Soci850 – SOCIAL STRATIFICATION
Fall 2015
Professor François NIELSEN

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1 Time, Place & Contacts

  • Classes Meet
    – Fri 9:00–11:30 AM in Hamilton 151

  • Instructor
    – Professor François Nielsen – Email: francois_nielsen@unc.edu · Office: Hamilton 163 · Hours: by appointment · Phone: 919-962-5064
    – The current version of this syllabus is available online at http://www.unc.edu/~nielsen (click on the link for Soci850 – Social Stratification)

2 Description & Goals

The course covers major classical and current approaches to social stratification in sociology, with some special emphasis on evolutionary approaches, issues related to the evolution of social inequality with industrial development and globalization, and comparative social mobility. I will try to prepare discussion questions ahead of time to guide the discussions. The class is organized as a seminar: students are expected to do the readings assigned for each period and to participate in class discussions. The attached reading list details the readings and the class period by which they should be read. “Additional references” readings are only suggestions and are not required for the course.

The goals of the course are the following.

1. To understand major substantive issues involved in social stratification research.

2. To achieve this understanding by becoming acquainted with the major world views, theories, models, methods, and people involved in stratification research; this knowledge should go a long way toward enabling students to launch a research project of their own on a topic pertaining to social stratification.

3. For graduate students in sociology especially, to acquire a solid basis for preparing the Ph.D. field exam in social stratification.

3 About the Readings

The following books will be used. You will almost certainly want to obtain a copy of the Grusky reader. The Herrnstein and Murray book is optional but used copies are widely available and cheap. I have not ordered these books at Student Stores. I suggest that you order them online at such places as Amazon.com.


Many of the readings are from the Social Stratification reader edited by David B. Grusky. I use the new 4th edition of the reader, which I refer to as GRU4e. Some of the chapters we use were already included in earlier editions, in which case I also provide the old reference. Most of the other readings will be accessible as PDF files linked to the syllabus. Some of these texts are protected by a login that will be communicated to class participants. You are encouraged to share books and articles. Let me know if you have trouble obtaining any of the readings.

The field of social stratification is vast, so the works on this list represent only highlights of the important works in stratification.

4 Requirements

The course has the following requirements.

1. **Readings & Class Participation (20%)**. You are expected to do the readings for the day and to think about the questions about them so you can participate in class discussion and other activities. Questions for discussion will be posted under Class Notes in the side bar. These notes will be updated in the course of the semester.

   As part of class participation each student will be a member of a team of two students that will lead and moderate the class discussion during a given class period. Given the number of students in the class this semester each student should be member of the team twice. For the first discussion period (Module 2) we will recruit two volunteers on the first day of class. I am open for suggestions on how to allocate team members for the other periods. We will decide collectively how to do this on the first day of class.

2. **Paper (60%)**. The main work in the class will consist of a paper on a topic of your choosing. I will discuss the kind of topics that are acceptable and provide examples early in the semester. You are welcome to choose a topic that relates to your field of study and may pave the way for a Master’s thesis, or dissertation or other kind of publication. And your paper does not have to be the final product of a research and may be tentative (i.e., it may be along the lines of a proposal or preliminary report rather than completed research). The paper may consist of a review of a subfield of social stratification, or an empirical paper contributing new analysis of relevant data.

3. **Presentation (20%)**. A class presentation of your paper topic. Such presentations are often useful in helping people refine their ideas. Presentations will be in conference format, lasting 15–25 minutes (depending on the number of students in the class), with time left over for questions and discussion. You are encouraged to prepare a PowerPoint (or equivalent) presentation, although this is not a requirement.

There are three important dates that should be kept in mind:

1. Class 7 (Fri 2 Oct) A three-page abstract / outline of your paper / presentation topic is due
2. Class 12 (Fri 13 Nov) and 13 (Fri 20 Nov) Class presentations (actual date of your presentation TBA)
3. The final paper is due on or before the official date of the final for the course (TBA)

5 Outline & Schedule

I must reserve the right to modify the readings at any time during the semester. I will make every effort to post these changes in useful time online and alert the class about them.
Table 1: Summary Outline and Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
<td>Fri 21 Aug</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module 2</td>
<td>Fri 28 Aug</td>
<td>Functionalist Approaches</td>
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<td>Module 3</td>
<td>Fri 4 Sep</td>
<td>Marxian Approaches &amp; Neoclassical Critique</td>
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<td>Module 4</td>
<td>Fri 11 Sep</td>
<td>Responses to Marx: Weber &amp; Elite Theorists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module 5</td>
<td>Fri 18 Sep</td>
<td>Evolutionary Approaches I</td>
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<td>Module 6</td>
<td>Fri 25 Sep</td>
<td>Evolutionary Approaches II</td>
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<td>Module 7</td>
<td>Fri 2 Oct</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Attainment &amp; Mobility I</td>
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<td>Module 8</td>
<td>Fri 9 Oct</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Attainment &amp; Mobility II: Gender &amp; Networks</td>
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<td>Fri 16 Oct</td>
<td>No Class – Fall Recess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module 9</td>
<td>Fri 23 Oct</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Attainment &amp; Mobility III: Cognitive &amp; Non-cognitive Traits</td>
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<td>Module 10</td>
<td>Fri 30 Oct</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Attainment &amp; Mobility IV: Race &amp; Ethnicity</td>
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<td>Module 11</td>
<td>Fri 6 Nov</td>
<td>Inequality &amp; Development in the World System</td>
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<td>Module 12</td>
<td>Fri 13 Nov</td>
<td>Class Projects – Presentations</td>
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<td>Module 13</td>
<td>Fri 20 Nov</td>
<td>Class Projects – Presentations (cont’d)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fri 28 Nov</td>
<td>No Class – Thanksgiving</td>
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Module 1 – Introduction (21 Aug)


Additional references:


Module 2 – Functions & Disfunctions of Stratification, Recent Trends in Top Incomes (28 Aug)

- M2 Discussion topics


Additional references:


Module 3 – Marxian Approach & Neoclassical Critique (4 Sep)

- M3 Discussion topics


Additional references:


  - “Alienation and Social Classes.” (Pp. 74–79 in GRU3e. Pp. 87–91 in GRU2e.) [It would be interesting for a German-reading student to have a look at the German version of this text, to elucidate some of the terminology.]

  - “Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism.” (Pp. 79–88 in GRU3e. Pp. 91–101 in GRU2e.)

- “Value and Surplus Value.” (Not in GRU3e. Pp. 103–105 in GRU2e.)


### Module 4 – Responses to Marx: Weber and Pareto (11 Sep)

#### M4 Discussion topics

##### a. Max Weber and Other Economic Approaches


##### b. Pareto and Other Elite/Ruling Class Theorists


Additional references:


**Module 5 – Evolutionary Approaches I: Sociocultural Evolution (18 Sep)**

- **M5 Discussion topics**
    - Chapter 5 – Characteristics of Sets of Societies (Pp. 81–109)
    - Chapter 6 – Characteristics of the Global System of Societies (Pp. 111–124)
    - Chapter 14 – From Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy (Pp. 265–292)
  - (Optional, Repeat) Grusky, David B. and Katherine R. Weishaar. “Introduction – The Questions We ask About Inequality.” Pp. 1–16 in GRU4e. [Compare their typology of societies with that of Lenski.]
Additional references:


  - Chapter 3 – The Evolution of Human Societies (Pp. 45–68)
  - Chapter 4 – Types of Human Societies (Pp. 69–84)

  - Prefaces (Pp. vii–xxvi)
  - Chapter 2 – Man and Society (Pp. 24–42)
  - Chapter 3 – The Dynamics of Distributive Systems (Pp. 43–72)
  - Chapter 4 – The Structure of Distributive Systems (Pp. 73–93)
  - Chapter 13 – Retrospect and Prospect (Pp. 434–446)
  - Chapters 5–12: peruse to understand the organization of the book.

Module 6 – Evolutionary Approaches II: Behavioral Foundations of Social Stratification & Gender Roles (25 Sep)

- M6 Discussion topics


  - Chapter 1 – Fish... (Pp. 1–3)
  - Chapter 2 – ...And People (Pp. 5–18)
  - Chapter 5 (partial) – “Dominance in the Primate Series.” (Pp. 58–64)
  - Chapter 6 – Status Signs (Pp. 65–77)


  - Chapter 16 – Gender (Pp. 337–371). [Note that pp. 359–371 are about rape; not strictly stratification but an illuminating discussion of a sensitive issue.]

Additional references:


  - Chapter 6 – Fundamentals of Sex Differences (Pp. 135–168)
  - Chapter 8 – Fundamentals of Social Stratification (Pp. 207–245)


  - Chapters 1 to 3
  - Chapters 4 to 5


  - Chapter 4 – Darwin’s Theory of Natural Selection (Pp. 83–100)
  - Chapter 5 – Elements of Evolutionary Behavioral Science (Pp 101–134)

  - Chapter 16 – Two-Gender Families (Pp. 49–74).


Module 7 – Socioeconomic Attainment & Comparative Social Mobility I (2 Oct)

a. Conceptualizing Occupational Status


b. Socioeconomic Attainment & Mobility


- Featherman, David L. and Robert M. Hauser. “A Refined Model of Occupational Mobility.” Pp. 443-453 in GRU4e; read only left column of 443, Table 52.1 p. 447, Figure 52.1 p.448, Section “Mobility Chances: A new Perspective” pp. 450–451. Pp. 426–436 in GRU3e; read only left column of p. 426, Table 1 p. 429, Figure 1 p. 431, Section “Mobility Chances: A new Perspective” pp. 433–435. Pp. 325–335 in GRU2e; read only left column of p. 325, Table 1 p. 329, Figure 1 p. 330, Section “Mobility Chances: A new Perspective” pp. 332–333.


- Breen, Richard. “Social Mobility in Europe.” Pp. 464–480 in GRU4e. Pp. 465–480 in GRU3e. [This is a long paper. Try to get the gist from conclusion and graphs; don’t get bogged down in it.]


c. Mechanisms of Attainment: Education


Additional references:


• Mouv, Ted. 2006. “Estimating the Causal Effect of Social Capital: A Review of Recent Research.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 32: 79–102. Key Words: peer effects, social networks, social homophily, fixed effects models. Abstract: Although there is a large literature on social capital, empirical estimates of the effect of social capital may be biased because of social homophily, the tendency of similar people to become friends with each other. Despite the methodological difficulties, a recent literature has emerged across several different disciplines that tries to estimate the causal effect of social capital. This paper reviews this recent empirical literature on social capital, paying close attention to the statistical and theoretical assumptions involved. Overall, there is evidence that genuine progress has been made in estimating the effect of social capital. The reviewed articles should provide useful examples for future research.


• Breen, Richard, Ruud Luijx, Walter Müller, and Reinhard Pollak. 2009. “Nonpersistent Inequality in Educational Attainment: Evidence from Eight European Countries.” *American Journal of Sociology* 114: 5 (March): 1475–1521. [Abstract: In their widely cited study, Shavit and Blossfeld report stability of socioeconomic inequalities in educational attainment over much of the 20th century in 11 out of 13 countries. This article outlines reasons why one might expect to find declining class inequalities in educational attainment, and, using a large data set, the authors analyze educational inequality among cohorts born in the first two thirds of the 20th century in eight European countries. They find, as expected, a widespread decline in educational inequality between students coming from different social origins. Their results are robust to other possible choices of method and variables, and the authors offer some explanations of why their findings contradict Shavit and Blossfeld’s conclusions.]

• Breen, Richard, and Jan Jonsson. 2005. “Inequality of Opportunity in Comparative Perspective: Recent Research on Educational Attainment and Social Mobility.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 31: 223–43. (For more about the earlier literature discussed in this paper see Ganzeboom, Treiman and Ultee 1991.)

• Ganzeboom, Harry, Donald Treiman, and Wout C. Ultee. 1991. “Comparative Intergenerational Stratification Research.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 17: 277–302. [This is a review of the whole literature; the distinction of the several phases of stratification research is important.]


Module 8 – Socioeconomic Attainment and Mobility II: Gender and networks (9 Oct)

• M8 Discussion topics

   a. Mechanisms of Attainment: Gender

   Labor Force Participation


   Discrimination


   Sex Segregation


Gender Gap in Wages


The Summers Affair

- ASA Council Statement on Causes of Gender Differences in Science and Math Career Achievement, 28 Feb 2005

b. Mechanisms of Attainment: Peers and Network Influences


Additional references:

- Female/male hourly earnings ratios in industrial countries, 1967–90 (Blau and Kahn 1995, Figure 3.1 p. 106)
- Professional degrees in dentistry, medicine, and law, 1950–present, by sex (Table 256 from NCES 2005)
- List of tables for 2003 NCES Digest of Education Statistics
- Murray, Charles. 2005. “The Inequality Taboo.” Fully annotated version of an article that appeared in the September 2005 issue of Commentary. [This article is also relevant for Module 10 on Race & Ethnic distinctions.]
Module 9 – Socioeconomic Attainment and Mobility III: Cognitive and Noncognitive Abilities (23 Oct)

• **M9 Discussion topics**

a. **Mechanisms of Attainment: Intelligence**

**The Bell Curve Affair and Sociological Responses**

• Herrnstein, Richard and Charles Murray. [1994] 1996. *The Bell Curve*. New York: Free Press. [There are fairly informative summaries at the beginning of most chapters that are useful to get the gist of the chapters we don’t read.]
  
  
  – Part I
    
    ◦ The Emergence of a Cognitive Elite, pp. 25–27.
    
    
    ◦ Chapter 2 – Cognitive Partitioning by Occupation, pp. 51–61.
    
    ◦ Chapter 3 – The Economic Pressure to Partition, pp. 63–89.
    
    ◦ Chapter 4 – Steeper Ladders, Narrower Gates, pp. 91–115.
  
  – Part II
    
    ◦ Cognitive Classes and Social Behavior, pp. 117–125.
    
    ◦ Chapter 5 – Poverty, pp. 127–142.
    
  


Mainstream Psychology on Intelligence


b. **Mechanisms of Attainment: Noncognitive Skills**


c. Mechanisms of Attainment: Genetics


Additional references:

- Conley, Dalton. “What Do Low (or High) Sibling Correlations Tell Us About Social Ascription?” (Pp. 596–609 in GRU3e.)


  – Preface (Pp. ix–xi) [don't skip this!]
  – Chapter 1 – Historical Background (Pp. 1–17)
  – Chapter 5 – Behavior Genetics of Intelligence (Pp. 126–167)
  – Chapter 6 – Environmental Determinants of Intelligence (Pp. 168–214)
  – Chapter 9 – Correlates of Intelligence (Pp. 252–279)
  – Chapter 10 – Group Differences in Intelligence (Pp. 280–328)
  – Chapter 12 – Epilogue: The Future of Intelligence (Pp. 349–356)

  – Chapter 5: “Intervening Variables, I: Intelligence.”


Module 10 – Socioeconomic Attainment & Mobility IV: Race & Ethnicity (30 Oct)

- **M10 Discussion topics**

### a. Mechanisms of Attainment: Race & Ethnicity in the US


### b. The Black-White Test Score Gap

  - Part III: The National Context, p. 267
    * Chapter 13 – Ethnic Differences in Cognitive Ability, pp. 260–315
    * Chapter 14 – Ethnic Inequalities in Relation to IQ, pp. 317–340
  - Part IV: Living Together pp. 387–8
    * Chapter 19 – Affirmative Action in Higher Education, pp. 447–77
- [Optional] Murray, Charles. 2005. “The Inequality Taboo.” Fully annotated version of an article that appeared in the September 2005 issue of *Commentary*. [I found it on this site after the link to Commentary was broken.]
- If you want to know more about the hereditarian-environmentalist debate on the origins of the test score gap see the review by Rushton and Jensen (2005) (reference below) together with critical comments including one by Richard E. Nisbett. Nisbett’s (2009) *Intelligence and How To Get It* is a book-length exposition of the culturalist / anti-hereditarian argument. It is reviewed by Rushton and Jensen (2009) and by Nielsen (2010). See references below.

**Additional references:**

The following is a debate about origins of race differences in IQ. The target article is:

Commentaries on the target article and authors' rejoinder in the same journal issue:


Book by Richard E. Nisbett and reviews:

  - Chapter 2 – Heritability and Mutability
  - Chapter 6 – IQ in Black and White
  - Appendix B – The Case for a Purely Environmental Basis for Black/White Differences in IQ
- Nielsen, François. 2010. “Intelligence of Culture.” Contemporary Sociology 39: 4: 391–396. [Part of symposium on Nisbett’s Intelligence and How to Get It.]

Module 11 – Inequality & Development in the World System (6 Nov)

- M11 Discussion topics

a. The Kuznets Curve

b. The Great U-Turn


c. Thomas Piketty’s Theory

  - Introduction, pp. 1–35.
  - Chapter 8: Two Worlds, pp. 271–303.
  - Chapter 10, Inequality in Capital Ownership, pp. 336–376.
  - Conclusion, pp. 571–577.

d. World Inequality: The Overall Picture


- Hans Rosling’s GAPMINDER site [Some relevant parts will be shown in class.]
The World System Approach


  – Chapter 2 – Dependent Industrialization and Underdevelopment [Pp. 22–34]
  – Chapter 8 – Transnational Penetration and Income Inequality [Pp. 117–130]

• Stiglitz, Joseph E. “Globalism’s Discontents.” (Pp. 1036–1043 in GRU3e.)


Other Additional references


• Morris, Martina and Bruce Western. 1999. “Inequality in Earnings at the Close of the Twentieth Century.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 25: 623–657. [This is the article on which the shorter chapter in GRU is based.]


**Module 12 – Student Presentations (13 Nov)**

**Module 13 – Student Presentations (cont’d) (20 Nov)**