

Sociology 515: Social Stratification

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Course Description

This seminar explores processes of stratification in the United States and other affluent countries. The course is organized into two parts, which correspond to two basic approaches to the study of stratification pursued by sociologists and other social scientists. One is to focus on the structure of positions in the distribution of earnings, income, wealth, and so on. Research following this approach examines the causes of over-time trends and cross-country differences in the overall degree of inequality. The other approach focuses on how people are allocated to positions in the distribution. Research in this tradition assesses the effects of education, intelligence, family background, neighborhood conditions, gender, race, industry of employment, union membership, aspirations, ties/connections, and other factors on attainment.

This is the department's introductory graduate course in stratification. Courses that directly complement this one are: (1) Soc 517: Race and Ethnic Relations; (2) Soc 518: Race, Gender, and Economic Inequality. Other closely related courses include: (3) Soc 514: Bureaucratic Organizations; (4) Soc 516: Schooling and Society; (5) Soc 520: Political Sociology.

Requirements

Readings. The required readings for the course are listed in the schedule below. All of the articles and book chapters are available via E-reserve. To access them, go to www.library.emory.edu, click on "Reserve Desk" at the top of the screen, type in SOC515, and click on "Course Number." The books are available at the Druid Hills Bookstore and on reserve at Woodruff Library (also, if you prefer, through various online bookstores). They are:

- Slesnick, Daniel. 2001. *Consumption and Social Welfare*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Keister, Lisa A. 2000. *Wealth in America: Trends in Wealth Inequality*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Mayer, Susan E. 1996. *What Money Can't Buy: Family Income and Children's Life Chances*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne and Greg J. Duncan, eds. 1997. *Neighborhood Poverty: Context and Consequences for Children*. Volume 1. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Wilson, William Julius. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Knopf.
- Conley, Dalton. 1999. *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- England, Paula. 1992. *Comparable Worth: Theories and Evidence*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

I have also listed some recommended readings for each topic. These may prove helpful in preparing your presentations and/or if you are planning to take the preliminary exam in Stratification.

Grading. Class participation 20%; presentations 30% (15% each); book review 10%; paper 40%.

Presentations. Each week one or more students will make a 20- to 30-minute presentation on the readings. Each student will make two presentations during the semester. The presentations must be written up and distributed to everyone in class, preferably via e-mail, by 5:00 pm on the Monday before the class meeting. They should be no more than 4,000 words long. The object of the presentation is to highlight some of the central issues addressed in the week's readings, to locate the authors' positions vis-à-vis those issues, to comment critically on the state of the debate and the value of the individual contributions to it, and to raise questions for class discussion. Of course, you can't possibly cover all of the conceivable issues and need not place equal emphasis on each of the assigned readings. Try to avoid long and winding introductions and summaries of the readings. I strongly prefer that the presentation be *organized around an argument* — a statement about the most fruitful way to study a topic at hand, an adoption of a particular position in a debate, or a critique of some existing line of argument. If you don't have an argument, get one!

Book review. A review of no more than 1,000 words of one of the required or recommended books. The review is due in class the week the book is listed in the schedule below. You might find it helpful to consult recent issues of *Contemporary Sociology*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, or *Social Forces* for examples.

Paper. A 20- to 25-page paper on a topic of your choice related to the course material. The paper is due Friday, December 14. You must get your topic approved by me no later than November 14. The paper can be either an empirical study or a research proposal. If you choose to do a research proposal, the paper should include: (1) a theory/literature review section that discusses various theoretical perspectives and lists propositions about the empirical outcomes that would be predicted by those perspectives; (2) a description of realistic data and methods that would be appropriate for answering your research question, including empirical indicators that would operationalize the key concepts.

Schedule

1. Introduction (Sept. 5)

If you have no prior familiarity with regression analysis, read the first two chapters of Paul Allison's *Multiple Regression: A Primer* (available on E-reserve).

Part I The Structure of Inequality

2. Earnings and Income (Sept. 12)

How should we measure the distribution of earnings and income? By virtually any measure, the degree of earnings and income inequality in the U.S. has increased since the early 1970s. Why? Inequality varies markedly across affluent countries. What accounts for this variation? Are the factors that explain the rise in inequality in the U.S. relevant for understanding cross-national differences?

- Ryscavage, Paul. 1999. *Income Inequality in America*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe. Chapters 1-3 (pp. 3-9, 24-72).
- Morris, Martina and Bruce Western. 1999. "Inequality in Earnings at the Close of the Twentieth Century." *Annual Review of Sociology* 25:623-657.
- Alderson, Arthur S. and François Nielsen. 2002. "Globalization and the Great U-Turn: Income Inequality Trends in 16 OECD Countries." *American Journal of Sociology*, forthcoming.
- Recommended: Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1990. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 3.
- Recommended: Goodin, Robert E., Bruce Headey, Ruud Muffels, and Henk-Jan Dirven. 1999. *The Real Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-9, 16.
- Recommended: Gustafsson, Bjorn and Mats Johansson. 1999. "In Search of Smoking Guns: What Makes Income Inequality Vary over Time in Different Countries?" *American Sociological Review* 64:585-605.
- Recommended: Harrison, Bennett and Barry Bluestone. 1988. *The Great U-Turn*. New York: Basic Books.
- Recommended: Nielsen, François and Arthur S. Alderson. 2001. "Trends in Income Inequality in the United States." Pp. 355-385 in *Sourcebook on Labor Markets: Evolving Structures and Processes*, edited by Ivar Berg and Arne L. Kalleberg. New York: Plenum.
- Recommended: Rueda, David and Jonas Pontusson. 2000. "Wage Inequality and Varieties of Capitalism." *World Politics* 52:350-383.
- Recommended: Wallerstein, Michael. 1999. "Wage-Setting Institutions and Pay Inequality in Advanced Industrial Societies." *American Journal of Political Science* 43:649-680.

3. Wealth (Sept. 19)

The bulk of research on the structure of inequality has focused on earnings and incomes. But is that the appropriate focus? This week we will consider an important alternative: wealth.

- Wolff, Edward N. 1998. "Recent Trends in the Size Distribution of Household Wealth." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12(3):131-150.
- Keister, *Wealth in America*, chapters 1-3, 7-10.
- *Recommended*: Keister, Lisa A. and Stephanie Moller. 2000. "Wealth Inequality in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:63-81.

4. Consumption and Basic Material Needs (Sept. 26)

According to Daniel Slesnick: "Consumption provides a more accurate indicator of welfare, and its substitution for income leads to dramatically different conclusions. Consumption-based estimates of the standard of living show substantial growth, rather than stagnation, since 1970. Inequality and poverty rates based on households' consumption levels are substantially lower than those reported by the Bureau of the Census. The long-run trends of inequality and poverty in the United States differ markedly from those obtained using income as a measure of household welfare." Is this true? If so, what are the implications for our understanding of living standards and stratification?

- Slesnick, *Consumption and Social Welfare*, chapters 1, 5-8 (you can skim pp. 88-98).
- Mayer, Susan E. and Christopher Jencks. 1993. "Recent Trends in Economic Inequality in the United States: Income versus Expenditures versus Material Well-being." Pp. 121-203 in *Poverty and Prosperity in the USA in the Late Twentieth Century*, edited by Dimitri B. Papadimitriou and Edward N. Wolff. New York: St. Martin's Press.

5. Mobility (Oct. 3)

Growing income and wealth inequality could potentially be offset by increased mobility. If people have greater capability of moving up over time, then an increase in inequality might not seem so objectionable. Gottschalk and Danziger offer a useful metaphor: a group of people who stay in a hotel with rooms that vary widely in quality. "The absolute well-being of the hotel guests is affected by three distinct changes that can occur: upgrading the furnishings of all rooms (growth [assuming some trickle-down effect]), redistributing furniture among rooms (changes in inequality), or reshuffling people among rooms (mobility)." There are two main ways to explore mobility: between generations (intergenerational) and within generations (intragenerational).

- Ganzeboom, Harry B. G., Donald J. Treiman, and Wout C. Ultee. 1991. "Comparative Intergenerational Stratification Research: Three Generations and Beyond." *Annual Review of Sociology* 17:277-302.
- Erikson, Robert and John H. Goldthorpe. 1991 (1994). "Trends in Class Mobility: The Postwar European Experience." Pp. 289-316 in *Social Stratification*, edited by David B. Grusky. 1st edition. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Hauser, Robert M. 1998. "Intergenerational Economic Mobility in the United States: Measures, Differentials, and Trends." CDE Working Paper No. 98-12.

Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Available at www.ssc.wisc.edu/cde.

- Gottschalk, Peter and Sheldon Danziger. 1998. "Family Income Mobility — How Much Is There and Has It Changed?" Pp. 92-111 in *The Inequality Paradox*, edited by James A. Auerbach and Richard S. Belous. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- *Recommended*: Bernhardt, Annette, Martina Morris, Mark S. Handcock, and Marc A. Scott. 2001. *Divergent Paths: Economic Mobility in the New American Labor Market*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- *Recommended*: Featherman, David L. and Robert M. Hauser. 1978. *Opportunity and Change*. Academic Press.
- *Recommended*: OECD. 1996. "Earnings Inequality, Low-Paid Employment, and Earnings Mobility." *OECD Employment Outlook*, July, pp. 59-108.

Part II Who Gets Ahead? Determinants of Attainment

6. The Neoclassical Economic and Status Attainment Approaches (Oct. 10)

We now shift to the question of how people are allocated to positions in the distribution of occupations, earnings, income, and wealth. We begin with two influential perspectives that focus on differences in individual traits and capacities. One is the neoclassical economic view, which contends that a person's productivity is the principal determinant of her/his earnings. This leads to a focus on various sources of "human capital" such as education, training, and work experience. Within sociology the status attainment approach was the dominant research tradition in the 1960s and 1970s. Status attainment researchers broaden the analytical focus to include factors such as socioeconomic background, ability, expectations of "significant others," and aspirations.

- Sørensen, Aage B. and Arne L. Kalleberg. 1981 (1994). "The Neoclassical Theory of Earnings Determination." Excerpt from "An Outline of a Theory of the Matching of Persons to Jobs." P. 365 in *Social Stratification*, edited by David B. Grusky. 1st edition. Boulder, CO: Westview. (Originally pp. 55-56 in *Sociological Perspectives on Labor Markets*, edited by Ivar Berg. New York: Academic Press.)
- Mincer, Jacob. 1979 (1993). "Human Capital and Earnings." Pp. 69-97 in *Studies in Human Capital: Collected Essays of Jacob Mincer*. London: Edward Elgar.
- Beeghley, Leonard. 2000. "Status Attainment." Excerpt from *The Structure of Social Stratification in the United States*, 3rd edition, pp. 58-63. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Blau, Peter M. and Otis Dudley Duncan. 1967 (1994). "The Process of Stratification." Pp. 317-29 in *Social Stratification*, edited by David B. Grusky. 1st edition. Boulder, CO: Westview. (Originally pp. 163-77, 199-205 in Blau and Duncan, *The American Occupational Structure*. New York: Free Press.)
- Jencks, Christopher, et al. 1972. "Income Inequality." Chapter 7 in *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*, pp. 209-46. New York: Basic Books.

- Sewell, William H., Archibald O. Haller, and Alejandro Portes. 1969. "The Educational and Early Occupational Attainment Process." *American Sociological Review* 34:82-92.
- MacLeod, Jay. 1987 (1994). "Ain't No Makin' It: Leveled Aspirations in a Low-Income Neighborhood." Pp. 347-358 in *Social Stratification*, edited by David B. Grusky. 1st edition. Boulder, CO: Westview. (Originally pp. 1-2, 4-5, 8, 60-63, 78-79, 81, 137-141, 162 in MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It*. Boulder, CO: Westview.)
- *Recommended*: Becker, Gary S. 1993. *Human Capital*. 3rd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- *Recommended*: Sewell, William H. and Robert M. Hauser. 1993. "A Review of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study of Social and Psychological Factors in Aspirations and Achievements 1963-1992." CDE Working Paper No. 92-01. Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Available at: www.ssc.wisc.edu/cde.

7. Characteristics of Jobs, Worker Power, and Matching Processes (Oct. 24)

In the 1970s, dissatisfaction with the neoclassical and status attainment perspectives' focus on individual characteristics prompted the development of several alternative approaches to labor market attainment. "New structuralist" researchers emphasize the characteristics of positions, such as the type of industry one works in and whether or not one is a member of a union. Other researchers highlight the processes through which individuals get matched to jobs.

- Kalleberg, Arne L., Michael Wallace, and Robert P. Althausen. 1981. "Economic Segmentation, Worker Power, and Income Inequality." *American Journal of Sociology* 87:651-683.
- Smith, Michael R. 1990. "What Is New in 'New Structuralist' Analyses of Earnings?" *American Sociological Review* 55:827-841.
- Sørensen, Aage B. 1990. "Throwing the Sociologists Out? A Reply to Smith." *American Sociological Review* 55:842-845.
- Granovetter, Mark. 1973 (2001). "The Strength of Weak Ties." Pp. 447-451 in *Social Stratification*, edited by David B. Grusky. 2nd edition. Boulder, CO: Westview. (Originally pp. 1361-66, 1371-73, 1378-80 in "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78.)
- *Recommended*: Baron, James N. 1984. "Organizational Perspectives on Stratification." *Annual Review of Sociology* 10:37-69.
- *Recommended*: Wright, Erik Olin and Luca Perrone. 1977. "Marxist Class Categories and Income Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 42:32-55.

8. Intelligence, Schooling, and Noncognitive Skills (Oct. 31)

Publication of *The Bell Curve* in 1994 reignited long-standing debates about the role of intelligence in determining attainment and the role of genetics in determining intelligence.

- Herrnstein, Richard J. and Charles Murray. 1994. *The Bell Curve*, pp. 1-24, 91-115, 117-125, 127-142. New York: Free Press.
- Fischer, Claude, Michael Hout, Martin Sanchez Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss. 1996. Chapters 1-3 in *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*, pp. 3-69. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Korenman, Sanders and Christopher Winship. 2000. "A Reanalysis of *The Bell Curve*: Intelligence, Family Background, and Schooling." Pp. 136-178 in *Meritocracy and Economic Inequality*, edited by Kenneth Arrow, Samuel Bowles, and Steven Durlauf. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ashenfelter, Orley and Cecilia Rouse. 2000. "Schooling, Intelligence, and Income in America." Pp. 89-117 in *Meritocracy and Economic Inequality*, edited by Kenneth Arrow, Samuel Bowles, and Steven Durlauf. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Dunifon, Rachel, Greg J. Duncan, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. 2002. "As Ye Sweep, So Shall Ye Reap." *American Economic Review* (Papers and Proceedings) 91:150-154.
- *Recommended*: Hauser, Robert M., John Robert Warren, Min-Hsiung Huang, and Wendy Y. Carter. 2000. "Occupational Status, Education, and Social Mobility in the Meritocracy." Pp. 179-229 in *Meritocracy and Economic Inequality*, edited by Kenneth Arrow, Samuel Bowles, and Steven Durlauf. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- *Recommended*: Hauser, Robert M. 1995. "Review of *The Bell Curve*." *Contemporary Sociology* 24:149-153.

9. Parental Income and Traits (Nov. 7)

To what extent does growing up in a low-income household limit life chances? What are the mechanisms through which such an effect operates? Is it possible to separate the influence of low income from that of parental traits? If so, which turns out to be more important?

- Corcoran, Mary. 1995. "Rags to Rags: Poverty and Mobility in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 21:237-267.
- Mayer, *What Money Can't Buy*.
- *Recommended*: Duncan, Greg J. and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, eds. 1997. *Consequences of Growing Up Poor*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

10. Neighborhoods (Nov. 14)

How profoundly does neighborhood poverty endanger the well-being and development of children and adolescents? Is the influence of neighborhood more powerful than that of the family and other factors?

- Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, eds., *Neighborhood Poverty*.
- *Recommended*: Furstenberg, Frank F., Jr., Thomas D. Cook, Jacquelynne Eccles, Glen H. Elder, Jr., and Arnold Sameroff. 1999. *Managing to Make It: Urban Families and Adolescent Success*. University of Chicago Press.

11. Cities (Nov. 21)

The high concentration of black poverty and joblessness in a number of inner cities is perhaps the most important racial problem we face as a society. What are the causes of growing African American joblessness in urban areas? What are the connections between joblessness and neighborhood decay, family breakdown, racial residential segregation, and poverty?

- Wilson, *When Work Disappears*, Introduction and chapters 1-5.
- *Recommended*: Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2.
- *Recommended*: Adelman, Robert M. and Charles Jaret. 1999. "Poverty, Race, and U.S. Metropolitan Social and Economic Structure." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 21:35-56.
- *Recommended*: Rankin, Bruce H. and James M. Quane. 2000. "Neighborhood Poverty and the Social Isolation of Inner-City African American Families." *Social Forces* 79:139-164.
- *Recommended*: Massey, Douglas S. and Nancy A. Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 4.

12. Race, Class, and Wealth Inequality (Nov. 28)

Incomes and occupational status have been improving steadily for the black middle class, but the racial gap in wealth remains enormous. What are the principal causes of this gap? What effect does the wealth gap have on other aspects of racial inequality, such as education, employment, and earnings?

- Conley, *Being Black, Living in the Red*. Focus on chapters 1-4.
- *Recommended*: Oliver, Melvin L. and Thomas M. Shapiro. 1995. *Black Wealth/White Wealth*. New York: Routledge.

13. Gender Inequality in the Labor Market (Dec. 5)

England's book provides an excellent summary of various theoretical approaches to gender differences in occupations and earnings along with an influential empirical analysis. The article by Blau and Kahn article examines the state of current knowledge on these processes in the United States. Gornick's chapter explores cross-country differences.

- England, *Comparable Worth*, chapters 1-3.
- Blau, Francine D. and Lawrence M. Kahn. 2000. "Gender Differences in Pay." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14(4):75-99.
- Gornick, Janet C. 1999. "Gender Equality in the Labour Market." Pp. 210-242 in *Gender and Welfare State Regimes*, edited by Diane Sainsbury. New York: Oxford University Press.
- *Recommended*: See Irene Browne's syllabus for Sociology 518.

