Soc 521 Wealth, Power and Inequality
Spring 2019, Class# 77972
Mon and Wed 12:00-1:45 Fraser 106

Instructor:
Name: ChangHwan Kim
Office: Fraser 748
Email: chkim@ku.edu
Tel: 785-864-9426
Office Hours: M 11:00–12:00 & W 2:00–3:00

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.)

The Blackboard will be used for communication.

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.


Exams: There will be three in-class exams. The dates of the exams are in the “Tentative Topics and Reading Schedule” section of the syllabus. Students who arrive late to an exam will not be able to get extra time at any circumstance. Make-up exams are available only under two conditions: 1) you must have a valid excuse (this almost always means a medical excuse); or 2) you must
receive my permission to miss the test prior to 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.” You can consult your own note 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.

**Assignments:** Two assignments will be given during the course of the semester. Typically, this work requires students to write a 5 to 7 page essay on a specified topic. Assignments will be given at least a month before the due date. 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). I will not accept any work “turned in” via email.

**Class Participation:** All students are expected to read assigned materials before class and to actively contribute to class discussion (30 points). 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 the semester, I will award up to another 5 bonus points to students who contributed to class discussions very actively. I will assign 0 participation points to students who did not say anything constructive during the semester.

**Class Attendance:** Every day, attendance will be taken. If you are absent, your final point for the course will be reduced by one point for each absence. The first two absences will not cost the points, though. Class attendance is worth for total 30 points. You must notify me by email if there is any reasonable excuses why you cannot come to class. Supporting documents should be provided later. Students who leave before the attendance has been taken will not be counted for the day. Perfect attendance will be awarded by extra 17 points (i.e., An extra 17 points will raise your letter grade by 1-unit (e.g., from B0 to B+)).

**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.

**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.

- **IT Gadgets:** The usage of cell-phones, tablets, laptops and any other IT gadgets in class is strictly prohibited. Several academic studies have proven that using IT gadgets in class lower the learning efficiency. There is not much benefit in using IT gadgets for class learning. Reading newspapers and checking cell-phones in class are considered as class disruption. Repeated class disruptions will result in lowering your final grade or dismissal from the class.

- **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.

**Evaluation**

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|              | 400-415 B−   | 350-365 C−   | 300-315 D−   | \( \leq 299 \) F
Tentative Weekly Readings
(Weekly readings are going to be updated and posted on our course website.)

- **Week 1: Introduction**
  - Main Question: Review on what is happening now.
  - No required readings. Relax and enjoy the lecture.

- **Week 2: Theoretical Background 1**
  - Main Question: Is Inequality bad? Why? Why not?
  - Davis and Moore. 1945. Some Principles of Stratification. ASR.

- **Weeks 3: 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.”

- **Week 4 & 5: Measures of Inequality**
  - Main Question: How can we measure inequality?

  First Exam on February 20th.

- **Week 6: Income Inequality and Kuznets Curve**
  - 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.

- **Week 7: Why is Income Inequality Rising? Education and Technological Change**
  - Main Question: Why income inequality is rising?

- **Week 8: Spring Break**

- **Week 9: Why is Income Inequality Rising? Robot and the Future of Inequality**
  - Main Question: Will robots replace your work?
  - Reader Chapters 70 and 71
  - CBS Video Clip

• **Weeks 10: Why is Income Inequality Rising? Institutional Changes**
  – Main Question: Why income inequality is rising?
  – Reader Chapters 9, 10, and 66

  Second Exam on April 3rd.

• **Weeks 11: 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?

  Second Exam on November 2nd

• **Week 12: Status, Social Classes, Occupations**
  – Main Question: Are class structure and prestige associated with occupation changing over time?
  – Reader Chapter 56
  – Video: People Like Us: Social Class in America

• **Weeks 13: Wealth Inequality**
  – Main Question: Is the wealth inequality in the US worse than that in Sweden?
  – Reader Chapters 33 and 77
• **Week 14: Poverty**
  – Main Question: How much poor is poor enough to justify social actions? How global poverty has changed over time?

• **Week 15: Intergenerational Mobility: 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

Third Exam on May 6th.

(Topics below will be covered if we have time.)

• **Week Extra: Gender Inequality**
  – Main Question: How bad is the gender inequality? Are women still disadvantaged?
  – Reader Chapters 36, 40, 42, 44, 47, and 48.

• **Week Extra: Family and Inequality**
  – Main Question: Is the change in the family formation behavior (= marriage, child-bearing etc) associated with the rising inequality?
  – Reader Chapters 68 and 80

• **Week Extra: Racial and Ethnic Inequality**
  – Main Question: Is the significance of race declining?
  – Reader Chapters 24, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, and 64.