

SOCIOLOGY 713

Social Inequality

Term: Fall, 2018

Day and Time of Classes: Thurs 14:30-15:20

Class Location: KTH-712

Office: KTH-638

Instructor: Melanie Heath

Ext.: 23620

Office Hours: Tues 14:30-15:30

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This course explores sociological approaches to the study of social inequality. Evidence of social and economic inequality is pervasive in modern societies, and its causes and proposed solutions are often subject to fierce political, academic, and public debate. Growing domestic and global poverty, the persistence of racial, ethnic, gender, LGBTQ discrimination and the increasing visibility of inter- and intra-country differences in wealth and income are just some aspects of contemporary social inequality. This course introduces students to ongoing social scientific debates about the sources and consequences of inequality, while also exploring how social inequality is enacted and reinforced in everyday life.

This course will:

- Challenge you to gain a broad knowledge of research on social inequality and apply this knowledge to your own research.
- Encourage you to draw connections between theory and data at multiple levels of analysis.
- Teach you to articulate and critically assess theoretical arguments and methodological innovation through critical response memos and discussion.
- Sharpen your oral, critical thinking, and writing skills in analyzing and discussing the literature on social inequality.

Required readings:

Required articles are available as pdf or html files using the library's online catalogue (<http://library.mcmaster.ca>).

Recommended readings:

American Sociological Association. 2014. *ASA Style Guide*, 5th edition. Available for purchase through the ASA's online bookstore at <http://www.asanet.org>.

Course requirements:

Seminar participation (10%)

This course is a graduate seminar and students are expected to attend every class meeting having thoughtfully completed the assigned readings and be prepared to

discuss them. Seminar participation will be evaluated based on the **quality not quantity** of your contributions, and your ability to listen to other student comments and contribute to them. Quality contributions include probing questions, clarifications, and critical assessments of required readings. Inappropriate or rude comments will not be tolerated. I encourage you to meet with me if you experience any challenge to fully participating in the seminar, such as an unwelcoming/non-inclusive environment. As a seminar focusing on social inequalities, we must consider how dynamics in class might marginalize some voices.

Critical Response Memos (30%)

In the first class you will be assigned to a group, and every week one group member will be responsible for writing a brief, two-page, double-spaced critical response memo that covers one or more of the week's assigned readings (each student will complete **three** memos over the course of the semester). Response memos should include the following: 1) A statement of the research question(s) that each author expressly or implicitly seeks to answer; 2) A statement of *how* the author answers the question, such as using a theoretical argument or through empirical methods; 3) An analysis of how effective the research is at achieving its stated objectives (the strengths and weaknesses of the research); and 4) An assessment of the contribution to the overall field of social inequality. Do not summarize the readings. Instead, provide an analysis that digs into the "so what" question to identify the significance of this work to the field.

Students will send their memos to the entire group for feedback and then submit them to Avenue to Learn by **noon on the Wednesday** before class. Each group will be allotted fifteen minutes in class, where the memo writer will discuss her/his critical assessment and the other members will comment on their feedback and assessment. One group member should fill out the class schedule and submit it to Avenue by September 15, 2018.

Term paper proposal (5%), final paper (45%), and presentation (10%)

Students will write a critical review on a topic that is covered in class of 15-20 double-spaced pages (not including references). This paper should provide an analysis and not just a description of the current literature on your topic. Good examples of this type of critical assessment of the literature can be found in *Sociology Compass*. This kind of literature review provides a synthesis of the current state of the literature, offers an analysis of any gaps and critically assesses the arguments being made.

Your literature review should cite at least 8 academic, peer-reviewed sociology articles or books that have been published since 2000. Article databases such as Sociological Abstracts or Proquest are a good way to search for recent works. Required readings for this course published after 2000 can also be included in the 8

articles/books. Any works published before 2000 and non-sociology works (e.g. political science, psychology) can also be cited, but they should not be used to meet the 8 article/book requirement. More information on the term paper will be provided in class.

Students will submit proposals for the term paper to Avenue to Learn by the start of class on **Thursday, October 25**. Proposals should consist of a 1-2 page outline describing the area of social inequality that the paper will address, including the research question(s) that will drive the paper. The proposal should provide the complete list of 8+ references. Consult the ASA Style Guide for formatting. After I have assessed the proposals, I will meet with all students to discuss the term paper, and I also encourage you to meet with me before turning in the proposal.

The term paper is to be submitted to Avenue to Learn by **Thursday, December 13, at noon**. Late papers will not be accepted. The paper should follow the style standards of the ASA: double-spaced, in a 12-point font, with page numbers and properly formatted citations for all sources. I will evaluate your term paper in terms of the how well you assess the literature and the strength of your critical analysis.

Students will also have the opportunity to present an outline of their final papers during the final class. This will enable students to gain valuable feedback from me and fellow students on how they might improve their papers. The grades for the presentation will be based on my assessment and those of your peers.

Evaluation

Marks will be assigned for each course requirement, as follows:

Seminar Participation	10%
Response memos (3)	30%
Paper proposal	5%
Final seminar paper	45%
Seminar paper presentation	10%

Course Schedule

Introductions

Week One. 9/13 Studying Social Inequality in Sociology

Grusky, David, and Manwai C. Ku. 2008. "Gloom, Doom, and Inequality." Pp. 2-29 in *Social stratification : Class, race, and gender in sociological perspective*, edited by David B. Grusky, in collaboration with Manwai C. Ku and Szonja Szelényi. Boulder: Westview Press. (Avenue to Learn)

Week Two. 9/20 Durable Inequality

Tilly, Charles. 1998. *Durable Inequality*. Berkeley, CA University of California Press. (ebook Available via McMaster libraries) Focus on Chapters 1-3.

Week Three. 9/27 Inequality: Current Trends and Explanations

Abbott, Andrey D. 2016. "Inequality as Process" in *Processual Sociology*. University of Chicago Press.

Piketty, Thomas, and Emmanuel Saez. 2014. "Inequality in the Long Run." *Science* 344 (6186): 838–43.

I. Core Fields of Inquiry: Gender, Race, Class, LGBTQ

Week Four. 10/4 Gender: Stalled Revolution and Pay Gap

England, Paula. 2010. "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled." *Gender & Society* 24:149-166.

Correll, Shelly J. Stephen Benard and In Paik. 2007. "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?" *American Journal of Sociology* 112(5): 1297-1339.

10/11: Mid-term Recess

Week Five. 10/18 Race/Ethnicity/Immigration

Wilson, William Julius. 1991. "Another Look at The Truly Disadvantaged." *Political Science Quarterly* 106(4):639-656.

Denis, Jeffrey S. 2015. "Contact Theory in a Small-Town Settler-Colonial Context The Reproduction of Laissez-Faire Racism in Indigenous-White Canadian Relations." *American Sociological Review* 80(1): 218-242.

Kaida, Lisa. 2015. "Ethnic Variations in Immigrant Poverty Exit and Female Employment: The Missing Link." *Demography* 52(2):485-511.

Week Six. 10/25 Class: Is It Still Relevant?

Pakulski, Jan and Malcom Waters. 1996. "The Reshaping and Dissolution of Social Class in Advanced Society." *Theory and Society* 25:667-91.

Wright, Eric Olin. 1996. "The Continuing Relevance of Class Analysis." *Theory and Society* 25:697-716.

Week Seven. 11/1 LGBTQ: Does Sexuality Matter?

Waite, Sean and Nicole Denier. 2015. "Gay Pay for Straight Work: Mechanism Generating Disadvantage." *Gender & Society* 29(4): 261-588.

Tilcsik, Andras. 2011. "Pride and Prejudice: Employment Discrimination against Openly Gay Men in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(2): 586-626.

Bauer, Greta.R. and Ayden I. Scheim. 2015. *Transgender People in Ontario, Canada: Statistics to Inform Human Rights Policy*. London, Ontario. (Can be downloaded at: <http://transpulseproject.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Trans-PULSE-Statistics-Relevant-for-Human-Rights-Policy-June-2015.pdf>).

II. Core Fields of Inquiry: Culture, Organizations, Networks and Global Debates

Week Eight. 11/8 Cultural Approaches

Michele Lamont, Stefan Beljean, and Matthew Clair. 2014. "What is Missing? Cultural Processes and Causal Pathways to Inequality." *Socio-Economic Review* 12: 573-608.

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67:747-76.

Week Nine. 11/13 Organizational Approaches

Barbara Reskin. 2003. "Including Mechanisms in Our Models of Ascriptive Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 68(1):1-21.

Acker, Joan. 2006. "Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations." *Gender & Society* 20(4): 441-464.

Week Ten. 11/20 Networks and Inequality

Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6):1360-1380.

DiMaggio, Paul and Filiz Garip. 2012. "Network Effects and Social Inequality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 93-118.

Week Eleven. 11/27 Global Inequality Debates

Mills, Melinda. 2009. "Globalization and Inequality." *European Sociological Review* 25(1):1-8.

Massey, Douglas S. (2009). "Globalization and Inequality: Explaining American Exceptionalism." *European Sociological Review* 25(1):9-23.

Beck, Ulrich, and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. 2009. "Global Generations and the Trap of Methodological Nationalism for a Cosmopolitan Turn in the Sociology of Youth and Generation." *European Sociological Review* 25(1):25-36.

Week Twelve. 12/4 Presentations

Academic dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means. It can result in serious consequences, such as the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Faculty of Social Sciences email communication policy

It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all email communication sent from students to instructors and staff must originate from the student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at their discretion.

Please note

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.