

SOCI-010: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Professor Xi Song

Spring, 2022

[version 1/11/2022]

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 5–6pm

Class Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10:15–11:45am

Tuesday 12-1pm

Office: McNeil 271

Class Room: Williams Hall 321

<https://xisong-spring2022.youcanbook.me/>

Course Overview

This is an undergraduate seminar in social stratification. Social stratification is broadly defined as the unequal distribution of scarce resources and of the processes by which these resources are allocated to individuals, groups, and populations. The study of stratification encompasses income and wealth inequality, socioeconomic hierarchies and privileges, poverty and unemployment, social mobility over the life course and across generations, inequality in the educational system, race-ethnic and gender inequality, globalization and the future of work, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of inequality and opportunity, neighborhood segregation, and the consequences of inequality and policy interventions. Over this semester, we will investigate such questions as: How likely are individuals to end up in the same social stratum as their parents? Will globalization and automation exacerbate or reduce inequality in workplace? Is there growing inequality in the U.S. and around the globe and, if so, why? In this class, we cover the concepts, theories, facts, and methods of analysis used by sociologists to understand social stratification. This course takes most of its examples from the contemporary U.S., but we will place U.S. in historical and comparative perspectives as well.

Contacts

You can reach me via email; however, I do not respond to email between 8 pm and 8 am or over the weekend. If I don't respond within 24 hours, please feel free to send me a polite reminder. I don't intend to be unavailable, but sometimes I get quite a lot of email and/or I simply get swamped. Reminders do not offend me.

I will respond to most of the emails regarding the course, and this is the best way to work through simple questions. Please check your email and Canvas several times a week. Email is one of the best ways to keep in touch with our class when we are not in class. More complex questions would likely require more time, and for these, I recommend my office hours.

Textbooks

- **Required**

1. David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelényi. 2011. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*. Second Edition Boulder, CO: Westview Press. (Hereafter GS)

- **Optional**

1. Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Broadway Books.
2. Lareau, Annette. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. University of California Press.
3. McCall, Leslie. 2013. *The Undeserving Rich: American Beliefs about Inequality, Opportunity, and Redistribution*. Cambridge University Press.
4. Milanovic, Branko. 2016. *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization*. Harvard University Press.
5. Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
6. Pattillo, Mary. 2013. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class*. University of Chicago Press.
7. Putnam, Robert D. 2016. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. Simon and Schuster.
8. Sharkey, Patrick. 2013. *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality*. University of Chicago Press.
9. Xie, Yu and Kimberlee A. Shauman. 2003. *Women in Science: Career Processes and Outcomes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- **Recommended**

1. Grusky, David. 2014. *Social Stratification, Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*. Fourth edition. Routledge.

Class Requirements and Evaluation

1) Class participation (15% of your final grade)

This course requires your active participation in class, which relies heavily on you completing all required readings for each week and coming to class prepared to discuss them. Each week features foundational readings that will help shape your sociological thinking even where you may not yet see an immediate connection to a specific research idea or project that you are working on. During class, only active engagement with each participant's questions or insights will provide the type of intellectual community that benefits everyone. Active engagement includes the ability to listen carefully to others' questions and insights—otherwise, we are just talking at each other.

Every student is expected to speak at least once during each class. If, for some reason, a student cannot participate in the discussion for a certain week, he/she will need to submit a **two-page** essay (double-spaced) to the instructor. The synthetic essay will address themes and major issues in the readings. See the attendance policy below.

2) Two Take-Home Essays (50% in total of your final grade)

You will be asked to answer questions about reading and lecture materials. Students will answer these individually (i.e., not in groups). Questions posted on the class website on a Thursday will be due before the following Thursday's class. Posting dates and deadlines are included in the class schedule below. Further guidelines about these essays will be provided after the semester begins.

3) Class Presentation and Review (15% of your final grade)

From week 3, each topic will consist of two class lectures. One student will be asked to read the optional reading and give a presentation and lead the discussion during the second class of the topic. The presenters will (1) need to discuss the presentation plan with the instructor prior to the class and (2) receive feedback from the class and write up an essay (**no more than 2 pages single-spaced**) to provide a critical review of the reading. The review is due one week after the class presentation.

4) Final Group Project (20% of your final grade)

The course will culminate in a final project in which a group of students will be asked to analyze some original data to show inequality related to a specific topic. Topic selections are included in the end of the syllabus.

A group should detail what each author contributes to the project and include a few sentences detailing what each author contributed. See *PNAS* or *Science* publication examples.

We will work together during the class on **April 19, 2022** to discuss research questions, data sources, analytic methods, and data visualization. We will hold a mini-conference at the end of the semester on **April 26, 2022, 10:15-11:45 am**. Each group will give a presentation and receive feedback from other groups.

Course Policies

During Class

I understand that the electronic recording of notes will be important for class and so computers will be allowed in class. Please refrain from using computers for anything but activities related to the class. Phones are prohibited as they are rarely useful for anything in the course. Eating is not allowed in class due to Covid but drinking is allowed if you keep your face covering.

After Class

I expect you to spend **3** hours in class and **6–8** hours after class each week on the course readings and projects.

Office Hours

The scheduled office hours are on Tuesday from 12 pm to 1 pm and Tuesday and Thursdays from 5 pm to 6 pm. However, due to my travel schedules, I have to cancel the office hours on **February 8, 15, April 5, 19**. For those weeks, I will email the class about my new office hours or you can send me an email to schedule separate meetings.

I am also available by appointment. If you have any questions or problems, it is important to see me as soon as possible so we can appropriately address the situation. I am also available via e-mail or on Zoom, but many issues are much better dealt with in person and I encourage you to come discuss with me directly.

Policies on Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted. See the policy discussed about course exercises.

Attendance Policy

Attendance at all sessions is important. Read before class, arrive on time, and come prepared to ask questions. You may miss up to **two** sessions for any reason—illness, religious observance, sporting events—with no penalty. More will likely affect your grade. For weeks during which you cannot participate in the class discussion, you will still need to submit an essay to me that summarizes the readings (see the section on class requirements and evaluation).

In cases of emergency or extended absence, you are responsible for notifying me about your circumstance so I can help you determine your ability to complete the course. If you need to leave class early, let me know at the beginning of class. If you miss part/all of a lecture, assume that 1) you have missed “important” material and that 2) I will not give a repeat performance of my lecture in an office visit. Read, get notes from a classmate, review course materials. THEN, if you still have questions, by all means come see me.

Grading Policies

The typical UPenn grading scale will be used. Normally, grading will not be on a curve. You can access your personal grades on the course web page as we move along in the course. Your final course grade will be figured according to the following cutoffs:

A+ = 95 – 100	C+ = 73 – 76
A = 90 – 94	C = 70 – 72
A- = 87 – 89	C- = 67 – 69
B+ = 83 – 86	D+ = 63 – 66
B = 80 – 82	D = 60 – 62
B- = 77 – 79	F = 59 and Below

However, if no one receives higher than 90+, I reserve the right to curve the scale dependent on overall class scores at the end of the semester. Any curve will only ever make it easier to obtain a certain letter grade.

Please familiarize yourself with [Penn's Code of Academic Integrity](#), which applies to this course. It goes without saying that I do not anticipate any problems with academic integrity. In the unlikely event that any concerns do arise on this score, I will forward all related materials to [Penn's Office of Student Conduct](#), for an impartial adjudication.

Important Dates for the Term

Please note that the last day to add a course (known as the course selection period) is **January 25, 2022**. The last day to drop a course is **February 21, 2022** and the deadline to change a course to Pass/Fail is **March 18, 2022**. Finally, the last day to withdraw from a course is on **March 28, 2022**. The last day of classes is **April 27, 2022**.

Canvas

You can download all course materials from the course Canvas website:

<https://canvas.upenn.edu/courses/1637392>

Class Schedules (Subject to Change)

Topic 1 (January 13 & January 18): *Introduction: Why Is There Inequality?*

Required reading:

- Grusky and Szelenyi, "The Stories About Inequality That We Love to Tell." Pp.2–14 in GS.

- Fischer, Hout, Sanchez Jankowski, Locas, Swidler, and Voss, "Inequality by Design." Pp.20–24 in GS.
- Krueger, "Inequality: Too Much of a Good Thing." Pp.25–35 in GS.

Topic 2 (January 20 & January 25): *Theories of Stratification—Classics: Marx and Weber*

Required reading:

- Marx, "Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism." Pp.36–47 in GS.
- Weber, "Class, Status, and Party." Pp.56–67 in GS.
- Davis and Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification." Pp.16–19 in GS.
- Mills, "The Power Elite." Pp.100–111 in GS.
- Wright, "Class Counts." Pp.48–55 in GS.
- Gouldner, "The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class." Pp.118–127 in GS.

Topic 3 (January 27 & February 1): *Poverty and the Underclass*

Required reading:

- Ehrenreich, "Nickel-and-Dimed: On (not) Getting by in America." Pp.136–146 in GS.
- Newman and Chen, "The Missing Class." Pp.147–152 in GS.
- Smeeding, "Poorer by Comparison." Pp.153–156 in GS.
- Western, "Incarceration, Unemployment, and Inequality." Pp.208–213 in GS.

Class presentation:

- Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Broadway Books, 2016.

Topic 4 (February 3 & February 8): *Income and Wealth Inequality*

Required reading:

- Saez, "Striking It Richer: The Evolution of Top Income in the United States." Pp.86–89 in GS.
- Grusky and Weeden, "Is Market Failure Behind the Takeoff in Inequality?" Pp.90–99 in GS.
- Piketty, Thomas, and Emmanuel Saez. 2003. "Income Inequality in the United States, 1913–1998." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118 (1): 1–41.
- Auten, Gerald, and David Splinter. 2018. "Income Inequality in the United States: Using Tax Data to Measure Long-Term Trends."

http://davidsplinter.com/AutenSplinter-Tax_Data_and_Inequality.pdf.

Class presentation:

- Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Parts I and II, Part 3, Chapters 9, 10. pp. 39-113. Skim 113-163. Pp. 164-236, 304-376.
- For a critical review, take a look at Blume and Durlauf 2015 posted on the Canvas course website.

Author Meets Critics (February 10): *Three Myths of Inequality*

Guest lecture: **Thomas S. Coleman**, Senior Lecturer, Harris School of Public Policy, the University of Chicago

Coleman is the author of *Quantitative Risk Management*, published by Wiley and *A Practical Guide to Risk Management* published by the Research Foundation of the CFA Institute. Before entering the financial industry, Coleman was an academic, teaching graduate and undergraduate economics and finance at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Coleman earned his PhD in economics from the University of Chicago, and his BA in physics from Harvard.

<https://harris.uchicago.edu/directory/thomas-coleman>

Topic 5 (February 15 & February 17): *Intergenerational Mobility and the Great Gatsby Curve*

Required reading:

- Blau and Duncan, "The Process of Stratification." Pp.527–540 in GS.
- Chetty, Raj, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, Emmanuel Saez, and Nicholas Turner. "Is the United States still a land of opportunity? Recent trends in intergenerational mobility." *American Economic Review* 104, no. 5 (2014): 141-47.
- Song, Xi, Catherine G. Massey, Karen A. Rolf, Joseph P. Ferrie, Jonathan L. Rothbaum, and Yu Xie. "Long-term decline in intergenerational mobility in the United States since the 1850s." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2019).
- Beckfield, Jason. "Rising Inequality is not Balanced by Intergenerational Mobility." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2019).

Class presentation

- Putnam, Robert D. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. Simon and Schuster, 2016.

First Take-Home Essay Posted (due next Thursday before class)**Topic 6 (February 22 & February 24): Racial and Ethnic Inequality**

Required reading:

- Wilson, "The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions." Pp.282–295 in GS.
- Pager, "Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration." Pp.260–268 in GS.
- Oliver and Shapiro, "Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality." Pp.296–303 in GS.
- Monk Jr, Ellis P. "The Cost of Color: Skin Color, Discrimination, and Health among African-Americans." *American Journal of Sociology* 121, no. 2 (2015): 396-444.

Class presentation:

- Pattillo, Mary. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class*. University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Topic 7 (March 1 & March 3): Gender Inequality

Required reading:

- Jacobs and Gerson, "The Time Divide: Work, Family, and Gender Inequality." Pp.345–350 in GS.
- Correll, Benard, and Paik, "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?" Pp.365–377 in GS.
- Jacobs, "Detours on the Road to Equality." Pp.405–411 in GS.
- England, Paula. "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled." *Gender & society* 24, no. 2 (2010): 149-166.

Class presentation:

- Xie, Yu and Kimberlee A. Shauman. *Women in Science: Career Processes and Outcomes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

No Class on March 8 & 10. Spring Break.

Topic 8 (March 15 & March 17): *Globalization and Inequality*

Required reading:

- Stiglitz, "Globalism's Discontents." Pp.672–680 in GS.
- Firebaugh, "The New Geography of Global Income Inequality." Pp.681–695 in GS.
- WIL (World Inequality Lab), Facundo Alvaredo, Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman. 2018. *World Inequality Report 2018*. Harvard University Press <http://wir2018.wid.world/.47>

Class presentation:

- Milanovic, Branko. *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization*. Harvard University Press, 2016.

Topic 9 (March 22): *Social Inequality in Contemporary China*

Guest lecture: **Yu Xie**, Bert G. Kerstetter '66 University Professor of Sociology, Princeton University

Yu Xie is a Chinese-American sociologist. Xie has made contributions to quantitative methodology, social stratification, demography, Chinese studies, sociology of science, and social science data collection. He is currently Bert G. Kerstetter '66 University Professor of Sociology at Princeton University, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Academia Sinica, and the National Academy of Sciences. His recently published books include: *Marriage and Cohabitation* (University of Chicago Press 2007) with Arland Thornton and William Axinn, *Statistical Methods for Categorical Data Analysis* with Daniel Powers (Emerald 2008, second edition), and *Is American Science in Decline?* (Harvard University Press, 2012) with Alexandra Killewald.

<https://scholar.princeton.edu/yuxie/home>

Topic 10 (March 24 & March 29): *Objective Versus Subjective Inequality*

Required reading:

- Kluegel, James R. and Eliot R. Smith. 1981. "Beliefs about Stratification." *Annual Review of Sociology* 7:29–56.
- McCall, Leslie, Derek Burk, Marie Laperriere, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2017. "Exposure to Rising Inequality Shapes Americans' Opportunity Beliefs and Policy Support." *Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences* 114:9593–9598

- Kraus, Michael W, Julian M Rucker, and Jennifer A Richeson. 2017. "Americans Misperceive Racial Economic Equality." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114:10324–10331
- Alesina, Alberto, Stefanie Stantcheva, and Edoardo Teso. 2018. "Intergenerational Mobility and Preferences for Redistribution." *American Economic Review* 108:521–54

Class presentation:

- McCall, Leslie. *The Undeserving Rich: American Beliefs about Inequality, Opportunity, and Redistribution*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Topic 10 (March 31 & April 5): *Neighborhood Segregation*

Required reading:

- Wilson, "Jobless Poverty: A New Form of Social Dislocation in the Inner-City Ghetto." Pp.159–169 in GS.
- Massey and Denton, "American Apartheid. Segregation and the Making of the Underclass." Pp.170–181 in GS.
- Pebley and Sastry, "Neighborhoods, Poverty, and Children's Well-Being." Pp.182–195 in GS.

Class presentation:

- Sharkey, Patrick. *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality*. University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Second Take-Home Essay Due; No Class on April 7 (PAA)

Topic 12 (April 12 & April 14): *What Is To Be Done?*

Required reading:

- Atkinson, Anthony B. 2015. *Inequality: What Can Be Done?*
- Heckman, "Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children." Pp.711–716 in GS.
- Cohen and Sabel, "Flexicurity." Pp.719–724 in GS.
- Conley, "A Golden Parachute for Everyone?" Pp.725–729 in GS.
- Frank, "The Pragmatic Case for Reducing Income Inequality." Pp.730–734.

Class presentation:

- Lareau, Annette. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. University of California Press, 2011.

Final Project (April 19 & April 26): *Student Group Project Preparation & Presentation*

No class on April 21 (ISA-RC28 Social Stratification and Mobility).

Group Final Projects

Social stratification is a very broad and longstanding field. For the sake of time, we are unable to discuss many important topics and previous work in this field. We will explore some of these topics in a final project.

The class will be divided into no more than six groups, each with at most 4 students. Each project consists of conducting data analyses and making an oral report to the class that addresses the issues described below. For each topic, the group should marshal relevant facts, discuss relevant literature, and apply sociological concepts and arguments from this course or elsewhere.

Each group needs to choose one of the following topics. If you are interested in some topics that are not included below, please discuss with the instructor first.

Group 1: Gender Stratification in Education

A remarkable trend during the past 25 years has been the elimination of traditional disparities between men and women in college attendance (and overall educational attainment) and the emergence of a "female advantage" in higher education. Document these trends and discuss their causes, consequences, exceptions, and implications.

Group 2: Marriage and Inequality

Single parent families struggle compared to two-parent families. Men and women of similar socioeconomic background, ethnicity, and educational attainment tend to marry one another. Middle and upper class families have tended to have fewer children than their lower class counterparts. How are these factors causes and consequences of social inequality? How have demographic trends in marriage, divorce, and childbearing affected social inequality? How has social inequality affected these trends?

Group 3: Socioeconomic and Class Effects on Political Behaviors

How do individuals who vary in their socioeconomic levels (whether defined by education, income, social class, or other dimensions) differ in their political beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (such as voting)? A classic view is that political views and behaviors are governed by social class or socioeconomic position. An alternative view, typified by the argument in *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, is that non-economic, cultural factors play a larger role and may cause individuals to vote against their economic self-interest. Yet another view is that the effects of socioeconomic position may vary over time or across different socioeconomic dimensions. Which of these views best characterizes political behavior in the United States today? How do various dimensions of socioeconomic status affect electoral participation and voting? How have these patterns changed over time? What role are they likely to play in the 2020 elections?

Group 4: Socioeconomic Disparities in Health, Morbidity, and Mortality

How do individuals at varying socioeconomic levels (whether defined by education, income, social class, or other dimensions) differ in average health, sickness, and length of life (in the

United States)? What are the reasons for these disparities? What are some of the problems in interpreting data on health disparities? What are the most promising social policies for reducing these disparities?

Group 5: Economic/Racial Residential Segregation

To what degree do people at varying socioeconomic levels (whether defined by education, income, social class, or other dimensions) live in separate neighborhoods and communities and to what degree are they segregated from one another? What are the recent trends in socioeconomic residential segregation? What are the causes of socioeconomic segregation? What are the consequences of segregation for individuals and families? For communities? What are the most promising social policies for reducing socioeconomic segregation and for mitigating its harmful consequences?

Group 6: Social Mobility from a Multigenerational Perspective

Is a two-generation perspective enough for us to understand the reproduction of social inequality? Do grandparents, great-grandparents, extended family members, and remote ancestors matter for one's social attainment? Are the effects universal or do such influences only exist in some societies, subpopulations or during some historical periods? How can we find empirical evidence to test multigenerational social mobility? What are the existing theories, hypotheses, and findings in sociological, demographic, and economic studies? The intergenerational influence of parents on offspring is widely demonstrated, but why multigenerational influences are controversial?

Class Topic Presentation Sign-up Sheet

Topic	Presentation (put your name here)
(1) Income and Wealth Inequality	
(2) Poverty and the Underclass	
(3) Intergenerational Inequality and Mobility	
(4) Racial and Ethnic Inequality	
(5) Gender Inequality	
(6) Globalization and Inequality	
(7) Objective Versus Subjective Inequality	
(8) Neighborhood Segregation	
(9) What Is To Be Done?	

Additional Information

Academic Advising

Each of the four undergraduate schools (Engineering, Nursing, Wharton, and the College) has its own unique academic advising system. The majority of undergraduate students are in the College of Arts Sciences Advising Network, where they have a pre-major advisor, College Contact advisor (in the **College Office, 120 Cohen, 215-898-6341, college@sas.upenn.edu**), and, if already declared, a major advisor.

The College also has the CaseNet team, a group of specialist advisors who help students manage academics when they are dealing with health, family, or life challenges while still in school. In the College, the advising team monitors both Course Problem Notices and Course Absence Reports to support students academically.

A Guide for Emergency & Stress

- If you have an emergency, call 511 or the Division of Public Safety 215-573-3333. Help is available 24/7.
- If you need consultation, call CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services): 215-898-7021. On call clinicians are available 24/7.
- If you have academic difficulty, please contact me or seek help from the following services:
 1. **Weingarten Learning Resources Center**: Professional instruction in skills such as academic reading, test taking, and study strategies.
 2. **Tutoring Center**: A variety of subject-specific peer tutoring services to supplement support from faculty, TAs, and instructors.
 3. **Marks Family Writing Center**: Provides expert help in writing for undergraduate and graduate students.
 4. **Language Direct**: Provides tutoring for foreign languages.
 5. **Van Pelt Library**: Support for students in research and instructional technologies through a range of workshops and consultations.
 6. **Student Disability Services**: Provide appointments and drop-in sessions and ensure equal access for students with disabilities.
 7. **FGLI**: Textbook cost and other support for First-Generation, Low-Income students.