Sociology 515: Stratification

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Office hours: Wednesday 10:00-12:00 and by appointment

**Course Objectives:** This course is designed as an introduction to major themes in the sociology of stratification. Stratification covers a rather broad range of topics, including race, class, gender, and other forms of inequalities. On the one hand, this means that inequality is often thought of as core to the discipline of sociology, since sociologists are nearly always interested in some question of advantages or disadvantages or simply differences along these important dimensions. On the other hand, this can mean that it is difficult to teach and learn because there is no unifying perspective – or even perspectives – on the field, although we will read some attempts at developing these perspectives.

Because stratification covers a wide range of topics, the primary objective is to expose students to some of the most important readings in a range of different topics. The course should help prepare students for the major exam in stratification. In addition, the course will help students develop research skills in the sociology of stratification. Even for those who are not primarily interested in stratification, inequalities are an important topic in many other subfields of sociology, and my expectation is that the course will provide this.

The other major goal of this course is for you to develop a working paper that will be ready for submission for presentation at the American Sociological Association meetings. You will work together in groups on one of several topics. Along the way, I will assist you with the components of the paper.

**Course Requirements**

**In-class Discussion:** Discussion of the readings will be the dominant use of class time and our main way of interacting with the readings. As such, it is extremely important that everyone complete the assigned readings and actively participate in the discussion. Discussion will comprise 40% of the final grade.

**Discussion Memos:** Discussion memos will be 2-4 page (double-spaced) reactions to the readings for each week. The memos should consist of 1 to 2 paragraphs of summary but primarily reactions, responses, and thoughts about the readings. Students will sign up on day 1 to complete four memos throughout the course, which will lead to roughly three students writing memos per class. These should be circulated by 5 pm the day before class to other students in the class in order to facilitate discussion. The memos will be an additional 20% of the final grade.

**Final Paper:** For this class, you will write a final paper and submit it for consideration at the American Sociological Association annual meetings. The final papers for this semester will consist of one of two topics: the gender wage gap and either its evolution over time or an “explanation” of the gender wage gap, and the race wage and its evolution over time or an
“explanation” of the race wage gap. Each of these papers should also successfully contextualize research on wage gaps – what is the wage gap, what might other measures tell us, etc. I will function as an author on these papers by guiding the paper and offering feedback, but the vast majority of the literature review, writing, and data analysis will be done by students.

Components of the grade will include:

10%: Literature Review
10%: 1st full draft
10%: Final draft
10%: successful submission to the ASA meetings.

Required Books


Shapiro, Thomas M. *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality*.


Reading Schedule

September 3: General Income Inequality


September 10: Wage gaps: gender
Marianne Bertrand, Claudia Goldin, and Lawrence F. Katz* Dynamics of the Gender Gap for Young Professionals in the Financial and Corporate Sectors†


Samuel Cohn: chapter.

September 17: Wage gaps: race;


**September 24: Race and Inequality**


**October 1: Segregation and Race:**


Iceland. Chapters from Where we live Now.

**October 8: Threat and Race**


Blalock

**October 15: Wealth**


**October 22: Gender and Housework:**

Hochschild, Arlie. *The second Shift*.


**October 29: Gender Display or not?**


Gupta.


November 5: Economic and quasi-economic approaches to gender

Becker. Chapter.

November 12: Gender and Social Pyschology

November 19: Institutions and Inequality


November 26: Thanksgiving

December 3: More Theoretical Approaches
Lenski, Gerhard. Power and Privilege. Pages 1-3


Tilly, Charles. Durable Inequality. selection