20180201
***Note minor changes in the syllabus might take place as the course progresses***

Instructor
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Office Hours: Fridays, 10:00 to 1300 by appointment
Class Time and Location: Tuesday, 10:00-13:00, Room 18.0.A.01

Course description
This course overviews contemporary research on social stratification with particular attention to the study of advanced industrial societies. It presents some of the key findings from the comparative stratification literature and shows how theoretical debates can be tested against empirical data. The course provides a comprehensive overview of the main theories, debates, and methodological developments in the fields of class stratification, the study of inequality of educational opportunity and the intergenerational transmission of social (dis)advantage. Special attention is paid to the study of primary and secondary effects of class background on attainment.

Teaching Arrangements
The course combines lectures (L) followed by class discussion (D) with student-run presentations (P). Both discussions and presentations will be based on the readings listed below. All students must read at least two starred references before each session, including lecturing sessions. This is the minimum compulsory amount of readings required for class discussions to work. (Note in many sessions, readings are organised by themes. Students can choose their readings either within or between themes). Each student will participate in two student-run presentations during the semester. Presenters are responsible for preparing the session, which includes providing an introductory presentation about the readings, preparing discussion questions, and running the discussion.

Students’ grades will depend on active participation in class (20%), one class presentations (30%), one take-home exercise (10%) and the quality of the term paper (40%).
The term paper

The term paper should reflect your original work on a topic of your choice from within the range of subjects covered in this course. The typical length of a term paper is around 15 pages. There are two possible formats for the term paper:

1. An original research paper on a topic of interest. Research papers can be empirical or theoretical (or preferably both).

2. A detailed proposal for a research project, including an extensive and critical review of the existing literature on the topic.

Students are expected to present and discuss their proposals for research papers in the last session of the course.

Course Outline and syllabus

Note: all starred readings (within a theme) are compulsory for presenters. Students not presenting must read at least two starred papers in each session. In discussion-only sessions (D) all starred papers are compulsory for all students.

Legend:  L=Lecture; D=In-class discussion of compulsory readings; P=Student-run presentations.

Lesson-1 (L, D)
Course Overview, Organization and Introduction to Contemporary Class Schemas: E.O. Wright


Lesson-2 (L, D)
Introducing Contemporary Class Schemas II: John Goldthorpe


Lesson-3 (2P)

Contemporary debates: Sorensen’s employment-rent approach and Weeden & Grusky’s microclasses

Employment rents: Concept, debate and applications


Microclasses: Arguments, application and debate


See also: https://inequalitiesblog.wordpress.com/2013/01/07/classes-or-microclasses-the-nature-of-occupational-inequality/
Lesson -4 (L, D)
Class Mobility: An Introduction to key concepts, methods and major debates


Lesson -5 (L, 1P, D)
Comparative Research on Social Mobility

Mobility in the UK and Spain


Lesson -6 (L, 1P, D)
Educational attainment and the meritocracy debate


**Lesson - 7 (L, 1P, D)**

*Investigating Primary Effects I: Ability and Inequality*


**Take-home exercise**

Using (at least) the references listed below, and drawing on your knowledge about the sociological literature on primary effects, answer the first five questions plus one of the latter three (in total you must answer 6 questions):

1) Why/how does the Swedish Adoption/Twin Study of Aging (SATSA) allow researchers to separate out genetic influences from sociological influences on cognitive abilities? (Please answer by explaining what the within-pair and the between-pair effects of social class on adult abilities capture in the STATA study)

2) Do you think different types of abilities might have different levels of social and genetic inheritance (if so please explain why and provide examples)?

3) Ericsson et al (2017) measure ability at old age. Do you think their results regarding the effect of genetic inheritance would hold if abilities were measured in early adulthood? Why?

4) Why do you think adopted children show lower performance in school? Is this effect operating through cognitive abilities?

5) How can we conciliate the findings of adoption and twin studies regarding the relative weight of nurture versus nature?

AND

6) Do you think the nurture vs nature distinction is helpful for understanding the combined effect of genetic and sociological influences?
7) **How can social sciences contribute to the study of genetic heritability?**

OR

8) **What are the most important questions and avenues for future research in the nurture vs nature debate?**

REFERENCES


**Lesson-8 (2P)**

**Investigating Primary Effects II Parenting styles and health outcomes**

**Parenting styles**


**Class, health and children’s cognitive development**


AND


OR

Lesson 9 (2P)
Investigating Secondary Effects I

Modelling educational decisions

OR


AND


Cultural capital, signalling, personality traits and attainment


Lesson 10 (2P)
Investigating secondary effects II: Social capital, and attainment

Coleman’s social capital theory and applications


Granovetter’s weak ties model and applications


Lesson-11 (2P)

Elite Schools and Class Discrimination

Do employers discriminate by class origins?


Elite schools & elite labour markets


Lesson-12 (15P) Conclusions and paper project presentations
FURTHER RECOMMENDED MANUALS

GENERAL


CLASS MOBILITY


CHILDHOOD AND INEQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES


OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE