

HTS 3008: Class, Power, and Inequality  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Spring 2011  
MWF 1:05-1:55  
D.M. Smith 207

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## COURSE OVERVIEW

This class is an introduction to the study of social inequality from a sociological perspective. In every society beyond the simplest hunter-gatherer societies valued economic, social, and political resources are distributed to citizens unequally. Sociologists seek to understand the processes by which these valued resources become unequally distributed. And this will be our task this semester. The first half of the semester our goal will be to figure out how to think sociologically about the problem of inequality. How do sociologists explain inequality? What are the major categories of social inequality in the U.S.? Where do these categories come from? How does inequality emerge around these categories? After gaining some general insight into how to think about the problem, in the second half of the semester we will examine some basic trends, patterns, and experiences of inequality (primarily focusing on the contemporary U.S.). Our goal will be to use and expand upon the concepts developed in the first half to understand a variety of inequalities in a variety of settings. We will then turn to understanding the consequences of these inequalities and we will end the semester by asking what does the future of inequality likely hold, and what can be done to mitigate these inequalities.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### *Required Texts:*

There are three required books for this course:

David Grusky and Szonia Szelenyi. 2007. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

**Code: GS**

Douglas Massey. 2008. *Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. **Code: M**

The New York Times. 2005. *Class Matters*. New York: The New York Times. **Code: CM**

The texts can be purchased at the Engineers Bookstore. There will be a few other required readings not found in these books. These are noted with an asterisk and can be found on the T-Square course website.

### *Assignments and Grading:*

There will be two exams (a mid-term and a final, 30 points each). The mid-term exam will cover material from the first half of the class, primarily explanations of inequality. Because this class is cumulative, concepts we learn earlier in class will help us understand material later in class. Thus, while your final exam will cover primarily material from the last half of class we cannot

avoid returning key concepts learned in the first half. The final exam will cover readings from the second half of the semester PLUS key concepts from the first half of the class.

You will also write two short papers (15 points each). The first will be based on some simple U.S. Census data and the second will require you to connect what you have learned in the class to current events. I will give further information about these assignments later.

Finally, I will give unannounced pop quizzes, containing 1 or 2 short answer questions, throughout the semester (10 points). These quizzes both constitute my attendance policy (no make-up quizzes are allowed) and are meant to facilitate discussion in class. If you read the material assigned prior to class and reflect upon it (that is comprehend the readings), you will do fine on the quizzes. But if you do not regularly attend class and/or do not read the assigned material you will not do well on this portion and your grade will significantly suffer. I understand there are some legitimate reasons for you not attending class (serious sickness, death in the family, etc.) so you will not be penalized for missing up to 2 quizzes. Any points you accumulate beyond the required 10 points are considered extra credit and will be included in your final grade. This should give you an incentive to attend every class prepared. Since I allow you to miss two quizzes you CANNOT make up any quizzes for any reason. I will give them at the beginning of class, and if you are late you are out of luck.

Thus, you are able to receive up to 100 points for your final grade (excluding extra credit from quizzes). The grading scale for the final course grade is as follows:

97-100=A+; 93-96=A; 90-92=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 80-82=B-; 77-79=C+; 73-76=C; 70-72=C-; 67-69=D+; 63-66=D; 60-62=D-; 59 & below=F

I DO NOT accept late assignments (tests or papers) except in cases of documented illness or family emergency (this of course excludes pop quizzes for which no make-ups are allowed).

## COURE EXPECTATIONS

I have high, yet doable, expectations. This is not meant to be an easy course. It is designed to develop your knowledge of patterns and trends in social inequality, how inequality is experienced, and why it exists. Essentially, the goal is to develop a critical appraisal of the question, “Why do some groups have more control over their own and society’s resources than others, and what does this mean for individuals and society?” If you meet my expectations for the course you will gain this, and be a more informed citizen. You will also receive a good grade for the course.

I expect the following from you:

- **Attend all classes.** I will give pop quizzes to ensure that students come to class regularly. I give these pop quizzes at the beginning of class, and if you are late or miss the class you cannot make them up. No pop quizzes can be made up for any reason. If you cannot attend a class for any reason it is YOUR responsibility to get notes from that day’s class. I do not accept late assignments or reschedule make up exams except in the case of documented sickness or death in the family.
- **Do the reading ahead of class and be prepared to discuss them.** Reading the material is essential. While I do require a heavy reading load, actually reading the

material is important for class discussion, and as you will see is necessary to do well on the pop quizzes. Becoming an avid reader and consumer of information is essential to being an informed, politically efficacious citizen. Further, active participation in class discussions enhances your understanding of the concepts, so do not be afraid to ask questions about and/or comment on the readings during lectures and discussion. Do not be a wallflower. Simply showing up is not enough.

- **Have an open, yet critical, mind, but ALWAYS be respectful.** Many of us have preconceived ideas about inequality. A sociological perspective on inequality requires us to challenge these taken-for-granted assumptions about how inequality is created and reproduced, and we will often discuss hot-button issues. Both of these can often be unsettling and/or difficult. While I strongly encourage a critical examination of the material, I encourage you to suspend your assumptions about the world when you engage with this material. Try to understand the arguments and evidence first and then shift toward critically assessing them. Regardless of how you choose to engage the material, at no point will disrespectful comments be tolerated. Verbal attacks on persons in the class, or inflammatory remarks about material discussed in class will result in my asking you to leave class for the day.
- I will occasionally show films. This is not a day off from “regular” class, but is a chance to explore further our sociological imagination in a new way. When watching films you should take notes and be prepared to discuss the materials just as if it were a reading assignment. I will also write exam questions related to the films. If you miss a film it is your responsibility to watch it on your own time (the films we watch are available through our library, but I cannot guarantee availability).

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic honesty is required of all students at the Georgia Institute of Technology. All acts of dishonesty in any work for this class (exams, papers, quizzes, etc.) constitute academic misconduct. This includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, and facilitating such dishonesty. Sanctions will be sought for any cases of academic dishonesty. You should be aware that it is within the limits of the University to expel students for such conduct. If I identify such conduct you will *at minimum* receive a zero for the assignment. For more information see: [http://www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/integrity/policies/honor\\_code.html](http://www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/integrity/policies/honor_code.html). It is your responsibility to read and comply fully with this policy.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any students requiring assistance due to disability should contact me within the first week of classes so that provisions can be arranged to facilitate your learning. You will be required to provide proper documentation from the ADAPTS office so that proper arrangements can be made. For more information see <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction: What do we mean by “Inequality”?

Jan 14      **CM:** Scott and Leonhardt. “Shadowy Lines that Still Divide” 1-26.

Jan 17      MLK Holiday: No Class

## Is Inequality Necessary?

- Jan 19      **GS:** Davis and Moore “Some Principles of Stratification” pp. 14-18  
               \*Melvin Tumin. 1953. “Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis”  
                       *American Sociological Review* 18: 387-394.
- Jan 21      **GS:** Fischer et al “Inequality by Design” pp. 18-23  
               \*Lane Kenworthy. 2007. “Is Equality Feasible?” *Contexts* 28-32  
               **GS:** Krueger “Inequality, Too Much of a Good Thing?” pp. 23-31

## Categorical Distinctions and Inequality Processes

- Jan 24 **M:** Ch. 1 “How Stratification Works” 1-15  
\*“How the ‘Hidden Brain’ does the Thinking for Us” NPR Audio Clip

## How Social Class Works

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| Jan 26 | <p><b>GS:</b> Marx. "Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism" 32-44</p> <p><b>GS:</b> Weber. "Class, Status, Party" 44-56</p>   |
| Jan 28 | <p><b>CM:</b> Lewin. "A Marriage of Unequals." 51-62</p> <p><b>CM:</b> Steinhauer. "When the Joneses Wear Jeans." 134-145</p>  |
| Jan 31 | <p>*Luo and Cullotta 2008. "Even Workers Surprised by Success of Factory Sit-In" <i>The New York Times</i>, December 13.</p> <p>*Greenhouse. 2008. "After 15 Years, North Carolina Plant Unionizes." <i>The New York Times</i>, December 13.</p> <p>*Silverstein. 2009. "Labor's Last Stand: The Corporate Campaign to Kill the Employee Free Choice Act." <i>Harper's Magazine</i> July</p> <p>*Uchitelle. 2010. "Unions Yield on Wage Scales to Preserve Jobs" <i>The New York Times</i></p> |

## *The Social Construction of Gender*

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| Feb 2 | GS: Lorber “The Social Construction of Gender” 276-284<br>M: Ch. 6 “Engendering Inequality” (211-227)  |
| Feb 4 | *Mason-Schrock 1996. “Transsexuals’ Narrative Construction of the True Self.”<br><i>The Social Psychology Quarterly</i><br>M: Ch. 6 “Engendering Inequality” (228-241) |

## *The Social Construction of Race*

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| Feb 7  | <p><b>GS:</b> Omi and Winant “Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s” 197-203</p> <p><b>GS:</b> Waters. “Immigration, Intermarriage, and the Challenges of Measuring Racial/Ethnic Identities</p> |
| Feb 9  | <p><b>M:</b> Ch. 3 “Reworking the Color Line” (51-74)</p>   |
| Feb 11 | <p><b>M:</b> Ch. 3 “Reworking the Color Line” (74-93)</p>   |

Feb 14      **M:** Ch. 3 “Reworking the Color Line” (93-112)

*Ethnicity and Immigration*

Feb 16      **M:** Ch. 4 “Building a Better Underclass” 113-132

              \*Doris Meissner. 2010. “5 Myths About Immigration.” *Washington Post*

Feb 18      **M:** Ch. 4 “Building a Better Underclass” 132-140

Feb 21      **M:** Ch. 4 “Building a Better Underclass” 140-157

**GS:** Gans “The Possibility of a New Racial Hierarchy in the Twenty-First Century United States” 266-275

Feb 23      \*Roediger. 1991. “Irish-American Workers and White Racial Formation in the Antebellum United States.” 133-163

Political Power

Feb 25      **GS:** Mills “The Power Elite” 87-99

**GS:** Domhoff. “Who Rules America? Power and Politics” 99-105

Feb 28      \*Becker and Morgenson. 2009. “Geithner, Member and Overseer of Finance Club” *The New York Times* April 27

              \*Creswell and White. 2009. “The Guys from ‘Government Sachs’” *The New York Times* October 19.

March 2      Exam Preparation

March 4      Midterm Exam

**Patterns and Trends in Inequality**

Work and Employment

March 7      *Getting a Job*

**GS:** Lin. “Social Networks and Status Attainment” 495-497

              \*McDonald, Lin, and Ao. 2009. “Networks of Opportunity: Gender, Race, and Job Leads.” *Social Problems* 56: 385-402.

March 9      *Discrimination*

**GS:** Bertrand and Mullainathan “Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal?” 246-252

**GS:** Goldin and Rouse. “Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of “Blind” Auditions on Female Musicians” 301-315

March 11    *Job Segregation*

**GS:** Reskin “Labor Markets as Queues: A Structural Approach to Changing Occupation Sex Composition.” 315-326

              \*LeDuff. 2000. “At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die; Who Kills, Who

Cuts, Who Bosses Can Depend on Race” *The New York Times* June 16.

#### Income and Wealth Distributions

March 14 *Growing Income Inequality*

**GS:** Morris and Western. “Inequality in Earnings: Trends and Implications” 80-86

\*Noah. 2010. “The Great Divergence.” *Slate Magazine* (Parts 1-2, 4-6, 8-9)

March 16 *The Gender Wage Gap*

**GS:** Petersen and Morgan “The Within-Job Gender Wage Gap” 343-351

**GS:** England “Devaluation and the Pay of Comparable Male and Female Occupations.” 352-356

March 18 *Race, Income, and Wealth*

**GS:** Oliver and Shapiro. “Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality” 258-266

**Paper 1 Due**

March 21-25: Spring Break

#### Poverty

March 28 *Poverty Trends*

**GS:** Smeeding. “Poverty, Work, and Policy: The United States in Comparative Perspective” 134-142

**GS:** Ehrenreich. “Nickel-and-Dimed: On (not) Getting by in America.” 123-133

March 30 *The Experience of Poverty*

**GS:** Pebley and Sastry. “Neighborhoods, Poverty, and Children’s Well-Being.” 165-178

\*“I am just a poor boy though my story's seldom told” *The Economist*

April 1 *Creating the Ghetto*

**GS:** Massey and Denton “American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass” 153-165

\*Farley and Squires. 2005. “Fences and Neighbors: Segregation in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America.” *Contexts* 4 (1): 33-39.

#### Education and Social Mobility

April 4 *Social Mobility Trends*

**GS:** Bradbury and Katz “Are Lifetime Incomes Growing More Unequal? Looking at New Evidence on Family Income Mobility” 423-428

April 6 *Does Education Matter?*

**GS:** MacLeod. “Ain’t No Makin’ It: Leveled Aspirations in a Low-Income Neighborhood” 468-485

\*Downey and Gibbs. 2010. “How Schools Really Matter.” *Contexts* 9(2): 50-54.

- April 8      *Race and Education*  
**GS:** Steele “Stereotype Threat and African-American Student Achievement” 252-257  
 \*Farkas 2004. “The Black-White Test Score Gap.” *Contexts* 3(2): 12-19
- Inequality and Crime
- April 11      **GS:** Western “Incarceration, Unemployment, and Inequality” 191-196.  
 \*Pager. 2003. “Blacks and Ex-Cons Need Not Apply.” *Contexts* 2(4): 58-59.
- April 13      \*Tomaskovic-Devey and Warren. 2009. “Explaining and Eliminating Racial Profiling.” *Contexts* 8(2): 34-39.  
 \*Penner and Saperstein. 2008. “How Social Status Shapes Race.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*  
 \*Jayson. 2008. “Racial Identity: Not a Black-and-White Issue.” *USA Today*
- April 15      \*Sampson. 2008. “Rethinking Crime and Immigration.” *Contexts* 7(1): 28-33.  
 \* Moore. 2009. “Study Shows Sharp Rise in Latino Federal Convicts” *The New York Times* February 18
- The Consequences of Inequality
- April 18      *Crime and the Criminal Justice System*  
 \*Logan. 2003. “Life and Death in the City: Neighborhoods in Context.” *Contexts* 33-40.
- April 20      *Health*  
**GS:** Scott “Life at the Top Isn’t Just Better, It’s Longer” 503-511  
**GS:** Mullahy, Robert, and Wolfe. “Health, Income, and Inequality” 511-525
- April 22      *Cultural Practices and the Reproduction of Inequality*  
**GS:** Chan and Goldthorpe. “The Social Stratification of Theatre, Dance, and Cinema Attendance.” 525-536.  
**GS:** Lareau “Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life” 537-548.  
**Paper 2 Due**
- The Future of Inequality
- April 25      *Building Equitable Institutions*  
 \*Esping-Anderson 2007. “Equal Opportunities and the Welfare State” *Contexts* 23-27  
 \*Mishel and Cleeland “Building Shared Prosperity” *Economic Policy Institute*
- April 27      \* Voss and Fantasia. 2004. “The Future of American Labor: Reinventing Unions.” *Contexts* 3(2): 35-41.  
 \*Dixon and Martin. 2007. “Can the Labor Movement Succeed without the Strike?” *Contexts* 6(2): 36-39.  
 \*Kimeldorf et al. 2006. “Consumers with a Conscience: Will They Pay More?” *Contexts* 5(1): 24-29.

April 29      \*Dobbin et al. 2007. "Diversity Management in Corporate America." *Contexts* 6(4):  
21-27.

\*TBA

May 4          Final Exam: 2:50-5:40

FINAL NOTE – If necessary, I reserve the right to add, cancel, or change reading or other assignments with appropriate notification.