

SOCI341

Social Inequalities

Fall 2024 · # 55346 · 106 Strong Hall
MWF 10:20 am – 11:10 am

Instructor:

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Course Objective

Social Inequalities (SOCI341) is an upper-division sociology course that introduces the sociological study of inequality and stratification. The primary focus is on the contemporary U.S. Topics to be considered include fundamental theoretical and methodological issues, social status, social classes, occupations, related cultural and political aspects of inequality, income inequalities, wealth inequality, social mobility, education, poverty, racial and ethnic inequalities, and gender inequality.

The course fulfills the Global Citizenship – United States (GCUS) 3-credit requirement of the Volunteer Core (VC) for general education at UT and may be subject to assessment.

Programmatic Outcomes/Department Goals

This course serves as an upper division Social Science course at UTK. You will be able to apply the foundational perspectives learned in this course to advanced courses that take a deeper dive into the concepts and areas of sociology that we will touch on throughout the semester. If there is a section that you are particularly interested in, please let me know and I can recommend another upper division course for you. Even if you are not a sociology major, I believe you will enjoy the course and be able to apply many lessons and reflections to your own life, your relationships, and your future goals.


Value Proposition

Regardless of if you continue in sociology as a major or take more sociology classes, the sociological perspectives that you will learn and build throughout the semester will stay with you throughout your lifetime. Sociology is ultimately the study of us, which may inspire you to think critically about the society and social structures you were born into, the ones that you grew up in, and how social structure will impact your future. Sociology may inspire you to be an activist, an organizer, or other type of change maker in your community and/or workplace. Students time and again talk about sociology being an interesting field of study regardless of their major. I hope you find this to be the case as well.

Required Material

The main textbook for this course and additional readings can be downloaded from the course website or UTK e-libraries. The main textbook is available through the VolBooks Total Access program. You will also be required to pick a book from the list and read it to complete a writing assignment.

Main Textbook

-  Keister, Lisa A. and Darby E. Southgate. 2022. *Inequality: A Contemporary Approach to Race, Class, and Gender*. 2nd edition. Boston, MA: Cambridge University Press.

A Required Reading (5 options)

- Goldin, Claudia. 2021. *Career & Family: Women's Century-Long Journey Toward Equity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Streib, Jessi. 2023. *The Accidental Equalizer: How Luck Determines Pay after College*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Kalleberg, Arne L. 2011. *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s to 2000s*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kelly, Erin L. and Phyllis Moen. 2020. *Overload: How Good Jobs Went Bad and What We Can Do About It*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Damaske, Sarah. 2021. *The Tolls of Uncertainty: How Privilege and the Guilt Gap Shape Unemployment in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Other Required Readings

-  Assigned journal articles on Canvas (<https://utk.instructure.com>)

Evaluation

Your final grade will be based on (1) two in-class exams, (2) two writing assignments, (3) one class presentation, (4) class attendance/participation, and (5) Weekly Reflection Questions.

Exams

There will be two exams. The dates are in the syllabus's "Tentative Weekly Schedule and Readings" section. Make-up exams are available only under two conditions: 1) you must have a valid excuse (this almost always means a medical excuse, and the documentation can be submitted later), and 2) you must receive my permission to miss the test before the test. All exams are "often-note-exams." You can consult your own notes in exams, but you cannot use the textbook, journal articles, or a carbon copy of someone else's note, including lecture slides and handouts. Both hand-written and electronically typed notes are allowed.

Writing Assignments

Two writing assignments will be given during the semester. The first assignment is about computing inequality indexes and how to interpret them. The second assignment is to write an essay after reading one book out of the five books listed above. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the specified dates. Students who miss assignments will not be able to make up the work. Late assignments will be penalized. I will not accept any work “turned in” via email.

Weekly Reflection Questions

Reflection questions will be due on Canvas starting the first week. All students are expected to do assigned readings and answer questions. They are due 11:59 p.m. on Fridays and will be available from 9:00 a.m. on Mondays to 11:59 p.m. on Sundays.

Item	Weight	Percent	Grade
Exam 1	20	$93.0 \leq$	A
Exam 2	20	$90.0 \sim 92.9$	A–
Assignment 1	10	$87.0 \sim 89.9$	B+
Assignment 2	20	$83.0 \sim 86.9$	B
Attendance &		$80.0 \sim 82.9$	B–
Participation	10	$77.0 \sim 79.9$	C+
Presentation	10	$73.0 \sim 76.9$	C
Reflection Questions	10	$70.0 \sim 72.9$	C–
		$67.0 \sim 69.9$	D+
		$63.0 \sim 66.9$	D
		$60.0 \sim 62.9$	D–
		≤ 59.9	F
Total	100		

Class Presentation

All students need to do a presentation once throughout the semester. The instructor will assign the presentation date. Multiple students will be assigned on the same date, and they need to present as a team. The presentation should be a summary of the chapter and additional thoughts on the chapter. Students should summarize the chapter and share the summary with others by uploading it to Canvas. The presenters are expected to summarize the issue/chapter, provide points of debate, and add his/her/their own opinions. Weeks 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 applies.

Class Attendance/Participation

All students are expected to read assigned materials before class and actively contribute to class discussion. I will pick students randomly and ask them to explain the reading assignment for that class. A complete failure to explain the concept will lower your point. At the end of the semester, I will award bonus points to students who actively contribute to class discussions.

Classroom Etiquette

I find several things very distracting during class, talking while I and others are speaking and leaving early from class. I ask that students do their best to respect one another's views and not personalize disagreements. Getting educated involves building an ability to entertain viewpoints and ideas different from our own. Because materials dealt with in this course can be "sensitive," please be respectful of each other. Diverse opinions, even controversial ones, are welcome. Incivility toward each other will not be tolerated.

Course Policies

Communication

Email is an official form of communication. You are responsible for checking your University of Tennessee official email address regularly. Email me with any possible inquiries about the class. Please use [SOCI341] followed by whatever you would like for the subject of your email.

Discussion

I encourage thoughtful dialogue and debate. We will disagree with one another and with the readings at times, but I ask that we remain respectful of each other at all times. I recognize that you have certain assumptions, beliefs, values, and hopefully passionate ideas about the world. I welcome your views, and I hope you share them with the class often. I also caution you to remember that opinions rooted in personal experience are often not universal truths, so it is important that you ground your claims with ideas from the readings, texts, and other scholarly material.

Copyright

All classroom materials, including syllabus, lectures, slides, and others, are allowed only for personal use. Sharing them with others (except your classmates) or selling them to third parties or anyone else, including your classmates, are strictly prohibited. Seek permission from the instructor if you need to videotape or record the lectures.

Academic Integrity

Each student is responsible for their personal integrity in academic life and for adhering to UT's Honor Statement. The Honor Statement reads: "An essential feature of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity."

AI Policy: Not Permitted in this Course

In this course, it is expected that all submitted work is produced by the students themselves, whether individually or collaboratively. Students must not seek the assistance of Generative AI Tools like ChatGPT. Use of a Generative AI Tool to complete an assignment constitutes academic dishonesty.

Religious Holidays

While I have attempted to construct the course schedule around religious holidays, I may have overlooked some. If you are unable to attend a class due to a religious holiday, please let me know in advance, and we can make other arrangements.

Accommodations

I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. I will need documentation from the appropriate college office before making any changes. You will need to let me know as soon as possible so that I can make arrangements.

Record Keeping

Students are obliged to save important emails, such as class absence notifications, in their email accounts and to keep other important records.

Other Policies

Please note that the University of Tennessee has many policies regarding how classes will be conducted and the expected behaviors of students. Even though these may not be explicitly listed here, this class will be run per other policies.

Disclaimer

The syllabus and schedule are subject to change.


Tentative Weekly Schedule and Readings

All readings are to be done before the class.

Week 1: Introduction

8/19~


- Introduction and overview of the course


 Ch. 1: 3–27

Week 2: Theoretical Background

8/26~


- Functionalism vs. Conflict Theory

 Ch. 2: 30–40

 Davis, Kingsley and Wilbert E. Moore. 1945. "Some Principles of Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 10:242–249

 Tumin, Melvin M. 1953. "Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis." *American Sociological Review* 18:387–394


- Marx and Weber

 Ch. 2: 40–53


Week 3: Inequality Assessment

9/2~

- How do we study inequality?

 Ch. 3: 63–91

- Principles of Inequality Index

 Allison, Paul D. 1978. "Measures of Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 43:865–880


- Calculate Gini


No Class on 9/2 (Labor Day)

Week 4: Structure of Inequality and Social Class


9/9~

- Class Structure

 Ch. 4: 98–114

 Hout, Michael and Thomas A. DiPrete. 2006. "What We Have Learned: RC28's Contributions to Knowledge about Social Stratification." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 24:1–20

- Reproduction of Class

 Ch. 4: 114–122

First Writing Assignment due
11:59 pm on Friday (9/13)

Week 5: Rising Income Inequality

9/16~

- Skill-Biased Technological Change

- ⑧ Alderson, Arthur S., Jason Beckfield, and François Nielsen. 2005. "Exactly How Has Income Inequality Changed?: Patterns of Distributional Change in Core Societies." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 46:405–423
- ⑧ Autor, David H. 2014. "Skills, Education, and the Rise of Earnings Inequality among the 'Other 99 Percent'." *Science* 344:843–851
- ⑧ Autor, David H. 2010. *The Polarization of Job Opportunities in the U.S. Labor Market: Implications for Employment and Earnings*. Center for American Progress and The Hamilton Project

- Institutional Approach

- ⑧ Kim, ChangHwan and Arthur Sakamoto. 2010. "Assessing the Consequences of Declining Unionization and Public-Sector Employment: A Density-Function Decomposition of Rising Inequality from 1983 to 2005." *Work and Occupations* 37:119–161. (Read theoretical discussion and conclusions only)

Week 6: Upper Class and Middle Class

9/23~

- Upper Class

📖 Ch. 5: 131–161

- Middle Class

📖 Ch. 6: 166–193

Week 7: Poverty and Wealth Inequality

9/30~

- Poverty

📖 Ch. 7: 200–230

- Wealth Inequality

- ⑧ Piketty, Thomas and Emmanuel Saez. 2014. "Income Inequality in the Long Run." *Science* 344:838–843

Week 8: Review and Exam

10/7~

- Exam Review (10/9, Wednesday)

***** No Class on 10/7 (Monday, Fall Break) *****

***** First Exam on 10/11 (Friday) *****

Week 9: Break

10/14~


- Catching up

***** No Class *****


Week 10: Social Mobility


10/21~

- Measures of Mobility

 Ch. 8: 238–248

- Mobility Patterns


 Ch. 8: 249–264


-  Corak, Miles. 2013. "Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27:79–102


Week 11: Education

10/28~


- Education and Inequality

 Ch. 9: 272–306

-  Torche, Florencia. 2011. "Is a College Degree Still the Great Equalizer? Intergenerational Mobility across Levels of Schooling in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 117:763–807

-  Zhou, Xiang. 2019. "Equalization or Selection? Reassessing the Meritocratic Power of a College Degree in Intergenerational Income Mobility." *American Sociological Review* 84:459–485


- Alternative Theories of Educational Inequality

-  Sakamoto, Arthur, ChangHwan Kim, and Hyeyoung Woo. 2012. "An Empirical Test of Alternative Theories of Educational Inequality." *Education Research International* 708989 (Theoretical Background only)


Week 12: Gender Inequality


11/4~

- Gender Inequality

 Ch. 10: 312–346

- Changing Gender Inequality in the U.S.


-  England, Paula, Andrew Levine, and Emma Mishel. 2020. "Progress Toward Gender Equality in the United States Has Slowed or Stalled." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 117:6990–6997

-  Kim, ChangHwan and Arthur Sakamoto. 2017. "Womens Progress for Mens Gain? Gender-Specific Changes in the Return to Education as Measured by Family Standard of Living, 1990 to 2009-2011." *Demography* 54:1743–1772

Week 13: Race and Ethnicity, Intersectionality

11/11~

- Race and Ethnicity

 Ch. 11: 352–384

- Intersectionality


8 Carbado, Devon W., Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Vickie M. Mays, and Barbara Tomlinson. 2013. "Intersectionality: Mapping the Movements of a Theory." *Du Bois Review* 10:303–312

8 Cho, Sumi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. 2013. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38:785–810

***** Second Writing Assignment due *****
***** 11:59 pm on Friday (11/15) *****

Week 14: Globalization and Inequality 11/18~

- Inequality across the Globe

 Ch. 13: 430–454


- Globalization and Global Inequality

8 Milanovic, Branko. 2013. "Global Income Inequality in Numbers: in History and Now." *Global Policy* 4:198–208


8 Milanovic, Branko. 2024. "The Three Eras of Global Inequality, 1820-2020 with the Focus on the Past Thirty Years." *World Development* 177:106516

Week 15: Culture and Social Policy 11/25~

- Culture

 Ch. 12: 390–420

- Public Policy

 Ch. 14: 459–493

***** No Class on 11/27 & 11/29 *****
***** (Thanksgiving) *****

Week 16: Wrap Up & Exam 12/2~

- Exam Review (12/2)

***** No Class on 12/4 (Wednesday) *****

***** Final Exam on 12/6 (Friday) *****
***** 3:30 pm ~ 6:00 pm *****