

SOC311 Social Stratification and Inequality

MWF 10:30-11:20

Miller 101

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Course Description

This course examines the patterned ways in which the resources we value in life are systematically and unequally distributed in society. We will take a look at the upper, middle and lower class life, the sorting mechanisms at work, and the daily struggles to maintain or improve their class positions. We will also examine how class structures are changing in the context of globalization. Questions about social class and social mobility are fundamental to our understanding of contemporary societies, as we often hear about the expanding divide between the rich and the poor in popular media and the various factors that are driving such change. The objective of this course is to become equipped with the analytical tools to critically examine the principles of stratification, how present condition of inequality is changing, what is driving such change, and what should be done about it.

Requirements

Students are required to finish the assigned readings before class and attend class prepared to share your thoughts. In addition, you will choose a topic of your interest, do a sociological analysis, and present your findings in a research paper.

Assignments

Attendance is part of your final grade.

Midterm & Final Exams

These two exams will cover the basic concepts and phenomena covered in the readings and lectures. The exams will be simple and short essay questions to be taken in class (not take-home).

Research Paper Proposal / Photo Essay / Current Event Essay:

This assignment probes into some aspect of inequality on any contemporary society. You can either write a research proposal; take three to five photographs and write an essay on the photos that discuss elements of inequality; choose an article, song, movie, etc. and analyze it by relating to the mechanisms of inequality you learned in class. Choose a topic/theme/question/source material that is of special interest to you, which directly engages the courses themes on inequality and stratification. Try to be as specific as possible with the

people and the phenomenon (pattern) that you want to focus on. Use this as an opportunity to better understand the many inequalities that surround your imminent everyday life. Analyze and explain the particular shape of inequality in your data, and write your analysis as you write a scholarly paper.

The key to a successful paper is an interesting research question: What is it that you want to know, and what is puzzling about it? Does your data help us gain deeper insight into what we already know? Or does your data show something that we have yet to learn about inequality in our society?

You will first submit a one-page description of your topic. The final paper is due on the last day of class.

Grades

Point Distribution:

Class Attendance:	10%
Project Proposal:	10%
Research paper:	30%
Project Presentation:	10%
Midterm and Final:	20% x 2
Total:	100%

Final Grades:

A+: 98 & Above	B+: 88-89	C+: 78-79	D: 60-69
A: 94-97	B: 84-87	C: 74-77	
A-: 90-93	B-: 80-83	C-: 70-73	
F: 59 & Below; All acts against the University Student Code.			

Academic Integrity:

The UH Student Conduct Code:

(http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/proscribed_conduct.php)

I don't anticipate any violations of the Code, but in situations of violation, the case will be forwarded to the Administrator for adjudication, in addition to receiving an F for this course.

Learning Assistance:

Every student at UH Manoa has access to the following offices that offer academic assistance and guidance. Do make good use of our resources!:

Learning Assistance Center: <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/learning/>

Writing Center: <http://www.english.hawaii.edu/writingcenter/>

Learning with Disabilities: <http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/>

Textbook

Grusky and Szelenyi eds. 2011. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*. CO: Westview Press.

Additional readings are posted online.

Calendar

Week 1 Introduction

August 26: Overview of Class

August 28: What is Stratification?

August 30: Why should we care about stratification and inequality?

Week 2 Perspectives on Stratification and Inequality

Sept. 2: No class

Sept. 4: Functionalist perspective on stratification

Read: "Some principles of Stratification"

Sept. 6: Critical perspective on stratification

Read: "Inequality by Design"

Week 3 Theory

Sept. 9: Karl Marx on "class"

Read: "Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism"

Sept. 11: Marxist conception of "class" and "exploitation"

Read: "Class counts"

Sept. 13: Weber on "class, status and power"

Read: "Class, Status, Party"

Week 4 Income Inequality

Sept. 16: Changes in top income earners

Read: "Striking it Richer"

Sept. 18: The idea of "rent" and possible solutions to the income divide

Read: "Is Market Failure Behind the Takeoff in Inequality"

Sept. 20: The Power Elite

Read: "The Power Elite"

Week 5 The Upper Class and the American Elite

Sept. 23: The New Upper Class I

Read: "Who Rules America?"

Sept. 25: The New Upper Class II

Read: "Bobos in Paradise"

Sept. 27: Watch documentary "The One Percent" and Discussion

Week 6 The Lower Class and Poverty

Sept. 30: Portraits of the working poor

Read: "Nickel-and-Dimed,"

Oct. 2: Joblessness

Read: "Jobless Poverty"

Oct. 4: Causes of Poverty with a Comparative Perspective

Read: "Poorer by Comparison"

Week 7 The Lower Class and Poverty

Oct. 7: Geographical segregation

Read: "American Apartheid" or "Neighborhoods, Poverty, and Children's Well-being"

Oct. 9: Welfare policy and poverty

Read: "Flat Broke with Children"

Oct. 11: Bourdieu, Culture and Inequality

Watch *Small Time Crooks*

Week 8 Culture and Inequality

Oct. 14: Continue watching *Small Time Crooks*

Oct. 16: Discussion

Oct. 18: **MIDTERM**

Week 9 Race and Stratification

Oct. 21: The social construction of race

Read: "Racial Formation in the United States"

Watch a film?

Oct. 23: Discrimination and Prejudice

Read: "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal?"

Oct. 25: Discrimination and the Black Middle Class

Read: "The Continuing Significance of Race"

Week 10 Race and Stratification

Oct. 28: The Future of racial inequality

Read: "The Declining Significance of Race"

Oct. 30: The Future, continued

Read: "What Do You Call a Black Man with a Ph.D.?"

Nov. 1: The Future, continued

Read: "The Possibility of a New Racial Hierarchy in the Twenty-First Century United States."

Week 11 Gender and Stratification

Nov. 4: Social construction of gender

Read: "The Social Construction of Gender"

Nov. 6: Labor force participation and Discrimination

Read: "The Time Bind," "Getting to Equal"

Nov. 8: Discrimination

Read: "The Within Job Gender Wage Gap," "Devaluation and the Pay of Comparable Male and Female Occupations"

Week 12 Mobility

Nov. 11: No class

Nov. 13: The Experience of Mobility

Read: "No Degree, and No Way Back to the Middle"

Nov. 15: Educational Mobility

Read: "Nonpersistent Inequality in Educational Attainment"

Week 13 Globalization and Inequality

Nov. 18: What is Globalization?

Nov. 20: Global Income Inequality

Read: "The New Geography of Global Income Inequality"

Nov. 22: Stiglitz on globalism

Read: "Globalism's Discontents"

Week 14 Thanksgiving Week

Nov. 25: Harvey on neoliberalism

Read: Harvey,

Nov. 27: No class

Nov. 29: No class

Week 15 Student Presentation

Dec. 2: Presentation

Dec. 4: Presentation

Dec. 6: Presentation

Week 16 Student Presentation

Dec. 9: Presentation

Dec. 11: **FINAL EXAM**