed. *Micro and Macro Linkages in Sociology*, 1991 Sage Publications, Inc.

Topics:

Gender and its Social ConstructionGender and Sex StratificationMajor Explanations of Gender Inequality***Short Writing Assignment (due in class Friday, Dec. 3)******4th EXAM (Friday, Dec. 3)***