SOC 524: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Instructor: Daniel Buffington, Assistant Professor of Sociology
Classroom: Bear Hall, 281
Seminar Sessions: TH: 5:30-8:15PM
Instructor’s Office: Bear Hall, 122
Instructor’s Office Hours: MW 10AM-12PM, or by appointment
Instructor’s Contact Information: email: buffingtond@uncw.edu (preferred method of contact)
Course website: learn.uncw.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Official Description: Examination of social and economic inequalities based on social class and status as basic dimensions of individual life chances as well as of the structure and dynamics of societies and the world system. Reviews current state of the field in regard to academic and policy debates, theories, methods, crucial research findings, as well as comparative analyses.

COURSE MATERIALS

There are three required texts for this course that can be purchased in the University bookstore, area bookstores, or online. Other readings (“course readings”) are available online:


Course Readings: available on Blackboard course website or via digital libraries, such as JSTOR (you will need adobe acrobat)

COURSE FORMAT

This course is organized as a seminar, meaning our meetings will center on advanced discussion of the assigned readings. Therefore, my role as a teacher will be to act as a moderator and facilitator rather than a lecturer. Given this, it is imperative that every student prepare for class by reading all assignments thoroughly, digesting them to the point of being able to break down their conceptual arguments, and discuss them critically. The course will be based on weekly discussion leaders who will assume primary responsibility for posing incisive questions and leading discussions. However, regardless of those day it is, everyone is responsible for reading the material and bring in their queries and brains to class! We will schedule discussion leaders the first day of class.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

Final grades will be based on your performance in FIVE areas:

1. Class Participation (5 pts)
   All students are expected and required to actively participate in class discussion for every seminar session. I will consider the quality and quantity of class participation in deciding your class participation grade.

2. Class discussion leader (15 pts)
   Students will be assigned as a designated discussion leader for each week’s set of readings (except week 1). The number of times you will be a discussion leader will vary depending on the number of students enrolled. Discussion leaders will be responsible for sending a list of questions (minimum of 3) aimed at stimulating critical evaluation of the weekly readings. The questions should be thought provoking and avoid dichotomous (yes/no), descriptive, and opinion questions. All questions must be emailed to the class and professor 24 hours before class (e.g. 5:30PM on Wednesday). In addition the discussion leader will be principally responsible for leading discussion and analysis during the seminar period. A successful discussion leader will be prepared to present the author’s argument both sympathetically and critically.

3. Reaction papers (20 pts)
   Students will be required to write reaction papers to a week’s assigned readings. Reaction papers should be 2-3 pages, single-spaced. They should avoid serial summarization (i.e. the author says “A” then “B” then “C”). While you should provide a brief synopsis of the central premise or premises of the reading(s), the focus should be on synthesis (how does it relate to other readings covered in this or other courses?) and analysis (How does “A” relate to “B” and “C”?). Students must complete 4 reaction papers over the course of the semester (Weeks 2 through 13). No late papers are accepted under any circumstances. You are in graduate school, so don’t even ask.

4. Take-home essay (20 pts)
   Upon completing Unit 1 (“Classical Perspectives, Ideas, and Debates”), you will be given a take home essay (distributed at end of class on 9/11). Completed papers will be due at the beginning of class the following week (9/18). More detailed directions will be distributed with the essay question.

5. Final Project (40 pts)
   Each student will write a term paper that will apply the theoretical perspectives and/or key concepts developed in this course to a topic of interest to you (preferably, your thesis topic). The goal is to demonstrate how the sociological literature on stratification informs your subject. This could be in the form of [a] an empirical analysis that applies the sociological literature on stratification to some empirical phenomenon or [b] a research proposal that suggests how the sociological literature on stratification might be used to design or frame a project on some as yet, unexplored topic. More specific directions will be distributed later in the semester. Students will give a presentation (time will vary depending on number of students enrolled) on their (nearly) completed paper on 11/20. The final paper will be due by 9AM on December 8. More details will be given in class. Late papers will only be accepted under extreme conditions (to be determined by instructor) and will be demoted a full letter grade for every 24 hour period they are late.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

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**COURSE POLICIES**

**Disabilities:** Students with diagnosed disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (962-7555). Please give me a copy of the letter you receive from Office of Disability Services detailing class accommodations you may need. If you require accommodation for test-taking please make sure I have the referral letter no less than three days before the test.

**Academic Honesty:** All academic work must meet the standards of the university’s Academic Honor Code. Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. Ignorance of these rules and regulations is not an acceptable defense of academic dishonesty. You may read the rules and regulations online at: http://uncw.edu/odos/documents/Honor_Code_12-13.pdf

**TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE:**

The course outline is a general plan for the course; deviation announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. The date indicated in the left hand column is the day for which that particular reading/assignment is due. If changes to this schedule are necessary, they will be announced in class and updated on the course website.

“in Grusky” indicates that the reading comes from the required *Social Stratification* text. “JSTOR” and “online” indicate you must follow the link to access the article. You may need to do this from an on-campus computer or login via the library’s website to access it. “Blackboard” indicates the reading is available as a .pdf on the course website.

**UNIT 1: CLASSICAL PERSPECTIVES, ISSUES, AND DEBATES**

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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>INTRODUCTORY CONCEPTS</th>
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- Grusky & Weissharr. “The questions we ask about inequality” in *Grusky*
- Massey. 2007. “How stratification works” in *Categorically Unequal*

Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading

- Grusky & Szelenyi “The stories we tell about inequality” in *Grusky*

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<th>WEEK</th>
<th>CLASS-BASED THEORIES OF STRATIFICATION: MARX &amp; WEBER</th>
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a. **MARX & NEO-MARXISTS**
   - Marx, “Alienation and social classes”, “classes in capitalism and pre-capitalism”, and “ideology and class”, in *Grusky*
   - Dahrendorf “Class and conflict in industrial society” in *Grusky*
   - E.O. Wright “A general framework for the analysis of class structure” in *Grusky*

b. **WEBER & NEO-WEBERIANS**
   - Weber “Class, Status, Party”, “Status Groups and Classes”, “Open and Closed Relationships” in *Grusky*
   - Giddens “The class structure of advanced societies” in *Grusky*
   - Parkin “Marxism and class theory: A bourgeois critique” in *Grusky*

Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading

- Chan, Tak Wing and John H. Goldthorpe. 2007. “Class and Status: The Conceptual
**WEEK 3**  
**9/4**  
**EARLY AMERICAN APPROACHES TO STRATIFICATION: FUNCTIONALISM AND STATUS ATTAINMENT**

a. **FUNCTIONALISM**
   - Durkheim “The division of labor in society” in Grusky
   - Davis and Moore “Some principles of stratification” in Grusky
     - **Response**: Tumin “Some principles of stratification: A critical analysis” in Grusky

Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading

b. **STATUS ATTAINMENT RESEARCH**
   - Treiman “Occupational prestige in comparative perspective” in Grusky
   - Hauser & Warren “Socioeconomic indexes for occupations” in Grusky
   - Featherman & Hauser “A refined model of occupational mobility” in Grusky
     - **Response**: Jonsson et. al. “It’s a decent bet that our children will be professors too” in Grusky

c. **REASSESSMENT – WHITHER CLASS?**
   - Grusky & Sorenson “Are there big social classes?” [Blackboard]
   - Wright “The ‘Death of Class’ Debate” class lecture notes [Blackboard]

**WEEK 4**  
**9/11**  
**ALTERNATIVE CLASSICAL APPROACHES TO STRATIFICATION**

A. **ECOLOGICAL-EVOLUTIONARY THEORIES**

Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading
   - Diamond 1997. *Guns, Germs, and Steel*
     - another take on an ecological-evolutionary of stratification developed independent of, but similar to, Lenski. Diamond also focuses on inequality between – rather than within – societies, meaning it contributes to current debates about global stratification. For another take on global stratification stratification between societies see the reading by Wallerstein in Grusky
     - *Sociological Theory* 22(2), 2004
     - a special issue dedicated to Lenski including updates, extensions, and critiques. I find the piece by Collins particularly useful.

B. **ELITE AND RULING CLASS PERSPECTIVES**
   - Mills “The power elite” in Grusky
   - Giddens “Elites and power” in Grusky
   - Domhoff “Who rules America?” in Grusky
     - also see his website: [http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/](http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/)
Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading


**Take home essay distributed (end of class)**

**WEEK 5 9/18**

**ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING, THE NEW ECONOMY, AND RISING INEQUALITY**

**Take home essay due (beginning of class)**

- Grusky & Weisshaar “A compressed history of inequality” in Grusky
- Massey 2007. Ch 2 “The rise and fall of egalitarian capitalism” in Categorically Unequal
- Atkinson, Piketty, and Saez “Top incomes in the long run of history” in Grusky

**Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading**

- Kallenberg “The rise of precarious work” in Grusky

**WEEK 6 9/25**

**FINDING A JOB IN THE NEW ECONOMY: LABOR MARKETS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS**

**A. MATCHING/QUEUING THEORY**

- Sorensen and Kalleberg “An outline of a theory of the matching of persons and jobs” in Grusky
- Reskin, “Labor markets as queues” pp 881-890 in Grusky

**B. EMPLOYER PREFERENCES & ATTITUDES**

- Bertrand & Mullainathan “Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal?” in Grusky

**C. SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL NETWORKS**

- Granovetter, “The strength of weak ties” in Grusky

**Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading**

and Ethnicity Matter. [online]
  o An excellent general overview of the literature on racial inequality in the labor market.
- Bourdieu, “Forms of capital” [Blackboard]
  o An introduction to two non-economic forms of capital: social and cultural. See especially the discussion of the former, pp 7-10
  o Another general discussion of social capital, but also pay attention to the specific discussion of social capital and inequality, pp 12-15

**WEEK 7 10/2** FINDING A JOB IN THE NEW ECONOMY: THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

- Reardon “The widening achievement gap between the rich and the poor” in Grusky

Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading


**WEEK 8 10/9** GENDER STRATIFICATION: OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION AND THE GENDER GAP IN PAY

- Beilby “The structure and process of sex segregation” in Grusky
- Jacobs “Revolving doors” in Grusky
- Gorman and Kane “Glass ceilings in corporate law firms.” In Grusky
- Charles & Grusky “Egalitarianism and gender inequality” in Grusky
- Peterson & Morgan “The within gender wage gap” in Grusky
- England “Devaluation and the pay of comparable male and female occupations.” in Grusky
- Tam “Why do female occupations pay less?” in Grusky
- Blau “The sources of the gender pay gap” in Grusky
- Correll, Bernard, and Paik “Getting a job: Is there a motherhood penalty?” in Grusky
- Goldin & Rouse “Orchestrating impartiality: The impact of ‘blind’ auditions on female musicians.” in Grusky

**WEEK 9 10/16** GENDER STRATIFICATION: BALANCING WORK-FAMILY CONFLICTS & THE STALLED REVOLUTION
### A. WORK-FAMILY CONFLICTS
- Hochschild “The time bind” in Grusky
- Belkin “The opt-out revolution.” in Grusky
- Percheski “Opting out?” in Grusky
- Maume, Sebastian, and Bardo. 2010. “Gender, work-family responsibilities, and sleep.” *Gender & Society*, 24: 746-768. [online]

### B. REVOLUTION STALLED?
- England “The gender revolution: Uneven and stalled” in Grusky
- Ridgeway “The persistence of gender inequality” in Grusky

### WEEK 10 10/23 RACIAL STRATIFICATION: THE ROLE OF HOUSING & WEALTH
- Massey & Denton “American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass” in Grusky
  - Focus on Chs 2, 3, and 5

### WEEK 11 10/30 RACIAL STRATIFICATION: THE ROLE OF MASS INCARCERATION
- Western & Pettit “Incarceration and social inequality” in Grusky
- Pager. “Marked” in Grusky

### Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading

### WEEK 12 11/6 ASSIMILATION THEORY RELOADED: HOW ARE IMMIGRANTS BEING INCORPORATED?
- Alba & Nee “Assimilation theory for an era of unprecedented diversity” in Grusky
- Portes & Manning “The immigrant enclave: Theory and empirical examples” in Grusky
- Portes & Zhou “The new second generation: Segmented Assimilation and its variants” in Grusky
- Massey 2007. Ch 4 “Building a better underclass” in *Categorically Unequal*
- Jiminez “Why replenishment strengthens racial and ethnic boundaries” in Grusky

### Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading
  - Two summation pieces that include useful discussions of the historical development of classical assimilation theory, its critics and downfall, and subsequent revival. Excellent background readings.
- Qian & Lichter “Are recent trends in intermarriage consistent with assimilation theory?” in *Grusky*
  - Three further empirical studies in the debate over the new assimilation theories

#### WEEK 13
11/13

**FINAL THOUGHTS: INTERSECTIONALITY, POLICY, AND THE FUTURE OF INEQUALITY**

**A. INTERSECTIONALITY**
- Anderson and Collins “Why race, class, and gender matter” in *Grusky*
- Greenman and Xie “Double jeopardy” in *Grusky*

### Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading

**B. POLICY & POLICY IMPLICATIONS**
- Reskin selections from *Realities of Affirmative Action* [Blackboard]
- Reskin “Rethinking employment discrimination” in *Grusky*

### Supplementary/Recommended/Further Reading
- Bielby 2000 “Minimizing Workplace Gender and Racial Bias” *Contemporary Sociology*, 29(1): 120-129. [online]
- Peterson “Discrimination: Conscious or unconscious?” in *Grusky*

**C. FUTURE OF INEQUALITY**
- Sawhill and McMurter. 1996. “Are justice and inequality compatible?” *The Urban Institute* [online]

#### WEEK 14
11/20

**CLASS PRESENTATIONS**

#### WEEK 15
11/27

**THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY [NO CLASS]**

#### WEEK 16

**FINAL PAPER DUE 12/8 9AM**