

SOCI-333 Social Stratification McGill University, Fall Term 2015
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 14:35 to 15:25 Room: STBIO 2/2

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OVERVIEW

The study of social stratification is concerned with the unequal distribution of resources and how they are allocated to individuals or groups of individuals. Social stratification is one of the core concerns of sociology but it is far from being a solely academic matter. Understanding social stratification is essential to being an informed citizen. Furthermore a sociological perspective on inequality will be directly relevant in many professions such as teaching, social work, public administration, health-care, marketing and many others.

This course will provide you an overview of key theoretical debates of the field and the empirical data and case studies on which these debates hinge. We will begin with a look at socioeconomic inequality and examine the processes that create it and re-create it over time and generations. We then consider how inequality is related to stratification according to categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, or citizenship. A variety of exercises will provide opportunity to actively engage the theories we discuss, apply them to current political debates, and to practice making coherent (sociological) arguments.

READINGS

Many of the readings for this class will be available online. Readings that are available through McGill's Library databases are marked with the ending "LIB" in the syllabus. You will use McGill library resources to access these. Readings marked with "CP" are in a course pack that is available for purchase at the McGill bookstore and also on reserve in the library.

There is one book required for purchase in this class:

Annette Lareau. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. University of California Press. Both the first and second editions of this book are acceptable for the course. This book is available at the McGill University Bookstore. A copy will also be placed on reserve at the library.

In addition to the readings listed I will distribute, via the course website, short pieces such as newspaper articles.

EVALUATION

Your grade in this class will be based on the following components:

- Quizzes (50%): We will have four short quizzes during the semester. They are tentatively scheduled and weighted as follows.
 - Wednesday Sept 23, Quiz #1 - 10%
 - Monday October 19, Quiz #2 (Midterm) - 20%
 - Monday November 16, Quiz #3 - 10%
 - December 7, Quiz #4 - 10%
- Participation (20%): You are expected to actively participate in conference discussion sessions and in-class exercises. Some of these exercises will involve group work.

- Writing exercise (30%): In the second half of the semester we will have a peer review writing project that will consist of three parts. You will write a first draft (10%). In an anonymous process you will get comments from your peers. The comments you provide on your colleagues' work count for another 10%. Using the feedback from your peers you will write a second draft (10%). As this assignment nears we will provide additional instructions.

ABSENCES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Only legitimate reason recognized by McGill as excusable, such as illness, family emergency, and natural disaster will be accepted if you miss a quiz. Individuals who miss a quiz because of health reasons must submit a note from a Doctor (a note from health services will not be accepted). I will determine the nature of the makeup exam: either a following quiz will be weighted more heavily, I will conduct a written make-up exam, or I will conduct a face to face oral exam in my office. The deadlines for the writing exercise (to be announced) will be strictly enforced and late assignments will be heavily penalized.

If students feel their exams are not accurately graded, they may request a regrade. However, in order to request a regrade, you must first submit a written letter indicating the reasons why your work should be regraded. During the regrade process, the paper/exam is analyzed more closely, and it is possible the regrade will result in a lower grade.

CONFERENCES

With few exceptions we will have conferences every Friday for which you sign up on Minerva. Conferences will have two main purposes: A) They will allow for discussion of readings, review and clarification and B) they will be the venue for class/group exercises. As noted above, discussions and exercises are a part of your grade so participation is important.

NOTES/POLICIES

Tentative nature of the syllabus: This syllabus is my best guess at how the semester will unfold. We may move faster or slower than I anticipate, or I may update some of the readings with newer/better material. Thus I reserve the possibility to amend the syllabus at any point during the semester. Any changes to readings will be announced at least one class in advance and posted on the course website. You are responsible for keeping up with any changes.

Language: In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Academic Integrity and Misconduct: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Respect and use of electronic devices: Laptops and tablet devices are allowed only for note-taking in class. In consideration for other students, as well as for the instructor, please make sure you that you arrive on time, and do not leave class early. Cell phones should be turned off.

Contact: We will be using the course website tools. You are responsible for checking the website for announcements, and make sure you check the e-mail account that is associated with the course website. The best way to reach us is via e-mail. If you write make sure you put SOCI-333 in the subject line. If you do not, your e-mail may get buried and I may not respond. I will do my best to get back to you within 48h, but it may take me longer over the weekend or when I'm out of town.

PLANNED SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND READINGS

0. **Introduction** (September 4)

1. **Socioeconomic Inequality: Does it matter? Should we care?** . (September 9 and 11)

- John Rawls. 1972. *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press [pp3-17;60-62;126-127;136-137]– LIB e-book
- Christopher Jencks. 2002. “Does Inequality Matter?” *Daedalus* 131(1) - LIB

2. **Socioeconomic Inequality: Contemporary Trends and Explanations.** (September 14, 16, 18)

- Morris, Martina, and Bruce Western. "Inequality in Earnings at the Close of the Twentieth Century." *Annual Review of Sociology* (1999): 623-657. -LIB
- Claude Fischer et al. 1996. *Inequality by Design*. Princeton Univ. Press [Chapter 6] – CP

3. **Classics approaches to Inequality – Labor and Capital** (September 21, 23, 25)

- Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore. 1945. “Some Principles of Stratification.” *American Sociological Review* 10(2):242-49. – LIB
- Marx, Karl. Communist Manifesto [Part I] Available online at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>
- Eric Olin Wright: *Class Counts* [Chapter 1] - CP

4. **Dynamics of Inequality** (September 28, 30, Oct, 2)

- Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the 21st Century* [pp 1- 27] – LIB-ebook
- Robert Frank and Philip Cook. 1995. *The Winner Take All Society*. Free Press. [Chapters 1 & 2] - CP
- Thomas Schelling. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior* [Chapter 4] - CP

5. **Stratification & Inequality I: Categories and Inequality** (October 5, 7, 9)

- Charles Tilly. *Durable Inequality* [Chapter 1] –LIB e-book.
- Rogers Brubaker. 2015. *Grounds for Difference*. [Chapter 1] – CP

6. **Stratification & Inequality II: Status, Taste & Cultural Capital** (Oct. 14, 16):

- Max Weber. “Class, Status, Party” in *Economy and Society* – CP
- Pierre Bourdieu. 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press. [Excerpts] – CP
- Appendix B in *Unequal Childhoods*

7. **Families & Inequality I** (October 19, 21, 23)

- *Unequal Childhoods*

8. **Families & Inequality II** (October 26, 28, 30)

- *Unequal Childhoods*

9. **Families and Inequality III / Genes and Inequality** (November 2, 4, 6)

- Dalton Conley. *The Pecking Order* [Chapter 1] – CP
- Thomas Bouchard et al. 1990. “Sources of Human Psychological Differences: The Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart,” *Science* 250:223-228. – LIB

10. **Gender** (November 9, 11, 13)
 - Judith Lorber. 1994. *Paradoxes of Gender* [Excerpt] - CP
 - Maria Charles and David Grusky. 2004. *Occupational Ghettos: The Worldwide Segregation of Women and Men*. Stanford University Press. [Excerpt] – CP
11. **Ethnicity & Race** (November 16, 18, 20)
 - Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race* [Excerpts] - CP
 - Edward Telles. *Race in another America* [Excerpts] – LIB e-book
12. **Citizenship and Global Inequality** (November 23, 25, 27):
 - Ayelet Shachar. 2009. *The Birthright Lottery. Citizenship and Global Inequality*. Harvard University Press. [pp. 1 - 27] - CP
 - Lant Pritchett. *Let Their People Come: Breaking the Gridlock on International Labor Mobility*. [Excerpts] Available online at Center for Global Development
13. **Immigration** (November 30, December 2, Dec 5)
 - Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut. 2001. *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. [Chapter 3: Not Everyone is Chosen] – LIB e-book
 - Jeffrey Reitz et al. 2011. “Comparisons of the success of racial minority immigrant offspring in the United States, Canada and Australia” *Social Science Research*
14. **Wrap up** (December 7)