Class, Power, and Inequality

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 3008

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
34975

Instructor First Name: Allen

Instructor Last Name: Hyde

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course will provide students with a basic introduction to a wide variety of topics related to inequality and social stratification, including its causes from a variety of scholars in sociology, economics, and political science. This class will particularly focus on inequalities related to social class; however, we will also consider inequalities by race and gender. In this course, we will first discuss different perspectives on why inequality occurs. We will then explore the inequality and class structure in the United States, as well as in some other countries like Finland and South Africa. Next, we will examine how race and gender complicate issues of class in American society. Finally, we will discuss some of the consequences of inequality and what might be done to fix some of the social ills associated with inequality.

Course learning outcomes:

- **Analyze Theoretical Frameworks:** Critically examine and evaluate key theoretical perspectives on social stratification from sociology, economics, and political science.
- **Explore Inequality and Class Structures:** Investigate and compare the inequality and class structures of U.S. society with those of other nations (namely Finland and South Africa), identifying unique characteristics and patterns.
- **Examine Intersections:** Analyze the intersections of inequality with class, race, and gender, and understand their cumulative impact on individual experiences and societal dynamics.
- **Assess Personal Impact:** Reflect on how inequality, social class, and mobility influence personal life trajectories and the lives of others within various contexts.

- **Enhance Writing Proficiencies:** Develop and refine a range of writing skills, including grammatical accuracy, descriptive clarity, and analytical depth, applicable to academic and professional settings.

Required course materials:

Required Readings:

1. Grusky, David and Jasmine Hill (eds), 2018. *Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader.* Routledge.

NOTE: A free e-book version of this textbook is available from the GT Library. You can download up to 212 pages as PDFs from the reader if you search for it on the GT Library website.

Grading policy:

Final Grades Rubric out of 1000 points possible (what appears on your transcript)

900 and above = A

800-899 = B

700-799 = C

600-699 = D

Less than 600 points = F

Grades and Assignments (Points used to calculate final grade)

Discussion Questions (150pts total): Every week, students have the opportunity to post one key point and one discussion question on the Canvas discussion board by Monday at 12pm related to the readings that could be potentially discussed in class. Each student should post 5 weeks (5 key points and questions in 5 separate postings) throughout the semester. These questions should involve critical thinking skills thus critical questions of the authors' arguments are allowed. In addition to the actual question, you should provide a brief discussion of the background to your question. Weekly questions will receive a 30 for excellent questions, a 20 average questions, and a zero (0) for extremely poor questions or no questions at all. *Late discussion questions will not be accepted.* For example, a good question would be: "In 'Some Principles of Stratification' by Davis and Moore, the authors outline several logical premises that ultimately lead one to believe that inequality is functional, necessary, and inevitable. In what ways is their logic flawed? Are rewards always distributed by their 'functional importance'? How does the case of professional athletes vs teachers either support or conflict with their argument?" An example of a poor question would be "Who are the bourgeoisie according to Marx?" (Note: You are welcome to ask clarifying questions during class or by email. They just will not work

for the weekly questions portion of your grade.) If students are not reading, I reserve the right to change this portion of the grade to random pop quizzes on the readings.

Classroom participation (150 points): Students are expected to be in class whenever possible and participate in discussions of the readings. I will be taking attendance this semester. It is difficult to participate when you are not in class. Occasionally, in class, writing assignments may also be assigned to aid in the writing assignments for the class and will be graded if attendance gets poor over the semester.

Narratives of Mobility and Class Papers: A Multi-Stage Assignment (700pts total): This multi-stage assignment will require you to think about the issue of class and inequality in a variety of ways in different papers throughout the semester. The intention is for you to first elaborate your views on social mobility and class early in the semester (150pts). Second, you will interview an adult, ideally older than you, about their views on class, social mobility, and the economy. You will then write a report about the interview and compare their views to yours. A video or reading will be provided to stimulate conversation for the interview (250pts). Third, you will write a brief paper reflecting on the experience of playing stratification monopoly and any insights into inequality and mobility based upon income and wealth (200pts). Fourth, you will write a brief reflection on views on inequality given what you learned over the semester, particularly in relation to *an issue related to inequality and a policy solution that you deem fit,* as your final paper (100pts). Each paper will potentially require at least 3-7 pages of writing, depending on the assignment. More information on this multi-stage assignment will be provided as the semester progresses.

Policy for Exams, Missed Exams, Late Assignments, and Extra Credit:

Late assignments: Normally, the policy for late assignments is that you will need a documented health, funeral, or university-sponsored excuse to complete late assignments at full credit. Assignments completed after their due dates without an excuse will receive a drop in letter grade for every two days beyond their due date. Even if you have accommodations for a disability, you should still work with me in advance of deadlines to set up appropriate due dates.

Extra credit: For up to 15 points of extra credit on your final exam, students can watch an outside documentary about material related to the class, and then write 1-2 pages describing how this event/documentary is related to or informs knowledge learned in this course. This extra credit can only be done once. Extra credit is due by the last day of class.

Attendance policy:

Classroom participation: Students are expected to be in class whenever possible and participate in discussions of the readings. I will be taking attendance this semester. It is difficult to participate when you are not in class. Occasionally, in class, writing assignments may also be assigned to aid in the writing assignments for the class and will be graded if attendance gets poor over the semester. Students may miss up to 2 classes, no questions asked, with no penalty to their grades. But after 2 absences, excuses will be requested.

University-sponsored events, sickness/medical emergencies, and family emergencies can all qualify as excused absences.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Course Policy on Artificial Intelligence (AI)

For assignments, you are expected to write using your own words and ideas; however, you can use AI to help brainstorm or outline your papers, which should be properly cited using the questions that you asked ChatGPT and the answers that you received. Using AI like ChatGPT to completely write your papers will result in an automatic zero (0). Do not copy and paste answers from AI-generated content into your paper. I will provide more guidance on using AI as a handout during the second week of classes.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion