

HTS 3008
Class, Power, and Inequality
Fall 2018
Course Syllabus

Instructor: Allen Hyde
Georgia Institute of Technology
Class Time: MWF 9:05-9:55am
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Course Description: Over the last few years, the media and political leaders have begun to discuss the “I” word more and more... inequality. As massive profits were being made on Wall Street seeing some of the richest Americans gain wealth only comparable to the roaring 20s, many other Americans have lost their jobs, have seen their retirement funds slashed (if they were lucky enough to have one), and/or experienced a stagnation or decline in their income. The growing number of Americans who rely on public assistance to make ends meet have seen their benefits cut or slashed... So what is going on? This course will provide students with a basic introduction to a wide variety of topics related to social stratification and its causes from a variety of scholars in sociology, economics, and political science. This class will particularly focusing on inequalities related to class; however, we will also consider inequalities by race and gender. In this course, we will first discuss different perspectives on why inequality occurs. We will then explore the class structure in the United States, as well as some other countries. Next, we will examine how race and gender complicate issues of class in American society. Finally, we will discuss some of the consequences of inequality and what might be done to fix some of the social ills associated with inequality. In order to bring some of the things we read to life, I will use a variety of media, particularly video, as teaching tools and to aid discussion.

Course Objectives:

- To understand basic perspectives on social stratification in sociology, economics, and political science, as well as critically analyze them.
- To understand the class structure of US society and compare it to that of other nations.
- To better understand the intersections of class, race, and gender
- To see how social class and mobility potentially affects one’s own life, as well as the lives of those around you.
- To develop a variety of writing skills, from grammatical to descriptive to analytical, that can be used in future classes and potentially in future jobs

Course Prerequisites: None

Required Readings:

Grusky, David and Szonja Szelenyi. 2011. *Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender, 2nd edition*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Make sure to get the 2nd edition!

Other readings will also be required; however, they will be posted to Canvas as PDFs or hyperlinks to web readings.



SLS Affiliated Course

This course is part of Georgia Tech's Serve-Learn-Sustain (SLS) initiative, uniting classroom learning with community action. SLS works with all six colleges to offer courses and programs connecting sustainability and community engagement with real-world partners and projects, allowing students to use their disciplinary expertise related to science and technology to help "create sustainable communities" where humans and nature flourish, now and in the future, in Georgia, the U.S., and around the globe. More information about SLS can be found at www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu. Visit the website to sign up for the SLS Email List, view the full list of affiliated courses, and find links to Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

SLS Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to identify relationships among ecological, social, and economic systems.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate skills (e.g., communication, critical thinking, intercultural, design) needed to work effectively in different types of communities.
3. Students will be able to evaluate how decisions impact the sustainability of communities

General Education Requirement, Area E Social Science Approved Learning

Outcome:

- Student will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior.

Explain how the course satisfies the Area E approved learning outcome:

This course focuses on theories and substantive issues in the study of class and economic inequality, with an emphasis on sociological perspectives that look at the interactions of individuals, groups, and institutions with their social environments. To demonstrate that they have met the Area E learning outcome, students will be able to describe how social institutions impact class and economic inequality, compare the major theories and methods used in studying social stratification, and analyze the causes and consequences of economic inequality in a variety of circumstances.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Students will describe major concepts in the discipline of sociology and the sociological study of social stratification and class.
- Students will compare and contrast the major theoretical perspectives and methodological issues in studying social stratification.
- Students will identify how sociocultural and economic forces shape economic inequality.
- Students will analyze in social stratification and how geographic, social, and temporal context shapes these processes.

Grades and Assignments (Points used to calculate final grade)

Class Participation (120pts): Students are expected to be in class whenever possible and participate in discussion of the readings and assignments. Discussing the readings and your work will help to improve your writing, your grades for the assignments, and most importantly your learning.

Discussion Questions (180pts total): Every week, students have the opportunity to post two discussion questions on the Canvas discussion board by Monday at 11pm related to the readings that could be potentially discussed in class. Each student should post 6 weeks (12 questions in 6 separate postings) throughout the semester. These questions should involve critical thinking skills thus critical questions of the authors' arguments are allowed. In addition to the actual question, you should provide a brief discussion of the background to your question. Weekly questions will receive a 30 for excellent questions, a 15 average questions, and a zero (0) for extremely poor questions or no questions at all. For example, a good question would be: "In the Some Principles of Stratification by Davis and Moore, the authors outline several logical premises that ultimately lead one to believe that inequality is functional, necessary, and inevitable. In what ways is their logic flawed? Are rewards always distributed by their 'functional importance'?" An example of a poor question would be "What is the bourgeoisie according to Marx?" (Note: You are welcome to ask clarifying questions during class or by email. They just will not work for the weekly questions portion of your grade.) If students are not reading, I reserve the right to change this portion of the grade to random pop quizzes on the readings.

Narratives of Mobility and Class Papers: A Multi-Stage Assignment (350pts total):

This multi-stage assignment will require you to think about the issue of class and inequality in a variety of ways in different papers throughout the semester. The intention is for you to first elaborate your views on social mobility and class early in the semester (100pts, Due 9/5 by 11pm). Second, you will write a brief paper reflecting on the experience of playing stratification monopoly and any insights into inequality and mobility based upon income and wealth (100pts, Due 10/5 by 11pm). Third, you will interview an adult, ideally older than you, about their views on class, social mobility, and the economy. You will then write a report about the interview and compare their views to yours. A video or reading will be provided to stimulate conversation for the interview (150pts, Due 11/9 by 11pm). Each paper will potentially require at least 3-5 pages of writing. More information on this multi-stage assignment will be provided as the semester progresses.

SLS Event Attendance and Reflection (150 points total): Students are required to attend two Serve-Learn-Sustain events throughout the semester and provide a short 1-page double spaced paper summarizing the event and how it relates to the issues of class, power, and inequality or sustainability. These events will be listed on Canvas, and it is the responsibility of students to choose which of these events to attend. In this assignment, students should outline how the event relates to class, power, and inequality or sustainability, provide a brief summary of the event, and then end the paper with a paragraph discussing how the event relates to themes of inequality discussed in class. The first reflection is due 10/24 by 11pm, and the second is due 11/28 by 11pm.

Final Essay Exam/Paper (200pts): Students will have the option to writing a final exam or a final paper. The exam will be essay questions. Before finals week, I will provide you with 6 final exam topics and the general idea about what the essay questions will be. During finals week, I will send you the essay questions via email. You will choose 3 of them, and return your answers to me by 12/7 by 11am via Canvas. These questions will be cumulative and cover material spanning the entire class. Any material that you mention in your paper should be properly cited. The final paper will be a 5-6 page paper on a topic related to class, power, and inequality that the students choose. Students doing this option need to let me know by 11/15 that they want to write the paper and what the topic will be. The Final Paper will also be due 12/7 by 11am via Canvas. More information about this assignment will appear later in the semester.

Policy for Exams, Missed Exams, Late Assignments, and Extra Credit:

Late assignments: The policy for late assignments is that you will need a documented health, funeral, or university sponsored excuse for completing late assignments at full credit. Assignments completed after their due dates without an excuse will receive a drop in letter grade for every two days beyond their due date.

Extra credit: For up to 25 points of extra credit on your final exam, students can watch an outside documentary about material related to the class; and then write 1-2 pages describing how this event/documentary is related to or informs knowledge learned in this course. This extra credit can only be done once. Extra credit is due on 12/3.

Communication Center: The Communication Center (CommLab) can provide assistance on communication related assignments, regardless of discipline, including the written papers and presentation assignments in this course. For more information, go to Clough Commons 447 or <http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu/>.

Academic Integrity

In this course, we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others; that is a vital part of academic life. You are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another's ideas, language, or syntax. You are encouraged to study together, discuss readings outside of class, share your drafts during peer review and outside of class, and go to the Communication Center with your drafts. In this course, those activities are well within the bounds of academic honesty. However, when you *use* another's ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it with a standard form of academic citation. Even one occasion of academic dishonesty, large or small, on *any* assignment, large or small, can result in failure for the entire course and referral to Student Judicial Affairs.

Office of Disability Services: Students with disabilities that need accommodations for class are asked to first contact and inform the Office of Disability Services to arrange accommodations before the semester starts or within the first two weeks of class. Students should receive a letter from the Office of Disability Services outlining the accommodations needed. Before I can grant accommodations, I will need to receive this letter. For more information, please see <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>.

Guidelines for Class Discussions (Open and Small Group):

1. Feel free to speak your mind; however, be respectful of other students and the instructors. We will be discussing potentially controversial topics at times.
2. If someone is speaking, let them finish speaking before the next person begins.
3. If you have a thought, try to raise your hand before speaking. I will do my best to give everyone who has something to say chance to contribute.
4. If you disagree with someone, respond to the argument or idea and not to the person who said it. This keeps the discussions from getting personal.
5. Be careful of generalizing from personal experience. While our personal experiences can inform our sociological discussions, the way we experience or perceive a particular event or experience may vary.
6. When we have a small group discussion, everyone should try to contribute to the discussion. Try not to have one person dominate the conversation. I will provide some questions to guide the small group. The purpose of these small groups is to flesh out some of the tougher topics collectively and to allow everyone a chance to let their voice be heard. I will walk around to help address any confusion. At the end of the small group, the group will turn in their answers to the questions with the names of all group members.

Course Expectations for Students:

Students are expected to keep up with readings from week to week, which are tentatively listed in the course outline. Students are also expected to attend lectures and participate in classroom discussions. I would expect, on average, between 4-7 hours a week of work dedicated to this class. Most importantly, I expect students to put in high quality work into their assignments.

In class, students are expected to arrive on time whenever possible. If you anticipate being late because you have back to back classes, or something of that nature, please let me know ahead of time, and it should be no problem.

Please place all cell phones on silent during class and put out of sight to prevent distractions.

Personal laptop policy will be determined later...

IAC Statement of Diversity and Inclusion: The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts supports the Georgia Institute of Technology's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in the broader society.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus as needed throughout the semester. If a change must occur, the instructor will inform the students in advance.

Week 1 (August 20, 22, and 24): Go over Syllabus; Introduction to Class, Power, and Inequality

- 1) Introduction to Class Matters by Scott and Leonhardt of NY Times (Canvas)

Optional Reading: The Stories about Inequality that We Love to Tell by Grusky (pgs. 2-14)

Week 2 (August 27, 29, and 31): Functions of Inequality

Readings: 1) Some Principles of Stratification by Davis and Moore (pgs. 16-19)

2) Inequality by Design by Fischer et al. (pgs. 20-24)

3) Inequality, Too Much of a Good Thing by Krueger (pgs. 25-33)

Week 3 (September 5 and 7): Inequality during and after the Great Recession

Readings: 1) [“The Origins of Financial Crisis: A Crash Course”](#) by Staff at *The Economist*

Movie: Inequality for All

- Part 1 of Narratives of Mobility and Class Papers due Wednesday 9/5 by 11pm on Canvas

Week 4 (September 10, 12, and 14): Measuring Inequality and Mobility and the Welfare State in Cross-National Perspective

Readings: 1) [The Many Ways to Measure Economic Inequality by Desilver](#) (Canvas)

2) [Mobility? What Are You Talking About? By Reeves and Venator](#) (Canvas)

3) [World Inequality Report 2018 by Alvaredo, Chancel, Picketty, Saez, and Zucman](#) (Canvas)

4) [An Introduction to Social Policy: “Welfare States”](#) by Spicker (Canvas)

Optional: Explore the websites <https://inequality.org/> and <https://wid.world>

Week 5 (September 17, 19, and 21): Structure and Components of Class Inequality

Readings: 1) Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism by Marx (pgs. 36-47)

2) Class Counts by Wright (pgs. 48-55)

3) Class, Status, and Party by Weber (pgs. 56-67)

Week 6 (September 24, 26, and 28): Stratification Monopoly

No readings!

Possible Movie: Park Avenue by PBS (1 hr)

Week 7 (October 1, 3, and 5): The Middle Class, the Working Class, and Unions

- Readings:
- 1) No Degree and No Way Back to the Middle by Egan (pgs. 452-454)
 - 2) Little Labor by Rosenfeld (pgs. 696-703)
 - 3) Unequal Childhoods by Lareau (pgs. 648-659)
 - 4) [Inside Alabama's Auto Jobs Boom](#) by Waldman (Canvas)
 - 5) "[How Technology Wrecks the Middle Class](#)" by Autor and Dorn, 2012, *New York Times* (Canvas)

- Part 2 of Narratives of Mobility and Class Papers due by 10/5 by 11pm on Canvas

Week 8 (October 10 and 12): Economic and Social Elite

- Readings:
- 1) The Power Elite by Mills (pgs. 100-111)
 - 2) Who Rules America? by Domhoff (pgs. 112-117)

Week 9 (October 15, 17, and 19): Poverty, Social Policy, and Working Poor

- Readings:
- 1) Poorer by Comparison by Smeeding (pgs. 153-158)
 - 2) Nickel-and-Dimed by Ehrenreich (pgs. 136-146)
 - 3) Jobless Poverty by Wilson (pgs. 159-169)
 - 4) Escaping Poverty by Deluca and Rosenbaum (pgs. 214-219)

Week 10 (October 22, 24, and 26): Race and Social Stratification

- Readings:
- 1) Racial Formations by Omi and Winant (222-227)
 - 2) American Apartheid by Massey and Denton (pgs. 170-181)
 - 3) Black Wealth White Wealth by Oliver and Shapiro (pgs. 296-303)

- SLS Event Reflection 1 due by 10/24 by 11pm on Canvas

Week 11 (October 29, 31, and November 2): Immigration and Refugees

Readings: 1) The New Second Generation by Portes and Zhou (pgs. 237-249)

- 2) [“From Unassimilable to Exceptional: the Rise of Asian Americans and Stereotype Promise”](#) by Lee and Zhou (Canvas)
- 3) [“This small town in America's Deep South welcomes 1,500 refugees a year”](#) by Long (Canvas)
- 4) “Ethnic Identity on Display: West Indian Youth and the Creation of Ethnic Boundaries in High School” by Richards (Canvas)

Optional: Black Identities by Waters (pgs. 250-253)

Week 12 (November 5, 7, and 9): Gender and Stratification

- Readings:
- 1) Flat Broke with Children by Hays (pgs. 196-207)
 - 2) The Time Divide by Jacobs and Gerson (pgs. 345-350)
 - 3) Getting to Equal by Stone (pgs. 337-344)
 - 4) The Time Bind by Hochschild (pgs. 326-331)

- Part 3 of Narratives of Mobility and Class Papers due by 11/9 by 11pm on Canvas

Week 13 (November 12, 14, and 16): LGBTQIA Identities and Inequality

- 1) [“LGBTQ+ Definitions”](#) by Trans Student Educational Resources (Canvas)
- 2) [“Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons & Socioeconomic Status”](#) by the American Psychological Association
- 3) [“Paying an Unfair Price: The Financial Penalty for LGBT People of Color in America”](#) by Center for American Progress

Week 14 (November 19): Consequences of Inequality—Health in a Comparative Perspective

No class on 11/21 and 11/23 university holiday for Thanksgiving

- Readings:
- 1) Life at the Top in America Isn't Just Better, It's Longer by Scott (pgs. 614-621)
 - 2) Health, Income, and Inequality by Mullahy, Robert, and Wolfe (pgs. 622-635)

Week 15 (November 26, 28, and 30): The War on Drugs and the Prison Industrial Complex

- Readings:
- 1) “Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex” by Davis (Canvas)
 - 3) Excerpt from *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander (Canvas)

- SLS Event Reflection 2 due by 11/28 by 11pm on Canvas

Week 16 (December 3): Inequality and Possible Solutions for Future

Choose 2 of the following to read:

- 1) Flexicurity by Cohen and Sabel (pgs. 719-724)
 - 2) [The Case for Reparations](#) by Coates (Canvas)
 - 3) “[Overview of Current Basic Income Related Experiments](#) (October 2017)”
Canvas
- Questions for Final Exam distributed
 - Extra Credit due 12/3 by 11pm

Final Exams/Papers tentatively due by Friday 12/7 by 11am via Canvas