



Western University
Sociology 3352G
Family inequalities:
Diverging Destinies of the Rich and Poor
Winter 2022
Wednesdays 9:30-12:30, In-Person

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Course Description:

Economic polarization is a defining feature of North American life today. Social, economic, and cultural forces are leading to two different trajectories for children. One trajectory is defined by birth within the context of marriage, increases in parental resources, and favorable educational, health, and occupational outcomes for children. The other trajectory is defined by non-marital birth, growing up in single-parent households or grandparent households, limited resources, and unfavorable educational, health, and occupational outcomes for children. These diverging destinies have been the subject of interest for many family demographers.

The purpose of this course is to (1) describe social class disparities in children's family backgrounds, (2) identify mechanisms contributing to children's diverging destinations, (3) describe educational, health, and family outcomes for children in the two groups, and (4) assess how socioeconomic resources are being passed from one generation to the next.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Gain insights about patterns and trends in socioeconomic inequalities for children
- Identify the social mechanisms contributing to socioeconomic inequalities
- Recognize how economic socio-cultural, and behavioral factors work together to generate family inequality by race, ethnicity, and nationality

Prerequisite(s):

Enrollment in the 3rd or 4th-year student. This course may be of interest to Sociology Majors interested in social inequalities and will be part of the Health, Aging, and Population Concentration. It may be a nice follow-up to the family course.

Unless you fulfill either requisite for this course or written special permission to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees if you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Lecture format:

- 9:30-10:45am: Lecture
- 10:45-10:50: Break
- 10:50-11:50: Discussion.

Required Text(s):

All other course materials can be downloaded from jstor.org or scholar.google.com. You can download them from the UWO library; type the journal name, and once you go to the journal type the article name, and log in using your library credentials.

Method of Evaluation:

Below is a detailed description of the work requirements of this course. You have two options.

Grades: Two options for the final grade

Option 1.

- A) Midterm (40%)
- B) Final exam (60%)

Option 2.

- A) Midterm (31%)
- B) Final exam (38%)
- C) Paper (31%)

There are two, possible 3, components of evaluation

- **In-class exam -- Midterm**

- (1) It will be 5-6 short answer questions (subject to my discretion).
- (2) You will have 3 hours to complete the exam and a grace period of 30 minutes to turn in your exam.
- (3) After 210 minutes from the start time of the exam, I will deduct a point for every late minute.
- (4) You will be graded on a curve. Your relative performance matters.
- (5) It will be marked by a grader.
- (6) Documentation
 - a. If you are unable to take this exam, you need to go to Academic Counselling or the Dean's Office to obtain the necessary documentation to take the make-up exam. You can make up the exam. The make-up exam will be held during the departmental make-up exam date.
 - b. If the student also misses both the actual and make-up exam due to a documented reason, then you need to write a **3,500**-word essay on a topic of the instructor's choice. This paper will be due on the last day of class (i.e., April 12 by 5:00 pm).
 - i. For students to be the beneficiary of this policy, they must obtain documentation from Academic Counselling, the Dean's Office, or the Chair of the Department of Sociology at UWO. Verbal communication to the instructor does not meet the

requirement, nor does a doctor's note sent to the instructor. Notes from parents also do not meet this requirement.

- c. In cases where there is no approved justification for the absence, the student will receive a grade of zero on the exam.
- d. Last semester, Accessible Education issued general and broad excuses lasting the entire semester (e.g., flexibility required on all deadlines). Some students misused the broad excuse to request close to 10 extensions. The class is graded on a curve. Such an excuse provides an unfair advantage for some students over others. To avoid this unfair advantage, I am going to request a specific excuse for each exam. Please ask Academic Counselling and/or Accessible Education to write you a specific excuse listing the exact dates for which you should be excused and what type of accommodation you require (e.g., 10 minutes more/60 minutes).
- e. The date for exam 1 is **February 23, 2022**, between 9:30-11:30 am.

Final exam during exam week

Same rules as above, except in three ways:

- 8-9 questions
- Duration: 3 hours. You have a thirty-minute grace period to turn in the exam in case you run into technological problems.
- Same rule as those listed for the in-class exam.
- After the 210-minute mark from the start time of the exam, I will deduct a point for every late minute.
- Will be held during the final exam week defined by Registrar's Office.

Optional Research paper

- **Length:** 1500-word essay
- Detailed description and rubric will be offered to the student three weeks ahead of the last class.
- The student can send me a draft ahead of time and ask for feedback. Some students ask for line byline feedback. There are two problems: (a) fairness and (b) handicapping your critical thinking and analytical skills. I will only offer 1 feedback/student and provide "general" advice.
- If you are planning to submit the paper, please fill out the Assignment section titled "Paper?" by March 30th, 2021 at 5:30 pm. You just have to indicate "yes".
- These essays are due in-class on **April 6, 2022, at 9:30 am.** You will have a grace period of 120 hours. No essays can be submitted after April 11, 2021, at 9:30 am.

Extra Credit: Participation

- (1) Participation is an important aspect of all my classes. It is also the part that students find very enjoyable. It also helps develop mastery in verbal skill sets necessary to help students perform better in job interviews, team meetings upon employment, and when they enroll in law/graduate schools. We are, however, living in the era of COVID-19 and many of you are logging in

remotely. It would be unfair to penalize a student's internet connection is not working, but it would also be unfair for me to penalize students who participate actively. Below is a "hybrid" approach to ensure fairness for all students.

- (2) *Expectations*: You will receive a rubric and will be graded accordingly. You must fill out the weekly inventory in the Assignment Section in OWL to receive any marks.
- (3) *Grades*: Up to 10 percentage points can be added to your exam.
- (4) Some students are very verbose. Getting to the point quickly is an important skill to develop for the job market. I want you to try to summarize your point of view in less than 2 minutes unless I prompt you to elaborate.
- (5) Some students have a fear of public speaking. I encourage students to try to verbalize their point of view. At the beginning of class, the students can use the chat function in zoom where they can type their remarks. The remark has to be less than 3 sentences.
- (6) This is a class where we discuss structural correlates of inequality within and across families. It is not the setting to engage in hate speech regarding racial minority groups, gender minority families, etc. Repeated discussions of your political perspectives are unwelcome and will be considered "disruptive behavior".
- (7) To ensure that our class is a pleasant learning environment for everyone, there is a zero-tolerance policy towards disruptive behavior in class. The first time - you will receive a warning in writing; the second time- you will forfeit your right to any extra credit marks. The third time – you will be asked to leave the class and I will request that the student be considered for disciplinary action. It is at my sole discretion to determine what is and what is not disruptive.
- (8) This is an extra credit assignment. I will not offer any alternate assignments for this portion of the class. If you cannot participate, please forego the participation mark and do well in the exam.

Grades

- Following the Sociology department's guidelines, the average final grade for this class will be likely to fall between 80 percent. The standard deviation will likely fall between 3 to 4 percentage points. The instructor reserves the right for some discretion about both the class average and standard deviation depending on class performance.

Important note: For Options 1 and 2, you need to complete at least 2 assignments, even with an excuse. If a student is unable to complete 2 or more assignments, then he/she will (a) receive an incomplete in the course and needs to retake the course in the future or (b) write a **7,000-** word essay addressing the questions posted for the reaction paper. This essay will be graded in absolute terms. If you foresee having to miss more than 2 assignments, please consider dropping the course before March 14, 2021 (i.e., the official date for dropping the course). It is the student's responsibility to double-check the exact date of the drop with his/her academic counselor.

How to Contact Me:

E-mail is the best way to contact me. During weekdays, allow for 24 hours until response. During weekends, allow for 48 hours until response.

Grade negotiation

The grader (who has never met you) marks the exam. I review the exams to ensure that they are graded reliably and validly and decide on a curve. The two-tiered process ensures greater accuracy. Research suggests that the likelihood of approaching faculty to verbally negotiate grades are lower for women than for men, more disadvantaged than advantaged students, younger relative to older students, and visible minority relative to other students. As someone committed to fairness, I will not entertain verbal grade negotiations. Within 14 days of receiving your grade, you must write a memo contesting a section of the grade; write down what your answer was, indicate what the written answer was, and explain why your grade deserves to be raised. This approach is taken to ensure that the process is fair and a learning experience. Without proper documentation, I cannot excuse students from assignments on grounds of compassion. It is also worth noting that I cannot alter grades on grounds of compassion.

If you submit another student's grade as an excuse, I will review both student's grades. Simply put, Student B's answer and grade can serve as a rationale for why Student A's grades deserve to be raised, but also a rationale for why Student B's grades should be lowered. Student B – proceed at your own risk.

I am a true believer in meritocracy and fairness of opportunity. Writing me that you need to go to law school or graduate school and asking that I raise your grade is not a valid reason why your grade should be raised, nor is saying that you are usually an "A" student.

Bottom line: To contest your grade, there needs to be an academic basis for why you feel like you need a higher grade.

IMPORTANT POLICIES

Standard Western Policies except for Policies for Assignment Deadlines

Policies for Assignment Deadlines:

If you miss a due date for an assignment due to illness or any other unforeseen reason, you must notify your Academic Counselor within 48 hours. Please follow the Academic Counselor's instructions about proper documentation. For example, if your problem is medical in nature, you should hand in a doctor's note to the Academic Counselor for the due date of the assignment. If your Academic Counselor agrees that your reasons are legitimate and are supported by your medical doctor's documentation, you will be allowed to write a makeup exam.

- Every component of this course is over 30% so you cannot use SRA

- With a valid excuse from Academic Counselling, you can take the midterm exam during the department's collective midterm exam time. If the student also has a valid excuse for the collective departmental make-up time, the student needs to turn in a **3,500-word** essay on a topic designated by the instructor to be graded in absolute terms by the last day of class. I will not provide a rubric for this assignment.
- All students need to take the final exam during the time designated by the Registrar's Office. If a student has valid documentation from Academic Counselling, you can take a make-up final, which will be comprised of a single essay question on a topic of the instructor's choice. The length of the make-up exam is **3,500 words**. The due date will be decided by the instructor in consultation with the Undergraduate Chair, Chair, and/or Dean's Office. The assignment will be graded in absolute terms. I will not provide a rubric for this assignment.
- If students cannot take the midterm and final exams by the final exam date, they will receive a grade of incomplete. Their ability to not receive an "F" will be contingent on their completion of the **7,000-word** assignment listed above by a deadline specified by the instructor in consultation with the undergraduate chair, chair, and/or the Dean's Office.

A Note on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offense (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is submitted to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf. Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html.

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offenses are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western (www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a *Self-Reported Absence (SRA)* form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the [Senate policy](#) are met. Two important exceptions to this rule: SRAs will NOT be allowed for final examinations or assessments worth more than 30% of a given course. Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a [Student Medical Certificate](#) (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds) to your Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to variation)

- Note: Current events readings will be assigned the week before.

WEEK (1/5): Introduction

- Orientation to course requirements and schedule

WEEKS (1/12): Diverging Destinies for American Children

- Lesthaeghe, R. (2014). The second demographic transition: A concise overview of its development. *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111(51): 18112-18115.
- McLanahan, S. (2004). Diverging destinies: How children are faring under the second demographic transition. *Demography* 41, 607–627.

WEEKS (1/19): Diverging Childbearing and Childrearing Context by Race/Ethnicity and SES

- Sweeney M., K. Raley. (2014). “Race, Ethnicity, and the Changing Context of Childbearing in the United States”. *Annual Review Sociology*. 40:539-558.
- Manlove J., S. Ryan, E. Wildsmith, K. Franzetta. (2010). The relationship context of nonmarital childbearing in the U.S. *Demographic Research* 23:615-654.
- Gibson, Christina, Kathryn Edin, and Sara McLanahan. (2005). “High Hopes but Even Higher Expectations: A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of the Marriage Plans of Unmarried Couples who are New Parents.” *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 67(5): 301-312.

WEEKS (1/26): Divergent Parenting by SES, Race, and Immigration Status

- Cooper, K. (2020). Are Poor Parents *Poor* Parents? The Relationship between Poverty and Parenting among Mothers in the United Kingdom. *Sociology* 55(2): 349-383.
- Evans GW. The environment of childhood poverty. 2004. *American Psychologist* 59(2):77-92.
- Nomaguchi, K. and A. House. (2013). Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Maternal Parenting Stress: The Role of Structural Disadvantages and Parenting Values. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 54(3): 386-404.
- Lareau, A. (2012). [*Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*](#).

WEEKS (2/2): Childhood Poverty and Implications for Childhood Health

- Gage, T. F. Fang, E. O’Neill, and G. DiRienzo. (2013). Maternal Education, Birth Weight, and Infant Mortality in the United States. *Demography* 50(2): 615-535.

- Frost, M., R. Forste, and D. Haas. (2005). [Maternal education and child nutritional status in Bolivia: finding the links](#)". *Social Science & Medicine* 60: 395-407.
- Mcleod J.D., M. J. Shanahan. (1996). Trajectories of poverty and children's mental health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 37(3):207-20

WEEKS (2/9): Childhood Poverty and Education

- Guo, G. and K. Harris. (2000). The Mechanisms Mediating the effects on Poverty on Children's Intellectual Development. *Demography*7: 41-447. <https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.2000.0005>
- Isaac, J. (2012). [Starting School at a Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children](#). *Brookings Institute*.
- Duncan, G., K. Magnuson, A. Kalil, K. Ziol-Guest. (2012). The Importance of Early Childhood Poverty. *Social Indicators Research* 108, 87-98.

WEEK (2/16). READING WEEK (It ends on 2/21).

WEEK (2/23): EXAM

WEEKS (3/2). Transition into Adulthood: Education

- Black, S. and A. Sufi. (2002). [Who Goes to College? Differential Enrollment by Race and Family Background](#). NBER Working Paper 9310.
- Brand, Jennie E., and Juli Simon Thomas. 2014. "Job Displacement Among Single Mothers: Effects on Children's Outcomes in Young Adulthood." *American Journal of Sociology* 119(4):955-1001
- Brand, Jennie E., and Yu Xie. 2010. "Who Benefits Most from College? Evidence for Negative Selection in Heterogeneous Economic Returns to Higher Education." *American Sociological Review* 75(2):273-302

WEEK (3/9). Individual workshop on how to improve your grades.

WEEK (3/16, 3/23). Family structure and Transition into Adulthood

- Musick, K., P. England, S. Edgington, and N. Kangas. (2009). Education Differences in Intended and Unintended Fertility. *Social Forces* 88(2): 543–572.
- Xie, Y., J. Raymo. K. Goyette, and A. Thornton. (2003). Economic Potential and Entry into Marriage and Cohabitation. *Demography* 40(2): 351-367.

- Edin, K. and M. Kefalas. (2011). *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

WEEK (3/30). Grandparents and Diverging Destinies

- Amarin, M. 2019. "Are Grandparents a blessing or a burden? Multigenerational coresidence and child-related spending. *Social Science Research* 80: 132-144.
- Pilkauskas, Natasha V., and Christina Cross. 2018. "[Beyond the Nuclear Family: Trends in Children Living in Shared Households.](#)" *Demography*, 55(6): 2283-2297.

Week (4/6). Diverging destinies and health

- Thomeen, M., J. Yahirun, and A. Colon-Lopez. "How families matter for health inequality during the COVID-19 pandemic".
- Lawrence, E., S. Molborn, R. Hummer. 2017. [Health lifestyles across the transition to adulthood: Implications for Health.](#) *Social Science and Medicine* 913:23-32.
- Berger, L. and M. Carlson. (2020). Family Policy and Complex Contemporary Families: A Decade in Review and Implications for the Next Decade of Research and Policy Practice. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12650>

Optional paper due