

Soc 321 (GIST 550) Wealth, Power and Inequality

Spring 2022, 58014
Monday and Wednesday 12:30-1:45
CapFed Building Room 3031

Instructor:

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Course Website: <http://people.ku.edu/~chkim/soc521/>

(An ID and a password [they are different from your KU-ID] are required to open the restricted materials on the course website. Contact the instructor to acquire them.)

Course Objectives: This course 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.

Textbook: There is no main textbook for this course. Almost all readings can be downloaded from the course website or from KU e-libraries. There are one optional reader which I recommend you strongly and a book that you need to read to complete a writing assignment.

1. (Reader) David B. Grusky and Szonja Szelenyi eds. 2011. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*, 2nd edition. Westview Press.
2. (Required Reading: Option 1) McGarvey, Darren. 2017. *Poverty Safari: Understanding the Anger of Britain's Underclass*. Arcade.
3. (Required Reading: Option 2) Smarsh, Sarah. 2018. *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth*. Scribner.
4. (Required Reading: Option 3) Desmond, Matthew. 2017. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Broadway Books.

Other Requirements: Access to Canvas (<https://canvashelp.ku.edu/>) and email. For communication, I will use the KU email address registered in the school system.

Evaluation: Your final grade will be based on (1) two take-home exams, (2) three writing assignments, (3) class presentation, and (4) class participation.

Item	Points	Item	Points	Item	Points
Exam 1	100	Assignment 1	50	Presentation	30
Exam 2	100	Assignment 2	50	Attendance	20
		Assignment 3	50		
Total					400

Points	Grade	Points	Grade	Points	Grade	Points	Grade	Points	Grade
		347-359	B+	307-319	C+	267-279	D+		
373-400	A	333-346	B	293-306	C	253-266	D		
360-372	A-	320-332	B-	280-292	C-	240-252	D-	≤ 239	F

Exams: There will be two take-home exams. The dates are in the “Tentative Topics and Reading Schedule” section of the syllabus. I will email you the exam on the designated date, and you should email me back your answers by the end of that date. 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 prior to the test. Once you receive an exam email, you are in the test. It is your responsibility to provide written verification of your excuse to me; if I do not receive it, you will not receive any credit for the exam. All exams are “often-note-exams.”

Writing Assignments: Three assignments will be given during the course of the semester. The first assignment is about computing inequality indexes and how to interpret them. The second assignment is to write a short essay after reading one book out of the three books listed above. The last one is doing a small research project. 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 lowered 5 points for each day late (weekends count as two days = 10 points).

Class Presentation: During the semester, each student will do a 5 to 10 minutes presentation about the current inequality related issues and its sociological implications (30 points).

Class Participation: All students are expected to read assigned materials before class and to actively contribute to class discussion. I am going to pick students randomly and will ask to explain the reading assignment for that class. A complete failure in explaining the concept will lower your point. At the end of semester, I will award up to 10 bonus points to students who contributed to class discussions very actively.

Class Attendance: Every day, attendance will be taken. If you are absent, your class attendance point will be reduced by two points for each absence. **The first six absences will not cost the points**, though. Class attendance is worth for total 20 points. **The zero attendance score, which indicates that you miss more than half of the classes, will result in an F for the final grade.** You need to notify me by email if there is any reasonable excuses (e.g., medical issues) why you cannot come to class. Students who leave before the attendance has been taken will not be counted for the day. **Perfect attendance will be awarded with on notch upgrade in your final grade (e.g., from B+ to A-).**

Classroom Etiquette: There are several things that I find very distracting during class, talking while I and others are speaking and leaving early from class. Don't forget turning off your cell-phone. Cell-phones are absolutely not allowed to use in any circumstances. And also I ask that

students do their best to respect one another's views and do not personalize disagreements.

Zoom Etiquette: In case we have Zoom classes, I recommend you to turn on your camera. Those who turn off the camera will be called out for questions. Failing to answer will be considered as being absent from the class.

Course Policies

- **Copyrights** All classroom materials including syllabus, lectures, slides, and others are allowed only for personal uses. 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.
- **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 their important emails such as class absence notification in their email accounts and to keep other important records.
- **Other Policies:** Please note that the University of Kansas has many policies regarding how classes will be conducted and expected behaviors of students. Even though these may not be explicitly listed here, this class will be run in accordance with other policies.

Tentative Weekly Readings

(Weekly readings are going to be updated and posted on our course website.)

- **Week 1 (Jan 19): Introduction**

- Main Question: Review on what is happening now.
- No required readings. Relax and enjoy the lecture.

- **Week 2 (Jan 24 & 26): Theoretical Background 1**

- Main Question: Is Inequality bad? Why? Why not?
- Davis and Moore. 1945. Some Principles of Stratification. ASR.
- Tumin, Melvin. 1953. “Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis.” *American Sociological Review* 18:387-394.

- **Weeks 3 & 4 (Jan 31, Feb 7, (no class on Feb 2) and Feb 9): Theoretical Background 2**

- Main Question: Karl Marx declared that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Is he right?
- Reader Chapters 5, 6, and 7
- Marx. “Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism.”
- Weber. “Class, Status, Party.”
- Wright, E.O. 2003. Social Class. in Encyclopedia of Social Theory.

- **Week 5 (Feb 14 & 16): Measures of Inequality**

- Main Question: How can we measure inequality?
- Allison, Paul D. 1978. “Measures of Inequality.” *American Sociological Review* 43:865-80.

- **Week 6 (Feb 21 & 23): Why is Income Inequality Rising? Kuznets Curve, Education and Technological Change**

- Main Question: Why income inequality is rising? Will robots replace your work?
- Main Question: Is income inequality rising? How has income inequality changed over time? Is there any stylized pattern? Let’s compare Korea, the US, and the world.
- Nielsen and Alderson. 2005. “Exactly How Has Income Inequality Changed? Patterns of Distributional Change in Core Societies.” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 46: 405-23.
- Reader Chapters 70 and 71
- CBS Video Clip
- Autor, David H. 2010. “The Polarization of Job Opportunities in the U.S. Labor Market.” The Center for American Progress.
- Optional Reading: Autor, David H., Lawrence F. Katz, and Melissa S. Kearney. 2008. “Trends in U.S. Wage Inequality: Revising the Revisionists.” *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 90:300-23.)
- Autor, David H. 2014. “Skills, Education, and the Rise of Earnings Inequality among the Other 99 Percent.” *Science* 344: 843-851.

- **Week 7 (Feb 28 & Mar 2): Why is Income Inequality Rising? Institutional Changes**

- Main Question: Why income inequality is rising?
- Reader Chapters 9, 10, and 66
- 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* 37:119-61. (Read theoretical discussion and conclusions only)
- (Optional reading) Sakamoto, Arthur and ChangHwan Kim. 2010. “Is Rising Earnings Inequality Associated with Increased Exploitation? Evidence for U.S. Manufacturing Industries, 1971-1996.” *Sociological Perspectives* 53:19-43.
- **Week 8: Review (Mar 7) & 1st Exam (Mar 9)**
- **Week 9: Spring Break**
- **Weeks 10 (Mar 22 & 23): Globalization, International Migration, and Inequality**
 - Main Question: Is inequality rising globally? If so, is it because of the rise in within-country inequality or the rise in between-country inequality? Why do we believe that globalization is associated with the change in inequality? Does the rise in international migration cause the increase in inequality in rich countries? Is President Trump Right?
 - Milanovic. 2013. “Global Income Inequality in Numbers: in History and Now.” *Global Policy* 4(2):198-208.
 - (Optional reading) Kim, ChangHwan and Arthur Sakamoto. 2013. “Immigration and the Wages of Native Workers: The Spatial Versus the Occupational Approaches.” *Sociological Focus* 46:85-105.
 - (Optional reading) Mills, Melinda. 2009. “Globalization and Inequality.” *European Sociological Review* 25(1):1-8.
- **Weeks 11 (Mar 28 & 30): Wealth Inequality**
 - Main Question: Is the wealth inequality in the US worse than that in Sweden?
 - Reader Chapters 33 and 77
 - Piketty, Thomas and Emmanuel Saez. 2014. “Inequality in the Long Run.” *Science* 344(6186):838-43.
- **Weeks 12 (Apr 4 & 6): Intergenerational Mobility 1: OED Model & the Great Gatsby Curve**
 - Main Question: Is the level playing ground possible and/or desirable? Does higher education guarantee upward mobility?
 - Reader Chapters 50, 51, 52, 55 and 74
 - Corak, Miles. 2013. “Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility.” *Journal of Economic Perspective* 27(3):79-102.
 - (Optional reading) Turner, Ralph H. 1960. “Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System.” *American Sociological Review* 25: 855-867.
- **Week 13 (Apr 11 & 13): Intergenerational Mobility 2: Recent Findings**
 - Oh, Byeongdon and ChangHwan Kim. 2020. “Broken Promise of College? New Educational Sorting Mechanisms for Intergenerational Association in the 21st Century.” *Social Science Research*.

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- Song, Xi et al. 2020. “Long-term decline in intergenerational mobility in the United States since the 1850.” PNAS.
 - **Week 14 (Apr 18 & 20): Status, Social Classes, Occupations**
 - Main Question: Are class structure and prestige associated with occupation changing over time?
 - Reader Chapter 56
 - Hout, Michael and Thomas DiPrete. 2006. “What We Have Learned: RC28’s Contributions to Knowledge about Social Stratification.” *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 24:1-20.
 - Video: *People Like Us: Social Class in America*
 - **Week 15 (Apr 25 & 27): Poverty**
 - Main Question: How much poor is poor enough to justify social actions? How global poverty has changed over time?
 - Brady, David. 2003. “Rethinking the Sociological Measurement of Poverty.” *Social Forces* 81: 715-52.
 - **Weeks 16: Review (May 2) & 2nd Exam (May 4)**