

HTS 3008
Class, Power, and Inequality
Fall 2017
Tentative Course Syllabus

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Class Time: TBA
Classroom: TBA
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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 be able to 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 T-Square as PDFs or hyperlinks to web readings.

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 (150pts): 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.

Weekly Discussion Questions (150pts total): Every week, students should post two discussion questions on the T-Square discussion board by Thursday at 1pm related to the readings that could be potentially discussed in class. 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. Students are allowed to miss three weeks of questions per semester. Weekly questions will receive a 100 for excellent questions, a 70 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 clearly 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 (500pts 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 TBA). Second, you examine how the media presents class and social mobility through a critical evaluation of a movie, book, television show, or a comparison of two music videos (150pts, Due TBA). 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 TBA). Finally, at the end of the semester, you will write a brief paper reflecting on what you have learned throughout the semester, whether or not your views on the topics discussed in class have changed or not, and discuss what readings were most influential to your understandings of inequality (100pts, Due TBA). 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.

Final Essay Exam (200pts): 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 TBA via email. These questions will be cumulative and cover material spanning the entire class. Any material that you mention in your paper should be properly cited. 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 15 points of extra credit on your final exam, students can either 1) go to an educational/community event outside of class related to class, power, and inequality; or 2) watch an outside documentary about material related to the class; and then write 2-3 pages describing how this event/documentary is related to or informs knowledge learned in this course. This extra credit can only be done once.

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 Writing 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...

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

(Will be updated for Fall 2017)

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 (January 23): *Welcome to Class, Go over Syllabus and Basics*

Week 2 (January 30): *Introduction to Class, Power, and Inequality*

Readings: 1) The Stories about Inequality that We Love to Tell by Grusky (pgs 2-14)
 2) Introduction to Class Matters by Scott and Leonhardt of NY Times (HuskyCT)

Movie: *Inequality for All*

Week 3 (February 6): *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 4 (February 13): *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 (pgs 56-67)
 4) Is Market Failure Behind the Takeoff in Inequality? by Grusky and Weeden
 (pgs 90-97)

- Part 1 of Narratives of Mobility and Class Papers: a Multi-Stage Assignment due by class time

Week 5 (February 20): *The Upper-Class, and the Power Elite*

Readings: 1) The Power Elite by Mills (pgs 100-111)
 2) Who Rules America? by Domhoff (pgs 112-117)
 3) Bobos in Paradise by Brooks (pgs 128-135)
 4) “Striking It Richer” by Saez (pgs 86-89)

Movie: *Park Avenue* by PBS (1 hr)

Week 6 (February 27): *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)
- Part 2 of Narratives of Mobility and Class Papers: a Multi-Stage Assignment due by class time

Week 7 (March 6): *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 8 (March 13): *Midterm Due (by email) and Social Mobility*

- 1) Ain't No Makin' It by MacLeod (pgs 567-583)
And choose one of the following:
- 2) "Harder for Americans to Rise from the Bottom Rungs" by DeParle, 2012, *New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/05/us/harder-for-americans-to-rise-from-lower-rungs.html?pagewanted=all>)
- 3) "Can Upward Mobility Cost You Your Health?" by Miller, Chen, and Brody, 2014, *New York Times* (<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/04/can-upward-mobility-cost-you-your-health/>)
- 4) "How Technology Wrecks the Middle Class" by Autor and Dorn, 2012, *New York Times* (http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/24/how-technology-wrecks-the-middle-class/?_r=0)

Week 9 (March 20): Spring Break! No classes. Week

10 (March 27): *Race and Social Stratification*

- Readings:
- 1) American Apartheid by Massey and Denton (pgs 170-181)
 - 2) Black Identities by Waters (pgs 250-253)
 - 3) Marked by Pager (pgs 260-268)
 - 4) The New Second Generation by Portes and Zhou (pgs 237-249)
 - 5) The Possibility of a New Racial Hierarchy in the Twenty-First Century United States by Gans (pgs 304-313)

Week 11 (April 3): Library day; spend class time working on paper and interview in the library

Week 12 (April 10): *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: a Multi-Stage Assignment due by class time

Week 13 (April 17): *Consequences of Inequality*

- 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)
- 3) The Social Stratification of Theatre, Dance, and Cinema Attendance by Chan and Goldthorpe (pgs 636-647)

Week 14 (April 24): *Globalization and Inequality*

- 1) Globalism's Discontents by Stiglitz (pgs 672-680)
 - 2) The New Geography of Global Income Inequality (pgs 681-694)
- Part 4 of Narratives of Mobility and Class Papers: a Multi-Stage Assignment due by class time

Week 15 (May 1): *Inequality and Possible Solutions for Future*

Choose 3 of the following to read:

- 1) Flexicurity by Cohen and Sabel (pgs 719-724)
- 2) The Pragmatic Case for Reducing Inequality by Frank (pgs 730-734)
- 3) What Happens When the Poor Receive a Stipend? by Valesquez-Manoff, 2014, *New York Times*
(http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/18/what-happens-when-the-poor-receive-a-stipend/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0)
- 4) "What Obama Left Out of His Inequality Speech: Regulation." by McGarrity, 2013, *New York Times*
(<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/08/what-obama-left-out-of-his-inequality-speech-regulation/>)
- 5) "The Minimum We Can Do."
(http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/30/the-minimum-we-can-do/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0)

- Questions for Final Exam distributed

Final Exams tentatively due by TBA