

SOSC 3880: Social Inequality and Social Mobility

Spring, 2019

Monday & Wednesday 9:00-10:20 AM
Rm 6602 (Lift 31-32), Academic Building

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. XU Duoduo

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OFFICE HOURS: Monday & Wednesday 11:00-12:00 a.m. or by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social stratification concerns the unequal distribution of resources/rewards/opportunities which are scarce but widely desired, and the process of status attainment or social mobility whereby some persons or groups come to receive more of these scarce things than are received by others. This course will introduce the basic concepts and theories in analyzing social and economic inequalities in the contemporary world. Through research projects and term papers, students are expected to be able to apply the knowledge to address inequality issues in Hong Kong or mainland China.

Although there is no prerequisite for this class, students with backgrounds in Introductory Sociology and Introductory Statistics will feel more comfortable to deal with the readings and lecture materials.

FORMAT

Each class meeting consists of about 60 minutes of lecture and 20 minutes of discussion. Students are expected to finish the assigned readings before the class, and contribute ideas and questions for discussion.

TEXTBOOK

Kerbo, Harold 2011. *Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in Historical, Comparative, and Global Perspective*. 8th edition. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

COURSE HOMEPAGE

I will post announcement and lecture notes on the Canvas homepage created for this course. You may use your ITSC username and password to log in (<https://canvas.ust.hk/>) and find the course syllabus, reading materials, and lecture notes. You may also post your questions and exchange ideas with me, TA, or your fellow classmates on the discussion board.

REQUIREMENTS

(1) Comments, Quizzes and Attendance

You **MUST** attend all class meetings and take attendance at the end of class. Since there are no formal discussion sections for this course, I will leave about 15-20 minutes for questions and discussion, or for pop-up PRS quizzes. By “pop-up” quiz I mean they will not be announced in advance. If you miss one, you will receive “zero.”

Each week you are expected to complete all assigned readings before the class, and write a weekly comment on the readings for that week. The comment should be typewritten on one piece of paper, no more than 500 words. Your comments should be based on required readings and should not be paraphrase or summary of points made in the assigned reading, but the thoughts why you agree or disagree with particular concepts. You can also use example(s) to illustrate your argument and show your understanding or not-understanding of the reading materials. A good comment usually begins with a brief introduction of the topic followed by a well-developed, thought-out comment and/or criticism. Please keep comments short but precise, that is, allowing sufficient space to fully develop your argument.

Each comment will be evaluated according to the following scale:

- 3 excellent
- 2 good
- 1 weak; little originality
- 0 not submitted

The first comment should be turned in during the second week of class, then each subsequent week (except for week 14 and 15 there will be no reading assignment). Out of the 13 comments, the three lowest scores will be dropped and only 10 of them will be counted in your final grade. In other words, I do allow occasional non-submissions for a variety of reasons. Comments, quizzes and attendance account for 25% of your final grade.

(2) Midterm Exam

There will be an in-class closed book midterm exam, covering materials both in the lectures and in the assigned readings.

(3) Final Exam

It will be similar to the midterm exam in format, covering materials both in the lectures and in the assigned readings since the midterm. The date and venue of the final exam will be announced in due course.

(4) Project Presentation and Group Report

At the end of the semester, you are required to write and present a group report, focusing on inequality issues in Hong Kong or mainland China. Group project report will be due on the final exam date.

Each group should be consisted of about 5 or 6 students. Using the concepts learned from the class and additional readings, students can write on one of the following topics:

- (i) Income Inequality / Poverty
- (ii) Educational Inequality
- (iii) Gender Inequality
- (iv) Middle Class
- (v) Migration / Immigration
- (vi) Family Background and Socioeconomic Success / Social Mobility

In order to motivate students to start working on their projects early and make progress along the way, each group is required to:

- a) submit a one-page typewritten outline (single spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font) of their presentation on or before April 15
- b) meet with the instructor in person in the next two weeks to further discuss their projects and get feedback
- c) complete a group project peer evaluation form (downloadable from Canvas)

This practice is to help identify and penalize free-riders. Students with consistently low evaluation scores may have their individual score for the group project and the final grade adjusted. Please submit an electronic copy to Canvas on or before the specific day of group presentation (May 6 or May 8). Schedule and time limit of the in-class presentation, as well as schedule for meeting with the instructor will be determined after the groups are formed. Details and further instructions will be disseminated on Canvas in due course.

GRADING AND EXAM POLICIES

- Comments, quizzes and attendance: 25%
- Midterm exam: 25%
- Final exam: 25%
- Project presentation and group report: 25%.

1. There will be NO make-up for weekly comments and pop-up quizzes.
2. Be sure to arrive on time for the examination since NO additional time will be given to students who arrive late. There will be NO general make-up examination in this course. The only exceptions are for serious, unforeseen, documented (written note from your doctor), personal medical emergencies. In these cases, the make-up examinations will be closed book and consist of complex essay questions.
3. If students want to dispute a grade, please submit the argument in writing along with the quiz or exam. We will evaluate the merit of the argument as well as perform a full reassessment of the entire quiz or exam. This means that the grade may end up lower than it was originally.
4. Plagiarism and cheating in any form is NOT allowed. Students caught cheating will get a ZERO, and the case will be reported to the school for further action. For more information on academic integrity and dishonesty, please check the following web page:
<http://www.ust.hk/vpaa0/integrity>.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (Subject to Revision)

I. Concepts and Theories

Week 1

Class 1 [Jan 30] Introduction and Organization

Reading:

Kerbo, Chapters 1-2

Week 2

Class 2 [Feb 4] Bases of Stratification in Contemporary Societies

Reading:

Kerbo, Chapters 3

Week 3

Class 3 [Feb 11] Classical Theory of Inequality: Karl Marx

Class 4 [Feb 13] **NO CLASS**

Reading:

Kerbo Chapter 4

Week 4

Class 5 [Feb 18] Classical Theory of Inequality: Max Weber & Emile Durkheim

Class 6 [Feb 20] Contemporary Functional Theory: Davis and Moore, Talcott Parsons

Reading:

Kerbo Chapter 5 (pp. 117-129)

Weber, Max. "Class, Status, and Party." in *Economy and Society*. University of California, Press

Week 5

Class 7 [Feb 25] Contemporary Neo-Marxian Theory: Erik O. Wright

Class 8 [Feb 27] Contemporary Neo-Weberian Theory: Frank Parkin, John Goldthorpe

Reading:

Kerbo Chapter 5 (pp. 130-148)

Wright, Erik Olin. 1997. "Class Analysis." in *Class Counts*. Cambridge U Press

Week 6

Class 9 [Mar 4] The Ruling Elite: The Upper Class and Corporate Class

Class 10 [Mar 6] The Middle and Working Class

Reading:

Kerbo Chapters 6-7
Kerbo Chapters 8-9

Week 7

Class 11 [Mar 11] Poverty and the Urban Underclass
Class 12 [Mar 13] Gender Stratification and Inequality

Reading:

Kerbo Chapters 10-11

Week 8

Class 13 [Mar 18] Immigration and Inequality
Class 14 [Mar 20] Summary and Review

Reading:

Xu, Duoduo and Xiaogang Wu. 2017. "The Rise of the Second Generation: Aspirations, Motivations and Academic Success of Chinese Immigrants' Children in Hong Kong." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43:1164-1189.

Part II. Generating Inequality: Structure and Process

Week 9

Class 15 [Mar 25] Midterm Exam

Class 16 [Mar 27] Occupation, Prestige, Socioeconomic Status, and Class

Reading:

Blau, Peter and Dudley Duncan 1967. "Measuring the Status of Occupation" in *American Occupational Structure* The Free Press

Week 10

Class 17 [Apr 1] Social Structure and Social Inequality
Class 18 [Apr 3] Social Mobility and Status Attainment

Reading:

Kerbo Chapter 12

Week 11

Class 19 [Apr 8] Schooling, Education, and Achievement
Class 20 [Apr 10] Cognitive Ability, IQ, and Stratification: The Bell Curve Myth

Reading:

Hout, Michael. 2012. "Social and Economic Returns to College Education in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38:379-400.

Week 12

Class 21 [Apr 15] Human Capital, Social Capital, and Cultural Capital

Class 22 [Apr 17] Marriage, Family, and Stratification

Reading:

Coleman, James, 1988. "Social Capital and the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology* 94: S95-S120

Week 13

Class 23 [Apr 24] Firms, Labor Markets, and Social Stratification

Reading:

Xie, Yu and Xiaogang Wu. 2008. "Danwei Profitability and Earnings Inequality in Urban China." *The China Quarterly* 195:558-581.

Week 14

Class 24 [Apr 29] Summary and Review

Week 15

Class 25 [May 6] Class Presentation I

Class 26 [May 8] Class Presentation II