Sociology 551: Stratification and Class

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Fall 2013

Class: Social Sciences 415, W 2:00–4:30
Office hours: Social Sciences 440, W 8:45–9:45, 11:00–12:00
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Course Description

This seminar explores processes of stratification in the United States and other affluent countries. We'll focus on three issues: economic insecurity, inequality of opportunity, and income inequality.

Requirements

Readings. The readings will be available via the dropbox on D2L.

Presentation. Each student will make one in-class presentation during the semester, on the readings for a given week. Use the standard conference presentation as your model: about 20 minutes, with slides. The objective of the presentation is to highlight one or more of the central issues addressed in the readings, to locate the authors' positions vis-à-vis those issues, and to comment critically on the state of the debate and the value of the individual contributions to it. You won't be able to cover all of the conceivable issues and need not place equal emphasis on each of the readings. Avoid lengthy introductions and summaries of the readings. The presentation should be organized around an argument — a statement about the most fruitful way to study the topic at hand, an adoption of a particular position in a debate, or a critique of some existing line of argument. If you don't have an argument, get one!

Paper. A roughly 7,500-word paper on a topic of your choice related to the course material. Due date: Monday, December 16. Late papers will be penalized one grade level (e.g., from A to A-minus). You must get your topic approved by me no later than November 20. The paper can be either of the following:
• An empirical study. This can be a new analysis or a replication-reanalysis of a prior empirical study.
• A proposal for an empirical study. This should include (1) a theory/hypotheses section that discusses various theoretical perspectives and lists propositions about the empirical outcomes that would be predicted by those perspectives and (2) a detailed description of the data and methods you would use to answer your research question.

Grading. Class participation, the presentation, and the paper will each account for one-third of the course grade.

Schedule

August 28: Introduction

1. ECONOMIC INSECURITY

September 4: Economic growth, employment, social policy, and low income


September 11: The minimum wage, employment, and low income


September 18: Families and economic insecurity


September 25: Income decline

October 2: no class

2. INEQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

October 9: Parents' income


October 16: Parenting


October 23: Place


• Haveman, Robert. 2013. "Do Housing Vouchers Work?" Pathways, Spring: 15-17.

October 30: Schools


3. INCOME INEQUALITY

November 6: Causes of rising income inequality


November 13: no class

November 20: Causes of rising income inequality 2


November 27: no class

December 4: Causes of rising income inequality 3


December 11: no class