1 Instructions

Answer a total of 4 questions among the following 6. If you have any question during the exam you may contact Francois Nielsen at francois_nielsen(at)unc.edu.

2 Questions

1. Is it useful or possible to analyze the independent effects of race/ethnicity, gender, or class on common indicators of inequality? Develop the following points:
   (1) Referring to recent studies, discuss the methodological and theoretical pros and cons of treating these (and other?) dimensions separately vs. intersectionally.
   (2) In particular, consider the ramifications of this question for studying historical trends in inequality versus patterns of inequality across individuals, groups or social contexts.

2. Gender inequality in the labor market is sometimes attributed to status closure, in which men dominate better jobs, or status composition, through which women’s jobs accrue less rewards. Discuss:
   (1) Whether these concepts are sufficient or lacking in explaining gender inequality.
   (2) What we know of the processes affecting these patterns, if they exist.
   (3) What these processes imply about the dynamics of labor market inequality more generally.

3. This question is about inequality in the U.S. It has three parts:
   (1) What is the basic story of trends in inequality in America since 1950?
   (2) Can the story be told as one narrative, or is it necessary to distinguish among different aspects of inequality (such as economic, political, educational, health, etc., aspects)?
(3) Describe and evaluate the competing theories regarding the trends in inequality. Which theory or theories do you believe best account for the empirical evidence?

4. In his book *The New Geography of Global Income Inequality* sociologist Glen Firebaugh argues that global income inequality has stopped increasing and possibly begun declining. This question has three parts:

   (1) What are the recent trends in global inequality?
   (2) What are the competing theories of globalization and inequality which attempt to explain these trends?
   (3) Which provides the best explanation, in your analysis, of the recent rapid economic growth in China and India and continued stagnation in other parts of the world such as Latin America?

5. Do you think an egalitarian, classless society is possible? Discuss the following points, citing relevant literature or mentioning historical events as needed:

   (1) What does the historical evidence of the last 150 years of large scale attempts to construct a utopian society suggest?
   (2) In what ways do assumptions about human nature bear on these issues?

6. At one point elite theories were widely influential within sociology. However elite theories have minimal influence in contemporary work on social stratification. Discuss the following points (not necessarily in this order):

   (1) Describe the main arguments of elite theorists. What evidence did elite theorists point to in building their argument?
   (2) In what ways did elite theorists build on and/or react to the ideas of Karl Marx?
   (3) Describe the main reactions of the social sciences against elite theories and speculate on the intellectual roots of these reactions.
   (4) Are there any ideas, claims or questions central to “elite theory” that should be on the agenda for contemporary sociologists studying stratification, or are these ideas no longer relevant? Document your position on one side or the other of this issue.