

## **MA in Social Sciences (IC3JM)**

### **Social Stratification II**

(358-17101)

Winter Term, 2019–2020  
Tuesday, 10:30–13:30, Room 18.1.A04

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#### **Overview**

Parental background shapes the resources and abilities of children in manifold ways, rendering people's life chances fundamentally unequal. Understanding the mechanisms through which social inequality is reproduced across generations remains one of the key challenges for social science research. This seminar offers an advanced approach to current debates in the social stratification literature, with a focus on recent insights into the intergenerational transmission of advantage.

#### **Course Requirements**

This is a graduate-level course following a seminar format (not a lecture). Thus, active participation is an essential requirement. All readings in the syllabus are mandatory, and students should be prepared to raise questions and/or make reflected comments on each weekly reading assignment. Students' active participation in the critical discussion of the course material is crucial.

In addition to the weekly readings, students have to hand in a written seminar paper at the end of the semester. To facilitate this task and help develop academic writing skills, the course also includes a writing clinic. For this interactive activity, brief early drafts of different pieces of (what will become) the seminar paper are circulated and discussed in class. For every session of the writing clinic, each student has to hand in the respective draft document to the instructor and the rest of the class by Sunday night (via email) to leave enough time for reading. The writing clinic is based on reciprocity and lives from students providing constructive feedback on each other's draft texts.

The final seminar paper should resemble the front-end of an empirical research article. It should raise a research question that fills a gap in the existing knowledge, justify its relevance and discuss the previous literature on the topic. Moreover, it should briefly outline a theoretical framework, spell out one or several hypotheses as well as describe a research design that could be used to test expectations against available data. The seminar paper should be seen as an opportunity to move own project ideas forward and, ideally, begin a paper that can become a Master's Thesis and/or even eventually be published. Seminar papers should have an extension between 3,000 and 5,000 words.

Grading: class participation: 40%; writing clinic: 30%; seminar paper: 30%.

## Syllabus

### Session 1: Course Introduction and Normative Issues

#### Introduction

Roemer, J. E. (2000). "Equality of Opportunity", in Arrow, K. J., Bowles, S. and Durlauf, S. N. (Eds.) *Meritocracy and Economic Inequality*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 17–32.

Swift, A. (2004). Would Perfect Mobility Be Perfect? *European Sociological Review*, 20, 1–11.

### Session 2: Intergenerational Mobility

Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. (2002). "The Inheritance of Inequality." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 16, 3–30.

Blanden, Jo (2013). "Cross-country rankings in intergenerational mobility: a comparison of approaches from economics and sociology." *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 27(1), 38-73.

### Session 3: Skills Transmission

Anger, S., & Schnitzlein, D. (2017). „Cognitive skills, non-cognitive skills, and family background: Evidence from sibling correlations." *Journal of Population Economics*, 30(2), 591–620.

Hsin, A., & Xie, Y. (2017). "Life-course changes in the mediation of cognitive and non-cognitive skills for parental effects on children's academic achievement." *Social Science Research*, 63, 150–165.

### Session 4: Lessons Learned and To be Learned

Hout, M. & DiPrete, T. (2006). "What we have learned: RC28's contributions to knowledge about social stratification." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 24(1), 1-20.

Writing Clinic I: Research Ideas

### Session 5: Social Origins and Schooling

Downey, Douglas B., Paul T. von Hippel & Beckett A. Broh. (2004). "Are Schools the Great Equalizer? Cognitive Inequality during the Summer Months and the School Year." *American Sociological Review* 69: 613–635.

Brand, J.E. & Xie, Y. (2010). "Who Benefits Most from College? Evidence for Negative Selection in Heterogeneous Economic Returns to Higher Education." *American Sociological Review* 75(2): 273–302.

#### Session 6: Compensatory Advantage

Bernardi, F. (2014). "Compensatory advantage as a mechanism of educational inequality: A regression discontinuity based on month of birth." *Sociology of Education*, 87: 74–88.

Writing Clinic II: Literature Reviews

#### Session 7: Institutional Effects

DiPrete, T. A. (2002). "Life course risks, mobility regimes, and mobility consequences: A comparison of Sweden, Germany, and the United States." *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(2), 267–309.

Esping-Andersen, G. (2015). Welfare regimes and social stratification. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 25(1), 124–134.

#### Session 8: Self-control

Watts, T. W., Duncan, G. J. & Quan, H. (2018). "Revisiting the Marshmallow Test: A Conceptual Replication Investigating Links Between Early Delay of Gratification and Later Outcomes." *Psychological Science*: 0956797618761661.

Writing Clinic III: Hypotheses

#### Session 9: Parental Investments in Children

Kornrich, S. & Furstenberg, F. (2013). "Investing in Children: Changes in Spending on Children, 1972 to 2007." *Demography*, 50: 1–23.

Schneider, D., Hastings, O. P. & LaBriola, J. (2018). "Income Inequality and Class Divides in Parental Investments." *American Sociological Review*, 83: 475–507.

#### Session 10: Family Wealth

Pfeffer, F. T. & Killewald, A. (2018). "Generations of Advantage. Multigenerational Correlations in Family Wealth." *Social Forces*, 96, 1411–1442.

Writing Clinic IV: Research Design

### Session 11: Socio-Genomics

Branigan, A. R., McCallum, K. J., & Freese, J. (2013). "Variation in the heritability of educational attainment: An international meta-analysis." *Social Forces*, 92(1), 109–140.

Belsky, D. W., Domingue, B. W., Wedow, R., Arseneault, L., Boardman, J. D., Caspi, A., ... & Moffitt, T. E. (2018). "Genetic analysis of social-class mobility in five longitudinal studies." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 201801238.

### Session 12: Mini-conference

Writing Clinic V: Paper Presentations and Discussion