Social Stratification:

Social stratification is the study of inequality in society. In this course we will try to answer six important questions about American society:

1) Do social classes exist in America?
2) Is America a meritocracy?
3) Are workers exploited?
4) Are things getting better or worse?
5) How much race and gender inequality is there?
6) Why is there poverty in a country as wealthy as America?

I believe that social stratification is the core course in sociology and that these questions about inequality are a crucial part of becoming a thoughtful and informed citizen.

Contacts

You can reach me by email at tedmouw@email.unc.edu and Ping Chen at pingchen@email.unc.edu. For simple questions, this is the quickest way to reach us. I will also be available before and after class to answer questions or talk about social inequality. I welcome your questions and opinions. For more difficult questions, please come to see me during office hours.

Teaching Philosophy

I believe that the classroom experience can be both fun and intellectually stimulating. I will have high standards for your participation and performance in the course. At the same time, the class will be a friendly environment. For example, I will expect you to come to class prepared to discuss, and I will call on you to participate in class. However, class participation will be conducted with a mixture of seriousness, humor, and respect to ensure a diversity of opinions and a supportive atmosphere for participation.
Course email
To add or remove yourself from the course listserv, go to:
http://listserv.unc.edu/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=soc112_s2003

If you do not receive a test email from me the first day of class, add yourself to the class listserv. This is your responsibility--important information will occasionally be sent via email. (Example story).

Readings:

While social stratification is important, it is also fraught with controversy and disagreement. I have deliberately selected the reading for this course to reflect this lack of consensus. My guiding principle has been to avoid textbooks that spoon-feed answers, but to give you a sample of the diversity of opinion. I believe that the function of the college classroom is to confront opposing arguments rather than ignore them. The challenge is for you to sort through these conflicting perspectives, and my expectation is that the class will work cooperatively to decide what is “right.” As much as possible, I will try to moderate a discussion based on the reading rather than impose my own views of what is right and wrong. The reading is a combination of serious, controversial, and humorous perspectives on social class.

Aside from the novel that we will read, Storming Heaven by Denise Giardina, all of the reading is on reserve.

In-class essays

There will be no midterms in this class. On every other Thursday, the final 10-15 minutes of class will be used for a short essay question. The essays will be graded and returned to you the next class period. All of the essay questions will be taken from the reading questions (see below) or the in-class group discussion questions from the current and the previous 2-weeks of class. The philosophy behind this is three-fold. First, the essay questions will remove anxiety about testing. Because the possible essay questions are known beforehand, any student who wants to do well can prepare in advance. Second, having bi-weekly essays will provide frequent feedback about your class performance. Finally, the essays will reward individuals who keep up with the material and groups that work together to come up with thoughtful answers to the discussion questions. Each essay will be worth 30 points, and I will post the best essays on the class web page to give you an idea of what a good answer to the question was.

Absence policy on in-class essays:
Excused absence: If you know in advance that you will miss a Thursday essay, you may turn in a 2-3 page paper answering one of the reading questions if you o.k. it with me beforehand (ask me for the question). The paper will only be accepted for full credit if it is turned in advance. Late papers will accepted up to 1 week after the in-class essay be reduced to 80% of the score.
Unexcused absence: If you miss class the day of an in-class essay, you can still receive partial credit (80% of the score) by writing a 2-3 page paper answering on the essay question used in class. The makeup paper is due within 1 week of the in-class essay. Makeup papers later than 1 week will not be accepted. It is your responsibility to take care of makeup essays.
Reading notes:

My expectation is that you will come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. The reading in this class is not optional. As much as possible, I will try not to repeat things in lecture that were covered in the reading. The class discussion and lecture will begin where the reading left off.

An important skill in becoming a scholar is learning how to read effectively. Rather than trying to memorize everything you read, the effective reader reads “critically” by zeroing in on the main argument and the important or interesting facts that support the author’s argument.

To help you read effectively and critically, I will post reading notes on the class webpage for each class period. The philosophy behind the reading notes is that there is no point spending the time to do the reading if you don’t also take the time to take notes to ensure that you remember what you have read. The reading notes consist of two things.

A) “Basic concepts and facts.” This is a list of concepts and facts that you should focus on in the reading. In order to organize your reading and make it more efficient, you can read effectively by concentrating on these key points.

I will expect you to understand and remember these items for class. I will not necessarily lecture on them. However, I will welcome your questions in class for me to explain or clarify these concepts. Rather than waste valuable class time repeating things that were covered in the reading, I will rely upon you to identify which concepts were difficult. It is your responsibility to ask questions.

You can take notes on the “Basic concepts” part of the reading notes as you see fit. However, these notes do not have to be turned in.

B) “Reading questions/notes.”
These are important questions raised in the reading that will be the basis for our class discussion. I ask you to jot down answers to these questions. You do not have to write an essay. Several sentences plus an outline of your answer is sufficient. Record as much as you need to in order to remember your answer to the question and demonstrate that you have thought about it.

Reading questions are due at the front of class before class begins. Each day’s questions are worth 5 points. Reading questions are due at the front of class before class begins. Each day’s questions are worth 5 points. They are graded on a √+ (5 points), √ (4.5 points), √- (3 points), and √-- (1 point) basis. Reading questions are due before class starts day. If you get a √ on your reading note, that means you have done a fine job. √+ indicates that you have exceeded expectations with your answers to the questions. Because the reading questions reflect preparation to participate in class, they must be turned in at class.

Absence policy on reading questions:
“Excused absence”: You get 2 excused absences for the semester; you do not need to give an excuse for your absence just write/type “excused absence” on your reading questions. You get full credit for

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the reading questions if you turn them or email them to the TA before midnight on the class day. Please let us know about UNC related activities, weddings, extended illness etc. and we will work out a way to have you turn your reading notes in.

Late reading questions: If you attend class but haven’t finished your reading questions, turn in a blank sheet of paper with your name on it. You get 2/3 credit for completing the reading notes and turning them in by the next class period. This does not apply if you do not attend class.

All other late reading notes other than “excused absences” and “late reading notes” will not be accepted.

Group discussion

A significant amount of our class time will be spent in small group discussions. Because much of the course involves competing theories and perspectives, I believe that the only way to truly learn the material and have fun while doing it is to express the concepts in your own words in a discussion. I will divide you into 4-person groups. In order to get to know the opinions of your classmates, I will rotate the groups every three weeks.

I take small group discussion seriously and I expect you to do so also. As noted above, graded essay questions will come either from the reading questions or the small group discussion questions. It is your responsibility to work together to improve your answer to each day’s discussion question.

Small group guidelines:
1. Be encouraging, friendly, and responsive to other members of your group.
2. Provide positive, constructive feedback to other group members. The goal of the group discussion is not to race to get an answer, but to make sure that everyone in the group understands and participates in the discussion.
3. Insure that everyone in the group has an opportunity to contribute to discussion and the work of the group.
4. Help the group monitor their effectiveness as a team.
5. Stay focused and active. It is your responsibility as group members to ensure that the group time is used constructively. For example, the discussion questions will be open ended. Even if all the group members agree on an answer, someone should play “devil’s advocate” and argue an opposing position so that the discussion stays alive.
6. Raise your hand if you have a question for either instructor. However, you should first address your questions to your fellow group members.

Every three weeks you will receive a grade (10 points) for your group work. The teaching assistant and I will base the group grade on several factors:
1) The intensity of your group discussions. I.e., did your group really try to get into the questions and take them seriously? Was there an actual debate?
2) The degree to which all the group members were trying to participate in the debate.
3) Having a group member play devil’s advocate to stimulate the conversation.
4) Continuing the conversation until the end of the discussion period.
5) Having answers prepared for the class discussion, and your group’s active participation in the class discussion after the group discussion.
Group grades will not be based on “how smart” your group members were but how well the group functioned together to debate the discussion questions. Excessive absences will detract from the absent individual’s group grade.

Group grade guidelines:
10 – top two groups in the class
9—top 1/3 of groups
8.5—average
8— acceptable, could improve a bit.
7.5—need to improve group discussions.

**Short Papers**

Two short essays of 5 pages will each explore the one of the 6 basic questions listed above. The first paper is due 3/5. The assignment is to answer one of the two questions posed by the first part of the course:

1) Do social classes exist in America?
2) Is America a meritocracy?

The second paper is due 4/23. The assignment is to answer one of the questions posed by the final part of the course:

3) Are workers exploited?
4) Are things getting better or worse?
5) How much race and gender inequality is there?
6) Why is there poverty in a country as wealthy as America?

The short papers should be thought of as a “research essay.” I would like you to try to answer the question you have chosen in no more or no less than 5 pages. You should use the class readings, lectures, and discussions as your source material. You are also encouraged to use outside sources to substantiate your argument. Please cite all additional sources and include a bibliography.

**Final Exam**

The final exam is Tue. April 29 8:00 A.M.

The final exam will consist of short answer and essay questions. All of the final exam questions will be taken from the reading questions or the in-class group discussion questions.

**Grading**

*Online grade reports*

Grades will be posted, password protected, to the course web page. Follow the “grades” link. At the grade report page (http://www.unc.edu/courses/2003spring/soci/112/001/grades/grades.htm) click on your "secret number". Then you will be prompted for your "id" (not your onyen) and "password" to obtain your grade report. Secret numbers, ids, and passwords will be distributed the second week of class. Email the TA if you forget your secret number, id, or password.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

In-class essays 30 points each, 7x30 = 210 points total
Reading notes 5 points each, 30x5 = 150 points total
Group discussion 10 points every three weeks, 5x10 = 50 points total
Short Papers 50 points each, 2x50=100 points
Final Exam 100 points
Total (610 points)

Grades will be assigned as follows:
93-100% A
90-92 A-
87-89 B+
83-86 B
80-82 B-
77-79 C+
73-76 C
70-72 C-
67-69 D+
63-66 D
60-62 D-
below F
60
(fractions of a point will be rounded down)

Grades will be posted each week on the course web page via secret numbers.

Note: the official class schedule is on the class web page.

Class Schedule and Reading assignments: Spring 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Date</th>
<th>Reading &amp; links [available two weeks ahead of time]</th>
<th>Reading Notes</th>
<th>What we will do in class:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>Introduction: What is social stratification?</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Class discussion: What is social class?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/9</td>
<td>Introductory readings: [46 pages total] Rossides Ch1 “An Introduction to Stratification Analysis” (1-16) [Link] &quot;Where We Are Now&quot;, Ethan Canin. [57-72] [Link]</td>
<td>Rn2</td>
<td>Class discussion: biopsychological vs. sociocultural explanations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>1/16</td>
<td>In-class Essay (1)</td>
<td>An example of a stratification system with no mobility: caste in India.</td>
<td>Stratification through history (Rossides Ch.2 &amp; Kerbo Ch. 3). Castes, Class, and Slavery: The Taxonomic Problem. Edmund Leach p. 83-94. LOSH Caste, Race, and Class Cox.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Readings:</td>
<td>Social Class in America</td>
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<td>1/28</td>
<td>Readings:</td>
<td>The bourgeois-bohemian class?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Rothman, Ch.4 &quot;Institutionalizing and legitimating stratification&quot;</td>
<td>Do Social classes exist in America? (Clark &amp; Lipset; Kingston)</td>
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<td>2/18</td>
<td>NYT magazine article on the SAT: “Is this any to run a meritocracy?”</td>
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<td>2/20</td>
<td>Different views on education and class</td>
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<td>2/27</td>
<td>The Bell Curve, Part II Chapter 5</td>
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</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 17   | 3/4  | Poverty: Class or IQ, continued | [43 pages]  
Inequality by Design: Craking the Bell Curve Myth, Appendix 1 “Summary of the Bell Curve” and Chapter 4 “Who Wins? Who Loses?” [Link] (39 pages)  
Paper #1 due 3/5 (Wednesday) |
| 18   | 3/6  | Are Workers Exploited?  
Storming Heaven (pages 3-69) | Rn17  
Reading quiz |
| 19   | 3/18 | Spring Break | Rn19  
In-class Essay (5) |
| 20   | 3/20 | Storming Heaven (pages 70-232) | Rn20 |
| 21   | 3/25 | “Are Things getting better or worse?”  
Reading: [47 pages]  
Sklar, Chaos or Community? 1995. (1-25) [Link]  
Cox and Alm, Myths of Rich and Poor 1999. (1-22) [Link]  
Lecture: Human capital theory (Ehrenberg and Smith Ch. 9)  
Film excerpt: Gattaca (an anti-utopian meritocracy) |
| 22   | 3/27 | Reading: [38 pages]  
Rn22 |
| 23   | 4/1  | Reading: [46 pages]  
Cox and Alm, Myths of Rich and Poor 1999. (53-59) [Link]  
In-class Essay (6) |
| 24   | 4/3  | How much race and gender inequality is there?  
Inequality by Design: Craking the Bell Curve Myth, Chapter 8 “Race, Ethnicity, and Intelligence” [Link] (32 pages)  
Rn24 |
| 25   | 4/8  | [50 pages]  
Cohn, Race, Gender, and Discrimination at Work  
Chapters 1 & 2 (“Has the Problem of Discrimination Gone Away?” & “Discrimination and Market Competition”) [Link]  
Rn25 |
| 26   | 4/10 | [40 pages]  
Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2002. ”Are Emily and Brendan more Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination” [Link]  
Rn26 |
| 27   | 4/15 | Oliver and Shapiro.  
Black Wealth/ White Wealth, Chapters 1-2: "Wealth and Racial Inequality" and "Studying Wealth" (pages 1-65) [Link]  
Rn27 |
| 28   | 4/17 | Oliver and Shapiro.  
Black Wealth/ White Wealth, Chapter 5: "A Story of Two Nations: Race and Wealth" (pages 91-125) [Link]  
In-class Essay (7) |
| 29   | 4/22 | Why is there poverty in a country as wealthy as America?  
The Economist, “The War over Poverty” [Link]  
Paper #2 due 4/23 (Wednesday) |
| 30   | 4/24 | Barbara Ehrenreich, “Nickel and Dimed” [Link]  
Review Rossides, Ch. 20 “The American Class System”  
Rn30 |