Sociology 515: Stratification

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Course Objectives: This course is designed as an introduction to major themes in the sociology of stratification. Stratification covers a 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.

Because stratification covers a wide range of topics, the primary objective of this course is to expose students to many 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 familiarity with inequality that might help guide research in other areas.

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 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 three memos throughout the course, with two to 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.

Summary of citations and topics among recent inequality articles: Students will read abstracts of recent articles on inequality for recent years in several journals. Doing so will generate a list of the most read articles and we will read those for the class. Students will also generate a list of the topics covered in these articles. This assignment will comprise 10% of the final grade.

Final Paper: The other major assignment will be a final paper, which should be a research paper. Although not required, I will suggest that students use chapters from the book The Atlanta Paradox as examples and potentially replicate analyses from these chapters.
Components of the final paper grade will include:

10%: 1st full draft
20%: Final draft

**September 3: Labor Day, no class**

**September 10: Class introduction**
Readings by Kenworthy, Jencks, Reskin

**September 17: Wage and Occupational inequality, general**


Oliver, Melvin L. and Thomas M. Shapiro. 1995. *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. New York: Routledge. (Chapters 1, 2, 6, 7)

**September 24: Class, Education, Mobility**


**October 1: ONLINE SESSION – Gender and Paid work I**


**October 8: Fall Break**

**October 15: Mobility and TBA**

Tilly, Charles. *Durable Inequality.* selection

**October 22: Readings TBA (Determined in previous week)**

**October 29: Gender and Paid Work II**


**November 5: ONLINE SESSION – Gender Perspectives**


**November 12: Gender**


November 19: (Directly before Thanksgiving) ONLINE SESSION Prejudice and
Discrimination
Bobo, Lawrence. 1999. “Prejudice as group position: Microfoundations of a sociological


57(4): 829-849.


November 26: Race and Place I
Wilson, William Julius. 1987. The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and
Urban Poverty. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapters 1, 2, 5-7).

Small, Mario L. and Monica McDermott. “The Presence of Organizational Resources in Poor
Urban Neighborhoods: An Analysis of Average and Contextual Effects.” Social Forces
84(3):1697-1724

December 3: Race and Place II.
Making of the Underclass. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Chapters 1,2,4,6).


December 10: Race in Labor Markets


Occupational Determinants of the Black-White Wage Gap.” American Sociological Review 66,
August, 542-567.