

Class, Power, and Social Inequality

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Office Hours: Tues, 2:00-3:00; Thur, 11:00-12:00

Spring 2008
HTS 3008
DM Smith, Rm 304
Tuesdays & Thursdays
12:05-1:35pm

Course Overview:

In the United States, the richest 10% of the population owns about 65% of the wealth (net financial assets), while the poorest 20% owns less than 1%. On average, women's annual earnings fall more than 25% below men's earnings; the same is true of ethnic minorities compared to whites. And, female-headed families constitute a high proportion of the poor. How can we explain and understand such social inequality? Is inequality the consequence of individual abilities? Are poor people simply less motivated, less able, or less "good"? Or, are there larger social forces at work, and if so, what are they?

To answer these fundamental questions, this course examines social inequality and stratification in the United States. We will concentrate on how social class and the market economy affect inequality, but issues of race and gender are interwoven throughout the course. Students will gain an understanding of the current extent of inequality in various social institutions and organizations. By looking at the bases of inequality, students will also acquire an understanding of "popular" and sociological perspectives on economic, racial, and gender inequality, as well as on the role of the state in ameliorating and/or maintaining inequality. Perhaps most importantly, we will examine the possibilities for changing social inequality in the United States.

Throughout the semester, we will consider the treatment of animals by humans as a reflection of how humans exploit one another. We will see how the social construction of inequality, the market economy, and issues of class, race, and gender shape people's treatment of animals.

Requirements:

Grades will be based on several criteria: class participation, reading responses, a group project, and two exams. In fulfilling these requirements, students are expected to adhere to the **Georgia Tech Honor Code** (see www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Honor/). Honor code violations will be addressed appropriately and could result in an "F" on the assignment or in the course. I am happy to accommodate you if you need any special considerations due to a disability, but please let me know *as soon as possible* (do not wait until exam day!). You should contact the **ADAPTS Office** (see www.adapts.gatech.edu/index2.htm).

Participation (10%)

Student participation is essential because much of each class session will include discussion. Make sure you *do the reading before class and come prepared to discuss*. **Do not assume that these are automatic points. You must earn them by contributing in class.** Furthermore, disruptive behavior (e.g., socializing in class, passing notes, coming to class late) will negatively affect your grade. If you have a question or comment or need something clarified, raise the issue in class.

Reading Responses (15%)

Each week, students will write a 1-2 page (typed, doubled spaced, 1" margins, 12 point font) response to a reading for that week. (In total, each students will write about 10 reading responses during the course of the semester.) These papers will allow students to *demonstrate that they understand the readings and how the readings fit with the course*. These responses are due on T-Square by the beginning of the class in which we cover those readings (see the attached page).

Group Projects (15%)

Students will participate in group projects, exploring different aspect of inequality at Georgia Tech (e.g., gender differences in student majors, ethnic diversity in student socializing, etc.). After gathering and organizing information to answer particular research questions, students will present and explain their findings to the class in a 15-20 minute presentation. These projects have two purposes: (1) to help students see how issues of inequality directly affect their everyday lives; and, (2) to expose students to the process of social research, thereby giving them a better understanding of how sociological knowledge is attained.

Exams (60% total)

This course will have two exams, each of which will be in-class and closed-book/note. The first exam is scheduled for Thursday, **February 28**. The second exam will be on the date designated by the college, which is Thursday, **May 1**, from 8:00-10:50am. All exams will consist primarily of short essay questions. These questions will require students to draw on readings, lectures, and discussions from the course. We will discuss the exams as they approach.

Summary of grade breakdown:	Participation.....	10%
	Reading Responses..	15%
	Group Project.....	15%
	<u>Exams (2).....</u>	<u>60%</u>
	Total.....	100%

Readings:

Several required books are available at the **Engineer’s Bookstore at 748 Marietta Street**:

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1989. The Communist Manifesto.
Milkman, Ruth. 1997. Farewell to the Factory.
Newman, Katherine. 1999. No Shame in My Game.
Nibert, David. 2002. Animal Rights, Human Rights.
Rose, Stephen. 2007. Social Stratification in the United States.
Shapiro, Thomas M. 2004. The Hidden Cost of Being African American.

In addition to these books, many of the course readings are our course page on T-Square.

Weekly Schedule:

Unmarked readings come from the required books. An asterisk (*) indicates that a reading is on our course page on T-Square.

Introduction: The Social Construction of Inequality

- Jan. 8 *Introduction: What are social inequality and stratification?*
- Jan. 10 *Principles of Inequality: What's the "nature" of inequality?*
*Katz, Sidney. 1997. "The Importance of Being Beautiful." Pp. 307-313 in Down to Earth Sociology, edited by James Henslin.
*McIntosh, Peggy. 1998. "White Privilege and Male Privilege." Pp. 94-105 in Race, Class and Gender, edited by Margaret Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins.
*Steinem, Gloria. 1978. "If Men Could Menstruate." *Ms.* (October):110.
- Jan. 15 *Different Explanations: Why does inequality exist?*
*Davis, Kingsley, and Wilbert Moore. 1945. "Some Principles of Stratification." American Sociological Review. 10:242-249.
Nibert. Animal Rights, Human Rights. Ch 1 ("Toward a Sociological Analysis. . ."), p1-20.
- Jan. 17 *Ideology: Why do we accept inequality?*
*Polanyi, Karl. 1944. The Great Transformation. Ch 4 ("Societies and Economic Systems"), p43-55.
Nibert. Animal Rights. Ch 6 ("The Social Construction of Speciesist Reality"), p195-235.
Video: "Social Class in America"
- Jan. 22 *"Rooted in the System": How does the economy shape inequality?*
Nibert. Animal Rights. Ch 2 ("Economic Basis. . ."), p21-55.
*Henslin, James. 1997. "How Sociologists Do Research." Pp. 31-43 in Down to Earth Sociology, edited by James Henslin.

Education: The "Great Equalizer"?

- Jan. 24 *Class and Education: What are the social bases of educational achievement?*
*Kozol, Jonathan. 1992. Savage Inequalities. Ch 1 ("Life on the Mississippi"), p7-39.
*Lareau, Annette. 2000. Home Advantage. Ch 9 ("Social Class Differences . . ."), p167-186.
- Jan. 29 *Stratification in Education: Do schools reproduce inequality?*
*Persell, Caroline, and Peter Cookson. 1985. "Chartering and Bartering: Elite Education and Social Reproduction." Social Problems. 33(2):114-129.
*Dougherty, Kevin J. 1992. "Community Colleges and Baccalaureate Attainment." Journal of Higher Education. 63(2):188-214.

- Jan. 31 *Inequality Within Schools: How do race, gender, and class affect student achievement?*
 *Morris, Edward W. 2005. “‘Tuck In That Shirt!’ Race, Class, Gender, and Discipline in an Urban School.” Sociological Perspectives. 48(1):25–48.
 Newman. No Shame in My Game. Ch 5 (“School and Skill”), p122-149.
 Handout: Mona Charen. 1998. “Females get a dumb rap when it comes to smarts.” Atlanta Journal Constitution. November 4.
Group Presentation: Gender and Academic Major
- Feb. 5 *Inequalities at the Highest Levels: Is academia a meritocracy?*
 *Park, Shelley M. 1996. “Research, Teaching, and Service: Why Shouldn’t Women’s Work Count?” Journal of Higher Education. 67(1):46-84.
Group Presentation: Race and Gender Disparities in Faculty Positions
- The U.S. Economy: Equal Opportunity?**
- Feb. 7 *Inequality in the “Land of Opportunity”: How unequal is the U.S.?*
 Rose. Social Stratification in the United States.
 Newman. No Shame. Preface and Ch 1 (“Working Lives”), p3-38.
Group Presentation: Income distribution at Georgia Tech versus in U.S.
- Feb. 12 *“The Other America”: Who are the poor?*
 Newman. No Shame. Ch 2 (“Invisible Poor”), p39-61; and Ch 4 (“No Shame”), p86-122.
Group Presentation: Social Groupings at Georgia Tech
- Feb. 14 *Shifts in the Economy: How do they shape inequality?*
 Nibert. Animal Rights. Ch 3 (“Capitalist Expansion. . .”), p56-100.
 *Harrison, Bennett. 1986. “Deindustrialization: The Case Against Capital Flight.” Pp. 96-108 in The Global Economy, edited by Edward Gondolf, et al.
 *Fraser, Jill Andresky. 2001. White Collar Sweatshop. Ch 2 (“Working Three Times Harder. . .”), p39-57.
Group Presentation: Job Opportunities and Expectations
- Feb. 19 *Women at Work: How does gender affect working women’s paychecks?*
 *Williams, Christine. 1992. “The Glass Escalator.” Social Problems. 39(3):253-267.
 *Reskin, Barbara, and Irene Padvic. 1994. “Sex Differences in Earnings.” Pp. 101-126 in Women and Men at Work.
Group Presentation: Gender and Sports at Georgia Tech
- Feb. 21 *Race at Work: What role does race play in occupational segregation?*
 Newman. No Shame. Ch 3 (“Getting a Job”), p61-85.
 *Granovetter, Mark. 1974. Getting a Job. Introduction, p3-22.
Group Presentation: Race, Gender, and Occupations at Georgia Tech
 Video: “Discrimination Testers”

Feb. 26 *Out of Poverty: What obstacles and opportunities face the poor?*
Newman. No Shame. Ch 6 (“Getting Stuck”), p150-185; and Ch 7 (“Family Values”), p186-229.

Feb. 28 **FIRST EXAM**

The Invisible Inequality of Wealth: How Pervasive Is It?

Mar. 4 *Wealth in America: Are we a land of equality?*
Shapiro. Hidden Cost. Intro, p1-18; and Ch 1 (“Color of the Safety Net”), p21-41.

Mar. 6 *Racial (Dis)Advantages: How large is the racial wealth gap?*
Shapiro. Hidden Cost. Ch 2 (“Cost of Being Black”), p42-59; Ch 4 (“Middle Class”), 87-104.

Mar. 11 *Reproducing Inequality: How does inheritance shape wealth inequality?*
Shapiro. Hidden Cost. Ch 3 (“Inheritance”), p60-84.

Mar. 13 *Community Color: How does homeownership affect the racial wealth gap?*
Shapiro. Hidden Cost. Ch 5 (“Homeownership Crossroad”), p105-125; Ch 6 (“Where People”), 129-154.

Mar. 18-20 **No Class: Spring Break**

Labor, Capital, and the State: What (or Who) Shapes the Economy?

Mar. 25 *The rules of the game: Does capitalism simply reproduce inequality?*
Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1989. The Communist Manifesto. Part I (“Bourgeois and Proletarian”), and Part II (“Proletarians and Communists”).

Mar. 27 *The rules of the game: Does capitalism simply reproduce inequality?*
Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1989. The Communist Manifesto. Part I (“Bourgeois and Proletarian”), and Part II (“Proletarians and Communists”).

Game: Stratification Monopoly

Apr. 1 *Class Conflict: Where do labor’s and capital’s power come from?*
*Boyer, Richard, and Herbert Morais. 1955. Labor’s Untold Story. Ch 5 (“Hell in the Rockies”), p141-170.

*Whitt, J. Allen, and Glenn Yago. 1985. “Corporate Strategies and the Decline of Transit in U.S. Cities.” Urban Affairs Quarterly. 21(1):37-65.

Apr. 3 *The Case of Autoworkers: How did things get started?*
Milkman, Ruth. 1997. Farewell to the Factory. Ch 1 (“Introduction”), p1-21
Video: “1937 Sit-Down Strike at Flint”

- Apr. 8 *The “Golden Years”*: What was good and bad about the post-war era?
Milkman. Farewell. Ch 2 (“Prisoners of Prosperity”), p22-50; Ch 3
 (“Adversarialism and Beyond”), p51-92.
- Apr. 10 *Facing Globalization: “What the hell happened?”*
Video: “Roger & Me”
- Apr. 15 *A different approach in Linden: Easing deindustrialization?*
Milkman. Farewell. Ch 4 (“Farewell to the Factory”), p93-136.
- Apr. 17 *Power in the state: What’s behind our social policy?*
Nibert. Animal Rights. Ch 5 (“Oppression and the Capitalist State”), p142-194.
*Winders, Bill. 1999. “The Roller Coaster of Class Conflict: Class Segments,
 Mass Mobilization, and Voter Turnout in the U.S., 1840-1996.” Social
 Forces. 77(3):833-862.
- Apr. 22 *Globalization: What’s power got to do with it?*
Nibert. Animal Rights. Ch 4 (“The Growth of Agribusiness. . .”), p101-142.
*Tabb, William. 1997. “Globalization is *an* Issue, the Power of Capital is *the*
 Issue.” Monthly Review. June:20-30.
- Apr. 24 *Organizing for Change: What works?*
*Piven, Frances Fox and Richard Cloward. 1998. “Disruptive Dissensus: People
 and Power in the Industrial Age.” Pp. 165-193 in Reflections on
 Community Organization, edited by Jack Rothman.
Nibert. Animal Rights. Ch 7 (“Toward a United Struggle. . .”), p236-256.
Shapiro. Hidden Cost. Ch 7 (“Getting a Decent”), 155-182.
- May 1 **FINAL EXAM** (8:00-10:50a.m.)