



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 3347G-001
Current Issues in Stratification
Winter 2024
In-person

Instructor: Anders Holm

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This is a DRAFT only. Please see the course site for the final version.

Course Description: Social inequality is a fundamental and contentious issue in almost all societies that exist and that have ever existed. Together with social stratification it forms one of the most studied issues in the discipline of sociology. Although some patterns of social inequality are specific to a certain country or region due to unique historical experience, there are some common social structural factors explaining the root causes of inequality. In this class we will discuss many causes and consequences of inequality both in Canada and in global contexts. We will study the distribution of wealth, power and influence; how these factors that influence inequality can be measured; and how their relative importance can change.

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third year or above.

Unless you have either the prerequisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, 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 in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Anti-requisite(s): None

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

The course aims at giving a broad overview of inequality and social stratification with a special focus on the importance of social class and income. Also, there is a focus on how society has changes over times in terms of unequal distribution of resources and the links to stratification. Further, the student should get a good understanding of the mechanisms generating inequality and stratification. There is an emphasis on understating the logics of mechanisms leading to inequality and stratification with special emphasis on the importance of education. The student will learn to read and argue from graphic illustrations of the relationship between quantities capturing inequality and stratification across time and societies.

Course Material:

The readings for this class are excerpts from the book: Grusky, D. B. (ed.) *Social Stratification, Class, Race and Gender in Sociological Perspective* (5th ed.), Westview Press. It is available at the UWO bookstore. In addition, research paper and articles will be used. They are available for download via OWL.

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

There will be one midterm test, an essay assignment, and a final exam.

Evaluation Breakdown:

Midterm test (February 29). 3 hours, Multiple choice, and short answers, in person (in class). Weight = 33.3%

Student essay (Due March 21). Take home. Weight = 33.3%

Final Examination: (Final exam period, TBA) 3 hours. Multiple choice and short answers, in person, date: TBA, Weight = 33.3%

Essay:

Each student is expected to write a research essay for the course. Students are required to pick a topic of their choice that deals with social inequality, either globally or in Canada. A range of possible topics will also be presented in class. The instructor must approve the topic. The essay should not exceed 7 pages and be double-space typed. The essay should specify the main questions raised; begin with a thesis statement; contain a relevant literature review; and conclude with your position on the topic. The instructor will hand out detailed instructions for the essays.

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online.

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible.

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam. Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

Course Schedule and Readings:

Jan. 11. Introduction.

Introduction David B. Grusky and Katherine R. Weishaar: The Questions We Ask About Inequality

David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi: The Stories We Tell About Inequality

Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore: Some Principles of Stratification

Jan. 18. Introduction to mechanisms of stratification

David B. Grusky and Katherine R. Weishaar A: Compressed History of Inequality

Melvin M. Tumin: Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis

Claude S. Fischer, Michael Hout, Martín Sánchez, Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss: Inequality by Design

Jan. 25. Trends I

Anthony B. Atkinson, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez: Top Incomes in the Long Run of History

Robert Frank Why: Is Income Inequality Growing?

Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson: Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States

Gøsta Esping-Andersen and John Myles: The Welfare State and Redistribution

Feb. 1. Trends II

Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz: The Race between Education and Technology

Bruce Western and Jake Rosenfeld: Unions, Norms and the Rise in the U.S. Wage Inequality

Yujia Liu and David B. Grusky: The Winners of the Third Industrial Revolution

Feb. 8. Segregation

Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton: American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass

Stefanie DeLuca and James E. Rosenbaum: Does Changing Neighborhoods Change Lives?

Robert Sampson: Legacies of Inequality

Feb. 15. Mechanisms I

James J. Heckman: Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children

Greg J. Duncan and Katherine Magnuson: The Long Reach of Early Childhood Poverty

Gary W. Evans, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, and Pamela Kato Klebanov: Stressing Out the Poor

Feb. 22. Reading week

Feb. 29. Midterm Exam

Mar 7. Mechanisms II

Peter M. Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, with the collaboration of Andrea Tyree: The Process of Stratification

Christopher Jencks, Marshall Smith, Henry Acland, Mary Jo Bane, David Cohen, Herbert Gintis, Barbara Heyns, and Stephan Michelson: Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America

Mar. 14. Mobility I

David L. Featherman and Robert M. Hauser: A Refined Model of Occupational Mobility

Richard Breen: Social Mobility in Europe

Jan O. Jonsson, David B. Grusky, Matthew Di Carlo, and Reinhard Pollak: It's a Decent Bet That Our Children Will Be Professors Too

Mar. 21. Mobility II (assignment due)

Gary Solon: Intergenerational Income Mobility

John Ermisch, Markus Jäntti, Timothy Smeeding, and James A. Wilson: Advantage in Comparative Perspective

Mar. 28. Education I

Richard Breen and John H. Goldthorpe: Explaining Educational Differentials

Sean F. Reardon: The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor

Richard Breen, Ruud Luijkx, Walter Müller, and Reinhard Pollak: Nonpersistent Inequality in Educational Attainment

Apr. 4. Education II

Sigal Alon: Towards a Theory of Inequality in Higher Education

Florence Torche: Does College Still Have Equalizing Effects?

Jennie E. Brand and Yu Xie: Who Benefits Most from College?

Apr. TBA. Final Exam

Academic Policies:

Please review the Department of Sociology "[Important Academic Policies](#)" document

https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Academic Accommodation
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health