

**SOC 260: Inequality and Social Stratification
Course Syllabus, FALL 2016 (68878)
University of Alberta**

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Office Hours: TR 3:30-4:30pm and by appointment

Lecture: CAB 265, T R 11:00am - 12:20am

Teaching Assistant:

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TA office hours: R 12:30-1:30pm in Tory 15-13

Required Course Reading:

This course relies on electronic readings and selected chapters from Grusky, David and Szonja Szelényi. 2018. *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender, 2nd Edition*. Routledge.

Electronic versions of the full text are available from the University of Alberta library through this [*link*](#). Additional required electronic readings available through the library are listed within the course schedule. Links are provided on the website.

Prerequisite:

SOC 100 or consent of instructor.

Technology Requirements:

This course uses [eClass](#) for the posting of certain content and Google Docs for certain assignments and activities. I will also make announcements via eClass, so please check the website regularly.

Policy about course outlines can be found in [Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures, and Grading](#) of the University Calendar.

Course Description

Stratification refers to systematic social inequality in the access of opportunities, resources, and rewards. It involves the uneven distribution of people across social categories based upon achieved and ascribed characteristics. This course focuses on social stratification in Canada with some comparisons to other industrialized countries. We will address how stratification has varied throughout history and question why members of certain groups advance while others do not.

Part I of the course focuses on *understanding social stratification*. It describes the processes and theories behind stratification. During this part of the course we will discuss the social construction of categories, the mechanisms behind the unequal distribution of rewards, and explanations for varying levels of stratification. We will address theories related to markets, capital, and segregation.

Part II investigates the many *dimensions of stratification* that includes difference bases, such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, and class, along with different areas, including credit markets, work, health, consumption, and education. During this part of the course, we will apply the theories, mechanisms, and explanations discussed in Part I to these different areas and bases of stratification.

Part III emphasizes *the power of policy*. In this part of the course, we will discuss trends in stratification across Canada and internationally with a focus on how stratification is tied to policy, including taxation and redistribution, healthcare systems, minimum wages, and affordable housing.

Course Goals

This course aims to create a better understanding of what stratification is, how it works, and the explanations behind it. In a society that values individualism, many students tend to focus on the individual-level explanations for inequality, believing that some groups get ahead of others because of only intelligence, ability, and hard work. However, the study of stratification goes beyond individual-level explanations for inequality, because for most people, it takes more than talent to be successful. In general, stratification refers to structural inequality that occurs through a systematic process, such that members of some groups get more social goods than members of other groups. My aim is for you to expand your thinking and focus on how groups' unequal locations in opportunity structures affect their locations in the stratification hierarchy.

Course Objectives

After successfully completing the course, you will be able to:

- describe the process of stratification;
- identify theories and mechanisms of stratification;
- examine individual and structural level explanations for variation in stratification;
- describe how inequality in Canada has changed over the past century;
- compare inequality in Canada with other industrialized countries;
- apply theories of stratification to bases of race, gender, and class inequality;
- explain the extent and trends in stratification across multiple bases and areas; and
- assess policies related to social stratification.

Course Policies

Be respectful. Be honest. Be kind.

Contacting Me:

I highly recommend bringing any questions to class with you to raise at the beginning of lecture. However, if you have a question that can be answered with a couple sentences and this question has not already been answered on the syllabus or course website, you may contact me through email. If your question requires a more detailed or lengthy response, I suggest that you raise the question in class, attend my office hours, or make an appointment to meet with me. Please be aware that I check email from 9:00-5:00 on weekdays but not on weekends.

Email Etiquette:

Remember that email communication for all courses should be formal and professional. Make sure to use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Absences:

If you are going to be absent from lecture, you do not need to contact me unless you will be missing an exam. However, if you miss a lecture, I suggest contacting another student in the class to obtain a copy of the notes from that lecture.

As per the University of Alberta Calendar: Excused absence for a missed exam is not automatic and is granted at the discretion of the instructor (in the case of term exams) or the student's Faculty (in the case of final exams). Instructors and Faculties are not required to grant excused absences for unacceptable reasons that include, but are not limited to personal events such as vacations, weddings, or travel arrangements. When a student is absent from a term or final exam without acceptable excuse, a final grade will be computed using a raw score of zero for the exam missed. Any student who applies for or obtains an excused absence by making false statements will be liable under the Code of Student Behaviour.

If you miss an exam or are unable to complete assignments on the appropriate date because of an incapacitating illness, you must contact me within two business days or as soon as you are physically able to do so. You must also complete a [Request for Deferral Form](#) or a Statutory Declaration obtained through the Registrar's Office. Supporting medical documentation, such as a University of Alberta Medical Statement signed by a doctor, is also helpful but not required. You should submit appropriate documentation for other acceptable absences. This might include a copy of the death certificate for a death in the family, a letter from the church or pastor for a religious conflict, or a copy of the accident report for a car accident. For other reasons, please consult with me for appropriate documents.

Accessibility Resources:

Students who require accommodations in this course due to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, mental, or physical health are advised to discuss their needs with [Student Accessibility Resources](#), SUB 1-80, 492 · 3381 (phone) or 492 · 7269 (TTY). Students registered with Accessibility Resources who will be using accommodations in the classroom or writing exams through Accessibility Resources are required to provide a "Letter of Introduction."

Electronic Recording of Lectures:

As per the University Calendar: *Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as apart of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).*

Lecture Slides and Handouts:

I post lecture slides on the course website after lecture for you to review. I do not and will not post lecture slides before class. I share the slides to supplement, not to replace, note-taking in class. Independent note-taking is an important skill that you should work to develop throughout your university career. However, slides will often contain definitions, figures, and tables that you may want to refer back to when reviewing the material.

Academic Integrity:

Per GFC 24.3(2): *The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. All students should consult the [academic integrity website](#).*

Basic Needs Security:

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or if you lack a safe and stable place to live, and you believe this may affect your performance in this course, please contact the [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) or the [Dean of Students](#) for support. The [Campus Food Bank](#) also offers multiple programs to help with food insecurity. Additionally, please talk to me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I might possess.

Children in Class:

All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as necessary. For older children and babies, I understand that minor illnesses and unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in tough situations. Although this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable. However, please do not let this disrupt the learning of other students. In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you sit close to the door so that you can easily step outside if your little one needs special attention.

Difficult Subjects:

The content of this course may include topics that are difficult for some students to confront or discuss. I cannot anticipate what those topics are, or who will be affected, but I can be sensitive and work with students who let me know about their needs.

Treaty 6 Territory:

The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

Learning and Working Environment:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty, and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behavior that undermines that environment.

Course Requirements

Grade Breakdown:

Your grade in this course will be based upon five aspects, each worth a part of the grade:

- Midterm Exam: 35%
- Final Exam: 35%
- Activities and Participation: 30%
- **Total:** 100%

Grading Policy:

Three components constitute your grade for this course: a midterm exam, a final exam, and activities and participation. If you are having issues keeping up with course work for any reason, notify me as soon as you start to have a problem. We will be more likely to come to an acceptable arrangement if we can attack the problem sooner rather than later. [Counseling and Clinical Services](#) are also available.

Exams:

You will have two exams in this course: a midterm exam during Week 6 and a final exam at the end of the term. The exams are in-class, closed-book exams, consisting of multiple choice questions. The midterm will cover Part I of the course. The final exam will be cumulative, but it will stress Parts II and III of the course. Example midterm and final exam questions will be reviewed in class and made available on the course website. The midterm exam is worth 35% of your total grade, and the final exam is also worth 35%.

Activities and Participation:

I strongly believe in active learning. I want students to play an active role in the learning process and I regularly try to engage students in course material through discussion, problem solving, and various activities. There will be 13 activities throughout the semester. Most activities are noted on the course schedule and syllabus; however, there will also be several unannounced activities during the semester. You can expect approximately one graded activity per week.

Activities will include group work, individual quizzes, and other written work, which will sometimes include specific questions about the day's material. For example, I might ask, "How does Marx define class?" However, many times I will simply ask, "What was the most important point from class today?" or "What questions do you still have about the material?" This helps me to gauge how well students understand the material. Activities account for 30% of your total grade.

Each individual activity will receive a grade of 0-5 points. Only your 10 highest scoring activities will count toward your final activity grade. This means that you will be allowed to drop your three lowest scoring activity grades. Activities cannot be made up if they are missed, but there will be opportunities available to complete additional activities outside class. Please see the course website for more details.

Participation is also factored in as part of this grade. In-class participation includes speaking up in class, asking and answering questions, and completing group work. If you are a quiet person, take class as an opportunity to challenge yourself and share your thoughts. Disruptive and disrespectful behavior, such as talking out of turn, listening to music, using electronic devices for non-class purposes, sleeping through class, and leaving early without first notifying the instructor, will negatively affect your grade. At the end of the semester, you will also have the opportunity to assess your overall participation in the course.

Grade Conversion Scale:

Descriptor	Percentage Grade	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value
Excellent	96 - 100	A+	4.0
	91 - 95	A	4.0
	86 - 90	A-	3.7
Good	81 - 85	B+	3.3
	76 - 80	B	3.0
	71 - 75	B-	2.7
Satisfactory	66 - 70	C+	2.3
	62 - 65	C	2.0
	58 - 61	C-	1.7
Poor	54 - 57	D+	1.3
Minimal Pass	50 - 53	D	1.0
Failure	0 - 49	F	0.0

Course Schedule & Readings
(TENTATIVE)

Part 1: Understanding Stratification

Week 1: Stratification Process

Tues. (Sept. 3rd): What is stratification and why does it matter?

- Introduction to course and discussion of stratification systems

Thurs. (Sept. 5th): Categorization and the Social Construction of Categories

Required Reading:

- Fiske, Susan T., Amy J.C. Cuddy, Peter Glick, and Jun Xu. 2002. "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow from Perceived Status and Competition." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82(6): 878-902. **[Pages 878-883]**
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2013. "What We Mean When We Say 'Race Is a Social Construct'" *The Atlantic*, May 15, 2013.

Week 2: Stratification Process

Tues. (Sept. 10th): Ranking, Social Status, and Mechanisms of Durable Inequality

Required Reading:

- Avent-Holt, Dustin, and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey. 2019. "Organizations as the Building Blocks of Social Inequalities." *Sociology Compass* 13(2): e12655.

Thurs. (Sept. 12th): Unequal Treatment and the Distribution of Resources

Required Reading:

- Grusky, David. 2018. "The Stories About Inequality that We Love to Tell," Ch. 1, Pp. 2-14 in D. Grusky and S. Szelenyi (Eds.) *The Inequality Reader, 2nd Edition*. Routledge.

Activity:

- Visualizing Inequality in Canada

Week 3: Theories and Mechanisms of Stratification

Tues. (Sept. 17th): Explaining Stratification

Required Reading:

- Davis, Kingsley and Wilbert E. Moore. 2018[1945]. "Some Principles of Stratification," Ch. 2, Pp. 16-19 in D. Grusky and S. Szelenyi (Eds.) *The Inequality Reader, 2nd Edition*. Routledge.
- Tumin, Melvin. 2018[1953]. "Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis," Ch. 2, Pp. 7-20 in D. Grusky and S. Szelenyi (Eds.) *Inequality: Classic Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*. Routledge.
- Fischer, Claude S., Michael Hout, Martín Sánchez Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss 2018[1996]. "Inequality by Design," Ch. 3, Pp. 20-24 in D. Grusky and S. Szelenyi (Eds.) *The Inequality Reader, 2nd Edition*. Routledge.

Thurs. (Sept. 19th): Explaining Stratification

Required Reading:

- Calarco, Jessica McCrory. 2018. "Why Rich Kids are So Good at the Marshmallow Test." *The Atlantic*, June 1, 2018.
- Calnitsky, David. 2018. "Structural and Individualistic Theories of Poverty." *Sociology Compass* 12(12): e12640.

Week 4: Theories and Mechanisms of Stratification

Tues. (Sept. 24th): Supporting Stratification

Required Reading:

- Mijs, Jonathan. 2019. "How Inequality Leads to Its Own Legitimization." *Work In Progress Blog*, March 12, 2019.

Activity:

- Get to Know a Billionaire

Thurs. (Sept. 26th): Class, Markets, and Labor

Required Reading:

- Marx, Karl. 2018[1848, 1969]. "Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism," Ch. 5, Pp. 36-47 in D. Grusky and S. Szelenyi (Eds.) *The Inequality Reader, 2nd Edition*. Routledge.

Week 5: Theories and Mechanisms of Stratification

Tues. (Oct. 1st): Class, Status, and Party

Required Reading:

- Weber, Max. 2018[1922]. "Class, Status, Party," Ch. 7, Pp. 56-67 in D. Grusky and S. Szelenyi (Eds.) *The Inequality Reader, 2nd Edition*. Routledge.

Activity:

- Quiz on Marx and Weber

Thurs. (Oct. 3rd): Economic, Cultural, and Social Capital

Required Reading:

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2002[1986] "The Forms of Capital," Ch. 15, Pp. 280-281 in N.W. Biggart (Ed.), *Readings in Economic Sociology*. Wiley.

Week 6: Midterm Exam

Tues. (Oct. 8th): Review for Midterm and Catch-up on Readings

Thurs. (Oct. 10th): MIDTERM

Part 2: Dimensions of Stratification

Week 7: Stratification across Groups

Tues. (Oct. 15th): Canadian Politics and the Federal Election

Required Reading:

- Candidate and Party Platforms (see website for links)

Thurs. (Oct. 17th): Gender Roles, Sexism, and Attitudes

Required Reading:

- Eckes, Thomas. 2002. "Paternalistic and Envious Gender Stereotypes: Testing Predictions from the Stereotype Content Model." *Sex Roles* 47(3/4): 99-114.
- Fiske, Susan T. 2012. "Managing Ambivalent Prejudices: Smart-but-Cold and Warm-but-Dumb Stereotypes." *AAPSS* 638: 33-48.

Activity:

- Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (complete before class, see website for details)

Week 8: Stratification across Groups

Tues. (Oct. 22nd): Colonization, Immigration, and Racism

Required Reading:

- Dua, Enakshi, Narda Razack, and Jody Nyasha Warner. 2005. "Race, Racism, and Empire: Reflections on Canada." *Social Justice* 32(4): 1-10.
- Hutchins, Aaron. 2018. "Few Canadians Ever Set Foot on a First Nations Reserve and That's a Problem." *Maclean's*, June 8, 2018.
- Mouallem, Omar. 2018. "What is Canada Like for a Refugee?" *The Guardian*, May 13, 2018.

Thurs. (Oct. 24th): Intersectionality and Cumulative Disadvantage

Required Reading:

- Bose, Christine E. 2012. "Intersectionality and Global Gender Inequality." *Gender & Society* 26(1): 67-72.
- Maroto, Michelle and David Pettinicchio. 2019. "How Disability Compounds Economic Insecurity for Already Marginalized Groups." *LSE USAPP*, August 15, 2019.

Activity:

- Reflecting on Intersecting Identities

Week 9: Stratification across Areas

Tues. (Oct. 29th): Class, Culture, and Educational Inequality

Required Reading:

- Jack, Anthony Abraham. 2016. "(No) Harm in Asking: Class, Acquired Cultural Capital, and Academic Engagement at an Elite University." *Sociology of Education* 89(1): 1-19

Thurs. (Oct. 31st): Inequality in the "Sharing" Economy

Required Reading:

- Schor, Juliet B., and William Attwood-Charles. 2017. "The 'Sharing' Economy: Labor, Inequality, and Social Connection on For-profit Platforms." *Sociology Compass* 11(8): e12493.

Week 10: Stratification across Areas

Tues (Nov. 5th): Inequality in a Digital World

Required Reading:

- McCarthy, Matthew T. 2016. "The Big Data Divide and Its Consequences." *Sociology Compass* 10(12): 1131-1140.
- Biddle, Sam. 2019. "Facebook's Ad Algorithm is a Race and Gender Stereotyping Machine." *The Intercept*, April 3, 2019.

Thurs. (Nov. 7th): Privilege and Persistent Inequality

Required Reading:

- Friedman, Sam and Daniel Laurison. 2019. "The Class Pay Gap: Why It Pays to Be Privileged." *The Guardian*, February 7, 2019.

Activity:

- Reflecting on the Dimensions of Social Class

Week 11: No Classes - Have a lovely Reading Week!

Tues. (Nov. 12th): No Classes

Thurs. (Nov. 14th): No Classes

Part 3: The Power of Policy

Week 12: Inequality Trends and Social Policy

Tues. (Nov. 19th): Inequality and Social Policy

Required Reading:

- Jenson, Jane. 2010. "Continuities and Change in the Design of Canada's Social Architecture." Pp. 417-433 in J.C. Courtney and D.E. Smith (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Politics*. Oxford University Press.

Thurs. (Nov. 21st): Taxation, Redistribution, and Public Policy

Required Reading:

- Myles, John. 2015. "Canadian Sociological Association Outstanding Contribution Lecture: The Fading of Redistributive Politics in Canada." *Canadian Review of Sociology* 52(1): 1-21.

Activity:

- Taxation across the Provinces

Week 13: Housing, Poverty, and Policy

Tues. (Nov. 26th): Housing and Homelessness

Required Reading:

- Anderson-Baron, Jalene T., and Damian Collins. 2019. "'Take Whatever You Can Get': Practicing Housing First in Alberta." *Housing Studies Online First*: 1-21.

Thurs. (Nov. 28th): Poverty, Wages, and Extreme Inequality

Required Reading:

- Tirado, Linda. 2014. "Poor People Don't Plan Long-Term. We'll Just Get Our Hearts Broken." *The Guardian*, Sept. 21, 2014.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2014. "It is Expensive to be Poor." *The Atlantic*, January 13, 2014.

Activity:

- Poverty and Budgeting

Week 14: Wages and Policy

Tues. (Dec. 3rd): Minimum Wages and Basic Income

Required Reading:

- Desmond, Matthew. 2019. "Dollars on the Margins." *New York Times*, February 21, 2019.
- Calnitsky, David. 2019. "Basic Income and the Pitfalls of Randomization." *Contexts* 18(1): 22-29.

Activity:

- Policy Exercise

Thurs. (Dec. 5th): Review for Final and Catch-up on Readings

Activity:

- Meme this Class!

Finals Week:

Tentative Final Exam Date: Monday, December 16, 2019 at 2:00pm

Sociology Deferred Final Exam Date: Saturday, January 11, 2020 at 9:00am in BUS 1-10

Note: As per the University Calendar: *A deferred final examination will not be approved if a student (a) has not been in regular attendance where attendance and/or participation are required, and/or, (b) excluding the final exam, has completed less than half of the assigned work.*

SOC 260: Course Schedule FALL 2019

Week (Mon. - Sun.)	General Topic	Tuesday		Thursday	
		Topic	Reading / Activities	Topic	Reading / Activities
Week 1 09.02 - 09.08	Understanding Social Stratification	What is Stratification and Why Does it Matter?	Avent-Holt and Tomaskovic-Devey (2019)	Categorization and Social Construction	Fiske et al. (2002); Coates (2013)
Week 2 09.09 - 09.15		Ranking, Social Status, and Mechanisms of Durable Inequality		Unequal Treatment and the Distribution of Resources	Grusky (2018) / Visualizing Inequality in Canada
Week 3 09.16 - 09.22		Explaining Stratification	Davis & Moore (1945); Tumin (1953) Fischer et al. (1996)	Explaining Stratification	Calnitsky (2018); Calarco (2018)
Week 4 09.23 - 09.29		Supporting Stratification	Mijs (2019) / Get to Know a Billionaire	Class, Markets, and Labor	Marx (1848, 1969)
Week 5 09.30 - 10.06		Class, Status, and Party	Weber (1922) / Quiz	Economic, Cultural, and Social Capital	Bourdieu (1986)
Week 6 10.07 - 10.13	Midterm	Review for Midterm & Catch-up on Readings		MIDTERM	
Week 7 10.14 - 10.20	Dimensions of Stratification	Canadian Politics and the Federal Election	Party Platforms	Gender Roles, Sexism, and Attitudes	Eckes (2002); Fiske (2012) / Ambivalent Sexism Inventory
Week 8 10.21 - 10.27		Colonization, Immigration, and Racism	Dua, Razack, and Warner (2005); Hutchins (2018); Mouallem (2018)	Intersectionality and Cumulative Disadvantage	Bose (2012); Maroto and Pettinicchio (2019)
Week 9 10.28 - 11.03		Class, Culture, and Educational Inequality	Jack (2016)	Inequality in the "Sharing" Economy	Schor and Attwood-Charles (2017)
Week 10 11.04 - 11.10		Inequality in a Digital World	Biddle (2019); McCarthy (2016)	Privilege and Persistent Inequality	Friedman and Laurison (2019) / Class Reflections
Week 11 11.11 - 11.17	Reading Week	NO CLASS		NO CLASS	
Week 12 11.18 - 11.24	The Power of Policy	Inequality and Social Policy	Jensen (2010)	Taxation, Redistribution, and Public Policy	Myles (2015) / Taxation across Provinces
Week 13 11.25 - 12.01		Housing and Homelessness	Anderson-Baron and Collins (2019)	Poverty, Wages, and Extreme Inequality	Tirado (2014); Ehrenreich (2014) / Poverty and Budgeting
Week 14 12.02 - 12.08		Minimum Wages and Basic Income	Desmond (2019); Calnitsky (2019) / Basic Income Activity	Review for Final & Catch-up on Readings / Meme this Class!	
Finals Weeks 12.09 - 12.22	Final Exam: December 16, 2019 @ 2:00pm (Tentative Exam Date)				