

Social Stratification and Social Mobility
SOSC 3880
Spring 2021

MW Noon-1:30pm
Online via Zoom until further notice

Instructor: Cameron Campbell (3345 Lifts 13-15/Lift 3)

28 January 2021 version – may be revised

Inequality has reemerged as a central concern in social science research. Studies of social stratification and mobility seek to understand how patterns of inequality emerge and persist over time, and what the implications of inequality are for society, families and individuals. The overall focus of this course is on economic inequality and its relationship to education, employment, race and ethnicity, housing, and family structure.

Readings in the primary course text mostly refer to the US because the study of stratification and mobility has a long history there and the data and methods are reasonably well-developed. For the first two-thirds of the class we will focus on these readings as a starting point for class discussions of stratification, mobility, and inequality in general and in HK, the mainland and Asia. For the last third of the class, the assigned readings will focus specifically on HK and the mainland.

The class will be organized as a seminar, with meetings focused on discussion, rather than lecture. I will begin each class session with introductory remarks on the topic at hand, and then we will have discussions led by teams of students. Assigned readings or viewing should be completed in advance of each class meeting. Starting from the 2nd week, students will be responsible for writing a half-page response to the assigned reading each week. The details are described below.

Grading

Discussion leadership – 15%

Teams of students will be responsible for leading discussion each week. The size of each team and the number of times each student will need to participate in a team will be determined by the total enrollment. Teams will be responsible for reviewing the written responses at Canvas (described below), selecting questions for class discussion, preparing brief introductory remarks related to each reading, and managing discussion.

Normally teams will divide the assigned readings or viewings for the week among themselves, with each team member taking responsibility for a selection of readings or viewings. The team member will summarize the readings or viewings for which they are responsible, offer their thoughts or observations, and then call on classmates who posted relevant questions or responses to share them. Team members may also suggest questions for discussion for the reading or viewing for which they are responsible.

Class attendance – 10 %

Class attendance will be based on the duration and ‘attentiveness scores’ reported by Zoom. Attentiveness is calculated by Zoom accordingly to whether you have the window open and visible on your screen. It isn’t using your camera or anything else. If we resume in-class meetings, attendance there will be measured with a sign-in. You may miss one class meeting without it affecting your score. For any additional missed class meetings to be excluded you will need to provide documentation.

We will round up so you should not worry if you only miss a few minutes of a class.

To help ensure that you receive credit, please make sure that your screen name is the name that appears on the roster. If you use your English name for your screen name and the roster has your Chinese name, or vice versa, we may have a hard time matching you to the roster, and you may not receive attendance credit.

Written responses to assigned reading – 35%

Starting from the 2nd week, students are responsible for writing a response to the assigned reading or viewing each week and posting it to Canvas in advance of class. This response should be around 250 words. It should raise a question arising from the reading to be discussed in class and should refer to the reading or viewing. It should be apparent from the response that you have done the assigned reading or viewing. The question should refer to one or more of the readings for that week. I will grade the responses 0-5 as follows:

If you come across recent news reports, opinion pieces or other materials related to a week’s reading, you are encouraged to include links to them in your written response, and you may introduce them if you are called on by discussion leaders or the instructor.

- 0 – No submission or completely off-topic. *Your response must be clearly relevant to the topics of the assigned reading. Seriously off-topic responses will not receive credit.*
- 1 – Inadequate. Little or no engagement with the assigned reading or effort to develop a question.
- 2 – Below average. Barely enough engagement with assigned reading and/or effort to develop a question.
- 3 - Acceptable. Shows engagement with the reading or viewing, and a serious effort to come up with a question for discussion or a response. This will be the most common grade.
- 4- Above average. Superior engagement with the reading and/or effort to copy up with a question. Must engage more than one of the readings or viewings for that week.
- 5 – Superior. Excellent engagement with the reading and/or highly creative or thoughtful independent thinking about a question for discussion. Must engage with most of the readings or viewings for that week.

Discussion leaders do not need to post a response in the week in which they are leading discussion.

Class participation – 15%

Students are expected to participate in class discussion. The TA will help keep track of contributions to discussion.

When called upon by the instructor or discussion leader to share the question or response they posted to Canvas with the class, students should be prepared to introduce their question or response. Please review your post before coming to class so that you are ready to share it if called on. You should not need to review your response or question when you are called on.

Other contributions to discussion should reflect that students have read the assigned readings.

Proposal for final project – 5%

By week 7, students should submit a short proposal (250 words or so) describing their plans for their final project. They are welcome to discuss this with me in advance and may amend their plans afterwards.

Final project – 20%

For the final project, students may produce a literature review or a research proposal, according to their interests. It should be approximately 2000-2500 words, double-spaced. This will usually be about 8-10 pages. It must be new, and not previously submitted in any other class. If you are working on a related topic for another class, you will need to inform me and the other instructor so that we can coordinate. It isn't acceptable to submit the same work for credit to two classes, unless both instructors consent and an arrangement is in place to ensure that the total amount of work is equivalent to two projects done separately.

Required Reading/Viewing

David B. Grusky and Jasmine Hill, eds. 2018. *Inequality in the 21st Century*. Routledge.

This book is available electronically at the library website. Hard copy will be available at the bookstore.

You will also be required to watch selected videos from Raj Chetty's online course at Harvard, Using Big Data to Solve Economic and Social Problems: <https://opportunityinsights.org/course/> These will be indicated below as Chetty Lecture X, where X is the number of the lecture.

Additional materials may be announced during the semester.

Suggested reading/viewing

Websites

I will refer to these websites frequently during class. Make sure to visit each of them before the first class.

Opportunity Insights - <https://opportunityinsights.org>

World Inequality Database - <https://wid.world/>

Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality - <https://inequality.stanford.edu/research>

Harvard Program on Inequality and Social Policy - <https://inequality.hks.harvard.edu/>

Center for Equitable Growth - <http://ceg.berkeley.edu/>

Week 1 (February 1, 3)

Introduction and Overview

Why Do We Care About Inequality?

Sign-up for Discussion Group Leadership

Grusky and Hill, 1-10

Alvaredo, Facundo, Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman. 2018. *World Inequality Report. Executive Summary*.

<http://wir2018.wid.world/files/download/wir2018-summary-english.pdf>

United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs. 2020. World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World. Executive Summary.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/02/World-Social-Report2020-ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

OxFam Hong Kong. 2018. "Summary" in *Hong Kong Inequality Report*.

https://www.oxfam.org.hk/f/news_and_publication/16372/Oxfam_inequality%20report_Eng_FINAL.pdf, pages 1-4

Week 2 (February 8, 10)

Classic Theory

Grusky and Hill, 11-36

Week 3 (February 17)

The Recent Rise in Inequality

Grusky and Hill, 37-78

Chetty, Lecture 4

Chetty, Raj, David Grusky, Maximilian Hell, Nathaniel Hendren, Robert Manduca, and Jimmy Narang. 2016. [The Fading American Dream: Trends in American Income Mobility Since 1940](#). *Science*. 356(6336):398-406.

Week 4 (February 22, 24)

Elites/The One Percent

Grusky and Hill, 79-104

Week 5 (March 1, 3)

Gender, Sexuality, and Inequality

Grusky and Hill, 345-424

Additional readings/viewings TBA

Week 6 (March 8, 10)

Poverty and the Underclass

Grusky and Hill, 105-130

Chetty, Lecture 3

Why is There So Much Poverty
Grusky and Hill, 131-174

Week 7 (March 15, 17)

Education

Grusky and Hill, 175-208

Chetty, Lectures 6-7

Chetty, Raj, John Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, Nicholas Turner, and Danny Yagan. 2017. [Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility](#). Website with video, PPT, data and manuscript.

Please also visit the related website where you can look up mobility scores for specific colleges: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility>

Week 8 (March 22, 24)

Economic and Occupational Mobility

Grusky and Hill, 209-274

Chetty, Lecture 1

Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, and Emmanuel Saez. 2014. [Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States](#). *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. 129(4): 1553-1623.

Chetty, Raj, John Friedman, Nathaniel Hendren, Maggie R. Jones, and Sonya R. Porter. 2018. [The Opportunity Atlas: Mapping the Childhood Roots of Social Mobility](#). NBER Working Paper No. 25147.

Week 9 (March 29)

Race, Ethnicity, and Inequality

Grusky and Hill, 275-344

Chetty, Lecture 10

Week 10 (April 7)

How Inequality Spills Over

Moving Towards Equality

Grusky and Hill, 425-480

Chetty, Lecture 3

Week 11 (April 12, 14)

Historical China

Bamboo Y. Ren, Chen Liang, James Z. Lee. 2020. Meritocracy and the Making of the Chinese Academe, 1912-1952. *China Quarterly*. 244(December): 942-968.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741020001289>

Campbell, Cameron and James Z. Lee. 2011. Kinship and the Long-Term Persistence of Inequality in Liaoning, China, 1749-2005. *Chinese Sociological Review*. 44(1):71-104. [PMC3626260](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11464-011-9262-6)

Campbell, Cameron, Bijia Chen, Yuxue Ren and James Lee. 2020. Family Background and Career Outcomes for Exam Degree Holders in the Qing (1644-1911) Civil Service. Unpublished manuscript. Will be posted at Canvas.

Week 12 (April 19, 21)

Contemporary China

Xie Yu. 2016. Understanding Inequality in China. *Chinese Journal of Sociology*. 2(3):327-347. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2057150X16654059>

Xie Yu and Xiang Zhou. 2014. Income inequality in today's China. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 111(19):6928-6933. <http://www.pnas.org/content/111/19/6928.full>

OxFam Hong Kong. 2018. "Summary" in *Hong Kong Inequality Report*. https://www.oxfam.org.hk/f/news_and_publication/16372/Oxfam_inequality%20report_Eng_FINAL.pdf, pages 8-60

Week 13 (April 26, 28)

Gender inequality in China

Readings TBA

Week 14 (May 3, 5)

Education in China

Readings TBA