

Social Stratification

Sociology 112 - University of North Carolina, Spring 2001
course website: www.unc.edu/~tedmouw/soc112/soc112.html

Class time: TTH 3:30-4:45

Class room: 103 Bingham

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Office Hours: M 9:00-10:00

W 3:30-5:00

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Social Stratification:

Social stratification is the study of inequality in society. In this course we will try to answer six important questions about American society:

- 1) **Do social classes exist in America?**
- 2) **Are things getting better or worse?**
- 3) **Are workers exploited?**
- 4) **Is America a meritocracy?**
- 5) **How much race and gender inequality is there?**
- 6) **Why is there poverty in a country as wealth as America?**

I believe that social stratification is the core course in sociology and that these questions about inequality are a crucial part of becoming a thoughtful and informed citizen.

Contacts

You can reach me by email at tedmouw@email.unc.edu. For simple questions, this is the quickest way to reach me. I will also be available before and after class to answer questions or talk about social inequality. I welcome your questions and opinions. For more difficult questions, please come to see me during office hours.

Teaching Philosophy

I believe that the classroom experience can be both fun and intellectually stimulating. I will have high standards for your participation and performance in the course. At the same time, the class will be a friendly environment. For example, I will expect you to come to class prepared to discuss, and I will call on you to participate in class. However, class participation will be conducted with a mixture of seriousness, humor, and respect to ensure a diversity of opinions and a supportive atmosphere for participation.

Readings:

While social stratification is important, it is also fraught with controversy and disagreement. I have deliberately selected the reading for this course to reflect this lack of consensus. My guiding principle has been to avoid textbooks that spoon-feed answers, but to give you a sample of the diversity of opinion. I believe that the function of the college classroom is to confront opposing arguments rather than ignore them. The challenge is for you to sort through these conflicting perspectives, and my expectation is that the class will work cooperatively to decide what is “right.” As much as possible, I will try to moderate a discussion based on the reading rather than impose my own views of what is right and wrong. The reading is a combination of serious, controversial, and humorous perspectives on social class.

Aside from the novel that we will read, Storming Heaven by Denise Giardina, all of the reading is on reserve.

In-class essays

There will be no midterms in this class. On most Thursdays, the final 10 minutes of class will be used for a short essay question. The essays will be graded and returned to you the next class period. *All of the essay questions will be taken from the reading questions (see below) or the in-class group discussion questions from the current and the previous week of class.* The philosophy behind this is three-fold. First, the essay questions will remove anxiety about testing. Because the possible essay questions are known beforehand, any student who wants to do well can prepare in advance. Second, having weekly essays will provide frequent feedback about your class performance. Finally, the essays will reward individuals who keep up with the material and groups that work together to come up with thoughtful answers to the discussion questions. Each essay will be worth 25 points, and I will post the best essays each week on the class web page to give you an idea of what a good answer to the question was.

There are no excused absences for the graded essays (except for illness with a doctor’s note). Because we only meet 30 times, each class period is 3.3% of our time together. If you know in advance that you will miss a Thursday essay, you may turn in a 2-page paper answering one of the week’s reading questions if you o.k. it with me beforehand. The paper will only be accepted if it is turned in advance.

Reading notes:

My expectation is that you will come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. The reading in this class is not optional. As much as possible, I will try not to repeat things in lecture that were covered in the reading. The class discussion and lecture will begin where the reading left off.

An important skill in becoming a scholar is learning how to read effectively. Rather than trying to memorize everything you read, the effective reader reads “critically” by zeroing in on the main argument and the important or interesting facts that support the author’s argument.

To help you read effectively and critically, I will post reading notes on the class webpage for each class period. The reading questions will be in MS-Word format, so you can type your notes directly onto the note sheet if you want to. The philosophy behind the reading notes is that there is no point spending the time to do the reading if you don't also take the time to take notes to ensure that you remember what you have read. The reading notes consist of two things.

A) "Basic concepts and facts." This is a list of concepts and facts that you should focus on in the reading. In order to organize your reading and make it more efficient, you can read effectively by concentrating on these key points.

I will expect you to understand and remember these items for class. I will not necessarily lecture on them. However, I will welcome your questions in class for me to explain or clarify these concepts. Rather than waste valuable class time repeating things that were covered in the reading, I will rely upon you to identify which concepts were difficult. It is your responsibility to ask questions.

You can take notes on the "Basic concepts" part of the reading notes as you see fit. However, these notes do not have to be turned in.

B) "Reading questions."

These are important questions raised in the reading that will be the basis for our class discussion. I ask you to jot down answers to these questions. You do not have to write an essay. Several sentences plus an outline of your answer is sufficient. Record as much as you need to in order to remember your answer to the question and demonstrate that you have thought about it.

Reading questions are due at the front of class before class begins. Each day's questions are worth 5 points. They will be graded as follows: A \checkmark (5 points) indicates that you completed the questions o.k. (although it does not indicate that you got them all "right"), and a \checkmark^- (2.5 points) indicates that you turned it in but your answers were less than satisfactory. Turning in a nearly blank sheet will get you 1 point (it's better than nothing) and extra attention from the professor during class discussion in the next class. Because the reading questions reflect preparation to participate in class, they must be turned in at class. There are no excused absences for the reading questions. As noted above, all essay and exam questions will come from reading questions or group discussion questions. Therefore, writing good answers to the reading questions is an effective way study.

Group discussion

A significant amount of our class time will be spent in small group discussions. Because much of the course involves competing theories and perspectives, I believe that the only way to truly learn the material and have fun while doing it is to express the concepts in your own words in a discussion. I will divide you into 3-person groups. In order to get to know the opinions of your classmates, I will rotate the groups every two weeks.

I take small group discussion seriously and I expect you to do so also. As noted above, graded essay questions will come either from the reading questions or the small group discussion questions. It is your responsibility to work together to improve your answer to each day's discussion question. Small group guidelines:

1. Be encouraging, friendly, and responsive to other members of your group.
2. Provide positive, constructive feedback to other group members. The goal of the group discussion is not to race to get an answer, but to make sure that everyone in the group understands and participates in the discussion.
3. Insure that everyone in the group has an opportunity to contribute to discussion and the work of the group.
4. Help the group monitor their effectiveness as a team.
5. Stay focused and active. It is your responsibility as group members to ensure that the group time is used constructively. For example, the discussion questions will be open ended. Even if all the group members agree on an answer, someone should play “devil’s advocate” and argue an opposing position so that the discussion stays alive.
6. Raise your hand if you have a question for either instructor. However, you should first address your questions to your fellow group members.

Every two weeks you will receive a group grade based on (1) the intensity of group discussion, (2) your group’s answers to the questions during the full class discussion of the group questions, (3) the group’s written work, and (4) peer evaluations of your group performance. Each grade will be worth 10 points as follows:

√++ (10 points): excellent work, top group in the class

√+ (9.4 points): very good. Group works effectively and with intensity. (top 1/3 of groups)

√ (8.5 points) good work

√- (7.5 points) group discussion needs improvement.

Research Paper

A short 8-page research paper will explore one of the 6 basic questions listed above. In order to conduct research for the paper, you should be familiar with the electronic search engines available through the UNC library page, <http://library.unc.edu/eid/eresources.html>.

A 1-paragraph description of your paper topic is due on 2/27.

A (preliminary) bibliography with at least 10 references is due on 3/20. At least 8 of these references must be either academic journal articles or library books. You are also required to have checked out at least 2 books from the library (include the library call numbers in your bibliography).

A rough draft of your paper is due 3/29. It must be at least 4 pages long.

Your final paper of at least 10 pages is due in class on May 17. Please turn in a physical copy as well as an electronic copy via e-mail or by disk.

Late topics, bibliographies, rough drafts, and final papers will be reduced by **a letter grade per day.**

Final Exam

There will be a final exam consisting of short answer and essay questions. All of the final exam questions will be taken from the reading questions or the in-class group discussion questions.

Grading

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

In-class essays	25 points each, $14 \times 25 = 350$ points total
Reading notes	5 points each, $30 \times 5 = 150$ points total
Group discussion	10 points every two weeks, $8 \times 10 = 80$ points total
Research Paper	100 points
Final Exam	50 points
Total	(630 points)

Grades will be assigned as follows:

93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
below 60	F

(fractions of a point will be rounded down)

Grades will be posted each week on the course web page via secret numbers.

Class Schedule and Reading assignments. [For the updated reading schedule and the reading notes, see the schedule page on the course website: www.unc.edu/~tedmouw/soc112/soc112.html]:

Class/ Date	Reading	Class
1 1/9	Introduction	What is social class?
2	Introductory readings: [46 pages total] Rossides Ch1 “An Introduction to Stratification Analysis” (1-16) William Graham Sumner, <u>What The Social Classes Owe To Each Other</u> . 1901. Chapter 1 “On a New Philosophy: That Poverty is the Best Policy” (13-27) and “Wherefore We Should Love One Another” (153-169)	Class discussion: biopsychological vs. sociocultural explanations
3 1/16	Basic functional and conflict theories of inequality Readings: [33 pages total] “Social Stratification Theory: Early Statements” (83-104) Ch. 4 in Harold Kerbo, <u>Social Stratification and Inequality</u> . 1996. “Some Principles of Stratification”, Davis and Moore, <u>American Sociological Review</u> 7:309-321. Optional: “Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis”, Melvin Tumin, <u>American Sociological Review</u> 18:387-394 (provides a useful summary and critique of the Davis and Moore article).	
4	An example of a stratification system with no mobility: caste in India. Reading: [35 pages total] “The Caste System: India” (26-29) in Daniel Rossides, <u>Social Stratification</u> . 1997. “The Caste System” (35-67) in Egon Bergel, <u>Social Stratification</u> . 1962. Optional: “Caste Society” (68-90) in James Littlejohn, <u>Social Stratification</u> . 1972.	
5 1/23	“Do Social Classes Exist in America?” A basic overview of inequality in America Readings: “Dimensions of Inequality in the United States” (18-47) Ch.2 in Harold Kerbo, <u>Social Stratification and Inequality</u> . 1996	

	Forbes: “The Billionaire Next Door”, 1999	
6	Social Class in America Readings: [60 pages] <u>Class: A Guide Through the American Status System</u> , Paul Fussell, 1983. Chapters 1-3 (15-75)	
7 1/30	Brooks	
8	Brooks parts of Rossides, ch. 10 “The Legitimation of Class Inequality”	
9 2/6	Kingston “Are there social classes in America” [parts of ch1-2] Frank, <u>Choosing the Right Pond</u> , parts of ch1-2	
10	“Are Things getting better or worse?” Sklar, <u>Chaos or Community?</u>	
11 2/13	Cox and Alm, <u>Myths of Rich and Poor</u>	
12	Wolff, <u>Top Heavy</u>	
13 2/20	Schwarz, <u>Illusions of Opportunity</u> and Cox and Alm, <u>Myths of Rich and Poor</u>	
14	Are Workers Exploited? Storming Heaven	
15 2/27	Storming Heaven	
16	Storming Heaven	
17 3/6	Storming Heaven	
18	“Is America a Meritocracy?” Macleod	
	Spring Break	
19 3/20	Macleod NYT magazine article	
20	Human capital theory (Ehrenberg and Smith Ch. 9)	
21 3/27	Kerbo Ch. 6 “Social Mobility” (p. 141-158) Macleod	
22	Cox and Alm, <u>Myths of Rich and Poor</u> , ch4 Rossides Ch. 9 “Class and Education” 176-208	
23 4/3	The Bell Curve and Inequality by Design	

24	The Bell Curve and Inequality by Design	
25 4/10	How much race and gender inequality is there? Cohn, <u>Race, Gender, and Discrimination at Work</u>	
26	Cohn, <u>Race, Gender, and Discrimination at Work</u>	
27 4/17	Conley, <u>Born Black, Living in the Red</u>	
28	Conley, <u>Born Black, Living in the Red</u>	
29 4/24	Why is there poverty in a country as wealthy as America? Kerbo, Ch. 9 Cox and Alm, “Somebody always flipped hamburgers”	
30	Edin and Lein, <u>Making Ends Meet</u> Mayer, <u>What Money Can’t Buy</u>	
31 5/3	Edin and Lein, <u>Making Ends Meet</u> Duncan, “The Consequences of Growing up Poor”	