

SOCIOLOGY OF INEQUALITY (325)

Professor Leslie McCall
Department of Sociology
Room 305, 1812 Chicago Avenue
l-mccall@northwestern.edu
Office Hours: Tues 3:30-5:30

TA Fiona Chin
Department of Sociology
1st Floor, 1812 Chicago Ave
Office Hours: TTH 3:30-4:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a broad and interdisciplinary introduction to the topic of inequality by considering historical and global trends in different forms of inequality in addition to the focus on contemporary patterns of social inequality in the United States. We first consider conceptual and normative perspectives on equality/inequality and the historical context of industrialization that gave rise to classical sociological theories of inequality in Western Europe. In this first part we also examine historical trends and contemporary patterns of inequality and poverty in the United States. We then focus on a range of different types of inequality—inequality by education, opportunities for upward mobility, gender, race/ethnicity, and immigrant status. In the last few weeks of the term, we examine inequality in the political arena, such as inequality in political participation and influence. We end with a set of readings that discusses a range of possible ways to understand public policies and other practices that can alter current patterns of social inequality.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course will only be interesting if you actively participate in it. That means attending class and demonstrating that you have read and thought about the readings for the day. I have purposely kept the reading load manageable; in exchange, I expect you to be prepared to discuss the readings in class. Class participation of this kind counts for a full 25 percent of your grade, with 8 percent for attendance and 17 percent for participation in discussions. An additional 10 percent of your grade will be based on your preparation of a summary and discussion topics and questions for one or two (TBA) class periods over the course of the term. There will also be an exam in the fourth week (worth 20 percent) and a final exam (worth 25 percent). The final 20 percent of your grade will be based on a group project on a form of inequality that is not discussed in class or in the readings in any substantial depth (but must be related to aspects of inequality that are discussed in class and in the readings). More information about all of these assignments will be provided in class.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS

Manza, Jeff and Michael Sauder, eds. 2010. *Inequality and Society: Social Science Perspectives on Social Stratification*. W. W. Norton. **Referenced as MS below.**

Friedman, Benjamin. 2005. *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth*. Random House.

These books are available at Norris. All other readings will be available for downloading and printing through the Course Management System.

CLASS RULES

No late assignments or make-up exams will be permitted unless there is a note from a dean or some other university official that makes such a request on your behalf.

We start class 5 minutes late so that everyone can make it to class on time. Students should not interrupt class by walking in late or leaving early unless there is an unavoidable conflict.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to change)

WEEK 1, APRIL 1: Theories and Definitions

Day 2

- (1) M. Walzer, "Complex Equality," pp. xi-xvi, 3-20.
- (2) A. Sen, Ch. 60 (MS).

Background: C. Jencks, Ch. 61 (MS).

WEEK 2, APRIL 6, 8: Recent Trends in the US

Day 1

- (3) T. Piketty and E. Saez, Ch. 11 (MS).

Day 2

- (4) R. Blank Ch. 16 (MS).
- (5) R. Frank, Ch. 59 (MS).

WEEK 3, APRIL 13, 15: Historical and Global Ideas and Trends

Day 1

- (6) B. Friedman, Parts I (Ideas) and II (US).

Day 2

- (7) B. Friedman, Parts III (Europe), IV (Developing Countries), V (Conclusion/US).

Background: K. Marx, Ch. 2 (MS); M. Weber, Ch. 3 (MS); G. Firebaugh, Ch. 56 (MS)

WEEK 4, APRIL 20, 22: Social Mobility by Income

Day 1

FIRST EXAM

Day 2

- (8) R. Breen and D. Rottman, Ch. 18 (MS).
- (9) T. Herz, "Understanding Mobility in America."

WEEK 5, APRIL 27, 29: Social Mobility by Education

Day 1

- (10) A. Lareau, Ch. 14 (MS).
- (11) K. Boo, "Expectations."

Day 2

- (12) D. Ellwood and T. Kane, "Who is Getting a College Education? Family Background and Growing Gaps in Enrollment."

WEEK 6, MAY 4, 6: Gender and the Family

Day 1

- (13) C. Goldin, Ch. 35 (MS).
- (14) L. McCall, Ch. 45 (MS).

Day 2

- (15) K. Edin and J. Reed, "Why Don't They Just Get Married?"
- (16) *The Economist*, "The Worldwide War on Baby Girls."

WEEK 7, MAY 11, 13: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration

Day 1

- (17) W.J. Wilson, Ch. 31 (MS).
- (18) D. Massey and N. Denton, Ch. 32 (MS).

Day 2

- (19) A. Portes et al., Ch. 40 (MS).

(20) R. Waldinger et al., Ch. 41 (MS).

(21) J. Lee and F. Bean, “America’s Changing Color Lines: Immigration, Race/Ethnicity, and Multiracial Identification.”

WEEK 8, MAY 18, 20: Inequality in Political Participation and Representation

Day 1

(22) J. Manza, Ch. 51 (MS).

(23) C. Fischer et al., Ch. 48 (MS).

Day 2

(24) R. Freeman, Ch. 52 (MS).

(25) T. Skocpol, “Advocates Without Members: The Recent Transformation of American Civic Life.”

Background: G. Esping-Andersen, Ch 47 (MS).

WEEK 9, MAY 25, 27: Public Policy and Inequality

Day 1

(26) L. McCall and L. Kenworthy. 2009. “Americans’ Social Policy Preferences in the Era of Rising Inequality.”

(27) L. Bartels, “Homer Gets a Tax Cut.”

(28) J. Hacker and P. Pierson, “Abandoning the Middle: The Bush Tax Cuts and the Limits of Democratic Control.

Day 2

(29) D. Graeber, “Army of Altruists.”

(30) P. Singer, “What Should a Billionaire Give – and What Should You?”

WEEK 10, JUNE 1: Review

WEEK 11: FINAL EXAM

REFERENCES TO PUBLICATIONS NOT IN ASSIGNED BOOKS

(1) Walzer, Michael. 1983. *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. New York: Basic Books.

(9) Hertz, Tom. 2006. *Understanding Mobility in America*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

(11) Boo, Katherine. 2006. "Expectations." *The New Yorker* (2/6/2006).

(12) Ellwood, David and Thomas Kane. 2000. "Who Gets a College Education? Family Background and Growing Gaps in Enrollment." Pp. 283-324 in S. Danziger and J. Waldfogel, eds., *Securing the Future*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

(15) Edin, Kathryn and Joanna Reed. 2005. "Why Don't They Just Get Married? Barriers to Marriage among the Disadvantaged." *Future of Children* 15(2):117-137.

(16) "The worldwide war on baby girls." Pp. 77-80, *The Economist* (3/6/10).

(21) Lee, Jennifer and Frank Bean. 2004. "America's Changing Color Lines: Immigration, Race/Ethnicity, and Multiracial Identification." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 221-242.

(25) Theda Skocpol, "Advocates Without Members: The Recent Transformation of American Civic Life." Pp. 461-510 in T. Skocpol and M. Fiorina, eds., *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

(26) McCall, Leslie and Lane Kenworthy. 2009. "Americans' Social Policy Preferences in the Era of Rising Inequality." *Perspectives on Politics* 7(3):459-484.

(27) Bartels, Larry M. 2005. "Homer Gets a Tax Cut." *Perspectives on Politics* 3:15-31.

(28) Hacker, Jacob and Paul Pierson. 2005. "Abandoning the Middle: The bush Tax Cuts and the Limits of Democratic Control." *Perspectives on Politics* 3(1):33-53.

(29) Graeber, David. 2007. "Army of Altruists." *Harpers* (January).

(30) Singer, Peter. 2006. "What Should a Billionaire Give – and What Should You?" *New York Times Magazine* (12/17/06).